

ECONOMIC NETWORKS OF FEMALE MONASTERIES

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

LATE BYZANTIUM PRESENTS a complex picture of both decline and resilience. While the period was marked by crises—such as the capture of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, ongoing ecclesiastical disputes after 1261, and the accelerating expansion of the Ottoman Empire—it also witnessed significant adaptation and innovation. These challenges contributed to political instability and the decentralization of imperial authority.

In the agrarian economy, the *pronoia* system—the conditional grant of a specific amount of tax revenues from properties and peasant households, used by the Byzantine state especially from the twelfth/thirteenth centuries onwards—evolved further under the Laskarid dynasty and acquired a more hereditary nature during the Palaiologan era. Monasteries, bolstered by imperial land grants and fiscal immunities, expanded their holdings significantly, accumulating large estates and increasing their economic influence.¹

The crises of the period triggered notable shifts in economic behaviour. As territorial losses to the Ottomans reduced the viability of traditional land-based income, many aristocratic landowners turned to commerce, adopting Western financial practices. This transformation gave rise to a new entrepreneurial class that Klaus-Peter Matschke and Franz Tinnefeld have termed *aristokratisches Unternehmertum* (aristocratic entrepreneurship).² Nevertheless, land ownership retained its central importance; in a pre-industrial context, land continued to be synonymous with power.³

Monastic land ownership in Byzantium primarily aimed at ensuring self-sufficiency. However, many male monasteries extended their activities beyond the mere preservation of their estates, actively seeking to expand

¹ Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins*; Smyrlis, “Τα μοναστήρια στο Ύστερο Βυζάντιο.”

² Matschke and Tinnefeld, *Die Gesellschaft im späten Byzanz*, 158–90. The term *aristokratisches Unternehmertum* designates the shifting of the interests of Byzantine aristocracy after the loss of their vast land properties due to the Ottoman expansion. While Byzantine nobility was previously not interested in participating in trading, it changed its attitude due to the circumstances and out of necessity.

³ Curtis, *Coping with Crisis*, 29–35.

their landholdings. Institutions such as the Great Lavra and the Monastery of Patmos participated in maritime trade and sold surplus agricultural products in both local and international markets.⁴ Additionally, they often acted as creditors, providing loans to individuals in need of cash.

For female monastic communities, self-sufficiency was a more immediate and daily concern. Although some nunneries demonstrated entrepreneurial initiative, their engagement in financial activities was limited by structural constraints—namely, stricter regulations on the movement of nuns and a lack of access to influential social networks. As a result, it was essential for their founders to endow them with sufficient resources to ensure long-term sustainability. Given that most nunneries did not play a central role in economic development or innovation, any threat to their landholdings—whether political or financial—could have severe consequences for their survival.

Late Byzantine Nunneries: Finances and Management

The events of 1204 led to the abandonment of numerous Orthodox monasteries in territories that fell under Latin control. Monastic communities displaced by the Latin occupation relocated to regions governed by the emerging Greek successor states. Efforts were made to accommodate these displaced communities. For example, the Laskarid dynasty transferred the landholdings of Constantinopolitan monasteries in the Smyrna area to the Monastery of Lesbos.⁵

However, the influx of monks and nuns into the Greek polities created significant spatial and demographic pressures. A document from Epiros, dated between 1224 and 1230, notes that due to the absence of female monastic institutions in the Arta region, nuns were “dwelling in the forecourts of churches in dilapidated shacks with space only for broken-down beds.”⁶

Following the recapture of Constantinople in 1261, the city was reestablished as the imperial capital, necessitating substantial financial investment for its restoration.⁷ While portions of these renovation expenses were cov-

⁴ Oikonomides, “The Monastery of Patmos and Its Economic Functions,” 1–17; Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, “Τὰ πλοῖα τῆς Μονῆς Πάτμου,” 93–114.

⁵ The Pantokrator Monastery possessed the village of Bare in the area, which was later granted to Lesbos. Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 4, pp. 184–85, no. 105 (1194).

⁶ John Apokaukos, *Praxis on the Blachernitissa Monastery*, 17; Talbot, “Affirmative Action in the 13th Century,” 405–6; Lampropoulos, *Ιωάννης Απόκαυκος*, 284–86.

⁷ Cf. Hilsdale, *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline*, 31–87.

ered by wealthy aristocrats and members of the imperial family, the overall strain on resources grew. By the fourteenth century, both newly founded and older monastic institutions had become smaller and increasingly struggled to sustain themselves.

The financial structures of Byzantine monasteries have garnered significant attention in modern scholarship, although the majority of research has focused on male monastic institutions.⁸ This imbalance largely stems from the greater availability and richness of source material related to men's monasteries. In a recent survey, Kostis Smyrlis examined the wealthiest monastic foundations in Byzantium, classifying as *grandes* (great or rich) those that owned at least five thousand *modioi*—approximately five hundred hectares—of land.⁹

Among the wealthiest monastic institutions, only four were female aristocratic convents: Bebaia Elpis, Lips, Nea Petra, and Panagiotissa. Geographically, three of these were located within Constantinople, with Nea Petra being the sole example situated in the countryside. A shared characteristic among these affluent nunneries was their association with wealthy aristocratic patrons and close ties to the imperial family. Financial information for Bebaia Elpis and Lips is preserved in their *typika*, while Nea Petra is documented through archival sources. The economic status of Panagiotissa is discussed in a synodal act.

Bebaia Elpis

The endowment of the convent of Bebaia Elpis was relatively modest, comprising several plots of land and vineyards located in Constantinople and its surrounding regions.¹⁰ In accordance with prevailing legislation and tradition, these properties were technically inalienable—a legal safeguard intended to preserve the integrity of large estates and ensure their continued viability as units of agricultural exploitation.¹¹ A notable feature of the initial endowment was the deliberate effort to concentrate the convent's

⁸ Talbot, "Personal Poverty in Byzantine Monasticism," 829–41.

⁹ Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins*, 32–33.

¹⁰ *Typicon monasterii Theotoci Bebaias Elpidos*, ed. Delehay, chaps. 120–24, pp. 82–85; Talbot, "Bebaia Elpis," 1556–58; Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins*, 37.

¹¹ On the inalienability of church and monastic property, see Konidares, *To δίκαιον της μοναστηριακής περιουσίας*, 254–58; Papagianni, "Legal Institutions," vol. 3, pp. 1061–62; Smyrlis, "The State, The Land, and Private Property," 62; Curtis, *Coping with Crisis*, 24–25.

holdings around key locations rather than maintain a dispersed portfolio of assets. Bebaia Elpis owned an estate and a village near Constantinople, another village near Herakleia, and seven vineyards.

Table 3.1. Bebaia Elpis Nunnery—list of properties.

Principal Endowment of the Nunnery		Value and Comments
1	Half of Synadene’s entire ancestral estate of Pyrgos	This may have included arable land or a vineyard. The other half was kept by Synadene for herself and her daughter
2	The village of Ainos ¹² near Parapolia	Valued at 400 <i>hyperpyra</i> : 200 were donated as her ancestral property and 200 were donated by her son
3	Vineyard of ___ <i>modioi</i> at Selokaka ¹³	
4	Vineyard of ___ <i>modioi</i> together with its houses near St. Nicholas Mesomphalos ¹⁴	400 <i>hyperpyra</i> Purchased years earlier from a man named Kaligas as barren land, where Synadene later planted vines
5	Vineyard of ___ <i>modioi</i> near Kosmidion ¹⁵	Donated by Synadene’s nephew, John (Joasaph) Palaiologos Angelos Branas
6	Vineyard of ___ <i>modioi</i> in Kosmidion	John (Joasaph) Palaiologos Angelos Branas gave this vineyard in exchange for “adelphata” for his wife, from which eight <i>hyperpyra</i> were paid annually as <i>telos</i> to the monastery of Kosmidiotes
7	Village of Morokoumoulou ¹⁶ near Herakleia	The landed property of Diakephalaïos is also located there
8	Vineyard of ___ <i>modioi</i> in the village of Kanikleion ¹⁷	Donation for the salvation of Thomais Palaiologina Kantakouzene, daughter-in-law of Synadene

12 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 242.
13 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 634.
14 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 549.
15 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 471–73.
16 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 538.
17 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 435.

Properties Kept by Synadene for Herself and Her Daughter		Value and Comments
1	Half of the estate of Pyrgos	
2	Village of Kanikleion in Parapolia	Ancestral estate
3	Garden called Gymnou near the convent in Constantinople	Synadene's daughter decided upon the garden's fate
4	A large vineyard close to Kyriotissa	Theodore, Synadene's son, the <i>protostrator</i> , gave it to her
5	The houses around the large vineyard very close to Kyriotissa, on the public road	Theodore, Synadene's son, the <i>protostrator</i> , gave it to her

Later Additions		Value and Comments
1	John Theophilos left 300 <i>hyperpyra</i> for an estate to be purchased for the convent	The heir of John's property first gave 100 <i>nomismata</i> to the monastery, and the nuns handed over the garden at Blanga. The nuns received the remaining 200 <i>hyperpyra</i> because of the difficulties they faced due to the siege by the Turks Donation for commemoration of the anniversaries of the deaths of John Theophilos and his wife ¹⁸ These transactions were recorded by the great sacristan of the Great Church, Demetrios Balsamon, on February 11, 1397
2	Courtyard of Anna Kantakouzene, sister of Eugenia Kantakouzene	300 <i>hyperpyra</i> Cleared and turned into a wheat-field
3	Donation of gold by Eugenia Kantakouzene	In 1398
4	Restoration and repair of the church and bell tower	200 <i>hyperpyra</i> , of which 70 <i>hyperpyra</i> came from the sale of the house of Marachas Eugenia Kantakouzene added 130 <i>hyperpyra</i> Manuel II gave Eugenia Kantakouzene the house in 1400
5	Vineyard close to Kyriotissa in Constantinople	100 <i>hyperpyra</i> The garden of St. George was planted and restored as a vineyard; it joined the large vineyard of the convent

¹⁸ *Typicon monasterii Theotoci Bebaias Elpidos*, ed. Delehay, chap. 8, pp. 102–3.

The convent's foundress, Synadene, contributed half of her ancestral estate in Pyrgos to the monastery,¹⁹ while retaining the other half for her own "maintenance and modest comfort" as well as for her daughter, Euphrosyne. According to the *typikon*, these retained properties were to be transferred to the convent upon their deaths, with the exact terms of the donation left up to Euphrosyne's discretion.

To provide a clearer picture of Bebaia Elpis's endowment, Table 3.1 presents a breakdown of the convent's original assets, the properties retained by the foundress, and those later added, many of which were recorded in the *typikon* by Euphrosyne, reflecting her role in expanding the monastery's economic base.

Maps 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate the locations of the nunnery's properties in Constantinople and its surrounding hinterland. Over the course of a generation, the nunnery of Bebaia Elpis gradually expanded its membership from the original thirty to fifty nuns.²⁰ This growth was likely supported by external contributions, including entrance gifts, *adelphata* (fellowships granted in return for substantial donations), and other forms of benefaction. During the Ottoman siege of Constantinople in the late fourteenth century, such donations—both monetary and in land—proved especially vital.

Some of these contributions may have come from Eugenia Kantakouzene Philanthropene, the (new) foundress, whose entrance gifts possibly formed part of her overall support. Tonsured at an early age, Eugenia reportedly dedicated "all her fortune" to the convent.²¹ At a time of financial hardship, she repurposed part of the convent's property, transforming a yard into a wheat field and a garden into a vineyard to help sustain the community.

While the original endowment of Bebaia Elpis included a combination of arable land, vineyards, and villages, later developments indicate a strategic shift in focus toward vineyard cultivation within the city itself.

