I seek not my own
IS THERE A FEMALE MODE OF CHARITY AND PATRONAGE?

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A widow, a married woman, an unmarried one – if they had the purse and the penchant to be charitable, to sponsor an object, an idea, an institution, would they behave differently from their husbands, deceased or alive, their fathers, brothers or sons? Is gender a useful tool in studying charity and patronage? These are questions that may appear superfluous amidst the contributions in this volume, but they are not if we want to position the results of our research within a larger framework both in the territory of those looking to reconstruct the past as well as those seeking to understand and shape the present. As a social historian who is working on late Byzantine charity I aim to do two things: first to understand the context of women and giving in our current scholarly environment and second to survey and analyze the available data from the later Byzantine period. It is easier to begin with what this article is not: it is not exhaustive, but rather eclectic in its pickings; it does not at this stage offer definitive answers, but seeks to establish a framework for further research (which, I am confident will be made much easier after the publication of this collection of essays) and suggest orders of magnitude; finally it is an attempt to piece together a body of evidence and put some basic questions to it.

The sources at our disposal largely determine the amount and quality of data at hand. Documentary sources such as testaments, donation charters and typika constitute the most fruitful type of evidence; they will be privileged over other genres. However, without the use of narrative sources such as histories and hagiography, a lot of information on the way women practised charity would be lost, and as such they will also be included in this overview. Finally, for reasons of space, I will limit my investigation to the period from the Komnenoi onwards, occasionally using older material to support a point. Also for reasons of clarity I will not refer to charitable donations or patronage performed by married couples.

I. THE SEMANTICS OF DIFFERENCE

Beyond the biological differences between the sexes should one emphasize the differences or the similarities between them? At this particular point in our cultural history it seems that difference is the dominant discourse. From the pope to pop culture, men and women are perceived and more importantly presented as essentially different.¹ If divergence is really that

¹ Pope Benedict XVI to participants in the International Convention “Woman and Man, the Humanum in Its Entirety”, promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity on the 20th anniversary of the Apostolic Letter Mulieris dignitatem, 9 February 2008: “Faced with cultural and political trends that seek to eliminate, or at least cloud and confuse, the sexual differences inscribed in human nature, considering them a cultural construct, it is necessary to
general and intrinsic, I suppose that this could be expected to apply to most areas of human behaviour – in our case also to attitudes towards and the practice of patronage and charity. To examine our current outlook on charity and gender difference is not mere pedantry: such views inform the attitudes of historians (for example) and I cannot help but think that they influence his/her outlook on the past. By debating this issue of divergence, we can expect not perhaps to resolve the question, but at least to place it in a conscious context of enquiry.

The exploration of women’s attitudes towards others forms in a way the backbone of this project. Women have been regarded as more altruistic than men, as displaying a higher level of empathy, as being more prone to help others and as having a stronger concern of care towards others. In a popular and quite influential study Carol Gilligan assumed a moral superiority of women and emphasized an almost natural female inclination towards connectedness, the care of others and nurturing. Her work has provoked quite a strong reaction from feminist scholars for being blind to the social construction of difference and thus suggesting that differences may be “fixed”, and “essentialist”.

If the question of women and attitude to others has been principally explored by psychologists the fairly recent topic of gender and charity is mainly situated in the social sciences and economics and the goals of research undertaken therein are fairly clear: to investigate gender differences in giving, to understand the underlying mechanisms and to express findings in a practical way, above all in formulating more precise ways to attract significant donations from women – in short most of the research is driven by fundraising concerns. The underlying impetus must be a belief that women are not yet as active in charity as their social and economic status would suggest. On the one hand there are seemingly deeply rooted beliefs, which may be summarized as follows: “Women are more likely to give of their time than their money; […] when they give money, they give small amounts; […] women are very parochial in their giving. […] Men have sought a ‘naming opportunity’, that is, perhaps having a building or program with their name on it. Women, on the other hand, more characteristically give to make a difference, giving to causes that tug at their heart strings and that help others.” According to a study commissioned in 1999 by the Center for Women’s Business Research entitled “Philanthropy Among Business Wom-

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2 D. J. Mesch/P. M. Rooney et al., Race and Gender Differences in Philanthropy: Indiana as a Test Case, in: New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising, 37, 2002, p. 66. I would like to thank Patrick M. Rooney, Executive Director of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, for his help in obtaining useful data.
5 See, for example, the Women’s Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu/PhilanthropicServices/WPI/.
en of Achievement” the primary giving motivations of women identified through this research were “desiring to support an issue or cause about which these women were passionate” (66 percent of respondents) and “wanting to give back to the community” (40 percent of the respondents). Also, 40 percent “did not want or need to be recognized for their philanthropy.” There is evidence that contradicts this and shows that women do make substantial gifts and do seek naming opportunities. Single women usually occupy the top of the list for donations to charity. In economic experiments one study found no difference in giving between men and women when funds and possibilities are equal – but one should be wary of over-extrapolating from idealized studies that do not reflect actual reality.

