

DYNAMICS OF MONASTIC PATRONAGE IN CONSTANTINOPLE, 1081–1182 AND 1261–1328

Elif Demirtiken

This article presents a comparison of the Komnenian and the early Palaiologan periods in Constantinople. The Komnenian dynasty was founded by Alexios I Komnenos in 1081 and remained in power until 1185; it is seen as a high point in Byzantine history, frequently referred as the Komnenian revival. This distinctive period was followed by less glamorous events, such as the Fourth Crusade, the fall of Constantinople, and the establishment of the Latin Kingdom of Constantinople (1204–1261). From the Byzantine perspective, this meant an interregnum period of 57 years in their capital city. Michael VIII Palaiologos and the Palaiologan dynasty came to power with in 1259 when they re-conquered the capital; they revived the recently re-claimed city. It is intriguing to compare these two periods, both known as “revivals” or “renaissances,” in this case in terms of monastic (re-)foundations to see whether one can distinguish any patterns or preferences among individuals of distinctive social status to lay their foundations in particular areas in the city, and if so, the reasons behind such decisions.

In the prologue to the *typikon* of her monastery of Theotokos Kecharitomene, Eirene Doukaina Komnene¹ states that she provided the nuns settled in her monastic complex with “an absence of distraction from all sides in the matter of their holy way of life”² (τὴν ἄσκησιν καὶ πανταχόθεν περὶ τῆν ἐρᾶν πολιτεῖαν). In order to achieve this goal of helping the nuns to live an angelic life, the *typikon* of the Kecharitomene clearly shows that the *augousta* herself was involved with various earthly concerns such as construction of the buildings, the endowment of the convent, and the regulation of pure life in the monastery.³

¹ *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) (hereafter *ODB*) s. v. “Irene Doukaina” empress 1081–1118.

² Robert Jordan, tr., “*Kecharitomene: Typikon of Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene for the Convent of the Mother of God Kecharitomene in Constantinople*,” in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ “Typika” and Testaments*, ed. J. Thomas and A. C. Hero (Washington, DC; Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 666 (hereafter *BMFD*).

³ This article is based on: Elif Demirtiken, “Mapping the Meaning: Monastic Topography of Constantinople, 1081–1204 and 1261–1341,” MA thesis (Central European University, 2014).

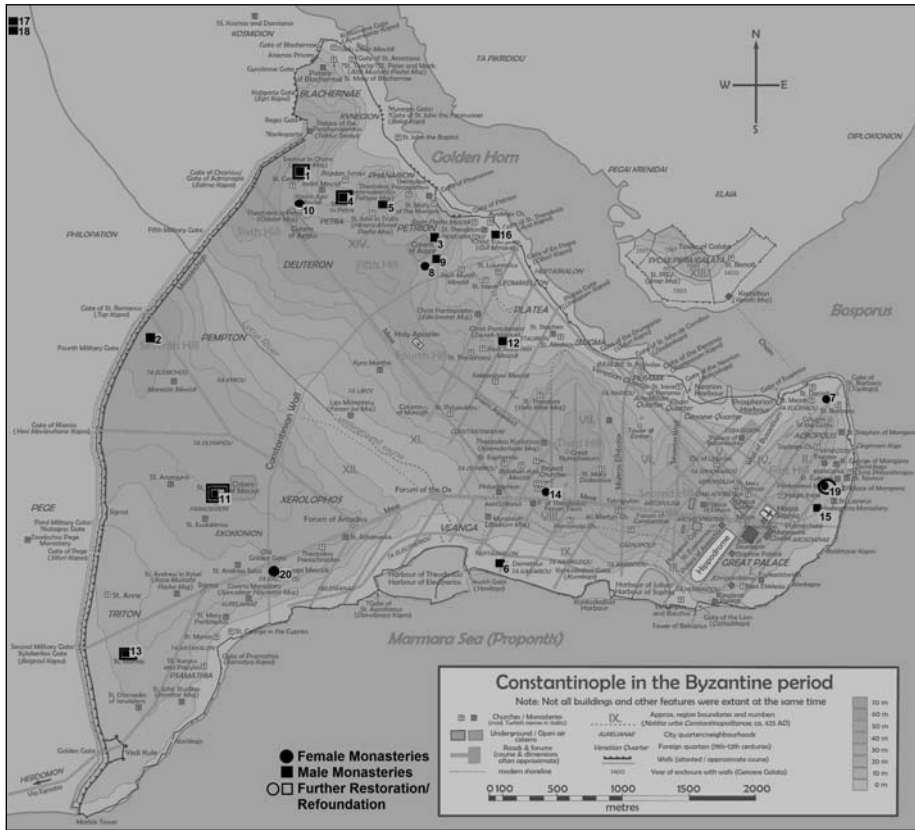


Fig. 1. Monastic (re-)foundations in Constantinople, 1081–1198 (adapted from Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantine 1, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique, 3: Les églises et les monastères* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1969 [1953]))

Judging from the surviving evidence, Eirene Doukaina was only one among many members of the Byzantine ruling stratum and aristocracy who founded monasteries in the city.⁴ Already increasing in the early tenth century, this tendency became the preferred form of charity under the Komnenoi and reached a peak

⁴ Paul Magdalino, “Medieval Constantinople,” in *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), I, 27–31.

