

# Sacred Dedication in Byzantine Imperial Finance\*

— Maria's bequest and Iveron monastery —

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## *I. Documents preserved in Iveron monastery*

In this short essay we would like to point out some characteristics of private monastic donation in the Byzantine Empire, and, to the extent that the documents allow, consider some cultural features of this society. The focus is on a particular case of sacred dedication, mainly through surveying some relevant manuscripts drafted at the end of the 11th century, and still preserved in the Athonite monastery of Iveron<sup>1</sup>.

Iveron was supposedly one of the best archives of the day, having preserved many varieties of manuscripts in Greek, Georgian, etc.<sup>2</sup> Even today there is a considerable bulk of documents concerning the formation of monastic estates, in addition to splendid Gospels, Liturgies, Hagiographies, the Tetrabiblos of Ptolemy, and so on. This monastery can therefore be regarded as one of the best for retracing its chronological development. It is generally supposed that monastic institutions flourished from the second half of the 11th century onward. It is noteworthy that monastic documents began to increase greatly in this

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1 The monastery of Iveron was dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin (so-called "Koimisis" "κοιμησις"). It ranks third in the hierarchy of Mt. Athos, after Lavra and Vatopedi. It was founded by Ioannis Tornikios and the Iberians (Georgians) Georgios and Euthymios in the last quarter of the 10th century A.D. The Palaiologoi, the princess of Iberia and the Serb tzar Stephen Dusan all endowed the monastery with new buildings. It was also given support by many of the patriarchs, mainly during the Ottoman occupation. The origin of its name can be traced back to ancient Greek, referring to the region of Georgia, the northern land of Caucasia. This old Christian state was an alliance of Byzantines confronting Arabs in the 10th to 11th century.

2 Lambros enumerated 1386 manuscripts written in Greek. Lambros, Spyridonos P., *Catalog of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos*. Vol. 2. Cambridge, 1900. p. 1-279. There are many manuscripts in other languages such as Georgian and Serbian.

period<sup>3</sup>. Such documents allow us to discern a good deal about the realities of monastic life.

We will first consider the institutional situation of such dedication to Iveron in relation to the imperial administrative system. We pick up here a series of documents consisting of two testaments, a document for dedication and some official papers (Table 1). These have already been surveyed by Dr. Jacques Lefort and other French and Greek editors<sup>4</sup>. Though we have

Table 1 Documents related to Maria's donation

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	Preserved in the Archive of Iveron Monastery at Athos. No.: given in <i>Actes d'Iviron</i> , II. ed. J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, D. Papachryssanthou, V. Kravari. [Archives de l'Athos, XVI] Paris, 1990
No. 44	"Testament of Symbatios Pakourianos" 23 January, 1090 (13th indication, A.M. 6598) Parchment (785 × 672 mm) copy made in 1112
No. 47	"Testament of Maria (Kale Diabatena)" 4 November, 1098 (7th indication, A.M. 6607) Parchment (900 × 622 mm) original
No. 48	"Extract of the imperial fiscal register, accompanied by the signature of cartophylax (officer for the maintenance of the fiscal register) Niketas Anzas" Without date of issue (maybe between Dec. 1098 and Dec. 1103) Parchment (860 × 580 mm) original
No. 51	"Praktikon issued by two fiscal officers by ordinance of Sebastos John Comnenos" December, 1103 (12th indication, A.M. 6612) 4 sheets of paper [1940 (403 + 511 + 506 + 520) × 354 mm] original (in bad condition)

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3 They have been investigated in such monographs as the following: Dölger, F., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung, besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts*. 1927; Ostrogorskij, G., *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine*. Bruxelles, 1954; Lemerle, Paul, *Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance*, in *Revue Historique* 219 (1958) (Revised ed. *The Agrarian History of Byzantium from the Origins to the Twelfth Century*, tr. by G. Mac Niocaill, Galway, 1979.); Kazhdan, A.P., *Derevnja i gorod v Vizantii IX-X vv.* Moscow, 1960. Most related manuscripts concerned the financial privileges of ecclesiastical institutions. The emergence of such documents has been supposed to represent a sort of social change, that is, feudalization. The monographs mentioned above are still valuable from the viewpoint of historiography. The relevant question is now discussed in the context of aristocracy, e.g., Morris, Rosemary, *The Byzantine aristocracy and the monasteries*, in Angold, Michael, *The Byzantine aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, Oxford, 1984, p. 112-137.