Furthermore, there is also evidence that seems to suggest that women’s giving levels tend to be lower than men’s, and that women tend to donate late in life (or arrange their gifts as bequests).

But there are reasons behind such attitudes: first and foremost women’s earning power and net worth are still lagging behind that of males, and in what has been called “the bag-lady syndrome”, women, who as a rule outlive men by several years, are concerned about a potential lowering of their financial status and as a result only make their largest donations after their death.

The evidence from contemporary studies on women and giving is, to say the least, inconclusive and the projected results of this research at times contradictory. Leaving aside what this may suggest for their methodologies and scopes, for the purpose of this study it will suffice to note the differences in charitable behaviour and activities between men and women and therefore to survey possible reflections of such divergence in the past. Moreover, it can serve as a warning about the possible answers we can obtain from our material if these had been in a way implied in the questions put to it.

II. A PURSE OF ONE’S OWN

The absolute prerequisite we need to address before scrutinizing the evidence for charity and patronage in the later Byzantine world is the material basis of women: did women own property and could they, and under which circumstances, dispose freely of it? It is telling that this topic has not been adequately explored: one would look in vain for monographs or articles devoted to it while the references to women in the recent works on Byzantine economic history are very sparse. There are two avenues to be explored here: the legal basis for women holding

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7 Cf. Oppedisano, Giving Back (cit. n. 6), pp. 176–177.
11 Mesch/Rooney/Steinberg/Denton, Effects of Race (cit. n. 9), p. 569; Hall, Gender Differences (cit. n. 8), pp. 77–78.
12 Hall, Gender Differences (cit. n. 8), pp. 78–79.
property and its manifestation on the ground, that is in actual records of women independently holding and exploiting property.

Since at least the Justinianic era women owned personal property, either in the form of dowry (as a rule, instead of inheritance)\(^\text{14}\) or any other property given to them called parapherna.\(^\text{15}\) During the marriage, although the husband could not (or only with great difficulty and as a rule only with the wife’s permission) alienate the dowry, he was still the one managing it – although she had the right to bequeath it as she wished: a clear case of usufruct versus ownership. By if widowed, the dowry returned to the woman, and she could dispose of it as she desired.\(^\text{16}\) We will see later that this concerns the vast majority of cases at our disposal. Angeliki Laiou found evidence that seemed to suggest that in the Palaiologan period the inviolable character of the dowry had been eroded or, that at least some property given by parents to a bride was not classified as dowry but as patrimony to release it from the above related limitations.\(^\text{17}\) Despite possible restrictions, however, we can safely assume that women, and especially widows who did not choose to remarry, owned property that they could dispose of freely. Charity and patronage was, of course, merely one avenue of use of such property – and, at this point, it is impossible to quantify how important it was when compared to other ways of female use of property. The next remarks should be read against such a background.\(^\text{18}\) It follows from the above that women held and used property independently. They could and did donate, sell and buy land, found monasteries, sponsor works of art and manuscripts, and dispose of their property freely in testaments.

The rich material from Mount Athos was the first (and to date the only) body of documentary sources to have been explored in tracing the topic of women and property. In a pioneering study, Laiou looked at the structure of households in the first half of the thirteenth century in Macedonia among the property of the Athonite monasteries and came up with remarkable data: around 20 percent of households were headed by widows and a further very small percentage, less than one percent, by unmarried women.\(^\text{19}\) A similar figure derives from Alice-Mary Talbot’s research on Athonite documents [up to 1996]: 16 percent concern transfers of property by women alone; 27 percent by men and women.\(^\text{20}\) One example can help to illustrate such transactions. In 1338 the formidable Theodora Kantakouzene, mother of John VI, made a substantial donation to Koutloumousiou: she begins by lamenting the fact that so far she has not given as much as she should have; she proceeds by donating a number of properties to Koutloumousiou; while she lives she demands three euchelai per year, daily mention in the monks’ prayers, one paraklesis and one liturgy for her extra per week (for which she has given extra money and live-

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\(^\text{16}\) Laiou, Role of Women (cit. n. 14), pp. 237 ff.
\(^\text{18}\) On a more general overview of foundation acts by women see the contribution by Sylvie Herl in this volume.
\(^\text{19}\) A. E. Laiou-Thomadakis, Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Social and Demographic Study, Princeton 1977, Table III 4, p. 90, and also the discussion on pp. 89ff.
stock); once she dies (as well as her son, John, the apple of her eye) the monks should double their prayers, since they will be even more necessary then. This is a transaction that concerns exclusively the two parties: Kantakouzene and the monastery. The document includes no stipulations about any provisions for others, say charitable donations to the poor to benefit the donor allegedly so anxious for redemption – and we will see that this is a fixed pattern.