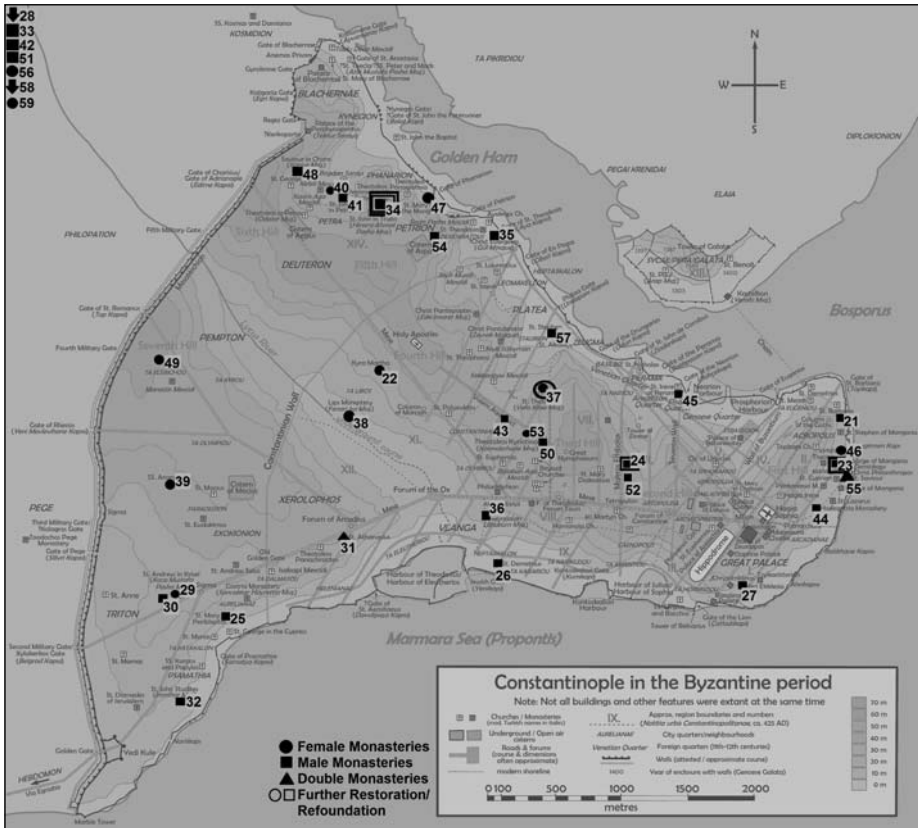


Fig. 2. Monastic (re-)foundations in Constantinople, 1261–1328
 (adapted from Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantine 1*)

under the Palaiologoi (Figs 1–2).⁵ Numerous reasons lay behind it; founding a monastery was surely a pious act to “grant a portion of their possessions to God.”⁶ Yet besides the religious motive behind commissioning a monastery, a monastic foundation was also a measure to secure the economic wellbeing of family members or a way of protecting the family estates by transforming them

⁵ These figures are extracted from the written sources, but in order to avoid possible duplications do not include unidentified ecclesiastical structures in modern Istanbul like Vefa Kilise Camii or the so-called Manastır Mescidi at Pazartekke near the gate of Romanos.

⁶ *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*, (207.23–4), trans. H. J. Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 118 (hereafter Choniates).

into *res sacra* while keeping the family name attached to the properties. It was also a manifestation of wealth and economic power of the patron(s),⁷ a materialized imprint of prestige on the cityscape. Whatever specific reasons the founders had to commission a monastery, the process of foundation was also determined by numerous factors such as the founders' ability to commission a foundation, receiving the emperor's permission for imperial foundations, donation by the patriarch (as in the case of the monastery of *ta Kellaraia*s given to Eirene Doukaina), or simply financial matters regarding the construction work, and their choice or the availability of a site.⁸ The seemingly individual act of founding a monastery must also have been shaped by "others," i.e., other founders, the emperor's initiatives, social trends, and political strategies at the time.

This article seeks to interpret monastic patronage in Constantinople in relation to one of the Byzantine political strategies which was widely employed during the periods in question, i.e., marriage arrangements. Although marital arrangements were always a means of political alliance, not by any means peculiar to Byzantium, it was the founding emperor of the Komnenian dynasty, Alexios I Komnenos, who arranged several marriages between his family and the aristocracy in a way that transformed the state mechanism into a dynastic system, a huge *oikos* of the emperor, as Magdalino states.⁹ I argue here that the marriage arrangements which were used to reinforce the emperor's power resulted in empowering his in-laws and the women who accepted these marriages, allowing them to be increasingly visible as monastic patrons in the capital.

Founders and Their Monasteries in the City

When Alexios I Komnenos usurped the Byzantine throne, Constantinople already had a history of more than seven centuries with a strong monastic tradition.¹⁰ Among at least nineteen foundations/refoundations in Constantinople that were recorded in sources between 1081 and 1182, the vast majority belonged to

⁷ Barbara Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025–1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology* (London: Longman, 1999), 26.