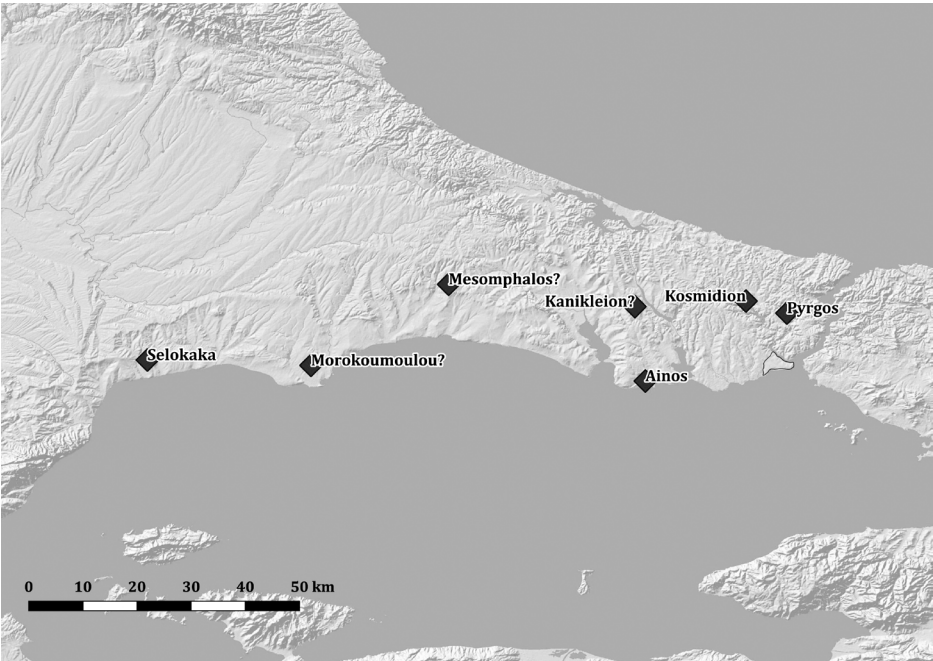
The *typikon* does not always provide precise figures regarding property prices and revenues.²² Nevertheless, by comparing its information with contemporary data, certain conclusions can be drawn. For instance, the purchase of a garden in the Blanga district for one hundred *hyperpyra*

19 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 606. Pyrgos is a settlement ca. twelve kilometres northeast of Constantinople, three kilometres southeast of Peteinochori (today Kemberburgaz).

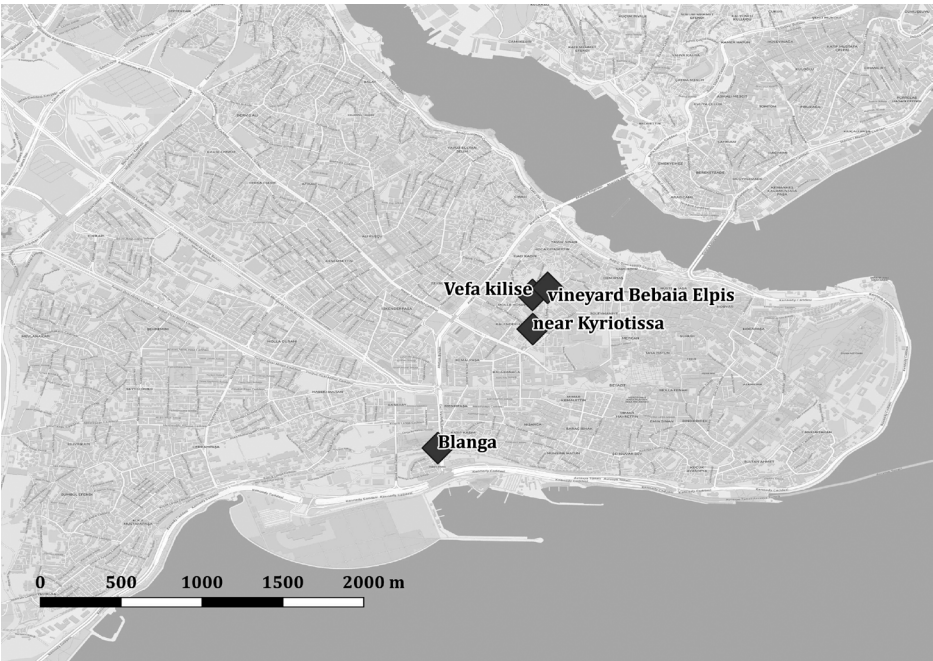
20 *Typicon monasterii Theotoci Bebaias Elpidos*, ed. Delehay, chap. 146, p. 96; Talbot, "Bebaia Elpis," 1564.

21 *Typicon monasterii Theotoci Bebaias Elpidos*, ed. Delehay, chap. 159, pp. 104–5; Talbot, "Bebaia Elpis," 1568.

22 Morrisson and Cheynet, "Prices and Wages in the Byzantine World," 815–78.



Map 3.1. The properties of Bebaia Elpis nunnery outside Constantinople.



Map 3.2. The properties of Bebaia Elpis nunnery in Constantinople

around 1342 represents nearly half the cost of a similar property in the same area by 1400, indicating a noticeable increase in land value over the period.²³ Similarly, the sum of three hundred *hyperpyra* bequeathed by John Theophilos for the acquisition of an estate aligns with known land prices from the latter half of the fourteenth century. This amount would have covered approximately twelve *modioi* of land.²⁴ In addition, two hundred *hyperpyra* were designated for the restoration and repair of the church and its bell tower, reflecting typical construction and maintenance costs of the time.

The *oikonomos* held responsibility for all financial matters within the nunnery²⁵ and was required to be an older nun with “great experience in practical affairs.” Kostis Smyrlis describes this role as a form of “hybrid management,” which differed from the more typical Byzantine model where estates were managed exclusively by either monastic or lay administrators.²⁶ The steward’s duties included the careful documentation of all financial transactions, with records to be submitted regularly to the superior and the senior members of the community. While the steward herself could only leave the convent under exceptional circumstances, lay external managers were appointed to oversee the administration of the nunnery’s estates.²⁷

The detailed recording of all actions related to the legacy of John Theophilos—amounting to three hundred *hyperpyra*—by Demetrios Balsamon, *skeuophylakissa*, or sacristan, of the Great Church, is particularly noteworthy. In 1397, Balsamon documented the transactions with the following statement: “For future security and the explanation of these events, they were recorded by my hand, the great sacristan of the most holy Great Church of God [Hagia Sophia], the deacon Demetrios Balsamon, on the eleventh day of the month of February, fifth indiction of the year 6905.”²⁸ According to the *typikon*, this act of documentation was likely

23 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, p. 394, no. 578 (June 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 3137.

24 Morrison and Cheynet, “Prices,” 832.

25 *Typicon monasterii Theotoci Bebaias Elpidos*, ed. Delehay, chaps. 54–55, pp. 48–49; Talbot, “Bebaia Elpis,” 1538–39.

26 Smyrlis, “The Management of Monastic Estates,” 249.

27 *Typicon monasterii Theotoci Bebaias Elpidos*, ed. Delehay, chap. 55, p. 48; Talbot, “Bebaia Elpis,” 1538–39.

28 Gastgeber, “Das *Typikon* Lincoln College gr. 35,” 96–100.

intended to safeguard the fund from potential mismanagement. In fact, the Patriarchate exercised close oversight over changes to the *typika* and *brenbia* of nunneries, as these foundational documents were archived under its authority.

Lips

Theodora Palaiologina endowed her monastic foundation, the Lips nunnery, with an extensive array of properties, including land, vineyards, buildings, and gardens, totaling approximately twenty thousand *modioi*. This endowment was intended to provide for a community of fifty nuns along with twenty-one hospital staff and twelve patients. The sources of these assets varied; a portion came from her mother and son, another from her dowry, while additional holdings were personally acquired by the empress. One property was offered as an entrance gift.

Within Constantinople, the Lips nunnery owned approximately twenty-three buildings, not including its mills. It also held significant land in Galata, Blanga, and other parts of the capital, comprising 237 *modioi* of vineyards and ninety-eight *modioi* of gardens. Beyond the city, the nunnery's possessions included three estates, five villages, and numerous parcels of land, vineyards, gardens, mills, and apartments located across Thrace, western Macedonia, Bithynia, Pergamon, and the Smyrna region. A detailed list of the properties held by the Lips nunnery is presented in Table 3.2 below.²⁹

In contrast to the centralized landholdings of Bebaia Elpis, the properties of the Lips nunnery were geographically dispersed across multiple regions and Constantinople (see Maps 3.3 and 3.4 below).

This difference in spatial organization influenced administrative practices; while Bebaia Elpis employed a female steward, the broader distribution of the Lips estate required a more mobile and externally oriented administrator. Following the precedent set by the Kecharitomene convent, Theodora Palaiologina appointed a male or eunuch steward to manage the holdings—an example of the lay management model commonly adopted by Byzantine nunneries.³⁰

²⁹ *Typicon monasterii Lips*, ed. Delehay, chaps. 43–49, pp. 130–34; Talbot, “Lips,” 1279–80.

³⁰ Smyrlis, “The Management of Monastic Estates,” 249.

Table 3.2. Lips Nunnery—list of properties.

Donations of the Empress		Value and Comments
1	Estate (<i>ktema</i>) Kastellou in theme of Pergamon	350 gold pieces (<i>hyperpyra</i>)
2	Part of the estates of Achilleion and Barys	Worth 300 gold pieces (<i>hyperpyra</i>) Included in this amount was a fish pond (<i>vivarium</i>)
3	The mill of Thermene near the estates of Achilleion and Barys	From the property of the same ancestral estates
4	Vineyard of Emporianos	Purchased by Theodora Palaiologina
5	A vineyard of 32 <i>modioi</i> near the <i>ktemata</i> (near Anaia?)	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina
6	A garden of 20 <i>modioi</i>	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina
7	A smaller garden of 10 <i>modioi</i>	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina
8	Arable land of 390 <i>modioi</i>	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina
9	A double mill near Anaia	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina — operated all year round
10	Vineyards of 145 <i>modioi</i>	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina — some acquired by purchase, others through improvements and maintenance
11	Gardens of 150 <i>modioi</i>	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina
12	Arable land of 350 <i>modioi</i>	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina
13	Fourteen houses for rent	Part of <i>zeugelateion</i> called Kythrina
14	Arable land of 500 <i>modioi</i> near Kordoleon in the <i>katepanikion</i> of Smyrna	Purchased from Abalantos
15	Arable land of 2000 <i>modioi</i> in the vicinity of Philopation ³¹ near Constantinople	
16	The houses of Batrachonites and Gabras in the Kynegoi quarter, Constantinople	Buildings in Constantinople obtained by purchase
17	Workshop near the Kynegos Gate	Buildings in Constantinople
18	The [house] of Chabaron near Blachernai	Buildings in Constantinople
19	The [houses] at Tzocharea [near?] the Imperial Gate	Buildings in Constantinople purchased from a Syrian tar-maker named Maphre

31 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 587–88.

Donations of the Empress		Value and Comments
20	The houses of John Eulogios behind the Latin church of the exceedingly Holy Mary	
21	The houses of the <i>archon tes thymeles</i> (magistrate of the stage) near the houses of John Eulogios	
22	The [houses] of Sampson near the houses of nos. 20 and 21	
23	The guard house at the Beautiful Gate	

Properties Donated to the Hospital		Value and Comments
1	The village of Nymphai ³² in the vicinity of Constantinople	Dependent peasants and arable land amounting to 260 <i>nomismata</i> A portion of 600 <i>nomismata</i>
2	Two mills near Aphameia	Worth 32 <i>nomismata</i> A portion of 600 <i>nomismata</i>
3	Skoteinon village in the region of Macedonia ³³	308 <i>nomismata</i> : 138 <i>nomismata</i> from dependent peasants 70 <i>nomismata</i> from four mills 100 <i>nomismata</i> from arable land of 2600 <i>modioi</i> A portion of 600 <i>nomismata</i>
4	A vineyard of 300 <i>modioi</i> at Lopadion	Part of the estates of Lachanas
5	Arable land of 860 <i>modioi</i> at Lopadion	Part of the estates of Lachanas
6	A winter mill at Lopadion	Part of the estates of Lachanas
7	A half share in another mill at Lopadion	Part of the estates of Lachanas
8	Houses at Lopadion	Part of the estates of Lachanas

³² Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 550–51.