I have looked at two more substantial collections of documents. The chartulary of the monastery of Lembos preserves some 181 documents from around 1081 to 1294. Around 45 of these documents refer to donations. In these there are 13 donations made by women alone (8 of which were widows, and 5 were nuns), around 10 by men and women (not necessarily couples) and 62 by men alone. The chartulary furthermore preserves some 40 documents referring to sales (mostly of land). In 11 of them (27.5 percent) women are the main signatories (and as such most probably the heads of households); in all cases the women were widows.

The data from Lembos corroborates Laiou’s findings in Macedonia: widows sell and buy land (nos. 93, 104, 111, 151) and are active in the pursuit of the financial interests of their families (no. 105).

Another chartulary, that of the monastery of St John Vazelon in the hinterland of Trebizond, preserves some 190 charters, 157 of which date to the period 1261–1453. 102 of these are land donations to the monastery for the perpetual commemoration and salvation of their donors. About 20 of them concern women donating property to the monastery – roughly 20 percent. Widows represent around half of the

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23 This is the total number of documents that refer to donations: I have excluded imperial donations (but have included one donation by an empress, no. 99), documents confirming property and such that settle disputes. In what follows I have counted instances of donation: therefore I have not counted people who are mentioned more than once regarding the same donation. As I am counting people and not documents the number may appear somewhat odd.
24 The use of the term widow needs some explanation. In most cases it is not clearly stated that a woman who signs the document (and has children) is a widow – I have assumed she is, because although in principle and according to the law a woman could use her dowry property without her husband’s consent this was a highly unusual and socially hardly accepted practice, see LAIOU, Role of Women (cit. n. 14), pp. 237–238.
25 In two instances the women were both widows and nuns: Martha Thrakesina, Irene Zagaromatina.
26 In four of these documents women appear as the main signatories and as such can be assumed to have been the heads of the respective household. On women as heads of households that included adult males cf. LAIOU–THOMADAKIS, Peasant Society (cit. n. 19), pp. 89–91.
27 This number is somewhat problematic, because in some documents (e.g. nos. 2, 6) only the men are mentioned as having donated, but in some instances further documents in the chartulary make clear that a donation was made by men and women (e.g. Theodore Garares appears alone in no. 6, but in no. 101, we learn that he donated together with his wife).
28 I have used the following edition which includes a reprint of the original one by Uspenskij and Beneševič with additions and corrections: K. K. PAPOULIDES (ed.), Τα Αcta της μονής Βαζελάνως, Thessaloniki 2007. Hereafter I will cite the number of the document.
29 17 documents concern women donating and 3 are documents in which women are the main signatories.
cases, and nuns one quarter of them. The transactions recorded in the documents do not exclusively refer to donations to the monastery, but occasionally include donations to third parties. Donors do find space to consider people they would like to benefit by their acts: in the second half of the thirteenth century, Kalana Spelianitopoulos donates property to Vazelon, to her husband, siblings, to her spiritual father, but also leaves her earrings to her servant (τὸ κορίτζιν), Irene, daughter of Lazaros (no. 118). The vast majority of the women recorded in these documents are widows and nuns (in that order), and one could safely assume that perhaps some of the latter had been widows as well (expressly recorded only in no. 123). There are three cases in which the women were possibly unmarried (nos. 17, 114, 142): no children or husbands are mentioned, but this may be a mere matter of fragmentary data.

Close relatives are included in the stipulations for the salvation of the testators’ souls, or psychika: children, husbands, siblings and parents. One can assume that if the donor had children, she would have transferred the property to them — as the people mentioned in these acts come from a rural environment and we can assume that most of them were not particularly wealthy, as to have a surplus of assets that would allow them to bequeath property both to their offspring and the monastery. We can safely assume that because there are cases where the donors specify that they had already provided dowries for their daughters (no. 123) or their dependent sisters (no. 143). Occasionally, we get a glimpse of personal stories behind the formulaic documents: In 1261, Maria Tzarchalina donates property to Vazelon as a psychikon for her parents and husband; her five sons are prisoners; were they to come back, their mother makes sure they should receive their legal share (μοίρα); if not the property will fall to the monastery. And lest we forget the “bag-lady syndrome”, here is an unnamed woman of the second half of the thirteenth century in her own dangling diction: after leaving property to children and family, she goes on: Kamasia, belonging to me, when I live, I eat it (τρώω το), but if I die, may it go to the Vazelon for my funeral.

Stray evidence can also help to strengthen the case of women donating land (and also to suggest the loss of evidence in those cases where the land was not donated to an institution whose archives have been preserved) as the following case suggests. Tamar, wife of the emir kyr Basil Giagoupes donated a vineyard to the church of St George at Belisirama in Cappadocia she had founded and recorded the act in an inscription.