⁸ John Haldon, "Towards a Social History of Byzantium," *The Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), 1–30; Philip Ethington, "Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History," *Rethinking History* 11 (2007): 465–93.

⁹ Paul Magdalino, "Innovations in Government," *Alexios I Komnenos, 1: Papers. Papers of the Second Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium, 14–16 April 1989*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996), 146–66.

¹⁰ Peter Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople 350–850* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 257–63.

imperial family members. Although Alexios I was preoccupied with his grand project, the Orphanotropheion (*Fig. 1*, no. 7), which also hosted monastic communities,¹¹ he was also the co-founder of the Philanthropos (*Fig. 1*, no. 9) with his wife, Empress Eirene Doukaina.¹² John II Komnenos (also a co-founder with his wife) commissioned the Pantokrator (*Fig. 1*, no. 12).¹³ Even though Manuel I despised the idea of urban monasteries (seen as corrupt) within the city walls,¹⁴ he is mentioned along with his father and grandfather as founders of the St. Mokios (*Fig. 1*, no. 11).¹⁵ While the Komnenian emperors did not show a special interest in the northwestern area of the city, others did. Empress-Mother Maria of Bulgaria founded the Chora (*Fig. 1*, no. 1)¹⁶ and another empress-mother, Anna Dalassene, founded the Pantepoptes (*Fig. 1*, no. 3);¹⁷ Empress Eirene Doukaina founded the Kecharitomene (*Fig. 1*, no. 8) and the *ta Kellaraias* (*Fig. 1*, no. 10) there.¹⁸ Maria of Antioch founded the Pantanassa (*Fig. 1*, no. 19)¹⁹ after Manuel's death, presumably due to the emperor's discontent with urban monasticism at the time. Alexios' brother, Adrian Komnenos, is commemorated on a funerary inscription at the Pammakaristos (*Fig. 1*, no. 5) with his wife²⁰ and

¹¹ Magdalino, "Innovations in Government," 156–61.

¹² Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantine 1, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique, 3: Les églises et les monastères* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1969 [1953]), 525–7.

¹³ For the latest thorough study on Pantokrator, see Sofia Kotzabassi, ed. *The Pantokrator Monastery in Constantinople* (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).

¹⁴ Choniates, (207–208.1–10), 117–8.

¹⁵ Codex Marc gr. 1524 fol. 46^r; Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 226–7.

¹⁶ Magdalino, "Medieval Constantinople," I: 81.

¹⁷ Janin and Kidonopoulos identify the Pantepoptes as Eski İmaret Camii. See Janin, *Les églises*, 513–5; Vassilios Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel 1204–1328 Verfall und Zerstörung, Restaurierung, Umbau and Neubau von Profan- und Sakralbauten* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), 28–30; cf. Cyril Mango, "Where at Constantinople was the Monastery of Christos Pantepoptes?" *Δελτίον ΧΑΕ* 20 (1998): 87–8. Mango argues that *Pantepoptes* must have stood where the Sultan Selim Camii stands today. For the patronage of Anna Dalassene, see Hill, *Imperial Women*, 161–5.

¹⁸ Kecharitomene was mentioned in the sources by 1107, Janin, *Les églises*, 188–91; Hill, *Imperial Women* 165–9; Jordan, "Kecharitomene," 649–724. *Ta Kellaraias* was donated by Patriarch Nikolaos III Grammatikos to serve as an additional mausoleum for the nuns of Kecharitomene, probably also in the same neighborhood, Janin, *Les églises*, 188.

¹⁹ Janin, *Les églises*, 215–6.

²⁰ Paul Magdalino, "The Foundation of the Pantokrator Monastery in Its Urban Setting," *The Pantokrator Monastery in Constantinople*, ed. Sofia Kotzabassi (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 38–9.

John II's brother, Isaac the *sebastokrator*, was involved in the restoration of the Chora.²¹ Furthermore, at least three other Komnenoi founded monasteries in the city.²² During the reign of Alexios I, only the top stratum of hierarchy, the inner imperial family, was visible as monastic founders, except at the St. Demetrios in the southern part of the city, founded by George Palaiologos, who was married to Empress Eirene Doukaina's sister.²³ Under John II, John Iokalites *protasekretis*, a member of lower aristocracy who did not have marital ties to the Komnenoi, founded the Petra,²⁴ while under Manuel I such a figure as the father of Gregory Antiochos founded the Basil, George Kappadokes *mystikos* was able to found the Mamas; and George Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos *mezas betaireiarches* and *sebastos* founded the Hodegetria.²⁵

The Latin presence in Constantinople (1204–1261) was catastrophic for the monasteries; most of them were abandoned, robbed of their roofing systems or wooden structures and left in ill-repair.²⁶ The large number of monasteries founded under Palaiologan rule, therefore, should not come as a surprise.²⁷ Emperor Michael VIII²⁸ is known to have founded at least three monasteries (the Peribleptos, the Mangana, and the St. Demetrios), all in different parts of

²¹ Magdalino, "Medieval Constantinople," I, 78.