³³ Soustal, *Makedonien, südlicher Teil*, 995–96: northeast of Berroia.

Donations of the Empress's Mother		Value and Comments
1	The village of Ennakosia ³⁴ near Constantinople	95 gold pieces from dependent peasants
2	The village of Plakos ³⁵	66 <i>nomismata</i> from dependent peasants
3	The properties at the village Kalon Neron (lit. Good waters) ³⁶	58 <i>nomismata</i>
4	Abandoned land amounting to 500 <i>modioi</i> in Ennakosia, Plakos, Kalon Neron	18 <i>nomismata</i>
5	Another abandoned property of 1400 <i>modioi</i> in the vicinity of Ennakosia, below the paved road	42 <i>nomismata</i>
6	A mill in the village of Ennakosia	8 <i>nomismata</i>
7	The pier in the village of Ennakosia	10 <i>nomismata</i>
8	Arable land of 700 <i>modioi</i> in the vicinity of Martinakion ³⁷	28 <i>nomismata</i> Total: 344 <i>nomismata</i>
9	Arable land of 3000 <i>modioi</i> in the neighbourhood of St. Anna ³⁸	
10	Arable land of 200 <i>modioi</i> near Empyrites at Palatitzia ³⁹	
11	Two mills at Kamelogephyron ⁴⁰	
12	Two other mills in the village of Apodroungarion ⁴¹ in the theme of Selymbria	

34 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 349–50.

35 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 597: in the southern part of Küçükçekmece Gölü.

36 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 431: one kilometer north of Küçükçekmece (modern Soğuksu Çiftlik).

37 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 517: in close proximity to Küçükçekmece Gölü.

38 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 252: in close proximity to Küçükçekmece Gölü.

39 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 558–59: in close proximity to Empyrites located at the Küçükçekmece Gölü.

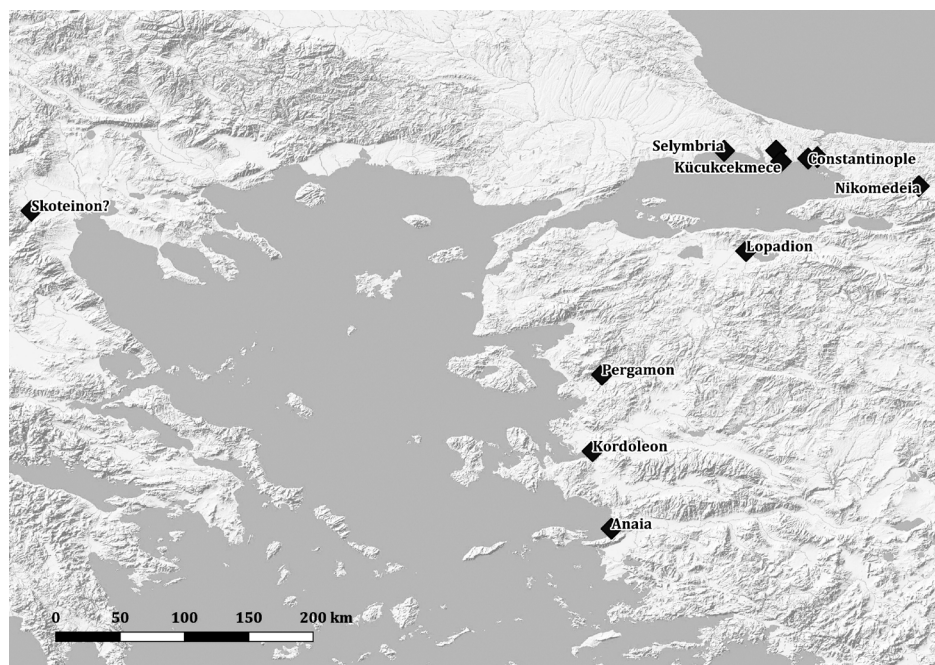
40 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 279–81, esp. at 280: Kamelogephyron was a bridge of the river Barbyzes in the hinterland of Constantinople.

41 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 255.

Properties of the Convent Located in Constantinople, Nikomedeia, and Skoutari		Value and Comments
1	A vineyard of 125 <i>modioi</i>	
2	Gardens of 40 <i>modioi</i> in different locations	
3	Another garden of 15 <i>modioi</i> at Blanga	
4	Another called Dzeffre of 40 <i>modioi</i>	
5	A vineyard of 112 <i>modioi</i> at Galata	
6	Garden of 3 <i>modioi</i> at Galata	
7	A vineyard of 237 <i>modioi</i>	
8	Gardens of 98 <i>modioi</i>	
9	Six mills reconstructed near the monastery of Pantepoptes and outside at the wall of the Phanar	
10	Houses of Tzochareia	Purchase from Nikolezos
11	Two further houses at Beautiful Gate	Purchase from Chrestine
12	Ten further houses in the area of Blachernai	
13	House with an upper floor in the area of the Blachernai palace, near the houses of Niketiates	
14	Half of the field of Diabatenos including 112 olive trees	
15	Half of the field of Magistros including 210 olive trees	
16	Olive trees at Nikomedeia	Conveyed to the convent by the reccessor (<i>apographeus</i>) Cheilas
17	The small convent of the reccessor (<i>apographeus</i>) dedicated to the Great martyr St. George, called Trapeza in Skoutari	Entrance gift of the nun Tzakalina

The responsibilities of the lay steward included appointing local administrators for individual estates, supervising agricultural activities such as fieldwork and viticulture, preventing theft or damage, and ensuring the upkeep of buildings. Although he was allowed to confer with the abbess—always in the presence of senior nuns—he was not permitted to reside within the monastery and was required to leave before the midday meal.⁴²

⁴² *Typicon monasterii Lips*, ed. Delehaye, chaps. 25–26, pp. 119–20; Talbot, “*Lips*,” 1272–73.



Map 3.3. The properties of Lips nunnery in Asia Minor and Greece.

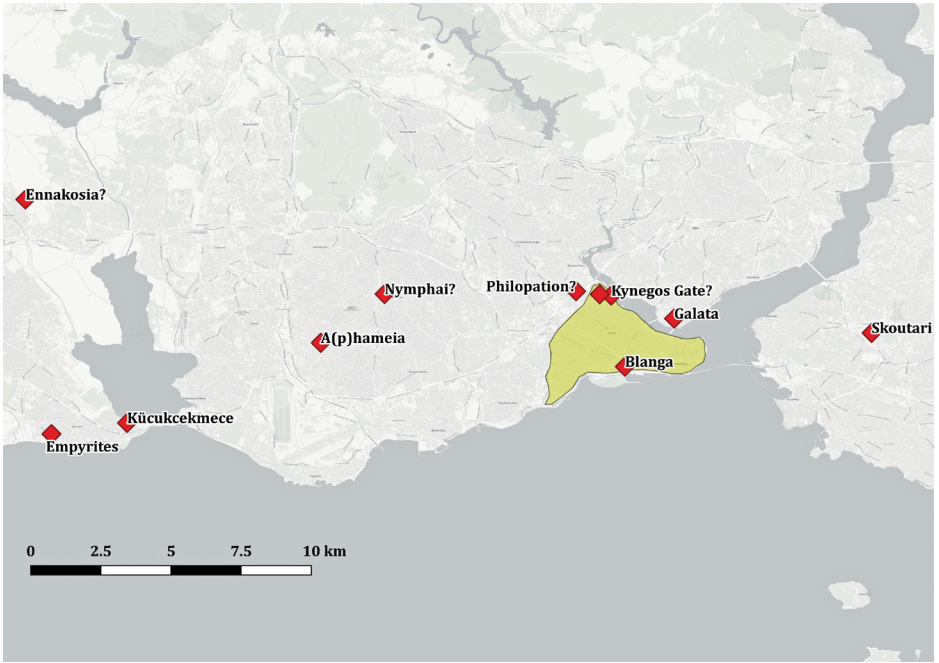
The alienation of immovable property was strictly prohibited, and movable goods could only be pawned under exceptional circumstances, such as enemy incursions or a significant decline in revenues.⁴³ Entrance gifts were not obligatory; however, as illustrated in Table 3.2, some foundations, such as the small convent of St. George “called Trapeza” in Skoutari (Chrysopolis),⁴⁴ originated as entrance gifts—this one from the nun Tzakalina. Other offerings, including property, money, sacred vessels, or furnishings donated “by anyone with pious intentions,” were also accepted and valued.

A final observation concerns the financial difficulties the Lips nunnery likely encountered shortly after the death of its foundress in 1303. Its holdings in Asia Minor probably fell into Turkish hands within a short period, causing considerable economic strain. In such a context, further private donations would have been essential to sustain the institution.

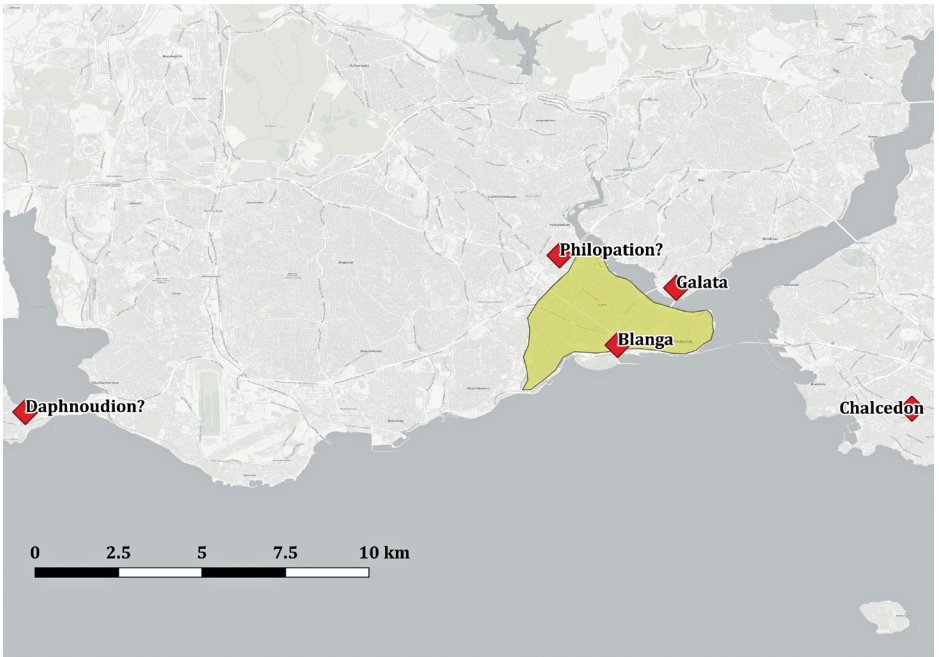
The case of the Lips nunnery also illustrates how monastic foundations could function as mechanisms for preserving familial wealth. Instead of

⁴³ *Typicon monasterii Lips*, ed. Delehaye, chap. 43, p. 130; Talbot, “Lips,” 1279; Stolte, “Law for Founders,” 126–27: *res sacrae* were *extra commercium*.

⁴⁴ Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres Byzantins*, 26.



Map 3.4. The properties of Lips nunnery in Constantinople and Thrace.