While the transfer of property was practiced by women from a wider socio-economic stratum, elite women had additional means of using their property such as founding monasteries or sponsoring monuments and art.

In the period in question there is a significant number of monasteries founded or restored by women: Chora by Maria Doukaina (1077–81), Pantepoptes by Anna Dalassene (before 1087), monasteries on the Princes’ Islands by Maria of Alania (late 1080s?), Kecharitomene by Irene Doukaina (before 1110), Pantanassa by Maria of Antioch (after 1143), Lips and Anargyroi by Theodora Palaiologina (last years of the thirteenth century), Mouchliotissa by Maria Palaiologina (around 1282), Andrew en te krisei by Theodora

30 On problems defining widows see n. 24. It is quite remarkable that in most cases the (supposed) dead husband is not included in the psychika stipulations, which as a rule refer to parents, siblings and offspring.
31 No. 37 records the remarkable case of Giagoupena, a nun, buying land.
32 No. 38.
33 No. 119.
Palaiologina Kantakouzene Raoulaina (around 1284), Philanthropos by Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina (around 1307), Bebaia Elpis by Theodora Synadene (after 1300), Kyra Martha by Maria-Martha Palaiologina (early fourteenth century). I will discuss the evidence of the surviving typika for five of these foundations below, but at this point it will suffice to point out the implications of this data: elite women disposed of considerable means that enabled them to erect, restore and endow monasteries.

Turning now to other monuments, Sophia Kalopissi-Verti collected dedicatory inscriptions and donor portraits in thirteenth-century Greece. Her data yields the following results. Out of a total of 79 inscriptions and portraits 34 were commissioned by (or at least mention) men and women (43 percent), 5 mention women only (6 percent) and 40 mention men only (51 percent). As no similar study exists for any other period or region of the Byzantine empire, it will suffice to refer to a number of cases out of a large pool of data.

Funerary monuments sponsored by widows make up a large percentage of female activity in this area. Some of the most well-known examples include the funerary chapel built by the protostratorissa Maria (at that stage already the nun Martha), widow of Michael Tarchaneiotes Doukas Glabas at the Pammakaristos monastery in Constantinople in the early fourteenth century along with the commission of the epigrams that adorned it by Manuel Philes. At around the same time another widow, Theodora Doukaina Komnene Palaiologina, widow of Michael VIII restored the monastery of Lips (see below). But such monuments were of course not limited to the highest echelons of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. In 1314/15 the widow Euphrosyne Psalida completed the building and decoration of the church of Christ in Berroia. Nor was this practice limited to the Greek-speaking part of the “Byzantine Commonwealth”: in 1405/6 the widow of the Serbian despot Milica sponsored the paintings of the church at Ljubostinja.

Aristocratic ladies, however, did not need to wait for their husbands’ death to sponsor less expensive, but equally prestigious objects. In the Komnenian period we can identify the donations of icons by members of the imperial family – the icons may not have been preserved, but the epigrams commissioned to adorn them do as in the case of those by Irene-Dobrodeja,

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Rhoby, Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken (cit. n. 37), p. 273. See the contribution in this volume by Alexandra Vukovich on the activities of Milica’s daughter, Jelena Babić.
wife of Alexios Komnenos,⁴⁰ the son of John II,⁴¹ or by Maria of Antioch (PBW, Maria 103), wife of Manuel I Komnenos.⁴² We are more fortunate in having the object of such a donation preserved from the Palaiologan period. Around the middle of the fourteenth century Anna Philanthropene Kantakouzene Komnene Palaiologina Bryenissa ⁴³ donated an icon with silver revetment (now preserved at the monastery of Vatopedi): the inscription makes an allusion to the Virgin as Bebaia Elpis, which is important as Anna (under her monastic name of Xene) was the granddaughter of the foundress of the monastery of the same name in Constantinople and an important benefactress to it in 1392.⁴⁴ Further objects commissioned by women include a Psalter by the nun Theotime dated to ca. 1274 at Saint Catherine’s monastery, Mount Sinai,⁴⁵ another Psalter donated in 1346 by Anna of Savoy (now at the monastery of Iviron),⁴⁶ or a wooden cross covered in silver and gems donated by the empress Helena Dragas, wife of Manuel II, before 1448 (now at the monastery of Dionysiou).⁴⁷

Another obvious way of exploring the financial power of women (and of course also their attitudes towards charity, as we shall see later on) would be the scrutiny of testaments. A preliminary corpus of later Byzantine testaments, that is from roughly the year 1080 to 1453 amounts to 49 documents, 7 of which are by women, so far as we can tell all widows.⁴⁸ The bulk of the documents concern bequests to monasteries (Lembos near Smyrna, Timios Prodromos near Serres, Xeropotamou on Athos) as psychika; only one of the women included stipulations for charity within them: Kale-Maria Pakouriane (see below). But each of the documents includes details that add to the overall picture (and, as expected, make it harder to generalize): the nun Hypomone only gives part of her property to the monastery of St John; the bulk of her belongings was distributed to her children, and even her gift is to generate an annual donation of food to her (and after her

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death it should benefit her heirs). Anna Kyriauli-
na writes her testament on the brink of death
and has it signed in the presence of her children
so that they may not contest her donation of a
field that will pay for her funeral.