²² John Komnenos *protosebastos* who founded the Evergetes (a nephew of Alexios or Manuel), an unknown grandson of Alexios I, who founded the monastery of Botaneiates, and Andronikos Rogerios *sebastos* and *prokathemenos* (cousin?), who founded the Chrysokamarotissa, were all members of the extended imperial family.

²³ See *Fig. 1*, No. 1. Chora, 3. Pantepoptes, 4. John the Baptist at Petra, 5. Pammakaristos, 8. Kecharitomene, 9. Philanthropos, 10. ta Kellariai, 16. Evergetes.

²⁴ Although George Palaiologos served the emperor as a high military official and although he was a brother-in-law of Alexios he did not enjoy higher dignities like another brother-in-law, Nikephoros Melissenos, did as *caesar* or another brother-in-law, Michael Taronites, did as *panhypersebastos*. Peter Frankopan, "Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium," *English Historical Review* 122, no. 495 (2007): 1–34.

²⁵ So far, eighteen out of the nineteen monasteries marked on *Fig. 1* have been mentioned. The only remaining one was the later *Prodromos/Kyr Nikolaou* of Patriarch Nikolaos III Grammatikos (*Fig. 1*, no. 2), which is not included in the discussion as the patriarch was not a part of the inner or extended imperial family.

²⁶ Alice-Mary Talbot, "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 247–8 (hereafter *DOP*).

²⁷ This is, of course, based on what survived and was recorded in the written sources; the actual number could be higher. The founders of five monasteries during the early Palaiologan period (St. Nikolaos the Wonderworker, Pertze, Myrelaion, St. Nikolaos tes Opaines, and the Hyperagnos tou Plynariou) are unknown. They cannot be included in the discussion, but are still included on *Fig. 1* as no. 21, 28, 36, 40, and on *Fig. 2* as no. 58.

²⁸ *PLP* no. 21528.

the city, while Emperor Andronikos II (re-)founded the Nea Mone and the Pantepoptes.²⁹ During the reign of Michael VIII none of the imperial family members were involved with monasteries except his sister Martha,³⁰ while under Andronikos II, Empress-Mother Theodora Palaiologina founded the Lips and the Anargyroi (*Fig. 2*, no. 38 and 39);³¹ Andronikos' sons, *despotes* John founded the Prodromos (*Fig. 2*, no. 42)³² and Ateuemes-Bartholomaios the Evergetes (*Fig. 2*, no. 35),³³ the emperor's brother, Constantine *porphyrogenetos*, restored the Stoudios (*Fig. 2*, no. 32),³⁴ and the emperor's half-sister, Maria-Melane,³⁵ founded the Panagiotissa (*Figs. 2 and 4*, no. 47).³⁶ In addition to these inner family members, under Andronikos II three female cousins and two of their daughters founded monasteries (*Fig. 2*, no. 29 and 30).³⁷ Also, Maria Palaiologina Tarchaneiotissa,³⁸ Andronikos II's cousin's daughter, and her husband, Michael Tarchaneiotis *protastator*, founded the Pammakaristos, the *tes* Glabaina, and the Atheniotissa

²⁹ *PLP* no. 21436. Vassilios Kidonopoulos, "The Urban Physiognomy of Constantinople from the Latin Conquest through the Palaiologan Era," *Faith and Power (1261–1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art & Yale University Press, 2006), 98–117; Alice-Mary Talbot, "Building Activity in Constantinople under Andronikos II: The Role of Women Patrons in the Construction and Restoration of Monasteries," *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. Nevra Necipoğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 329–43, eadem, "The Restoration," 243–61. See *Fig. 2*, no. 25, 23, 26, 27 and 54.

³⁰ *PLP* no. 21389. She was a supporter of Arsenios. Her foundation, the monastery of Kyra Martha, is shown on *Fig. 2*, no. 22.

³¹ *PLP* no. 21380; Alice-Mary Talbot, "Empress Theodora Palaiologina, Wife of Michael VIII," *DOP* 46 (1992): 295–303.

³² Kidonopoulos identifies the founder as the third son of Andronikos II. *PLP* no. 21475. Kidonopoulos, *Bauten*, 43–4.

³³ Kidonopoulos, *Bauten*, 25–8; Janin, *Les églises*, 508–10.

³⁴ *PLP* no. 21492; Kidonopoulos, *Bauten*, 49–51; Janin, *Les églises*, 432.

³⁵ *PLP* no. 21395.

³⁶ Kidonopoulos, *Bauten*, 88–90; Janin, *Les églises*, 195–6. Maria-Melane Palaiologina is known to have made donations to Chora. Kidonopoulos, *Bauten*, 18–25. The other known illegitimate daughter of Michael VIII was wed to another Mongol khan. See Talbot, "Empress Theodora," 296.