Map 3.5. The properties of Anargyroi Monastery.

being divided among heirs or sold, the extensive estates of Theodora Palaiologina were consolidated within a monastic institution. This arrangement effectively prevented their fragmentation, ensuring the unity and continued use of family assets under ecclesiastical stewardship.⁴⁵

Anargyroi

Anargyroi, the second monastic foundation of Theodora Palaiologina, was likewise endowed with properties in Constantinople and other regions. However, some of its landholdings remain unknown due to lacunae in the manuscript preserving the *typikon*, specifically on fols. 66v and 67r. Palaiologina notes that the convent had lost its properties during the Latin occupation of the city and that its buildings were left in ruins. She undertook the restoration of the convent, constructed a protective wall, and provided it with consecrated objects “since it had none.” Importantly, the endowments designated for the Anargyroi convent were to remain entirely distinct from those of the Lips foundation (Map 3.5).⁴⁶ The known properties of the Anargyroi convent are listed in Table 3.3 below.⁴⁷

Like the Lips convent, Anargyroi represents another example of a female monastic institution employing the traditional model of lay management. Financial oversight was entrusted to a male steward—either a eunuch or an individual belonging to the category of “otherwise respectable men.” While he was not permitted to reside within the convent, he was required to make regular visits on designated days. His responsibilities included maintaining detailed records of all financial transactions and receiving payments from the convent in both currency and goods.⁴⁸

Theotokos tes Panagiotisses

Maria Palaiologina—the foundress of the nunnery *ton Mougoulion*—established the institution following the purchase of buildings and land for four thousand *hyperpyra*. The endowment comprised bakeries, churches, vineyards, and rental properties within Constantinople, collectively generating

⁴⁵ Curtis, *Coping with Crisis*, 25.

⁴⁶ *Typicon monasterii sanctorum Anargyrorum*, ed. Delehaye, chap. 61, p. 140; Talbot, “Anargyroi,” 1293.

⁴⁷ *Typicon monasterii sanctorum Anargyrorum*, ed. Delehaye, chap. 58, p. 138; Talbot, “Anargyroi,” 1291.

⁴⁸ *Typicon monasterii sanctorum Anargyrorum*, ed. Delehaye, chap. 59, p. 139; Talbot, “Anargyroi,” 1292.

Table 3.3. Anargyroi Monastery—list of properties.

Properties		Value and Comments
1	The [monastery?] at Oulas in the Thrakesian theme	It also possessed a <i>chrysobull</i> determining its properties
2	A piece of arable land of 640 <i>modioi</i> in Constantinople	
3	A vineyard of 65 <i>modioi</i>	
4	A garden with pasturage in Blanga	
5	Arable land of 1,000 <i>modioi</i> in Philopation	
6	The estate of St. Leontios in Daphnoudion ⁴⁹	Included the pasturage, the <i>pane-gyris</i> , and land called the Apotheke
7	Dependent peasants (<i>paroikoi</i>) at Marnakiou in Chalcedon	40 <i>nomismata</i>
8	Arable land of 452 <i>modioi</i>	
9	The vineyard of Ampeles of 9 <i>modioi</i>	
10	The vineyard of Aoinares, of 18 <i>modioi</i>	
11	A field of 30 <i>modioi</i> at Galata	
12	The field of Barelina of 10 <i>modioi</i> at Galata	With a bath and <i>ptochoi proskathemenoi</i>
13	240 olive trees in different places at Charax	
14	Arable land of 250 <i>modioi</i> at Charax	
15	Four <i>paroikoi</i> at Charax	Worth six <i>nomismata</i>

an annual income of approximately three hundred *hyperpyra*. Beyond the city, the monastery also owned villages, a *zeugelateion* (arable land), vineyards, and residences in areas such as Rhaidestos and Medeia.

The financial stability of the nunnery began to decline shortly after the deaths of Maria Palaiologina (after 1307) and her daughter Theodora (before 1351), when Isaakios Palaiologos Asanes, Maria's son-in-law, assumed the role of *ephoros* (overseer) of the institution. A critical misstep under his administration was the excessive increase in the number of nuns—thirty-three of whom were external/lay appointees (*ἀδελφαί ἐξωτερικαὶ κοσμικαί*) and additional nuns. This expansion appears to have been driven by his aim to collect *apotage* donations—entry fees given

⁴⁹ Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 323–24.

upon joining the monastery—which he hoped would yield a sum of two thousand *hyperpyra*.⁵⁰

Nea Petra

Nea Petra was an aristocratic foundation established by the Maliasenoi family in Thessaly. In contrast to Lips and Bebaia Elpis, information about Nea Petra's economic foundation derives not from a *typikon* but from a now-lost cartulary that contained forty-two documents dated between 1215 and 1276. This documentary evidence offers a vivid account of the complexities of monastic foundation and aristocratic patronage as well as the financial opportunities present in the peripheral regions of the Byzantine Empire.

The convent was founded around 1271–1272 by Anna/Anthousa Palaialogina, the niece of Emperor Michael VIII.⁵¹ Along with her husband, she donated a range of assets to the patriarchal nunnery, including buildings, agricultural land, mills, *zeugelateia*, and *metochia* (dependent estates). The initial parcel of land was purchased from a certain Michael Archontitzes, and, notably, the inhabitants of the nearby village of Dryanoubaina agreed to assume responsibility for the annual tax payments, thereby freeing the convent from fiscal obligations.

Shortly thereafter, the Maliasenoi acquired additional vineyards and landholdings from local peasants at very low prices, often structuring the transactions to appear as donations. The documentation makes clear that the majority of these acquisitions occurred between September 1271 and 1272, during a time of crisis marked by the ongoing conflict between Epiros and Constantinople and a prolonged regional famine.⁵²

The endowment of Nea Petra generally included lands and *metochia* in Dryanoubaina,⁵³ while the properties later acquired for the nunnery con-

50 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 3, ed. Koder et al., pp. 66–76, no. 184 (October 1351), lines 79–85; Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 2330; Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire*, 261; Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins*, 68–69. This is a special reference to the existence of external/lay appointees in Late Byzantium. Their exact relationship to the nunnery is not clear.

51 Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins*, 65–68; Giannopoulos, “Αἱ παρὰ τὴν Δημητριάδα βυζαντινὰί μοναί,” 210–40; Ostrogorsky, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine*, 93–99; Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalien*, 224–25.

52 Teleles, *Μετεωρολογικά φαινόμενα και κλίμα*, does not include this famine, as his research was based solely on historiographical sources.

53 Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalien*, 150.

sisted of *staseis* (settlements or groups of holdings), as well as vineyards, farmland, and one *zeugelateion* (plowland) in the area of Brasta (see Table 3.4). Among these, vineyards were the most significant and frequent type of acquisition.⁵⁴ Importantly, Nea Petra was located near the male Monastery of Makrinitissa, which had been founded by the Maliasenoi family shortly before 1215 and granted *stauropegial* status in 1256.⁵⁵ As Angeliki Laiou has noted, the development of both Makrinitissa and Nea Petra exemplifies the broader trend of consolidating small, fragmented landholdings into larger, more economically viable monastic estates.⁵⁶

The nunnery of Nea Petra enjoyed exemption from all taxes and obligations with the sole exception of *kastroktisia*: a corvée duty related to the construction of fortifications.⁵⁷ A legal dispute arose between Nea Petra and the *pronoia* holder Marmaras over the *zeugelateion* in Brasta. While Nea Petra leased this land to its peasants and collected rent, Marmaras claimed that Brasta fell within the bounds of his *pronoia* in Tyrnabos and attempted to collect rent from it as well. In July 1277, the *pinkernes* Manouel Komnenos Raoul adjudicated the case in favour of the nunnery, relying on witness testimony, and forbade Marmaras from interfering in the property.⁵⁸ The eventual transformation of Nea Petra into a male monastery may reflect its inability to attract or sustain a sufficiently large female monastic community or perhaps the inadequacy of its economic resources to support long-term female habitation. The properties associated with the convent of Nea Petra are listed in Table 3.4.

54 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 4, pp. 391–92, no. 26 (1271), pp. 393–96, no. 27 (1271), pp. 396–99, no. 28 (1271), pp. 399–402, no. 29 (1271), pp. 402–4, no. 30 (1271), pp. 404–7, no. 31 (1271), pp. 407–9, no. 32/1 (1272), pp. 410–11, no. 32/2 (1272), pp. 412–14, no. 33 (ca. 1272), pp. 330–32, no. 1 (1272), and pp. 333–36, no. 2 (1274); Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins*, 65–67; Stefec, “Beiträge zur Urkundentätigkeit epirotischer Herrscher,” 249–370.

55 Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalien*, 210–11. Melvani sets the foundation between 1205 and 1209. Melvani, *Late Byzantine Sculpture*, 108. On Maliasenoi, see Puech, “L’aristocratie et le pouvoir à Byzance,” vol. 1, p. 14.

56 Laiou, “The Agrarian Economy,” 325.

57 Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1392, 1394, 1397, 1402, 1403, 1411, 1412; Dölger and Wirth, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, vol. 3, nos. 1989, 1999a, 2011, 2012, and 2031a.

58 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 4, pp. 419–20, no. 37 (1277); Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium*, 410–11; Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, *Βυζαντινή διπλωματική*, 60–61.

Table 3.4. Nea Petra Nunnery—list of properties.

Properties		Value and Comments
1	Epano Dryanoubaina	It was the location of the nunnery
2	Kato Dryanoubaina	It included land in the valleys and mountains, as well as vineyards, lands, and mills
3	Stasis of Zoe Melanchrene, daughter of Stephan Syropoulos in theme of Dryanoubaina	5 <i>hyperpyra</i> even though its real price was more than double or triple this sum⁵⁹ – Zoe received a portion from the payment of an <i>adelphaton</i> The stasis included: – a vineyard – the nearby vineyards – orchards and 3 more arable pieces of land in Palatia – a <i>choraphion</i> in Plateos Lithou – 2 vineyards in Dryanoubaina – 2 houses
4	Metochion Portarea close to Nea Petra	3 <i>litrai</i> of wax to be given by the nunnery to the bishop of Demetrias, Michael Panaretos
5	Metochion Epaliropatou	4 <i>litrai</i> of wax to be given to the bishop of Demetrias, Michael Panaretos
6	Metochion Hesychastareion	Stauropegial
7	Metochion St. Nicholas Xyloipas	Included a mill, fruit trees
8	Mill?	26 ducats even though its real price was more than double this sum
9	Mill site in Velestinos ⁶⁰	Given by the bishop of Demetrias, Michael Panaretos
10	Vineyard of Martinos in Velestinos	1 <i>olokotinarea almyriotiken</i> ⁶¹ sold for only 10 <i>hyperpyra</i> even though its real price was more than double this sum
11	Vineyard of Nikolaos Bardas in Velestinos, close to Martinos’s vineyard	<i>Posoumenon</i> 1 <i>olokotinarea almyriotiken</i> sold for 10 <i>hyperpyra</i> even though its real price was more than double this sum

59 This mention refers to the principle of *laesio enormis* (abnormal harm, excessive injury), where the sale price is half of the “just price” of the land. Maniatis, “Organization, Market Structure, and Modus Operandi,” 311–12n180.

60 Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalien*, 133.

61 *Olokotinarea* is a term for the common Byzantine *modios* of forty *litrai*. Schilbach, *Byzantinische Metrologie*, 60–61.

Properties	Value and Comments
12 Vineyard of John Katzidones in Velestinos	Sold by the brother of Katzidones Konstantinos <i>Posoumenon 1 olokotinarea almyriotiken</i> Sold for 7 ὑπέρπυρα παρά τρίτον ($6\frac{2}{3}$) even though its real price was more than double this sum
13 Vineyard of Konstantinos Katzidones in Velestinos	Sold to the <i>ktetor</i> for 8 <i>hyperpyra</i> even though its real price was more than double this sum
14 Vineyard in St. George ton Kanalion in Velestinos	2 <i>olokotinareas</i> Sold to the <i>ktetores</i> for 15 <i>hyperpyra</i>
15 Property of Archontitzes in Dryanoubaina	12 <i>hyperpyra</i>
16 Arable land (<i>zeugelateion</i>) of Brastoi	Subject of a dispute with <i>pronoia</i> holder Marmaras (see above)
17 Hagioi Apostoloi tou Megalostomou	Vineyards, land, <i>ptochoi</i> (=peasants with no personal land and means of cultivation), i.e., children and relatives of Eunostos

Our sources offer only a partial picture of the financial operations of the great monasteries. What is clear, however, is that these institutions functioned primarily as landowners, with their wealth concentrated in assets such as houses, arable land, vineyards, and gardens, most of which were secured at the time of their foundation. In many cases, additional properties were donated by the foundress's relatives.