III. CHARITY

So far we have seen women use their property
in a variety of ways. It is now time to explore
one particular path that this could take, the prac-
tice of charity.

Charity took two main avenues: direct and in-
stitutional. The most straightforward way of giv-
ing would be directly to the needy. While every-
one was called to do so (and probably many did)
the documentation of non-institutional charity
at a horizontal level of ordinary, simple citizens
offering assistance to people among their ranks
is virtually non-existent. On the rare occasions
when such people are on record donating, they do
so to existing institutions, preferably monasteries,
in purely personal transactions, as we have seen.

Crisis- or situation-driven direct charity was
common in times of catastrophe: during fam-
nines, and/or epidemics, after earthquakes or in
the midst of warfare producing numerous refu-
gees and prisoners to be ransomed. It could take
the form of a financial assistance or that of mate-
rial aid: distribution of victuals, care for the sick,
burial of the dead, money for the ransoming of
prisoners. High church dignitaries, and less so the
imperial government, were the central authorities
behind such measures. Irene-Eulogia Choum-
naina, the wealthy widow (and thus almost em-
press) of John Palaiologos, son of Andronikos II,
distributed large sums of her vast property to the
poor and for the ransoming of prisoners before
she entered the convent that she had restored.9

Of course the crisis could be a personal one.
There are many instances of elite women distrib-
uting alms during the illness of a close family
member. Irene Doukaina, Alexios I’s wife, for
instance, distributed cash to the poor, sick and
prisoners as her husband lay dying,10 but then
so did male emperors for themselves.11 There is
also the remarkable case of Eudokia, mother of
St Philotheos, who found herself a refugee in
Macedonia, without any relatives, as her two
sons had been captured by the Turks; she distrib-
uted all her belongings to the poor and entered
a monastery.12

49 There is evidence (mainly from late antiquity)
of people giving money to beggars or to begging monks: R. Finn,
D. Caner, Wandering, Begging Monks. Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity
(The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 33), Berkeley, CA 2002, esp. chs. 4–5. The little evidence that I have
found regarding giving alms to the poor (who are not beggars) mainly comes from the vitae of a group of female
saints who attained sanctity while (or despite of) being married: Mary the Younger, Thoma of Lesbos, the empress
Theophano. I will discuss some of these women below. For an overview see the Introduction by A.-M. Talbot in
her edited volume: Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation (Byzantine Saints’ Lives in
Translation, 1), Washington, DC 1996.

50 I. Bekker (ed.), Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia, III. I, Bonn 1855, p. 238; On Irene-Eulogia see A. Con-
stantinides Hero, Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina, Abbess of the Convent of Philanthropos Soter in Con-

51 A. Kambylis/D. R. Reinsch (ed.), Anna Komnene, Alexias, I (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 40.1), Berlin

52 As illustrated by the case of John Vatatzes: A. Failler/V. Laurent (ed.), George Pachymeres. Relations historiques,

53 B. Papouli, Die Vita des heiligen Philotheos vom Athos, in: Südostforschungen, 22, 1963, pp. 274–276; see al-
Direct almsgiving to the poor which was not crisis-driven is rarely attested. Witness this eleventh-century parvenu, the judge and senator Michael Attaleiates, who founded two poorhouses and a monastery in 1077 investing a substantial part of his property.

“I have not made this offering, in which I place my hope, for lack of an heir and legitimate and natural succession,” Michael tells us for I have a legitimate son, the mystographos and imperial notary lord Theodore. And to make sure that Theodore would not lose out on his inheritance he decreed that he (and his agnatic succession) would act as ephoroi of the institutions and receive two-thirds of any surplus revenues.

His wife Sophia (PBW, Sophia 104), however, had been quite different. This is what Michael writes of her: “When I lost my wife, who died in her prime, I received nothing from her final will and testament except for a small house, a pittance, since I approved her desire to give everything to God through distribution to the poor. By virtue of my right as executor I cooperated with her mother, without any hindrance, in carrying out her will, and together with her distributed everything. Additionally, the entire price of the property of Banitzes [that she owned] was wholly allocated for distribution to the poor.” This is a mother with at least one surviving child, who nevertheless chose to give out her inheritance directly, that is without any strings attached, to the poor. It remains to see whether this was typical or extraordinary.