4 *Actes d'Iviron I-IV* ed. J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, D. Papachryssanthou, V. Kravari, avec la collaboration de H. Métrévélis. [Archives de l'Athos, XIV, XVI, XVIII, XIX] Paris, 1985, 1990, 1994, 1995. Some of them were first revised by F. Dölger. Dölger, Franz, *Aus den Schatzkammern des heiligen Berges*, München, 1948; id., *Sechs byzantinische Praktika des 14. Jahrhunderts für das Athoskloster Iveron*, München, 1949.

of course consulted their results, we intend here to approach the matter from the constitutional, not the diplomatic, point of view.

## *II. Maria's Donation to Iveron*

As mentioned above, the relevant manuscripts are preserved in the archive of Iveron Monastery, which contains other similar documents belonging to each period. Many of these documents concern the property of this monastery, as might be expected, and indeed most of them are related to the rights of Iveron's landed properties. Those we would like to consider here also concern the alienation of land, as performed by a nun named Maria.

### *1. Donator Symbatios Pakourianos and Maria Basilakina*

The document, made of parchment, is still preserved in very good condition (Table 2). It was issued on 4th November 1098. The dedicator was a nun named Maria, a widow bearing the original secular name of Kale. When she drafted her testament she was in Constantinople, dwelling still in her own vast house (oikos). She was in fact on her deathbed, which might be the reason she decided to make the testament. According to the text, she wished to leave her estates and possessions well arranged (see the preamble in Table 2).

Table 2 Contents of Maria Basilakina's Testament (4 November, 1094)

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lines 1-3	Incipit. "For all people, especially for those who decided to live in religious piety, it is indeed natural to reflect on their own death. Accordingly, I, a daughter of the late Kouloparates Basirakios Diabatenos and his wife, now a nun, Xena, wish to make a testament in a sound mind, lest my own affairs should be left in disorder, although my mortal body is now waning."
lines 3-21	Donator's retrospect (on her life with her husband, details of her husband's bequest and its disposal)
lines 21-26	Assignment of bequest to relatives.
lines 26-47	Assignment of bequest to familiars (monks, 28 domestics).
lines 47-52	Arrangement for the residuum which might remain at her death.
lines 52-55	Designation about her own burial.
lines 55-69	Nomination of five persons (3 relatives, 2 monks) as executors of the testament. Entreaty to them.
lines 69-71	Affirmation by the notary (in charge of making out the testament) and by 7 attestors (5 priests, including 2 eunuchs, 1 clergy man, 1 judge/tabullarios). The date of issue of testament [4 November 1098 (7th indication, A.M. 6607) November 1094].
lines 72-73	Authorization by financial officer Niketas Xiphilinos with his signature.

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—in *Actes d'Iveron II*. ed. J. Lefort et al. [Archives de l'Athos, XVI] Paris, 1990. No. 47—

Maria was of noble Armenian origin. Her father, the late Basirakios Diabatenos, had been a military commander of the Byzantine Army and was endowed with the imperial dignity “kouropalates”, the 7th in the Byzantine order of dignities<sup>5</sup>. Following her father’s advice, Maria had married a Georgian commander Symbatios Pakourianos, who also bore the same dignity “kouropalates”. Symbatios was supposedly a good commander. He seems to have served Emperor Alexis I (1081-1118) so ardently that he was rewarded by him with the vast estate of Soudaga, which was situated in Thracia, Theme of Macedonia. He had, however, died before January 1093 “still in the flower”. Therefore, when Maria made her testament, almost five years had passed after Symbatios’ death. The period of their marriage was, according to Maria’s expression, not long. They had no children. Maria spent her remaining days as a nun, though still in her house in Constantinople.