³⁷ Theodora Raoulaina's (*PLP* no. 10943) St. Andrei in Krisei and the Aristine, her daughter, Anna Komnene, Raoulaina Strategopoulina's (*PLP* no. 26893). According to Talbot, she may have been the daughter of Theodora Raoulaina. See Talbot, "Building," 332) Krataios (see *Fig. 2*, no. 46), Theodora Synadene (*PLP* no. 21381) and Euphrosyne Synadene's (*PLP* no. 21373) Bebaia Elpis (see *Fig. 2*, no. 37) and Eugenia Komnene Palaiologina's (*PLP* no. 21368) unknown foundation (see *Fig. 2*, no. 56).

³⁸ *PLP* no. 27511.

(*Fig. 2*, nos 34, 53 and 33).³⁹ Outside the blood ties of the Palaiologan family, five individuals founded monasteries; they belonged to rising urban elite and had established marital ties with the ruling dynasty, namely, George and Konstantinos Akropolites, Nikephoros Choumnos and his daughter Eirene Choumnaina, and Theodore Metochites. At the same time, the lower aristocracy who had neither blood nor marriage ties to the Palaiologoi, was able to commission monasteries. In parallel with the high frequency of monastic patronage, their appearance in the monastic topography of Constantinople was at an unprecedented level.⁴⁰

A comparison of the monastic cityscapes before 1204 and in 1328 shows that the Komnenian dynasty inhabited a city with a Byzantine past of centuries, therefore, it was important for them to create a sort of Komnenian-ness in the capital. They held the power which enabled them to achieve this goal – focusing on an area in the northwestern part of the city meant to be remembered after them. While Alexios was mentioned as the co-founder of the Philanthropos, and John II preferred the Pantokrator to be constructed somewhat closer to the northwestern part of the city, it was mainly the inner imperial family who chose this area for their patronage venues. Perhaps these foundations provided the founders with the visibility they desired in proximity to the Blachernai palace and other aristocratic *oikoi* in the neighborhood, something that they needed more than the emperor. The foundations of the emperor's in-laws and the lower aristocracy, however, were not located in the Komnenian core of the city. In contrast, the Palaiologoi did not found a single monastery in the northwestern part of the city during the first decade after the re-conquest – none of the eight monasteries⁴¹ founded during the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos was located there.⁴² Rather, the northwestern part of the city seems to have been allocated to

³⁹ Kidonopoulos, *Bauten*, 67–8, 80–6, and 41–2; also Alice-Mary Talbot, trans. “*Bebaia Elpis: Typikon* of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God *Bebaia Elpis* in Constantinople,” *BMTD*, 1512–78.

⁴⁰ The monasteries (re-)founded by the patriarchs and monks are marked on *Fig. 2* in order to offer a complete map of Constantinople at the time, yet they have little of relevance for the discussion. See Mangana, no. 23; Xerolophos, no. 31; Hodegetria, no. 44; Kyr Antonios, no. 45; Kyriotissa, no. 50; and the Monastery of Nikandros, no. 52.

⁴¹ See *Fig. 2*, nos 21–28 (St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Kyra Martha, St. George at Mangana, Anastasis, Peribleptos, St. Demetrios, Nea Mone, and Pertze).

⁴² Three members of the inner imperial family, Maria-Melane, Andronikos II Palaiologos, and Bartholomaios later founded three foundations, the Panagiotissa, the Pantepoptes and the Evergetes, respectively. Concerning Bartholomaios, *PLP* no. 1641 mentions him only as a monk related to the imperial house. Kidonopoulos suggests that he might have been

members of aristocracy or to those who were climbing the hierarchy during the early Palaiologan period (*Fig. 2*, no. 34 [Pammakaristos], no. 35 [Evergetes], no. 41 [Petra], no. 47 Panagiotissa, no. 48 [Chora], no. 54 [Pantepoptes]). It seems that the Palaiologoi preferred another part of the city as a focus of their patronage: the southern belt. Monastic patronage in this area during the early Palaiologan period was almost exclusively reserved for the imperial family (see *Fig. 2*, no. 25 [Peribleptos], no. 29 [St. Andrew in Krisei], no. 30 [Aristine], no. 32 [Stoudios] and no. 39 [Holy Anargyroi]). The exception is the monastic foundation by a member of the lower aristocracy, Phokas Maroules. In contrast, the Komnenian initiative in the southwest included Nikolaos Grammatikos' and a *mystikos*' foundations, a monastery founded by the sister of Alexios III, and the donations of three Komnenian emperors (*Fig. 1*, no. 2 [Prodromos/Kyr Nikolaou], no. 11 [Mokios], no. 13. [St. Mamas], and no. 20 [Dalmatios]). The continuing Palaiologan interest in the southern shore of the city was started by George Palaiologos under the Komnenian dynasty at a time this area had not attracted much attention in terms of patronage. Although George Palaiologos served the emperor as a high military official and although he was a brother-in-law of Alexios, he did not enjoy higher dignities like another brother-in-law, Nikephoros Melissenos, did as *caesar* or another brother-in-law, Michael Taronites, did as *panhypersebastos*.⁴³ The emperors, especially Michael VIII, received much praise for monastic foundations; it was almost a collective act to turn Constantinople into a Byzantine city again. All in all, as the early Palaiologan emperors did not have enough economic power to found such a large number of monasteries, the inner imperial family shared the cityscape with members of their extended family, with wealthy aristocrats connected to the Palaiologoi through marriage, and those who were outside the ruling clan. It is intriguing to evaluate the changes in the social status of the monastic founders within the context of the marriage policy of the Byzantine emperors.