A further example comes from the testament of Theodore Sarantenos in 1325 in which he states that his deceased wife Eudokia Doukaina Angelina had for many years shod and fed the poor on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Occasional almsgiving was certainly part of the repertory of virtues that imperial and aristocratic women were expected to demonstrate. Anna Komnene writes that both her grandmother, Anna Dalassene, and her mother Irene excelled at this. Even when authors could only be vague about the charitable attitudes of such ladies, it was important to include the information, as on the wife of Loukas Notaras who, as Doukas tells us on the occasion of her death, was a lady famous for her almsgiving and her mercy of the poor.

Such charitable actions were as a rule impersonal. The days when Jerome lauded Fabiola’s hands-on approach to charity feeding and caring for the patients herself at the hospital she had founded seem long gone. Theoleptos of Philadelphia, her spiritual advisor, had to admonish Eulogia Choumnaina to do that even in her own monastery: “Visit your ailing sisters, if possible, and try to minister to them with your own hands. Be present when a sister lies at the last...”

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55 Gautier, Attaliate (cit. n. 54), § 35–37. Only in the case of no existing (or suitable) male descendants should the ephorate go to a female one: § 37.
56 Gautier, Attaliate (cit. n. 54), § 20; BMFD, I, p. 333.
58 Kamblys/Reinsch, Anna Komnene, Alexias (cit. n. 31), III 8 and XIII 3.
60 Talbot, Byzantine Women (cit. n. 53), p. 114.
gasp and observe the agony of the soul as it leaves the body.\footnote{62}

It would seem logical to search for potential cases of direct charity in testaments, but the data does not confirm this. As indicated above of a total of forty-nine testaments only eight include charitable stipulations. There is only one woman among them.

It is the case of the nun Maria, (formerly Kale, \textit{PBW}, Kale 102), the wife of the \textit{kouropalates} Symbatios Pakourianos (\textit{PBW}, Symbatios 101). Kale-Maria was the daughter of a \textit{kouropalates}; she had married Symbatios sometime in the late 1080s and received 50 pounds of gold in cash as dowry with which he bought silver vessels now in her possession. He died young and left her those of his possessions remaining after implementing the clauses of his will and appointed her executor of his will together with his brother. Of interest is the clause in his will according to which he bequeathed to the poor 12 pounds of gold, in grain and coin, the latter to be distributed to those free men who had served him.\footnote{63}

In Kale's elaborate testament dated to November 1098 she made bequests to more than 30 persons and to Iviron.\footnote{64} Most of those receiving bequests were her kin, but other members of the household received gifts of lower value. Many bequests involved money, but decorated bowls, fabrics and a book were also given. She donated estates to the monks of Iviron (the monastery chosen by Symbatios as his final resting place) on behalf of hers and her husband's spiritual salvation; the rest (animals, the whole harvest and stocks) would be distributed (\diaskorpios\thetmav) upon her death to her own people regardless of age, sex or status to sustain them for a year; on the year of her death her people were to be freed from their tax obligations so they should pray on her behalf; the rest of her fortune (mobile, immobile and animals) shall be distributed to the poor for the absolution of her sins (lines 67–68).

Some interesting facts should be emphasized: Kale and Symbatios did not have children; hence perhaps her overall generosity, which does not account for the preservation of patrimony. Furthermore, she does not seem to care where her grave will be, nor does she wish to establish a focal point for her remembrance, unlike her husband. In her last will she follows the general pattern of her husband's testament, but seems to surpass him in her direct charity to the poor, which, although it cannot be exactly quantified, must have been significant.

Another type of source that could potentially include instances of direct charity would be donations for an individual's personal salvation, as surveyed above. These include no such mentions, although, obviously, some of the capital generated through the transfer of property by the women mentioned above could have been used by the monasteries to provide charity linked to their commemoration.

It remains to survey the other, much better documented, type of charity which channelled giving through foundations and institutions, ex-
especially monasteries. Monasteries functioned as focal points of charity by linking liturgical commemorations, both for the living and the dead but mostly for the dead, with charitable distributions. This is charity practised at a vertical level, from above to below, and quite visible. Members of the secular and ecclesiastical elite come off extremely well in their charitable attitude, a fact which is linked to their writing down the exact nature and extent of their donations and to these acts having been preserved up to the present. Emperors and their kin, high government, army as well as church officials, demonstrated their charity mostly by founding monasteries, and less so, charitable institutions (hospitals, hostels, orphanages, houses for the poor, for lepers, or for the old, while newly funded shelters for widows or “fallen women” are not recorded in that period).  