When Symbatios died, Maria might have executed her husband’s will with the help of Symbatios’ half-brother Sergios, who also bore the imperial dignity Magistros. Not long after Symbatios’ death, Maria took her husband’s testament<sup>6</sup> to the bureau of “Genikon”, an imperial Treasury or office dealing with financial administration. In the bureau, an officary named Georgios Nikaeos, κριτος τοῦ βήλου, with dignity of protoproedros, accepted this declaration of private asset disposal, then authorized its validity and Maria’s right as heir. Georgios Nikaeos then ordered a copy to be made.

In Maria’s testament, we can thus retrace vividly the story of the execution of Symbatios’ will. According to the text, she, though in mourning, carried out the details of her husband’s will with the help of her brother-in-law Sergios. Symbatios had wished to be buried in Iveron Monastery. She had this done, endowing 7 litrai of gold (= 2286.13g) to the Monastery in exchange for a receipt. Other bequests were also made to various people, such as relatives including the co-executor Sergios and over twenty servants including several slaves. As a result, “there is no remaining asset to be divided”, and Maria “is in no anxiety for reporting to her husband about it at the Day of Last Judgment”.

Maria’s seems a typical example of Byzantine testament. It gives us certain detailed information about the estates and properties left to her, as well as her final disposal of them. She designated each allotment by her own will. The addressees were firstly both relatives of her own and of Symbatios’ parentage. Also some monks in Constantinople and 28 servants are included there, of whom twelve were females.

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5 Kouroparates (32 litrai) was established by Alexis I. According to J. Cl. Cheynet, the series of dignities are as follows: sebastokourator, kaisar, sebastos, protonobelissimos, nobelissimos, protokouroparates, then kouroparates (32 litrai), protoproedros (30 litrai), proedros (28 litrai), magistros (16 litrai) and so forth. Cf. Cheynet, Jean Claude, Dévaluation des dignités et dévaluation monétaire dans la seconde moitié du XIe siècle. *Byzantion* 53 (1983) p. 453-477. An annual official pension, “roga”, was supposedly paid, the assumed figures of which are indicated in parentheses. For ranks above protokouroparates, however, no concrete figures can be presumed.

6 Symbatios had made bequests to his relatives and his “men” (who served him in his house) before his death, and left the remainder to his wife. This testament of Symbatios was issued on 23 January 1090 in Constantinople. It bears the signatures of 7 attestors, including 6 priests. It was preserved by his wife.

She had been left a large legacy by her husband. Besides a vast house in Constantinople and an estate in Macedonia, we can enumerate over 30 items, such as money, various treasures, valuable clothes, etc. Their house was so magnificent that it was equipped with a private oratory. In the list of estates was included Radolibos.

Maria appointed the disposal of all these after her own death. And, above all, she donated the estate of Radolibos to Iveron Monastery. In the testament, she began as follows at the head of the endowment part:

“Mourning the death of my husband Symbatios, and wishing that he should be commemorated perpetually, I would like to donate our estate of Radolibos to Iveron Monastery, in order that the soul of my husband might be saved, as well as that I myself might be excused from my sins.”

She wished that 2 icons, 1 silver cross, and a pair of candlesticks should be laid on Symbatios' tomb, then prescribed that “monks of Iveron would possess the estate (Radolibos) and receive its annual revenues”. She then stipulated that 100 modioi (ca. 853 kg) of wheat, 10 sheep and 100 metra (ca. 852 kg) of wine should be used annually in memory of Symbatios, as well as the same materials for herself. This provision would be carried out by the monks of Iveron under the supervision of the seven executors appointed in the testament. If it is neglected, the executors are requested to step in. The monks had no right to sell or exchange Radolibos. Maria desired that this estate would continue serving Iveron perpetuity.