The Outcomes of Marriage Policies: In-laws and Women as Monastic Founders

Starting with Alexios I, the Komnenian emperors elevated their kin to the top stratum of the state, rewarded their supporters by appointing them to high military offices, bestowing dignities on them, and establishing marital ties with their rivals. In addition to the marriage arrangements, the inner family members also played

the son of Andronikos II and his second wife, Eirene-Yolanda, as the imperial couple had a son named Bartholomaios. *Bauten*, 25–8.

⁴³ Frankopan, “Kinship,” 1–34.

an important role in the Byzantine state organization after the Komnenian period. The emperor elevated his close kin group above any titles and dignities. The monastic patronage of the kin group by affinity, i.e., marriage alliances, is detailed above. Concerning the foundations of the family by blood, Alexios I's brother Adrian and John II's brother Isaac *sebastokrator* should be noted as being granted high military posts but later deprived of their power. During the early Palaiologan period, Michael VIII did not share monastic patronage with his extended family members except his sister, in contrast to the foundations of Andronikos II's brother and two sons. There were three members of the extended Komnenian family by blood (cousins and nephews of emperors), but the source material does not allow us to evaluate the location, size, splendor, and importance of their foundations. There is no record of such a monastic founder under Michael VIII and, surprisingly, no record of male members of the Palaiologan family by blood under Andronikos II.⁴⁴ Being a relative of the emperor counted as much as, if not more than, an office or dignity.⁴⁵ With the exception of the rule of Theodore II Laskaris (1254–1258), the later emperors continued to benefit from marriage alliances with the Byzantine aristocracy.⁴⁶ As the status of a person came to be measured by his kinship/closeness to the emperor, those who were not able to establish marital ties with the ruling clan were at a disadvantage. Others who did not belong to the aristocracy by birth but were married a member of the ruling clan, i.e., the rising urban middling stratum, acquired high positions.⁴⁷

Internal marriage arrangements can be examined within the context of monastic patronage. What brought Alexios I to the Byzantine throne was a Komneno–Doukas alliance, realized with Eirene Doukaina and Alexios I's marriage. During these turbulent years, Anna Dalassene, mother of Alexios I, was active in civic administration, as well as in patronage; among numerous other good works, she helped a monk named John the Faster to restore the Petra in Constantinople as well as herself founding the Pantepoptes (*Fig. 1 no. 4*).⁴⁸ Maria

⁴⁴ Magdalino, "Innovations in Government," 156–61.

⁴⁵ Paul Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143–1180* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), 180–202, 217–27.

⁴⁶ Angeliki Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaiologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development," *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1992), 131–51.

⁴⁷ Niels Gaul, "All the Emperor's Men (and His Nephews): Paideia and Networking Strategies at the Court of Andronikos II. Palaiologos (1290–1320)," (forthcoming 2015).

⁴⁸ Magdalino, "Pseudo-Kodinos' Constantinople," *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), XI: 9; ODB s. v. "Petra Monastery;" George Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth*

of Bulgaria, the other empress-mother, was less visible on the Constantinopolitan stage, but she refounded the Chora, an imperial monastic foundation dating back to the sixth century.⁴⁹ Empress Eirene Doukaina is known to have been involved with three monastic foundations. The marriage of Adrian Komnenos and Zoe porphyrogenita Doukaina⁵⁰ is another example of the Komneno–Doukas alliance, although whether the wife or husband founded the Pammakaristos is unknown as it was common to have both names commemorated. Eirene-Piroska and Maria of Antioch were both foreign brides to the Byzantine court – Eirene’s untimely death eliminated any political action she might have taken, although her grand monastic co-foundation, the Pantokrator, was impressive. Maria, in contrast, fought for the regency of her son in an unstable period during which she also acted as a monastic patron (*Fig. 1*, no. 19).⁵¹ The Komnenian imperial women were active in monastic patronage in the capital, thus, it is surprising that the Palaiologan empresses did not found monasteries in Constantinople, especially considering Theodora’s active involvement with the monastic communities on Patmos and in the region of Smyrna before Michael VIII’s death.⁵² Theodora Palaiologina, then empress-mother, founded two monasteries only after Michael VIII’s death. The wives of Andronikos II, Anna of Hungary and Eirene-Yolanda, were also of foreign origin and, thus, might not have had enough power to found monasteries.

Unlike the Komnenians, during the early Palaiologan period the women of the highest social status, i.e., empresses, did not play a more prominent role as monastic founders than sisters, nieces, and female cousins of the emperors.⁵³ Michael VIII’s sister, Martha, founded a monastery in the immediate years after the reconquest of Constantinople in 1261 and later the half-sister of Andronikos II, Maria-Melane, an illegitimate daughter of Michael VIII who was wed to the Ilkhanid ruler Hulegu in 1265, founded the Panagiotissa in the northwestern part of the city. Despite being an illegitimate child of the emperor, Maria-Melane

Centuries (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984), 339–45.