The only foundation of a charitable institution by a woman in the period in question was made by Michael VIII’s widow, the dowager empress Theodora Doukaina Komnen Palaiologina in the last years of the thirteenth century. During the reign of her son Andronikos II (1282–1328) Theodora restored the tenth-century monastery of Constantine Lips, adding a second church dedicated to St John the Baptist and a hospital for women. According to the typikon drafted for her foundation the monastery was to be independent and self-governing and house fifty nuns while the hospital should accommodate twelve patients. Theodora dedicated a substantial amount of her estates to the monastery in which she retired as a nun; these comprised property that belonged to her and her ancestors, property given to her by her son Andronikos, property bought by her and property donated to the foundation by her mother, Eudokia Angelina. The monastic complex comprised the churches and the hospital, as well as at least two store-rooms, a kitchen, a laundry and some auxiliary buildings. The twelve beds provided by the hospital (plus three for the attendants) form a direct analogy to the women’s ward at the famous Pantokrator xenon and invite a comparison of both institutions.

But the founder’s emphasis lay not on the hospital, but on the monastery around it. The regulations for the monastery take up almost the entire space of the typikon; those for the hospital are limited to two sections. In establishing a monastery Theodora was following an ancient imperial line of patronage. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that memoria was a central aspect of her foundation. The liturgical commemorations for her family and kin, both those that are already deceased and those that will die in the future were central to her. Furthermore, she had intended Lips to become a mausoleum for her family, as the Pantokrator had been designed (and indeed had functioned) for the Komnenian dynasty. The typikon includes

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65 There seems to be some scanty evidence on the involvement of women in the establishment and upkeep of orphanages, but it dates to the period prior to this study’s focal point; see T. Miller, The Orphans of Byzantium, Washington, DC 2003, pp. 132–136.
69 There is now a vast amount of literature on the Pantokrator; I will only refer to some of the most important and recent studies: see the translation of its typikon by R. Jordan, in: BMFD, II, pp. 725–781; P. Horden, How Medicalized Were Byzantine Hospitals?, in: Medicina e Storia, 10, 2005, pp. 45–74. For the comparison see T. Miller, The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire, 2nd ed., Baltimore 1997, p. 203, Table 1.
71 Talbot, Empress Theodora (cit. n. 66), p. 299.
precise instructions as to where her family and kin should be buried. At least six members of the Palaiologoi were buried at Lips. Her husband, Michael VIII, was not among them as a result of his pro-Union (and therefore anti-Orthodox) policy. The memory of the founder and her kin was kept not only by the presence of their graves within the monastic complex.72 A number of liturgical actions to be performed throughout each year were also included in the typikon. The document itself should be recited three times a year while at the end of each session the nuns were to exclaim eternal be the memory of the founders.

Eight breads were to be consecrated each week for each of the four times that liturgy was to be celebrated. Of these one should be in the name of the deceased ancestors of Theodora, one for her son, the emperor, and his wife, one for all her other children and another for herself and her mother. Furthermore, each Saturday a number of liturgical breads stamped with a cruciform stamp should be offered on behalf of her deceased ancestors and children as well as those of them that would die in the future.73 The care of Theodora’s memory was completed through a number of charitable donations which were channelled through the monastery: distributions of food and coins to the Christian brethren (that is the poor) on at least two occasions per year.74

The last aspect I should like to explore is the institutional charity provided in monasteries founded by women. Again there are inherent difficulties due to the limitation of the available data. Only five typika of monasteries founded by women survive: three by empresses (Kecharitomene, Lips and Anargyroi) and two by women with close ties to the ruling dynasty of the Palaiologoi and great wealth (Philanthropos and Bebaia Elpis).

As I have already discussed Lips above, I will restrict the following account on Kecharitomene and Bebaia Elpis, as the typikon of Philanthropos survives only as a very short fragment.75 The convent of Kecharitomene was founded by Irene Doukaina while her husband, Alexios I, was still alive which makes it unique in our documentation.76 Unlike Lips, there were daily charitable distributions at the gate of the monastery and more lavish ones on the days of the commemoration of the founder’s kin (ancestors, parents, siblings, children and her husband). It is obvious that the distributions were an important part of the founder’s remembrance strategies; as such they are frequent and considerable. Another remarkable (and unique) feature of this typikon is the designation of an ephoros exclusively from the matrilineal descent of Irene’s heirs.77

The convent of Bebaia Elpis (Sure Hope) founded by Theodora Synadene, an aristocratic lady of peerless lineage in Constantinople in 1327 is the last monastic foundation by a woman in the period in question.78 Not only her own substantial means were invested in this enterprise, but also those of fourteen other members of her extensive family, who having all donated property, acquired the right to be commemorated.