This principal item in Maria's testament was this donation to Iveron Monastery. The domain was located in the Theme of Macedonia, at the foot of Mount Pangaion. There still exists a village bearing the same name, which is of Slavic origin. This suggests that Slavs might have immigrated there during the 7th and 8th centuries. At the turn of the 11th century, this region was incorporated into the tax-district of Boleron-Strymon, as well as into the diocese of Zabaltia. It is possible to calculate the dimensions of this domain of Radolibos, thanks to the data given by document no. 51. The latter is a Praktikon, that is, an official extract from a register which listed manorial details. From this, we can suppose that this manorial village had an area of 2000 ha (20 sq. km.), of which arable land occupied 600 ha (6 sq. km.), while there appear to have been 122 tenant farmers<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. *Individuals referred to in the document*

The testaments of both Symbatios and Maria mention the names of slave servants, Maria's in particular giving them concretely; they include Touganos, Charatzas, Solimas, etc., which

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<sup>7</sup> Lefort, J., Une grande fortune foncière aux Xe-XIIIe siècles: les biens du monastère d'Iveron. in *Structures féodales et féodalisme dans l'Occident méditerranéen (Xe-XIIIe siècles)*. Paris, 1980. p. 727-742; id., Le cadastre de Radolibos (1103) *Travaux et Mémoire* 8 (1981) p. 269-313.

coincide with the names of Patzinaks or Turks<sup>8</sup>. J. Lefort and other editors of these documents say that this was a result of the victory over Patzinaks in 1091.

Both documents also offer some information on their relatives. A list appears in Table 3. Symbatios' kin are not well attested, with only two individuals being mentioned: his half-brother Sergios as co-executor of the testament, and his son Belkonas as one of the legatees. To this young nephew, Maria allotted a riding-saddle made of gold together with several precious clothes.

Table 3 Relatives shown in Testaments of Symbatios and Maria

Name	Relationship	Imperial Dignity	Notes
Symbatios	Husband	Kouroparates	Brother Sabas
Kale	Wife	Kouroparatesssa	Sister Maria
Basilakios Diabatenos	Kale's father	Kouroparates	
Zoe Diabatena	Kale's mother	Kouroparatesssa	Sister Xene
Sergios Pakourianos	Symbatios' half brother	Magistros (later Proedros)	
Belkonas Pakourianos	Sergios' son (Symbatios' nephew)		
Niketas Diabatenos	Kale's brother	Proedros	
Basilakis Diabatenos	Niketas's son (Kales' nephew)		
Philaretos Diabatenos	Kale's brother		
Maria Diabatena	Kale's sister	Proedrissa	Marriage with a Proedros
Eudocia Diabatena	Kale's sister	Proedrissa	Marriage with a Proedros
Irene Diabatena	Kale's sister		Became nun
Leon Diabatenos	Kale's cousin	Protovestēs	

The Pakourianos family was, however, relatively well known in Byzantine society. We can make a list of them belonging to the period from the 11th to the 13th century. For instance, Gregorios, who died in 1086, was well known as an excellent military commander<sup>9</sup>. Several sources tell us that this Gregorios achieved many triumphs over Seljuk-Turks and Normans, and fell in battle against the Patzinaks. We reconfirm here that they were Georgians.

On the other hand, many more members of the Diabatenos family are mentioned. Of course,

<sup>8</sup> Maria's servants were left by Symbatios. Among them were several "armed" freemen liberated at the very time when Symbatios died. Their names are found in G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, II. (Berlin, 1958, rpt. Leyde, 1983). Touganos (id., p. 330), Charatzas (id., p. 153), Solimas (id, p. 286), etc.

<sup>9</sup> Lemerle has investigated the typikon issued by G. Pakourianos. Lemerle, Paul, *Cinq Études sur le XIe siècle byzantin*, Paris, 1977, p. 160-161.

they were of Maria's parentage and, ethnically speaking, Armenians. Although they were referred to only as legates in our documents, some of them are mentioned also in other sources. Leon Diabatenos is a representative example. He left some indications of a brilliant career, as dux (a sort of governor) of Edessa, then as procurator of Messenbria (a city facing the Black Sea, now in Bulgaria). Maria left him one of her domains named "Soudaga", which is located in Macedonia. It had supposedly been granted to Symbatios by the Emperor Alexis I (as can be inferred from Symbatios' Testament).

### III. Authorized Donation

It is an intriguing fact that we cannot find any reference to imperial tax in Maria's testament. There is no suggestion of it, in contrast with all the details of cereals and livestock. What should we think of this? The key to the problem is to be found in two officaries.