Theodora Palaiologina acknowledged that some individuals contributed to nunneries out of vanity. Nonetheless, the more socially and theologically acceptable motive for such acts was the salvation of the donor's soul and those of their kin. These intentions were often commemorated through inscriptions on church walls. A notable example is found in the hermitage dedicated to St. John near Zoupena (St. Anargyroi), close to Geraki (Peloponnese), where a dedicatory inscription records the nun Euphrosyne Glyka's plea for divine remembrance and forgiveness on the Day of Judgment.⁶² Similarly, in 1482, the nun Kataphyge Skoularopoulos donated her private properties to the monastery of Vazelon explicitly for the salvation of her soul and the remission of her sins.⁶³

⁶² Drandakes, "Τὸ Παλιομονάστηρο τῶν Ἀγίων Σαράντα στή Λακεδαίμονα καὶ τὸ ἀσκηταριό του," 135.

⁶³ Ouspenskij and Benešević, *Ta Acta της Μονής Βαζελώνος*, trans. Petropoulos, p. 187, no. 7 (1482); Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres Byzantins*, 283–86.

The cartulary of the Vazelon Monastery also preserves records of donations made by Eudokia/Eudoxia Taronitissa,⁶⁴ Anysia Papagenakopoulos, and two additional nuns in the mid-fifteenth century.⁶⁵ A close analysis of these documents suggests that the donations took place within specific familial and socio-political contexts. Eudokia Taronitissa, the sister of a priest, mirrored her brother's pious act—his donation of the family property known as *stasis Aitherissa*—by contributing her own share of the same estate to the monastery. In another case, Anysia Papagenakopoulos bequeathed all her properties to Vazelon in response to a personal crisis: her children had been taken captive by the Turks. Significantly, the document stipulates that if her sons were to return, they would be entitled to reclaim their share of the family estate.⁶⁶

Other donations and sales to nunneries were occasionally made in exchange for basic necessities such as food, housing, and shelter. In the first half of the thirteenth century, for instance, an individual named Planites donated his family property in Mantaia to the Lembos Monastery. This arrangement was confirmed by his relatives, Basil Planites and the nun Anysia Planitissa, under the explicit condition that the monastery would provide Anysia with the means for her subsistence.⁶⁷

Further insight into such transactions comes from Codex B of the Monastery of John Prodromos in Serres, which documents monastic property dealings in rural contexts. In July 1275, Abbess Marina Sgouraina of the convent of Megalos Taxiarches, along with her community of five nuns, donated a parcel of dry land to Abbot Ioannikios Kaloudes for the purpose of constructing a chapel. Additionally, the nuns sold a vineyard for ten *hyperpyra*,

64 Ouspenskij and Benešević, *Ta Acta της Μονής Βαζελώνος*, trans. Petropoulos, pp. 218–19, no. 60 (1275).

65 On the nun Anysia, see Ouspenskij and Benešević, *Ta Acta της Μονής Βαζελώνος*, trans. Petropoulos, pp. 241–43, no. 100 (1344). On Margarita/Makrina Kalliepopoulos, see Ouspenskij and Benešević, *Ta Acta της Μονής Βαζελώνος*, trans. Petropoulos, pp. 274–75, no. 123 (1415). On Makaria Sagmataba, see Ouspenskij and Benešević, *Ta Acta της Μονής Βαζελώνος*, trans. Petropoulos, p. 306, no. 185 (mid-fifteenth century).

66 Ouspenskij and Benešević, *Ta Acta της Μονής Βαζελώνος*, trans. Petropoulos, p. 242, no. 100 (1344); Pahlitzsch, “Zum Loskauf von griechischen Gefangenen und Sklaven,” 136.

67 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 4, pp. 86–88, no. 32 (1257).

designating the proceeds for the *lychnokaia* (λυχνokaΐαν; the lighting of lamps) and for the general support of the community's welfare.⁶⁸

In September 1304, the nun Magdalene donated a mill with year-round operations to the Monastery of John Prodromos in Serres.⁶⁹ Prior to 1318, the nun Kleptoulia endowed the Monastery of Esphigmenou with vineyards located in Krousobon (Strymon).⁷⁰ Numerous other women made similar contributions to Athonite monasteries, including nuns such as Paraskeue,⁷¹ Athanasia,⁷² and Kallinika⁷³ along with unnamed nuns from Lemnos. A notable case from 1445 involves the nun Nymphodora, who transferred her entire estate to the Monastery of Xeropotamou on the condition that she would be provided with sustenance for the remainder of her life.⁷⁴ This donation represents a clear instance of *adelphaton*—a contractual arrangement by which benefactors received lifelong support in exchange for material contributions. Such arrangements were not only vital for the subsistence of individual monks and nuns but also played a crucial role in bolstering the financial sustainability of female monastic communities.⁷⁵

The Patriarchal Register of Constantinople serves as a key source for understanding the practice of *adelphata*. One illustrative example involves the nuns of the Monastery of Evergetidos tes Sebastokratorisses, who were obliged to supply a quantity of wine to Demetrios Palaiologos Kallistos as part of the *adelphaton* arrangement for his father.⁷⁶ This obligation implies

68 Bénou, *Codex B*, pp. 21–23, no. 1 (July 1275). On the correct date of the document, see Kresten and Schaller, “Diplomatische, chronologische und textkritische Beobachtungen,” 184–91. On the monastery, see Soustal, *Makedonien, südlicher Teil*, 443–44.

69 Bénou, *Codex B*, pp. 44–45, no. 13 (1301). On the correct date of the document, see Kresten and Schaller, “Diplomatische, chronologische und textkritische Beobachtungen,” 210.

70 *Actes d'Esphigménou*, ed. Lefort, p. 108, no. 14 (1318), lines 195–97.

71 *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Guillou et al., vol. 3, p. 62, no. 136 (1355), lines 32–33.

72 *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Guillou et al., vol. 3, p. 63, no. 136 (1355), lines 81–82.

73 *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Guillou et al., vol. 3, p. 219, Appendix 18 (1415), line 30 (forged document).

74 *Actes de Xéropotamou*, ed. Bompaire, p. 216, no. 30 (1445), lines 17–23; Soustal, *Makedonien, südlicher Teil*, 503.

75 Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins*, 138–45; Magdalino, “*Adelphaton*,” 19; Euangelatou-Notara, “ΑΔΕΛΦΑΤΟΝ. ΨΥΧΙΚΟΝ,” 164–70; Laiou, “Economic Activities of Vatopedi in the Fourteenth Century,” 71–72.

76 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 430–31, no. 601 (October 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarchat*

that the nuns not only had access to wine production but also managed it at a scale sufficient to fulfill such commitments. Moreover, the evidence suggests that *adelphata* were not exclusively granted by male monasteries; female monastic communities could also both provide and receive such arrangements. Broadly defined, *adelphaton* refers to a contractual relationship wherein individuals—including nuns—made donations or endowments to monastic institutions in exchange for material support, sustenance, or a place within the monastic community. This practice reveals the intersection of spiritual motives and pragmatic concerns within the economic structures of Byzantine monasticism.

One such example is the case of Amarantina, who paid one hundred *hyperpyra* to the Mangana Monastery—an amount consistent with typical *adelphaton* arrangements in the fourteenth century.⁷⁷ Similarly, the nun Sikile held *adelphata* at the Monastery of St. Demetrios of the Palaiologoi.⁷⁸ This case underscores the role of legal proxies, or *epitropoi*, in representing *adelphataria* (recipient of *adelphaton*).⁷⁹ For instance, in January 1400, the *protonotarios* and hymnographer George Eugenikos received an *adelphaton* consisting of twenty *metres* of wine and ten *hyperpyra*, followed by an additional ten *hyperpyra* in the summer of the same year. A comparable arrangement is documented in the Lincoln College *typikon*, which references the *adelphata* of the wife of John (later Joasaph) Palaiologos Angelos Branas, acquired in exchange for a vineyard. These examples illustrate the transactional nature of *adelphata*, often involving land or monetary contributions in return for long-term material support.⁸⁰

In these cases, the nuns held *adelphata* as *exomonitai* (non-members of the monastery), entitling them to material support without full integration into the monastic community. In contrast, Theognosia Mauriane possessed

de Constantinople, no. 3161; Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantine*, 184; Talbot, "Old Age in Byzantium," 276–77.

77 Konidares, *Νομική θεώρηση τῶν μοναστηριακῶν τυπικῶν*, 59.

78 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 325–26, no. 535 (January 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3091.

79 Cf. Konidares and Manaphes, "Ἐπιτελεύτιος βούλῃσις καὶ διδασκαλία τοῦ οἰκουμενικοῦ πατριάρχου Ματθαίου Α΄," p. 491, line 732, and p. 492, line 743; Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3066; Talbot, "Testament of Matthaios I," 1648.

80 *Typicon monasterii Theotoci Bebaia Elpidos*, ed. Delehay, chap. 122, p. 84; Talbot, "Bebaia Elpis," 1557.

adelphata at the Monastery of Andrew in *Krisei*, where she served as abbess, thus holding the status of *esomonitissa* (a full member). According to the agreement she had secured with the monastery, Theognosia was permitted to bequeath one *adelphaton* upon her death. She sought to appoint a new recipient for this *adelphaton* and arranged for two individuals who lived in her cell to retain the same rights within the monastery after her death. However, Patriarch Matthew I in 1400 ruled this arrangement to be impossible. He clarified that *adelphata* were considered goods consecrated to the saint, and that beneficiaries of *adelphata* had to be nuns who remained within the monastery. If these individuals were to leave, they would forfeit their right to any benefits associated with the *adelphaton*.⁸¹

There were also male recipients of *adelphata* in nunneries, such as the father of Demetrios Palaiologos Kallistos. Serving as *ephoros* of the monastery of Evergetidos tes Sebastokratorisses, he was entitled to receive the *boutziatikon* (a customary payment).⁸² When the nuns were unable to fulfill this obligation, he was instead compensated with an *adelphaton* from the monastery.⁸³

Adelphata were often closely tied to a nunnery's wine surplus. Vineyards and rental properties—frequent sources of monastic income—encouraged a degree of entrepreneurial activity. By around 1400, many documents explicitly reference the possession of vineyards or gardens, suggesting that such assets were significant components of a nunnery's economy.⁸⁴ The cultivation and management of these properties typically required the hiring of

81 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 353–54, no. 552 (1400); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 3107.

82 The *boutziatikon* was a tax on wine production. See Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 379–80, no. 567 (August 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 3124.

83 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 430–31, no. 601 (October 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 3161; Macrides, "The Transmission of Property in the Patriarchal Register," 179–88; Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantine*, 184.

84 Gardens could be a profitable business producing a high income. Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 368–69, no. 559 (March 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 3115. Flowers, and especially roses, could be sold to perfumeries (*myrepsika ergasteria*). Therefore, the presence of nunneries close to the market places of Constantinople is not a coincidence. On the other hand, thorny rose hedges were a natural boundary preventing intruders in a land property.

labourers, indicating that even contemplative communities were engaged in practical economic management.⁸⁵

In other cases, nunneries relied on their *paroikoi* for both labour and income. A fiscal reassessment (*apographe kai apokatastasis*) conducted in 1302 provides insight into the economic structure of the female nunnery of Kantakouzene in the theme of Thessaloniki. The assessor, Demetrios Apelmene, confirmed that the assigned *paroikoi* were obligated to fulfill their customary labour duties for the convent. Despite these periodic corvées, the nunnery's overall income remained modest, generating just four *hyperpyra* annually, along with limited in-kind revenues, such as wine and cheese.⁸⁶

In addition to vineyards and gardens, nunneries also generated income through rental properties and workshops. A notable example comes from September 1306, when Anna Doukopoulina Mesopotamitissa formalized her *protage* in a legal document, designating the nunnery of St. Anargyroi *tes Parathyrou* as her hereditary possession.⁸⁷ Among the assets endowed to the convent was an orchard located near the Hippodrome in Thessaloniki.⁸⁸ Anna transferred the rights to this property to Leon Paulos, who intended to construct houses on the land. In return for development rights, Leon agreed to pay a *telos* of six *kokkia hyperpyra* to the nunnery, derived from the rental profits generated by the houses over a period of twenty-five years.