Commemorations of the founder’s immediate family were particularly lavish: eleven priests should be invited, so that the liturgy would be celebrated by twelve priests, the church would be decorated, six candelabra should be lit, memorial offerings distributed to those attending the ceremony, the nuns would be offered better food for

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74 Delehaye, Deux typica (cit. n. 67), § 38, p. 127; BMFD, III, p. 1277.
75 See BMFD, IV, pp. 1383–1388.
77 Gautier, Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitôménè (cit. n. 76), § 80, pp. 144–145; BMFD, II, p. 709.
the day, and some bread and wine distributed to the poor at the door. In this case, the charitable distributions are clearly subordinate to the commemorations and the monastery rightly credited with a minimal, ritualistic commitment to institutional philanthropy. It might appear pointless to attempt to generalize based on such a small sample of texts, but it seems as if the typika written for foundations of women do not differ in any substantial way from those written for male ones. After the Evergetis reform they all duly include institutional charity among their duties, but this is always subordinate to the liturgical and commemorative aspects of monastic life.

IV. Conclusions

At the end of this overview it is important to summarize our findings and try to place them in context. If the initial working hypothesis as suggested by our current understanding of women and giving was one that emphasized difference, the late Byzantine data does not seem to corroborate it. Women’s donations, sales, foundations and patronage while significant (and deserving of more in-depth research) are structurally identical to those practised by men.

But an indication of difference may still be perceptible. The few cases (and we can assume that they are perhaps underrepresented in the extant evidence) that indicate that some women preferred to give directly to the poor (as a rule, as bequests), that is without establishing an institution as a go-between, require discussion. Clearly the women who chose to follow this path had both the means and the know-how to act otherwise. In fact, in some instances we know that their husbands chose precisely the way of institutional philanthropy as was the case with Symbatiros Pakourianos, Michael Attaleiates and Theodore Sarantenos. Were these cases of a marital strategy of diversification to ensure maximum security in afterlife management prospects? Or did perhaps women, who were by now excluded from any active role in the Church (which controlled both charitable institutions and monasteries) feel distrustful of such institutions when it came to the expression of their personal faith?80

If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me (Matthew 19:21). Did women follow this commandment literally? Or was this merely the reflection of a Christian ideal built in the texts that preserve such information? One could suppose that the practice of direct charity, if it meant going out to meet and help the poor personally, would appeal to women ordinarily leading a life centred on their family, but although the evidence suggests that Komnenian and Palaiologan women (at least those of the upper class, on whom most of our evidence rests) were not constrained,81 there is hardly any evidence for such practice. Looking back at an earlier hagiographic model of pious housewives, sainted for their charitable activities as exemplified by Mary the Younger, we can see a pattern that was no longer followed. In Mary’s life her

ardent almsgiving was, at least partly, inspired by her meeting of poor people and beggars on her daily outings to the Church, and it would be safe to assume that help towards those one actually witnesses as in need comes more easily.\(^{82}\) Michael Psellos writes of his mother that once a year she would give out money to the needy and tend to them herself.\(^{83}\) This middle Byzantine model of pious housewives was prominent from the ninth to the eleventh century,\(^{84}\) but it seems to have declined thereafter. In the data surveyed above there do not seem to be reflections of it.

Perhaps it was a matter of realistic expectations. Mary the Younger had been absolute in her charity: she not only gave away all her personal property – even her clothes – to the poor and beggars, but this resulted in her leaving no inheritance at all for her children.\(^{85}\) Our women did not follow this path; their donations (in those cases when they had children) did not put their offspring’s inheritance in danger.

A final, unsurprising, finding derives from the above overview: the social and economic importance of widows. Widows formed a significant percentage of the population and had access to property, much of which, as our documentation shows, flowed as bequests to the Church. What part of such transactions was motivated by piety and what by various types of pressure is difficult to say,\(^{86}\) but there is evidence to suggest that monasteries could be perceived as safe havens by women who could not rely on their kin for caring for them in their final days, making sure they would get a proper burial and perhaps even enhance their chance for salvation through commemoration.\(^{87}\)

82 Talbot, Byzantine Women (cit. n. 53), p. 110.
84 Cf. Talbot, Byzantine Women (cit. n. 53), pp. 109–114. See also the contribution by Sharon Gerstel and Sophia Kalopissi-Verti in this volume.
85 Talbot, Byzantine Women (cit. n. 53), pp. 110–112.
86 As an allusion to CTh 16, 2. 27 (issued June 21, 390 at Constantinople) and CTh 16, 2. 28 (issued August 23, 390 at Constantinople) suggest; see Caner, Wandering (cit. n. 49), pp. 199–200 with nos. 213–214.
87 As the case of Irene Apokaukissa (PLP, no. 1193) shows: Miklosich / Müller, Acta et diplomata graeca (cit. n. 22), II, no. 655, pp. 509–510; see Talbot, Byzantine Women (cit. n. 53), p. 116.