Even before the village of Radolibos was donated to Iveron Monastery, this private action had been authorized by a financial officer (document no. 48). The manuscript is an extract from the imperial financial register (codix). Even though undated, this copy can be estimated to have been delivered after December 1098 (and before December 1103). It is accompanied, at the bottom, by the signature of the cartophylax Niketas Anzas<sup>10</sup>. The document contains data about the village and peasantry. We can find here such information as the limits of the village (lines 1-11), a history of taxation levied on the land (lines 11-12), an imperial declaration about cession of tax to Maria (lines 13-14)<sup>11</sup>, and lastly the details of 13 tenants (lines 15-21). The total amount of tax levied on Radolibos farmers was  $9 + 34/48$  nomismata. 10 of them are required to pay  $43/48$  nomismata, and one to pay  $26/48$  nomismata. The remaining 2 peasants are allotted  $4/48$  nomismata. The sum is  $9 + 32/48$  nomismata, quite close to the allotted figure of  $9 + 34/48$  nomismata.

Briefly speaking, this document conveys the devolution of the imperial right of taxation to Maria. The procedure was reportedly carried out by the authority of Alexis I, who issued two imperial decrees (one chrysobull and one pittakion). The peasantry list enumerates tenant farmers' names with those of parents and tax dues. The peasant households had their respective fiscal dues. This procedure of devolution was recognized as an official formula. We can find it in the Treatise of Taxation, which had supposedly been compiled in the 10th century. The treatise calls it "ekphonoumenon logismon"<sup>12</sup>. This formula is found also in lines 13-14 of our manuscript.

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10 χαρτουλάριος τοῦ γενικοῦ τῆς δόσεως. This was the officer in charge of maintaining the financial register. cf. Oikonomidès, N., *Les listes de présence byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*. Paris, 1971, p. 313-319.

11 These imperial edicts are now lost. Cf. Dölger, F., *Regesten der kaiserurkunden der oströmischen Reiches*. 2. Teil. 2. Aufl. München, 1995, p. 150. no. 1210a, 1210b.

12 Dölger, F., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung, besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts*, 1927, p. 117.

Byzantine finance had adopted proportional tax for landed properties. It can be assumed to have emerged at the beginning of the 9th century<sup>13</sup>. The rate of taxation of the day might have been 4.166%, that is, 1 keration to 1 nomisma (24 keratia). This system was based on a register which was to be revised periodically. In this register there seems to have been detailed information on all cultivable land. Document no. 48 is certainly an extract from the register.

### 1. Radolibos noted in a praktikon

In December 1103, after Maria's death, a praktikon was issued by the ordinance of Alexis I (no. 51). This document, consisting of 4 sheets of paper, contains the text of the imperial order, a list of 122 tenant farmers (paroikoi) with their parents' names and their means of production. The praktikon is an official specification of each particular private estate made by Imperial fiscal inspectors (apographos/anagrapheus). It might be said to be the equivalent of the Western European "Polyptych", which was frequently made in the early Middle Ages. Generally speaking, Byzantine plural praktika emerged from the second half of the 11th century, for the purpose of inspection of private estates. It seems that grand landed properties expanded from this period in Byzantine society, so the emergence of the praktikon might coincide with this expansion of such private domains<sup>14</sup>. Our example is certainly one of the earliest of this type of document. Though these 4 sheets are in bad condition, most of the text is fortunately legible.

There were not a few peasants in this village. The document counts 122 households. As mentioned above, it enumerates householders' personal names with their parents' as well as their economic situations. The latter are given in terms of their fiscal status, which was represented by their methods of cultivation, for instance, owning a pair of oxen (ζεευγάτος), or only one (βοιδάτος), one ass (όνικάτος), or no beast (άκτῆμων). This mode of indicating peasant status is supposed to be typical of this sort of document, which is in itself interesting. The quantity of ground-breaking power may represent the extent of their holdings.