85 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 499–501, no. 650 (May 1401); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3211; Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 501–2, no. 651 (May 1401); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3212; Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 506–9, no. 654 (June 1401); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3215.

86 *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Guillou et al., vol. 2, pp. 120–21, no. 24 (1302); Dölger, “Aus dem Wirtschaftsleben eines Frauenklosters in der byzantinischen Provinz,” 353–54. Dölger assumed that the document ended in Lavra through Ignatios Kalothetos who had brought the nunnery under his possessions. The otherwise unknown nunnery of Kantakouzene must have been located close to Athos. See Soustal, *Makedonien, südlicher Teil*, 1043–44. On the type of document “*apographe kai apokatastasis*,” see Pelekidou, *Βυζαντινή διπλωματική*, 60.

87 *Actes de Xénophon*, ed. Papachryssanthou, p. 100, no. 7 (1306); Maniate-Kokkine, “Τυναίκα καὶ “ἀνδρικά” οἰκονομικά προνόμια,” 440–44; Saradi-Mendelovici, “A Contribution to the Study of the Byzantine Notarial Formulas,” 72–73. *Protage* (*protagai* in plural) signifies a signature cross at the beginning of the document.

88 The Hippodrome quarter was located south of the port of Kassandra, at the southeast part of Thessaloniki. See Vickers, “The Hippodrome at Thessaloniki,” 25–32; Soustal, *Makedonien, südlicher Teil*, 137, 153–54.

The arrangement concerning the orchard near the Hippodrome illustrates a broader pattern in which nunneries entered into leasing and rental agreements to secure long-term revenue. Under the original terms, after the initial twenty-five-year lease, Leon Paulos was given the option to settle his obligations through a one-time payment of twelve *hyperpyra*, effectively ending his financial responsibilities to the nunnery. However, by June 1336, the situation had shifted. Irene, the widow of Leon Paulos, sold the properties—including those derived from the orchard—to the priest-monk Ignatios Syriares for fifty-eight *hyperpyra*. Significantly, this later transaction was witnessed by the abbess Hypomone, while the *ktetor* (founder or patron) was no longer mentioned. This absence suggests a possible change in the management or legal oversight of the nunnery's assets, potentially reflecting evolving administrative practices or a transition in the monastic leadership.⁸⁹

The complex legal and property history of the land originally belonging to Syrgis⁹⁰—later donated by Anna of Savoy to the nunnery of St. Anargyroi in Thessaloniki—highlights the fluid and often contested nature of property ownership in the Byzantine period. Anna's donation was a characteristic expression of aristocratic piety and patronage, aimed at supporting monastic institutions. However, the later fate of this property underscores the impact of broader political and military upheavals. From a document dated in March 1415, we hear that in 1370/71 Manuel II Palaiologos granted the same garden and courtyard to the *basilissa* Kantakouzene, possibly Isabelle of Lusignan. This act likely served a political purpose, reflecting Manuel's strategy to reinforce alliances with influential families amid instability perhaps during his travels or in preparation for a shift in imperial power dynamics.⁹¹

Following the Battle of Maritsa in 1371, the Byzantine state engaged in widespread appropriation of properties to reward military service,⁹² suggesting that this estate was likely confiscated during that period. By 1384, however, ownership had shifted once more, with the property ultimately

⁸⁹ *Actes de Xénophon*, ed. Papachryssanthou, pp. 179–83, no. 24 (1336).

⁹⁰ Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, vol. 5, no. 3074. This is Sire Guz de Lusignan, *strategos* of West, city administrator of Serres (1341–1342) and Armenia (1342–1344). See Maniate-Kokkine, “Γυναίκα και “ἀνδρική” οἰκονομικά προνόμια,” 441n135.

⁹¹ *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Guillou et al., vol. 3, pp. 163–66, no. 163 (1415); Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, vol. 5, no. 3346.

⁹² Smyrlis, “The State, The Land, and Private Property,” 66–72.

granted to the monastery of Nea Mone in Thessaloniki. This transfer reflects the dynamic redistribution of land in response to military, political, and monastic interests in the late Byzantine period.⁹³

In 1415, the nuns of the Anargyroi convent filed a legal complaint over the loss of a courtyard they claimed as theirs by virtue of Anna of Savoy's original donation. This dispute highlights the continued economic and symbolic significance of monastic property, particularly in a period of political instability and financial constraint. The case was adjudicated by the *katholikai kritai* (general judges), who acknowledged the substantial investments and improvements made by the Monastery of Nea Mone.⁹⁴ Their decision to divide the courtyard between the two institutions reflects a pragmatic compromise, aimed at preserving the economic viability of both monastic communities while recognizing their respective claims.

This ruling reflects a broader legal norm in Byzantine land law: improvements made to land often conferred certain rights to those who had invested in its development.⁹⁵ In disputes over ownership, the principle of *epidosis*—that labour and investment could justify partial or full claims to land—was frequently decisive. In the case of the Anargyroi nunnery, this legal logic was central to the decision to divide the courtyard with Nea Mone, whose contributions to the property were acknowledged by the *katholikai kritai*. Notably, the contested courtyard likely included a wider complex of income-generating assets, such as rental houses and workshops. These were essential for the financial sustainability of the nunnery, which relied heavily on revenues from urban and agricultural properties to maintain its community and fund charitable obligations.

The grant of the courtyard to Kantakouzene likely followed the confiscation of the estate by the state—a practice not uncommon in times of fiscal or military crisis. This allowed the emperor to redistribute valuable property, often as *pronoia*, to secure loyalty or reward service. Over time, the same plot was granted to successive holders, eventually passing to Nea Mone via a *chrysobull* issued in memory of John Kantakouzenos, the grandfather of Manuel II. This sequence of transfers underscores the instability

⁹³ Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres Byzantins*, 350; Laurent, “Le métropolite de Thessalonique Gabriel,” 241–55.

⁹⁴ *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Guillou et al., vol. 3, pp. 165–66, no. 163 (1415); Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium*, 556–58.

⁹⁵ Justinian, *Novellae*, ed. Schöll and Kroll, no. 64, chap. 2, p. 338.

of land tenure during the late Byzantine period, particularly in urban centres like Thessaloniki.⁹⁶

While the connection to the Kantakouzenoi is unmistakable, several links in the property's transmission remain unclear. What is evident, however, is that the courtyard—along with its associated houses and workshops—represented a consistently profitable asset. Over time, it served the financial interests of multiple parties: the St. Anargyroi nunnery, Kantakouzene, a series of lesser-known *pronoia* holders, and eventually the monastery of Nea Mone. For the nunnery of St. Anargyroi, this property was not directly managed or exploited in agricultural terms; rather, it conformed to a widespread, urban monastic practice. Instead of overseeing the site's development, the nunnery received a *telos* (rental or usage fee) from the income produced by the buildings and commercial structures that were erected there. This arrangement allowed the monastery to benefit financially without assuming the risks or responsibilities of property development.⁹⁷

The case of Xene Soultanina stands out as an intriguing departure from the usual monastic property transactions. As the widow of Alexios Soultanos Palaiologos, Xene not only inherited her husband's estate but actively petitioned for a *pronoia*—a type of land grant typically reserved for military service or aristocratic families—worth the *posotes* (lit. amount)⁹⁸ of one hundred *hyperpyra* in the region of Berroia. This *pronoia* had previously been awarded to her late husband, Alexios, and later transferred to their son, Demetrios. The fact that Xene, as a widow, was able to secure this grant for herself in 1344 underscores the fluidity and sometimes personal nature of *pronoia* transactions during the late Byzantine period.⁹⁹

The circumstances surrounding her petition have been extensively discussed.¹⁰⁰ Setting aside the remarkable case of a nun receiving a *pronoia*, I would like to focus on the sum of one hundred *hyperpyra*. This amount corresponds to what Soultanina, as a nun, could have received from a monastery

96 Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, vol. 5, no. 3180a.

97 Smyrlis, "The Management of Monastic Estates," 252.

98 On the special meaning of *posotes* in relation to *pronoia*, see Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium*, 242–51.

99 *Actes de Vatopédi*, ed. Bompaigne et al., vol. 2, p. 190, no. 89 (1344); Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, vol. 5, no. 2896. The monogram of Palaiologina is to be seen on the decoration of St. Sabas *tes Kyriotissas* in Berroia, see Papazotos, *H Bépoia kai oi naoi tēs*, 57–58.

100 Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium*, 319–20; Maniate-Kokkine, "Γυναίκα καὶ ἀνδρικὰ" οἰκονομικὰ προνόμια," 431–35.

as an *adelphaton* during this period. However, she opted to obtain a *pronoia*, likely because an *adelphaton* required the donation—and thus the loss—of a land asset to the monastery in exchange for cash or goods. In contrast, a *pronoia* grant was a hereditary asset that she could later dispose of at her discretion. By choosing the *pronoia*, Soultanina could pass it on to other family members and heirs, as it was considered her *gonikon* (private property). This allowed her entire family to benefit from her hereditary grant.

Private Property of Nuns

Up to this point, the general picture is that nuns were landowners who held private property and managed it according to their own discretion.¹⁰¹ While the Desert Fathers prohibited private property, the fifth Novel of Leo VI established a key principle allowing monks and nuns to own private property and freely dispose of possessions acquired after entering the monastery.¹⁰² This decision builds upon earlier legislation by Justinian, with the notable addition of provisions regarding the handling of assets acquired later.¹⁰³

In general, the *typika* express ambivalent views on private property. Some completely rejected any form of personal possession, while others imposed more moderate restrictions. The *typikon* of Neilos Damilas did not forbid nuns from having personal property but emphasized that they should not become attached to material objects.¹⁰⁴

Monks and nuns of aristocratic origin were often reluctant to renounce their landowning past. Theoleptos of Philadelphia, the spiritual father of Irene Choumnaina, foundress of the Monastery of Philanthropos-Soter, reprimanded her for her inability to detach herself from her family's affairs. He wrote: "If you cling to your dowry and retain houses and farms, and if

101 Talbot, "Personal Poverty in Byzantine Monasticism," 829–41.

102 Leo VI, *Novellae*, ed. Troianos, no. 5, pp. 54–60.

103 For the legal aspects of private property held by monks and nuns, see Konidares, *Το δίκαιον της μοναστηριακής περιουσίας*, 19–20; Konidares, *Νομική θεώρηση τῶν μοναστηριακῶν τυπικῶν*, 156–62; Simon, "Vertragliche Weitergabe des Familienvermögens in Byzanz," 183–96; Macrides, "Dowry and Inheritance in the Late Period," 89–98. Generally, see Laiou, "Family Structure and the Transmission of Property," 51–75.