⁴⁹ Magdalino, “Medieval Constantinople,” I: 81.

⁵⁰ Cyril Mango et al., *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1978). Zoe porphyrogenita was the stepsister of Nikephoros Diogenes. See Frankopan, “Kinship,” 23.

⁵¹ Janin, *Les églises*, 215–6.

⁵² Talbot, “Empress Theodora,” 295–303.

⁵³ Alexios I’s beloved daughter, Anna Komnene, resided in her mother’s monastery, yet she never showed interest in founding one herself. I think when she realized that she would not hold absolute authority at the court, she had no need to create a venue somewhere else to show her power. The *Kecharitome* might have sufficed for her needs.

played an important role in Byzantine politics upon her return to Constantinople. As Pachymeres records, Maria-Melane was involved in a negotiation which took place in Nicaea between Byzantium and the Ilkhanids – a kind of power she held as a result of Byzantine marriage policies.⁵⁴ The marriage arrangements that were meant to strengthen the authority of the emperor and imperial power resulted in empowering all those who married, both in-laws and the blood relatives. During the Komnenian century, it was more about “husbands” than “wives” as only one foundation by an in-law, that of George Palaiologos, Alexios’ brother-in-law, appeared in the monastic cityscape.⁵⁵ George Palaiologos was married to a high-ranking Komnene, but there is no sign of her as a monastic founder. The same is true for the wife of Adrian Komnenos and to an even further extent for the wife of George Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos. Similar marital ties were established during the early Palaiologan period, for instance, between Michael Tarchaneiotos and Maria Palaiologina Tarchaneiotissa,⁵⁶ also to a lesser extent between George Akropolites and Eudokia Palaiologina, a distant member of the Palaiologoi, yet in this case women were visible as monastic patrons to an unprecedented degree in Byzantine history. Theodora Raoulaina⁵⁷ the *protobestiaria*, a cousin of Andronikos II who was wed to George Mouzalon first and then John Raoul the *protobestiarios*, founded the female monastery dedicated to St. Andrew in Krisei after the death of her husband and Theodora-Theodoule Synadene,⁵⁸ another cousin of Andronikos II, wife of the *megas stratopedarches* John Angelos Doukas Synadenos, founded the famous Bebaia Elpis again in her widowhood.

The novelty of Andronikos II was that he deliberately chose to marry the male members of his family to the daughters of the middling stratum men in his service, as in the cases of Nikephoros Choumnos, Constantine Akropolites, and Theodore Metochites.⁵⁹ As argued by Gaul, this can be read as a deliberate act to keep these learned men, key figures in manipulating public opinion, content and close to the emperor.⁶⁰ This makes the sudden appearance of the middling

⁵⁴ A. Failler and V. Laurent, ed., *Georges Pachymères. Relations historiques*, 2 vols. CFHB Parisiensis 24.1–2 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984): 1:3–325; 2:329–667; ii, 620–1, 637 (hereafter Pachymeres).

⁵⁵ Another George Palaiologos refounded the Hodegetria – he must have been related to the Komnenian clan somehow, but his relation to Manuel I is unknown.

⁵⁶ However, George Palaiologos was married to the empress’ sister while George Akropolites and Michael Tarchaneiotos were married to distant relatives.

⁵⁷ *PLP* no. 10943 – Theodora Raulaina Palaiologina Komnene Kantakouzene.

⁵⁸ *PLP* no. 21381.

⁵⁹ Niels Gaul, “All the Emperor’s Men.”

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

stratum as monastic patrons understandable. Perhaps imperial foundations like the Chora and the Pammakaristos were given as a favor to in-laws and rising favorites.⁶¹ The marriage policy of the Palaiologoi not only increased the visibility of the Palaiologan higher aristocracy and its share of power, but also put great emphasis on the women who partook in these marriages. Except for Martha, sister of Michael VIII, and Maria-Melane, half-sister of Andronikos II, the Byzantine women who founded monasteries in Constantinople were fourth-degree relatives of the Palaiologan emperors who were wed to members of aristocracy, and their daughters.⁶² In only one case did the daughter of a rising courtier of low aristocratic background, Eirene Choumnaina *basilissa*, who was married to Andronikos II's son, also found a monastery.⁶³

The fortunate outcome of unfortunate widowhood can be seen in the cases of empress-mothers in both periods.⁶⁴ Combined with marriage arrangements with the powerful members of the aristocracy, the women of the extended imperial family were more likely to be able to found monasteries in their widowhood. That was how Theodora Raoulaina and Theodora Synadene left imprints on the cityscape – during their widowhood. Maria Glabaina Tarchaneiotissa was another such woman, who co-founded Pammakaristos with her husband, Michael, and after Michael's death extended the monastic church with a *parekklasion* and founded another monastery that came to known by her own name, *tes Glabainas*. The law that a *femina Byzantina* could manage her own dowry after her husband's death must have provided the women with financial freedom;⁶⁵ combined with their imperial blood, these imperial women were enabled to make their names visible in Constantinople. It is not possible to discover the exact reason why an imperial female who was wed to an aristocrat was more likely to be a monastic

⁶¹ Majeska, *Russian Travellers*, 166–93. Concerning the Kecharitomenē group (with the Philanthropos and *ta Kellaraias*), despite the fact that it was functioning at least when Zosima visited Constantinople in the 1420s, the sources do not mention whether it attracted any patronage from the Palaiologoi. In addition, Nikephoros Choumnos founded the Gorgoepekoos close to the so-called Valens' aqueduct and Constantine Akropolites founded the Anastasis on the Makros Embolos.