Document no. 51 thus conveys such intriguing information on tenants. However, a very significant point here is that there are now 122 households: this represents a tenfold increase in the number of peasants during less than five years. Why did 12 households swell to 122? The reason might be that the village of Radolibos was earlier separated into two parts<sup>15</sup>. We

13 It was supposedly established during the reign of Nicephore I (802-811). Cf. Oikonomidès, Nicolas, *Fiscalité et exemption fiscale à Byzance (IXe-XIe siècle)*, Athènes, 1996. p. 26 et passim. This was a new system, instead of the old one which had operated from the 4th century.

14 Dölger, Beiträge; Ostrogorskij, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine*, Bruxelles, 1954; Lemerle, Paul, Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance. *Revue Historique* 219 (1958) (*The Agrarian History of Byzantium.*); Kazhdan, A.P., *Derevnja i gorod v Vizantii IX-X vv.* Moscow, 1960, etc.

15 This point of view was first put forward by Lemerle. Lemerle, P., *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*, p. 205. Lefort followed his master. *Actes d'Iviron*, II, p. 186; Lefort, *Une grande fortune foncière*, p. 736; id. *Le cadastre de Radolibos (1103), les géomètres et leurs mathématiques*, *Travaux et Mémoire* 8 (1981), p. 272. On the other hand, Oikonomides, co-editor of this manuscript, tends to identify the estate Maria bestowed to Iveron with the village noted in the fiscal extract (no. 48), and insists that the increase of peasants in Radolibos should be attributed to the improvement of land as well as patronage to tenants pursued by Iveron. Oikonomidès, *Fiscalité*, p. 194-195.



also suppose here that one portion had been “a free commune” (chorion) composed of free peasants, and the other was a private domain (proasteion) cultivated by paroikoi of Symbatios and Maria. The former is treated in our document no. 48. On the other hand, no. 51 covers the whole of the village after incorporation into the former. We can thus assume that, in no. 48, the imperial government attributed to Maria the tax rendered by those 12 free peasants toward the State. Besides, the government granted tax exemption to Maria’s domain. This reminds us again that imperial authority was omnipresent in the Byzantine Empire.

Maria had decided to bequeath her proasteion Radolibos to Iveron when her testament was drafted on 4 December 1098. Then, in December 1103, when Maria had died, Radolibos was now a domain of Iveron. While the possibility cannot be excluded that Symbatios and Maria (Kale) had some privilege of tax exemption, they might have paid their portion of land taxes. Maria perhaps petitioned for her burdens to be lifted, alongside making her own testament. This might explain the absence of any reference to tax. Emperor Alexis I might have agreed to her request and even granted her the right of receiving tax levied on the free commune (chorion). Of course, this was probably done in anticipation of the donation to Iveron.

## 2. *Parchment transmitted*

This case was surely recognized by the imperial authority.

After the donation, Iveron monastery seems to have claimed all of the relevant documents from the Genikon. The bureau accepted this demand and arranged reproduction of Symbatios’ testament. The text of his will was thus replicated in August 1112, then handed over. Georgios Nikaeos, the officer who accepted Maria’s disposal, now ἐπι τῶν κρίσεων, again authorized this recopy. He wrote in the margin that he kept all the related documents as a faithful financial officer<sup>16</sup>.

Both the original and first copy of Symbatios’ testament have now been lost. The specimen existing in Iveron is this one evidenced in 1112. On the other hand, the original of Maria’s testament is still preserved in the Monastery. It is accompanied by the signatures of seven attestors, along with the authorization of an officer named Niketas Xiphilinos, a current financial officer in 1112.

## IV. *Conclusion*

### *Ecclesiastical Institutions incorporated in the State*

As a result of this short survey, we would like to propose some ideas.

Firstly, we would like to propose that the Byzantine Empire was an ethnically integrated society, in which various peoples lived. Indeed, “Greeks” as an ethnic group did not represent

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16 No. 46 document, lines 5-6. Actes d’Iveron.

the unique ruling class. Other ethnic groups streamed into Constantinople, such as Armenians, Georgians, Alans, or Paphlagonians. They even turned out central governmental as well as military staff. Byzantine people might not have minded seriously which ethnic group they belonged to. They seem to have lived together, indifferent to their ethnicity, and to have married each other, as in the case of Symbatios and Maria.