104 Pétridès, "Le *typikon* de Nil Damilas," chap. 2, p. 97; Talbot, "Neilos Damilas," 1468.

any other earthly possessions remain yours, how can you say with Paul, ‘the world has been crucified to me,’ while the world lives and thrives in you?”¹⁰⁵

During the political and financial crises of the late Byzantine period, the ability to sell land and other assets—often to monastic institutions—provided nuns with a crucial source of financial security. Around 1260, the nun Giagoupaina in Trebizond sold a piece of land in St. Theodore to the Monastery of Vazelon.¹⁰⁶ In 1330, Xene Indanina Sarantene and her sister, the nun Sophrosyne Sarantene, along with their *protagai*, signed a bill of sale for private assets near Pelorygion/Strymon to the Monastery of Zographou for five hundred *hyperpyra*. This land, adjacent to Zographou’s property, was part of the dowry of their deceased sister Anna, and they acted as her representatives.¹⁰⁷ In 1326, Anysia Platyskalitissa sold two houses in Thessaloniki to the Monastery of Chilandar for forty *hyperpyra*.¹⁰⁸ In 1355, Tamar sold a vineyard of two *modioi* in Lemnos to Kakkabiotissa.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, the 1264 *praktikon* of the village of Avion on the Latin-held Island of Kephallenia records a field as belonging to the nun Mastrangelena.¹¹⁰

Epigrammatic references on sales or donations made by nuns without a connection to a specific nunnery are a common phenomenon. In some documents from Serres, portions of land are listed with names such as “the nun of Stamenare”¹¹¹ or “a portion of land from nun Blandymerine.”¹¹²

Similarly, in the Patriarchal Register, most nuns who appeared before the synodic court defended their rights to private property independently of their convents. The nun Marina, sister of Euphrosyne *tou Chytou* and owner

105 Theoleptos of Philadelphia, *Letters*, ed. Constantinides Hero, p. 78, no. 3.

106 Ouspenskij and Benešević, *Ta Acta της Μονής Βαζελώνος*, trans. Petropoulos, pp. 200–201, no. 37 (1260).

107 *Actes de Zographou*, ed. Regel et al., pp. 64–68, no. 28 (1330). See new edition Pavlikianov, *The Medieval Greek and Bulgarian Documents of the Athonite Monastery*, pp. 310–17, no. 32 (1330); Maniate-Kokkine, “Γυναίκα και ‘ἀνδρικά’ οἰκονομικά προνόμια,” 429–30, 462–63.

108 *Actes de Chilandar*, ed. Petit and Korablev, pp. 218–20, no. 106 (1326). On the transactions of immovable property in Thessaloniki, see Patlagean, “Transactions immobilières à Thessalonique,” 133–44.

109 *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Guillou et al., vol. 3, p. 61, no. 136 (1355), line 10; cf. Haldon, “Limnos, Monastic Holdings and the Byzantine State,” 161–215; Kondyli, “Tracing Monastic Economic Interests and Their Impact,” 129–50.

110 Tzannetatos, *Πρακτικόν τῆς Λατινικῆς Ἐπισκοπῆς Κεφαλληνίας*, p. 33, line 58.

111 Bénou, *Codex B*, p. 193 no. 117 (fourteenth century).

112 Bénou, *Codex B*, p. 199, no. 120 (fourteenth century), line 18.

of a house in Constantinople (1351), had her rights represented in court by her brother-in-law, George Phoster.¹¹³ In 1359, a nun named Aspietina sold a vineyard for 120 *hyperpyra* to a man named Manuel Pazykes.¹¹⁴ In another case, Magistrina versus Triphyllina, we learn that Bryennissa, a cousin of Triphyllina, became a nun at the end of her life. She left part of her possessions to the imperial Monastery of *kyra* Martha¹¹⁵—possibly the monastery where she was tonsured. Additionally, Pheronike Aspietissa also owned a vineyard.¹¹⁶

The nun Hypomone Chrysokephalina Kaukanina owned one-third of a shop at the Kynegos Gate, which she inherited from her grandson.¹¹⁷ Zenobia Phialitissa bequeathed a house in the area of Eugeniou to her grandson.¹¹⁸ In another case, the nun Petraliphina served as the administrator of her brother-in-law Maurommates' allotment. However, she neglected her duties, damaging the trees on the land and diminishing its value, ultimately leading to the abandonment of the lot.¹¹⁹

Documents of sale involving nuns also appear in Serres. In 1328, Andronikos Lypenares, his son Manuel, and his daughter Irene sold a vineyard of

113 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 3, ed. Koder et al., p. 230, no. 216 (January 1359), lines 9–30; Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 2409.

114 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 3, ed. Koder et al., p. 234, no. 217 (January 1359), lines 11–13; Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 2410.

115 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 3, ed. Koder et al., p. 256, no. 218 (November 1360), lines 81–84; Laurent, “Kyra Martha,” 296–320; Talbot, “Kyra Martha Nunnery,” 1163; Effenberg, “Die Klöster der beiden Kyra Martha,” 255–93; Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel-Istanbul*, 211–12.

116 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, p. 363, no. 557 (1400); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3113.

117 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, 358–59, no. 555 (March 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3111.

118 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, 564–65, no. 684 (December 1401); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3247.

119 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 497–99, no. 649 (May 1401); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3210; Kazhdan, “The Italian and Late Byzantine City,” 16. According to the historian Doukas, there was a tremendous lack of firewood during the siege of Constantinople by Bayezit. See Doukas, *Historia*, ed. Grecu, bk 13, ch.7, p. 79, lines 12–14; Bernicolas-Hatzopoulos, “The First Siege of Constantinople by the Ottomans,” 39–51.

one *stremma* to the nun Mariamne *tou Blakou* for eighteen *nomismata*.¹²⁰ One year later, in 1329, the same individuals sold another vineyard of one *stremma* in the same area to Mariamne.¹²¹ Additionally, in 1328, Mariamne purchased another vineyard of two *stremmata* in Kontarion, this time from Theodore Basilikiotes and his wife, Kale.¹²²

Nuns possessed not only land, houses, and vineyards but also holy icons.¹²³ From these icons (or the lands associated with them) they could generate significant profits. However, great profit often brings complications. For example, in 1316, an ecclesiastical court ruled against Marinia Euphrosyne's claim to half of the income from a wonderworking icon.¹²⁴

In many instances, nuns (whether mothers or sisters of a deceased person) defended their own rights as well as the rights of their grandchildren or nieces and nephews.¹²⁵ This is evident in the cases of Euphemia Petraliphina in April 1330¹²⁶ and Eleodora Sarantene Tzypminissa from Thessaloniki in 1348.¹²⁷ A similar situation is recorded in 1397, when the nun Hypomone

120 Bénou, *Codex B*, pp. 104–7, no. 50 (May 1328).

121 Bénou, *Codex B*, pp. 107–9, no. 51 (July 1329).

122 Bénou, *Codex B*, pp. 109–11, no. 52 (December 1328).

123 On this issue, see Oikonomides, “The Holy Icon as an Asset,” 35–44.

124 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 1, ed. Hunger and Kresten, pp. 274–78, no. 35 (April 1316); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 2064; Oikonomides, “The Holy Icon as an Asset,” 40; cf. the case of Athanasia Gabraina, Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 513–15, no. 658 (July 1401); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3219. On the case of the nun Eugenia Chrysolorina, see Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 565–66, no. 685 (28 December 1401); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3248; Oikonomides, “The Holy Icon as an Asset,” 40–41.

125 See Leo VI, *Novellae*, ed. Troianos, no. 48, pp. 174–76, which permitted the presence of a woman as a witness only in female affairs, such as childbirth. cf. *Πεῖρα sive Επιτομή νόμων*, ed. Zepos and Zepos, bk. 60, chap. 25, p. 217. On the judicial status of women see Beaucamp, “La situation juridique de la femme à Byzance,” 145–76; Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance*, vol. 1, pp. 35–45, and vol. 2, pp. 21–31; Buckler, “Women in Byzantine Law About 1100 A.D.,” 391–416. On the Medieval West, see Brundage, “Juridical Space,” 147–56.

126 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 1, ed. Hunger and Kresten, pp. 562–66, no. 100 (December 1329); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 2153; *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 1, ed. Hunger and Kresten, pp. 578–84, no. 102 (April 1330); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 2156.

127 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 2, ed. Hunger et al., pp. 412–14, no. 152 (December 1348); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 2304.

Kaloeidina sought to ensure the proper execution of her daughter's testament, as her son-in-law, Theodore Kaloeidas, appeared unable to fulfill this responsibility.¹²⁸

In each of these cases, a written will of the deceased family member is central to the discussions of the Synod, while the nuns (whether mothers or sisters) act as executors of their wishes.¹²⁹

The Poverty of Nunneries and Nuns

The struggle to maintain financial stability was a significant aspect of life in many convents, affecting both the well-being of the nuns and the functioning of their religious communities. While some affluent women and nuns could rely on their possessions as a safeguard for the future, others were compelled to sell or donate land to wealthier monasteries, including those on Mount Athos. In return, they often received an annual stipend or secure accommodation in a nunnery for the remainder of their lives.

The nun Eupraxia Sabentzina owned a house in Constantinople, which she donated to the Monastery of Lavra around 1342.¹³⁰ At the end of the thirteenth century, the widow Zoe Syropoulina explained her decision to sell her ancestral property—including three vineyards and four fields—to the nunnery of Nea Petra, where she planned to take monastic vows. Syropoulina cited her desperate circumstances: she was poor, childless, homeless, and lacked sufficient food.¹³¹ Byzantine texts often portray a kind of psychological hardship that accompanied physical poverty and deprivation, which frequently drove women to seek refuge or support from powerful individuals or institutions, such as monasteries and nunneries.

Financial hardship also led nuns and their families to mortgage property in exchange for loans. The nun Eulogia Petzikopoulos and her mother,

128 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 347–52, no. 549–50 (October 1397); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, nos. 3061 and 3063.

129 The nun Martha Baropolitissa managed the money her nephew earned from the sale of his family's houses. Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 447–48, no. 613 (November 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, no. 3173. On sale transactions in Constantinople during this period, see Papagianne, "Η αγορά των ακινήτων στην Κωνσταντινούπολη," 145–55.

130 *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Guillou et al., vol. 3, p. 24, no. 123 (1342), lines 114–15.

131 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 4, pp. 394, no. 27 (1271), lines 24–27.

Martha/Melane, owned land and houses in the Paramonou Quarter of Thessaloniki. Around 1325, they secured a loan of fifty *hyperpyra* from the Monastery of Chilandar. Two years later, unable to repay the debt, Eulogia sold the mortgaged properties to the monastery for 140 *hyperpyra*—an amount that covered the cancellation of the original debt and included an additional payment of ninety gold coins.¹³²

When the risk of impoverishment became too great, nuns, monks, and even laypeople sometimes assumed control of nunneries in an effort to improve their financial standing. The nun Martha Syriana, for example, secured the *ephoreia* and *dioikesis* as well as the *ktetorikon dikaion*, of the Pausolype Monastery for the remainder of her life after making substantial improvements to the nunnery. The previous holder of these rights, the nun Kallinike, had already agreed to the arrangement. However, Syriana was obligated to repair the church and enhance the monastic properties as part of the agreement.¹³³

In another instance, the nun Theodoule Tzouroulene rebuilt a church that had fallen into disrepair. During her absence, a neighbour, Kavallarios Kontostephanos, encroached on the property and planted a vineyard on the land surrounding the church. After his expulsion, Patriarch Matthew I granted Theodoule the *ktetoreia* and *ephoreia* of the church, formally recognizing her rights over it.¹³⁴

When funds were scarce or when faced with pressure from wealthier monasteries, some nunneries resorted to selling parts of their property. The six nuns of the Taxiarchai Nunnery in the Serres region granted a piece of non-arable land to the Monastery of Prodromos for the construction of a *monydrion* dedicated to St. John Chrysostom. A few years later, they sold a vineyard to the same monastery for ten *hyperpyra* to cover their basic living expenses and lighting costs.¹³⁵

Another indicator of potential poverty within monastic institutions was the transformation of female monasteries into male ones, and vice versa.

132 *Actes de Chilandar*, ed. Petit and Korabiev, pp. 230–35, no. 112 (1327); Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres Byzantins*, 363, 404, and 415.

133 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 1, pp. 454–55, no. 200 (January 1365); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 2476; Stolte, “Law for Founders,” 128–29.

134 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 395–99, no. 579 (June 1400); Darrouzès, *Les registes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 3138.

