This volume is the product of a Gastprofessur in Gender Studies, offered to the University by the Ministry of Culture and held by Margaret Mullett, then of Queen’s University Belfast, now of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC. It is also the result of the collaboration between Margaret Mullett, Univ-Prof. Lioba Theis of the Institute of Art History at Vienna and Michael Grünbart, then of the Institute of Byzantine Studies and now professor of Byzantine Studies at Münster. The culmination of the Gastprofessur was to be a conference on Female Founders, on female economic power in Byzantium and its neighbours.

Margaret Mullett would like to thank Johannes Koder for hosting and housing her, colleagues in both institutes and in the Institut für Byzanzforschung of the Academy, together with the Frauenpower group of women professors, for the most stimulating environment imaginable during the time of the Gastprofessur. Her especial thanks are due to Lioba Theis, the ultimate female founder, whose energy and rigour, enlightened pedagogy, and sheer imagination made the enterprise very special, and the whole Vienna experience for the Guest Professor quite magical.

We all valued encouragement from the Dean, Michael Schwarz, and the Subdean, Marianne Klemun, both of whom offered their expertise, in the medieval history of Vienna, and in sociology, at the conference and the support of other Vienna colleagues who chaired sessions. Ernst Gamillscheg and his colleagues at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek graciously made it possible for us to see manuscripts which were the product of Byzantine female founders. Galina Fingarova and Matthew Savage have been with us all the way, and both finished their doctoral theses during the organisation of the conference, no mean feat. We should like to thank the University of Vienna, namely the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies, the Institute of Art History, and the Center for Gender Equality, as well as Wien Kultur, Raiffeisen Centrobank and Wüstenrot for financial support, Reeds exhibitions, Alba Druck, the wineries of Schlumberger, Taubenschuss and Kemeter, then Vöslauer, Teekanne, Ströck Brot and Manner Wien for substantial donations in kind for the conference. Thanks also to the editorial board of the Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte for allowing us to guest-edit a volume. At the end it was Galina who saw the volume to the press, and for this we thank her.

It was no ordinary conference (Wien ist anders) in two ways. One was the enthusiasm with which the call for papers was received which has resulted in this many-authored volume; we thank all the speakers who stood at Strzygowski’s lectern in lecture room 1, especially those who gave us their papers for the volume. The other is that the organisation of the conference was part of a seminar offered in both semesters in 2007–08. Students gave papers, and the best were delivered at the conference and appear in this volume, but they also produced posters which were displayed at the conference, judged
by a panel of art historians (Sharon Gerstel, Liz James, Sophia Kalopissi and Linda Safran) on grounds of content, presentation and relevance to the issues of Female Founding: Fani Gargova, who always knew how everything worked, who set up the web and the programme, who was always there to help, and who has contributed to this volume, was also the winner of the poster competition. But the contribution of the students to the conference is what makes it different. They were amazing from the very first meetings in October to the delivery of the posters, the papers, and the conference, the fund-raising, commissioning, all the logistics, including the Schlumberger Strassenbahn, an unforgettable experience. The work and imagination of those two men and eighteen women was female founding of a remarkable kind.

In the publication stage we are very grateful to our anonymous peer reviewers, to Caroline Macé who read the French-language papers for us, to the Institute of Art History and to Stefan Junker for the index. The financial support of FWF has made it possible. A few remarks about editorial practices that we have adopted in arranging this volume are in order. We have chosen to use the spellings of names in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium. We have not achieved complete consistency across the volume as to Greek font or transliteration when citing original passages. Within an article, attention is paid to uniformity in quotations and spellings according to its author’s language (English, German, French). We have decided to compile the index in English. Almost no titles of series and periodicals are abbreviated (for exceptions see “Abbreviations”). J.-M. Spieser/E. Yota (ed.), Donations et donateurs dans le monde byzantin (Realités byzantines), Paris, 2012, reached us too late to incorporate into our volume.

The conference and volume gained significance from the environment of Vienna, and the inspiration from the fundamental research of Viennese scholarship, especially that of a woman scholar, Irmgard Hutter. We dedicate this volume to her.

Lioba Theis (University of Vienna),
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Michael Grünbart (University of Münster),
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Matthew Savage (Louisiana State University)