We may say that, in Byzantine society, there was a quite different principle in integrating people. We would like to suggest here again the important role of Orthodox belief and of the Greek language as the method of describing their doctrine. Many people made offerings to ecclesiastical institutions, an example of which we have seen in this survey. And, in my opinion, those ecclesiastical institutions played a very important part in the integration of imperial subjects. Churches and monasteries were generally given financial privileges, especially land tax exemption. Thus those institutions were integrated within the State<sup>17</sup>.

Secondly, we propose that sacred dedication in Byzantine society was under the direction of the imperial administration. In Maria's case, her action seemingly proceeded subject to official regulation. The number of monastic documents increased from the second half of the 11th century onward, a fact that has been considered to reflect the prosperity of monastic institutions<sup>18</sup>, or to represent the tendency to feudalization, on the grounds that vast lands affiliated to monasteries dropped out of the imperial finance sector<sup>19</sup>.

Byzantine society in the 11th to 12th centuries was based primarily on agrarian revenues. Imperial finance also depended mainly on taxation of land. Successive emperors, as is well known, paid attention to the socioeconomic balance among various sorts of landowners. It has long been argued that, from the 10th century onward, the so-called grand proprietors expanded their own domains, which were often exempt from fiscal burdens. Among others, ecclesiastical institutions (churches, monasteries, charitable houses) are reputed to have been the principal "feudal lords".

Our concern is primarily about the interpretation of these facts. In the present instance, private donors did not proceed in an arbitrary manner. They seem to have performed a series

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17 Each Emperor always conferred his favor on those institutions by offering financial privileges as well as by donating privately. Most of them might have erected a new one to commemorate his own deed. Financial privilege was bestowed with a special imperial document, the Chrysobull. At the end of every Chrysobull, we can find the emperor's signature saying as follows: "Devoted to the divine Christ and made by Him the Roman Emperor born in the purple, I, Johannes Tzimiskes, would sign here." (Ἰωάννης ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστός βασιλεὺς πορφυρογέννητος καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων ὁ Τζιμισκῆς.) [Athonic Typikon issued by Johannes Tzimiskes in 972] Dölger, Franz, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*, 1. Teil. München, 1924. No. 745.

18 For this development, among others, see especially Herman, E. I., *Ricerche sulle istituzioni monastiche bizantine. Typika ktetorika, caristicari e monasteri «liberi»*. *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 6 (1940) p. 293-375; Konidares, Ioannou M., *Νομικὴ θεωρησι τῶν μοναστηριακῶν τύπων*. Athens, 1984.

19 Cf. n. 3. Needless to say, there are many monographs on Byzantine feudalism. Recently the prosperity of monastic institutions has been analyzed from the viewpoint of aristocracy. As an early example, cf. Morris, Rosemary, *The Byzantine aristocracy and the monasteries*. In Angold, Michael, *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*. Oxford, 1984, p. 112-137.

of actions quite properly following the imperial prescripts. This shows that the monastic estate was not formed independently of State regulation. Even the right of taxation was granted to an individual. What this situation means is still to be examined precisely.

We should also take note of the inventory of Iveron archives. Editors have arranged 107 documents belonging to the 10th to the beginning of the 16th centuries. Thus chronologically listed, they fall into several categories. We note that 49 of them were issued by imperial authority, including Serbian tsars, and that 21 were from "Protos" in Karies or other ecclesiastical authorities. It is also remarkable that most of the 34 private documents seem to have been prepared for estate transactions. If those manuscripts were oriented towards the state or rather issued by governmental authority, their significance has to be reappraised. For the present, we have to reject the conventional opinion that there was a political and economic struggle between the State and "feudal lords", secular and ecclesiastical. At least, we doubt the existence of such "ecclesiastical lords". An interpretation should be established which adequately covers the sacred properties privileged in the State financial system. We might suggest that Byzantine dedications were made suitable, theoretically, to the will of God, and so, actually, to the imperial administration, which was supposed to be directed by Him.