135 Bénou, *Codex B*, pp. 21–23, no. 1 (July 1275).

A notable example is the male Monastery of Blachernitissa in Epiros, which was vacated by its monks to accommodate fugitive nuns, owing to an insufficient number of nunneries.¹³⁶ Similarly, a monastery in Didymoteichon, initially inhabited by monks, was converted for female use but soon fell into disrepair. The nuns were eventually relocated to other convents, prompting the *ktetor*—who was concerned about further financial deterioration—to petition the Patriarch and the Synod for permission to restore the monastery to its original male status.¹³⁷

Female monastic communities were often more susceptible to poverty than their male counterparts due to their limited engagement with the external world. The restricted mobility of nuns impeded their ability to manage and oversee monastic properties effectively. Additionally, their comparatively narrower social networks curtailed access to influential benefactors and consistent financial support. These vulnerabilities were well understood by the Byzantines, who sought to mitigate them through charitable donations.

In his 1325 testament, Theodore Sarantenos, founder of the Prodomos Monastery in Berroia, stipulated that a substantial annual provision of grain and wine be allocated to impoverished female monastic communities. His wife, Eudokia Angelina Komnene, was similarly noted for her charitable activities, including the distribution of food and clothing to the poor in Berroia.¹³⁸ Likewise, the monk Gregory Isbes bequeathed fifty *hyperpyra* to an unnamed nun in his will.¹³⁹ The testament of Patriarch Isidore I Boucheir (r. 1347–1350) further illustrates this pattern of support: he directed that the wine and grain stores of the Great Church be divided into three portions—one for the clergy, one for impoverished nuns, and one for his assistants, both monastic and lay.¹⁴⁰

In July 1339, the nun Hypomone, widow of the *sakellarios* Mourmouras, along with her family, donated the Monastery of St. George Kryonerites—comprising 244 *modioi* of land—to the Prodomos Monastery near Serres. Documentary evidence indicates that the monastery had originally been founded by Mourmouras and his wife, who possessed the full rights

136 John Apokaukos, *Praxis on the Blachernitissa Monastery*, 17; Talbot, “Affirmative Action in the 13th Century,” 405–6.

137 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 2, ed. Hunger et al., p. 190, no. 127 (May 1340); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 2199.

138 *Actes de Vatopédi*, ed. Bompaigne et al., vol. 1, p. 358, no. 64 (1325).

139 *Actes de Docheiariou*, ed. Oikonomides, p. 207, no. 34 (1361), lines 6–8.

140 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 2, ed. Hunger et al., p. 440, no. 156 (February 1350), lines 188–94.

of a *ktetor* (τέλειαν δεσποτείαν καὶ κυριότητα).¹⁴¹ Despite the donation, the Mourmouras family retained the right to receive a *siteresion*, including provisions of food and firewood. The donation was formally ratified by the metropolitan of Serres; thus, the monastery of Kryonerites, designated as a *metochion*, was duly recorded in the official inventory of assets.¹⁴²

This charter offers valuable insight into the quantities of food and provisions deemed necessary for sustaining monastic life. A comparable testament from the fifteenth century further illuminates such practices. In 1421, George Goudeles stipulated in his will that each of the forty nuns residing in the Convent of St. Nicholas was to receive annually one *modios* of grain—approximately 322.3 to 234 kg., or roughly 650 g. per day—along with twelve *metra* of wine (with one *metron* equivalent to 10.25 litres), and firewood valued at one *hyperpyron* (corresponding to approximately 712.5 kg.).¹⁴³

George Goudeles, who was actively engaged in trade with the Genoese, provided substantial financial support to the Convent of St. Nicholas, with this support being primarily funded through the proceeds of his commercial enterprises. In addition to monetary aid, he endowed the convent with a variety of income-generating assets, including vineyards, gardens, workshops, and properties—referred to as *luoghi*¹⁴⁴—in Genoa, Constantinople, Pera, and other locations.

The financial condition of nuns and their communities is occasionally illuminated through indirect or unexpected sources. One such example is the case of the double Monastery of Athanasios, addressed in a patriarchal *sigillion* dated 1383.¹⁴⁵ This document includes an excerpt from the *typikon*, which outlines the internal organization of the monastic community, including regulations concerning diet and discipline. Although the two communities—male and female—resided in separate quarters, they shared a common abbot and operated within a unified financial framework. The nuns occupied

141 Bénou, *Codex B*, p. 282, no. 162 (1339); cf. Guillou, *Les archives de Saint-Jean-Prodrôme sur le Mont Menecee*, pp. 112–13, no. 34; Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins*, 264; Soustal, *Makedonien, südlicher Teil*, 443–44.

142 Bénou, *Codex B*, pp. 285–86, no. 163 (July 1339?), and pp. 287–88, no. 164 (July 1339?).

143 Ganchou, “L’ultime testament de Géorgios Goudélès,” p. 348, lines 28–31; Schilbach, *Byzantinische Metrologie*, 98.

144 Felloni, *Amministrazione ed etica nella Casa di San Giorgio*, 3–4.

145 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, p. 80, no. 375 (March 1383); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 2754; cf. Fusco, “L’encomio di Teoctisto Studita per Atanasio I di Costantinopoli,” p. 121, lines 16–20, chap. 14.

Table 3.5. Athanasios Double Monastery—list of properties.

Male Monastery — Properties		Value and Comments
1	Vineyards inside the monastery	2485 <i>hyperpyra</i>
2	Oil press	200 <i>hyperpyra</i>
3	The vineyard of Anapnoas and the garden which a certain Hierakina pawned. They should be divided in <i>dimoirā</i> and <i>trita</i> .	
4	The fields of St. Theodore	
5	Vineyards of St. Theodore	264 <i>hyperpyra</i>
6	Part from <i>telos</i> of Pinakidion	80 <i>hyperpyra</i> . From this amount, the nuns should have received 23. The rest was divided in <i>dimoirā</i> and <i>trita</i> .
7	The fields of the watermill in Pinakidion (?) to be divided in <i>dimoirā</i> and <i>trita</i> between monks and nuns	
8	Fields <i>tou Barangou</i> in Pinakidion	The rest—in <i>modioi tes metras</i> — of the part of the nunnery (cf. female monastery, no. 8, below).
9	3 horses used at the watermills in Pinakidion (?)	
10	3 <i>zeugaria</i>	
11	Vineyards of Pinakidion	
12	Fields in Mitylene	
Female Monastery — Properties		Value and Comments
1	Vineyards near the monastery and a vineyard together with fields by the Golden Gate ¹⁴⁶	1076 <i>hyperpyra</i>
2	Bakery in Constantinople	100 <i>hyperpyra</i>
3	The vineyard of Anapnoas and the garden pawned to a certain Hierakina which should be divided in <i>dimoirā</i> und <i>trita</i>	
4	The fields of Monasteriotes ¹⁴⁷	
5	The vineyards of Monasteriotes	240 <i>hyperpyra</i> . Like the monks, they received 132 <i>hyperpyra</i> , while 108 <i>hyperpyra</i> were paid to them due to a debt
6	A watermill in Pinakidion (?)	Rent: 40 <i>hyperpyra</i>
7	The fields of the watermill were divided in <i>dimoirā</i> and <i>trita</i> (cf. male monastery, no. 7, above)	
8	The field <i>tou Barangou</i> in Pinakidion	78 <i>modioi tes metras</i>
9	A horse used at the watermill	
10	A <i>zeugarion</i>	
11	Buildings in <i>Mikra Pyle</i> in Constantinople ¹⁴⁸	
12	A field in Rhaidestos	

146 On Golden Gate, see Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel-Istanbul*, 54–71.

147 Monasteriotes may have been the father-in-law of a certain Sebasteianos and *oikeios* of the emperor; *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 2, ed. Hunger et al., pp. 390–99, no. 150 (October 1348); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 2300.

148 Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, 297.

a subordinate position, relying on the monks for the management and provision of their material needs.¹⁴⁹

Difficulties emerged soon after the death of Athanasios. The monks, tasked with sustaining both their own community and the nuns, became overburdened, which led to a decline in their productivity and overall economic output. As a result, the monastery faced significant financial hardship. In response, Neilos Kerameus and the Synod in 1383 resolved to formally separate the two communities and to divide their assets accordingly.¹⁵⁰

Given that the monastic community of men was significantly larger than that of the women, the division of landholdings followed the principle of a two-to-one ratio, in accordance with Justinianic law. While vineyards and other fixed assets were to be apportioned based on their assessed value, arable land was divided using the traditional categories of *dimoira* (two-thirds) and *trita* (one-third), reflecting the demographic and administrative structure of the monastery (see Table 3.5).¹⁵¹

The document begins by enumerating the possessions located closest to the monastery, gradually progressing to those situated farther afield. It first references the vineyards within the monastic enclosure, followed by the workshops in Constantinople, which included an oil press and a bakery. The inventory then turns to more distant holdings, concluding with properties in Mytilene and Rhaidestos. The final section addresses and resolves the monastery's outstanding debts. Among these properties, the vineyard of Anapnoas—likely situated in Thrace, outside Constantinople—is of particular note.¹⁵² In September 1394, the nun Eugenia appears to have sold this vineyard to her son, the priest-monk Theophanes.¹⁵³ Similarly, the estate of Pinakidion and its associated holdings—including land, water mills, vineyards, horses, and *zeugaria* (yoke teams or plough oxen)—were also located beyond the city limits.¹⁵⁴

149 The expression *κοινήν δὲ καὶ τὴν τροφήν* should not be understood as common meals but much more as a common diet. For a relevant discussion in the monastery of Christos Philanthropos, see Trone, “A Constantinopolitan Double Monastery of the Fourteenth Century,” 86; Gregoropoulos, *Θεολήπτου Φιλαδελφείας τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ*, 95–108.

150 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, pp. 80–83, no. 375 (March 1383); Darrouzès, *Les regestes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 2754; Booramra, *Church Reform in the Late Byzantine Empire*, 166.

151 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, p. 82, no. 375 (March 1383).

152 Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantine*, 512.

153 Hunger, “Zwei byzantinische Urkunden der späten Palaiologenzeit,” p. 305, lines 5–6, no. 2.

154 Eustathios of Thessalonike, “Adversus implacabilitatis accusationem,” p. 111,

Closer to the city was the vineyard of St. Theodoros. The arable land in Mytilene was linked to the *metochion* of St. Theophano, which belonged to the Monastery of Athanasios on the island.¹⁵⁵ If this identification is correct, it implies that the synodic ruling of 1331—mandating the return of the *metochion* to the Metropolis of Methymna—was never fully implemented. The bulk of the monastery's debt, amounting to 250 *hyperpyra*, was assigned to the monks, while the nuns were responsible for only 24.5 *hyperpyra*.¹⁵⁶

According to the synodic decree, the monks received assets valued at three thousand *hyperpyra*, whereas the nuns were allotted property worth two thousand *hyperpyra*. As I have argued in a previous article, the Monastery of Athanasios was actively engaged in Black Sea trade, a factor that may have contributed to both its indebtedness and the subsequent tensions between the male and female communities.¹⁵⁷

Preliminary Conclusions

In conclusion, nunneries in the late Byzantine period were markedly more susceptible to poverty than male monasteries. The few that attained relative wealth were typically established by members of the aristocracy, the imperial family, or, in later periods, affluent merchants, such as George Goudeles. Unlike many male institutions, female monasteries rarely succeeded in becoming significant landowners—a limitation that curtailed their social influence and institutional power. This pattern was also reflected in the lives of individual nuns. Wealthy women who entered monastic life often retained ownership of their personal assets, including dowries and family estates.¹⁵⁸ Rather than dedicating these resources to the communal benefit of their convents, they frequently preserved them for personal or familial use. Consequently, transactions involving nuns, nunneries, or monasteries were often shaped more by economic considerations than by purely spiritual motivations.

lines 74–75, no. 14; Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantine*, 516.

155 *Patriarchal Register*, vol. 1, ed. Hunger and Kresten, p. 608, no. 106 (April 1331), lines 30–31; Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 2164.

156 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, vol. 2, p. 83, no. 375 (March 1383); Darrouzès, *Les registres des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, no. 2754.

157 Mitsiou, “Das Doppelkloster des Patriarchen Athanasios I,” 87–106.

158 Laiou, “The Role of Women in Byzantine Society,” 238–39.