⁶² Theodora Raoulaina, Theodora Synadene, Maria Palaiologina Tarchaneiotissa, Euphrosyne Synadene and Anna-Antonia Komnene Raoulaina.

⁶³ See *Fig. 2*, no. 55, Philanthropos.

⁶⁴ Dowager empress-mothers – Anna Dalassene, Maria of Bulgaria, Maria of Antioch, and Theodora Palaiologina.

⁶⁵ It was a phenomenon in Byzantium that women became patrons of charitable organizations, monasteries, and the arts after they were widowed and held the property rights to their dowry, and morning gifts. See Angeliki Laiou, *Women, Family and Society in Byzantium* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2011), especially no. II: 122–60 and V: 51–75.

founder than an aristocratic woman who was married to a male member of the Palaiologoi. It may have been due to the size of the dowry, the nature of the marital arrangement, or the political ambitions of these women. Apparently, the marriages of daughters of middling stratum men empowered their fathers rather than the women themselves. Only in the case of Eirene Choumnaina do her letters reveal how she could not accept the untimely death of her husband, *despotes* John, despite her high social status.⁶⁶

The fact that female members of the inner and extended imperial family founded monasteries in the city does not necessarily mean that they attempted to benefit from proximity to the emperor's palace or power. Already hinted at above, Michael VIII faced strong opposition due to the way in which he usurped the Byzantine throne and his Unionist policy. For instance, Michael VIII banned Theodora Raoulaina from Constantinople as she showed explicit discontent with his Unionist policy.⁶⁷ She returned to the capital after Michael VIII's death and founded two monasteries in the city.⁶⁸ It is reasonable to think that she did not stop expressing her thoughts about the current politics after Michael VIII's death. A monastery might have provided her with everything she needed: an *oikos* for the rest of her life and a stage on which she could express her opinion about the current religious or political situation. The cries of Eirene Choumnaina to have her spiritual father visit her or hosting an abdicated patriarch in the monastery are all testimonies to how female founders expressed themselves and increased their visibility in Constantinople. Byzantine court culture was limiting for women, therefore, they had to – and they did – find another venue to express themselves and leave their names.⁶⁹

Conclusions

Any city is a social and organic formation; so is a cityscape. Each and every building constructed in a city alters this cityscape, but in return, the building itself gains

⁶⁶ Angela Constantinides Hero, *A Woman's Spiritual Quest for Spiritual Guidance: The Correspondence of Princess Irene Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina* (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1986).

⁶⁷ Alexander Riehle, “Καί σε προστάτιν ἐν αὐτοῖς τῆς αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψομεν σωτηρίας, Theodora Raulina als Stifterin und Patronin,” *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Lioba Theis, Margaret Mullett and Michael Grünbart (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), 299–315.

⁶⁸ Pachymeres ii. 132; Gaul, “All the Emperor's Men,” Riehle, “Theodora Raulina.”

⁶⁹ Liz James, “Making a Name: Reputation and Imperial Founding and Refounding in Constantinople,” *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Lioba Theis, Margaret Mullett, and Michael Grünbart (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), 63–72.

a different meaning from its interaction with the topography and surrounding buildings. Just as the density of monastic (re-)foundations in the northwestern part of Constantinople must have been a deliberate attempt to mark an area of the capital as “Komnenian,” (re-)founding monasteries all over the city in the early Palaiologan period was an attempt to re-claim the city as “Byzantine” after the re-conquest in 1261. Although the same level of information is not available for all the monastic foundations during the Komnenian period, the emperor was the prime patron of monumental buildings. The Palaiologan emperor’s role as a monastic patron, however, appears to have been shared by many other founders in the capital. Including monastic foundations in a discussion of marriage alliances and kinship networks, this article argues that marriage alliances resulted in an increase in the number of imperial in-laws who left their imprints on the monastic topography of Constantinople – although in both periods several courtiers who did not have marital ties to the ruling family were also able to found monasteries.

Marriage alliances, which were used cleverly by both the Komnenoi and the Palaiologoi, worked to the advantage of women to leave their imprint in the cityscape. The Komnenian women who were able to commission a monumental building project were exclusively empresses and empress-mothers, while in the early Palaiologan period, women of the extended family, i.e., sisters, cousins, and nieces, also became monastic patrons. These women, who, on the one hand, belonged to the ruling clan and who, on the other hand, were married to wealthy members of the aristocracy, must have enjoyed significant power. Although it was a different kind of power than the political power a high-status man could exercise at the emperor’s court, it still enabled female founders to leave their materialized imprints on the cityscape and express themselves from a privatized venue in a political and public arena.