Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)
Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture

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Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)
Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture

Edited by
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# Contents

Peter Barnet, Helen C. Evans  
**FOREWORD** vi  
Sarah T. Brooks  
**PREFACE** viii  

Map: Byzantium and Its Neighbors, 1261–1557 xii  

Thomas F. Mathews  
*Icons and the Religious Experience* 2  

David Jacoby  
*Late Byzantium between the Mediterranean and Asia: Trade and Material Culture* 20  

Angeliki E. Laiou  
*Byzantium and the Neighboring Powers: Small-State Policies and Complexities* 42  

Robert F. Taft, S.J.  
*The Living Icon: Touching the Transcendent in Palaiologan Iconography and Liturgy* 54  

Maria Mavroudi  
*Exchanges with Arabic Writers during the Late Byzantine Period* 62  

Sophia Kalopissi-Verti  
*Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium during the Palaiologan Period* 76  

Vassilios Kidonopoulos  
*The Urban Physiognomy of Constantinople from the Latin Conquest through the Palaiologan Era* 98  

Nancy Patterson Ševčenko  
*The Monastery of Mount Sinai and the Cult of Saint Catherine* 118  

Hans Belting  
*Dandolo’s Dreams: Venetian State Art and Byzantium* 138  

Antony Eastmond  
*Art and Frontiers between Byzantium and the Caucasus* 154  

Donald Ostrowski  
*“Moscow the Third Rome” as Historical Ghost* 170  

Yuri Pyatnitsky  
*Byzantine Palaiologan Icons in Medieval Russia* 180  

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When Michael VIII Palaiologos recaptured Constantinople and restored Byzantine rule in the year 1261, the reconstituted empire was confined to parts of Asia Minor, Thrace, Macedonia, and the Peloponnese. Large tracts of formerly imperial lands remained under Latin, mainly Venetian, rule. The Palaiologoi thus reigned over a relatively small territory. This essay, based primarily on extant material, is geographically confined to the lands recovered by the Byzantines and is chronologically bound by the rule of the Palaiologoi, that is, from 1261 to 1453. Although Byzantium was plagued by political and financial troubles during this period, artistic production of every type flourished: mosaics, wall and icon painting, book illumination, and the minor arts. The purpose of the following discussion is, on the one hand, to investigate the identity and social position of these art patrons and, on the other, to evaluate the patrons’ impact on art production.

Dedictory inscriptions and donor portraits, in addition to written sources, indicate that patronage in the Palaiologan period may be roughly classified into four categories: the imperial, aristocratic, and ecclesiastical (including monastic) classes as well as the nonelite population.

**IMPERIAL PATRONAGE**

The founder of the dynasty, Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259–82), was very active in bestowing imperial commissions. After he recovered Constantinople, he faced a desolate capital whose monuments had suffered extensive damage because of the Latin occupation. The historian Pachymeres relates that Michael restored those parts of Hagia Sophia altered by the Latins and that he presented the Great Church with sacred gifts, including liturgical textiles and vessels. It is generally accepted, moreover, that Michael VIII commissioned the panel of the Deesis in the south gallery of Hagia Sophia in gratitude for the recovery of Constantinople. In the plasticity of its figures and fine modeling of its faces, this exquisite mosaic reflects a desire to revive classical models that is in accordance with the ideology of Michael VIII concerning the restoration of the empire. In addition, his renovation program in the capital included the repair of churches and monasteries that are no longer standing.

Michael VIII pursued the same policy of restoring religious foundations in the newly recovered Byzantine provinces. His efigy, depicted on the south facade of the church of Panagia Mavriotissa near Kastoria, together with that of Alexios I Komnenos, testifies to his support of this monastery. The juxtaposition of the first emperor of the Palaiologoi with the founder of the Komnenian dynasty aimed at underlining Michael’s descent from the Komnenoi, as well as establishing and legitimizing his authority in the recently restored province. Moreover, the family portrait of Michael in the exonarthex of the monastery church of the Virgin in Apollonia, near the Adriatic coast, and an imperial portrait (recently identified as Michael) painted in the rock-cut church of Saint Erasmus near Ohrid bear witness to imperial
renovation of religious foundations in the newly recovered northwestern provinces after the expulsion of the Latins. All these donations seem to reflect Michael VIII’s belief in the importance of restoring the ecumenical character of the Byzantine Empire.

Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) continued his father’s building and reconstruction program. Gradually, however, the increasing financial problems of the state limited imperial patronage, which was mostly confined to serving concrete needs. Characteristic of the reduced goals of imperial sponsorship is the donation of Michael IX, co-emperor with Andronikos II, who offered to pay the expenses for restoring the dilapidated roof of the basilica of Saint Demetrios in Thessalonike, according to an inscription written on a pier of the church in 1319–20. The difficulties confronting the imperial budget after the mid-fourteenth century are reflected in the public subscription organized by Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (r. 1347–54) in order to raise funds for reconstructing sections of the dome and the eastern semidome of Hagia Sophia, which had collapsed in 1346. The mosaics in the eastern arch were later completed by John V Palaiologos (r. 1341–91).

The financial shortcomings of the state in Palaiologan times are also apparent in the output of luxuriously illuminated manuscripts. It has been argued that Palaiologan emperors commissioned only a few manuscripts, often with a specific purpose in mind. The codex of Dionysios Areopagites in the Louvre is a characteristic example. A manuscript of the 1330s, it was reused and upgraded by Manuel II (r. 1391–1425) for presentation to the abbey of Saint Denis, near Paris, on the occasion of a diplomatic mission in 1408 (see fig. 42).

A different policy was followed by John VI Kantakouzenos, who commissioned a large number of manuscripts. Aside from the luxurious codex, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (ca. 1370–75), containing the theological works he wrote after his retirement (fig. 43), twenty-six sumptuous codices commissioned by the same emperor were presented to and are still in the possession of the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos. One of the most precious among these is the codex Skeuophylakion 16, a Gospel Book written in the Hodegon Monastery in Constantinople in 1340–41.
which includes superb portraits of the Four Evangelists. It is evident, however, that Kantakouzenos’s precious gifts to the Vatopedi Monastery did not reflect state policy but rather the private needs of the emperor, who desired to retire to the monastery.

Certain precious portable objects that have survived from the period also reveal that the early Palaiologan emperors commissioned works as gifts in the service of imperial policy. These include the altar cloth offered by Michael VIII to the Genoese on the occasion of the treaty signed at Nymphaion in 1261 and the epitaphios now in the National History Museum in Sofia (fig. 44), a valuable example of Byzantine court embroidery, which was offered by Andronikos II as a gift to the cathedral church of Saint Sophia in Ohrid.

Female imperial patronage also seems to have been significant during the Palaiologan period. In the last decade of the thirteenth century, Theodora (d. 1303), widow of Michael VIII Palaiologos, restored the Lips Monastery in Constantinople and added to it a second church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist; she also renovated the convent of the Holy Anargyroi. A group of luxurious late-thirteenth-century biblical and liturgical manuscripts, earlier assigned to the scriptorium of the princess Theodora Palaiologina Raoulaina (d. 1300), a niece of Michael VIII, on the basis of monograms on one of them (Vat. gr. 1158), has recently been attributed to the dowager empress Theodora. In addition, an elegant psalter in the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos, executed in 1346 in the scriptorium of the Hodegon Monastery, was commissioned by Anna of Savoy, second wife of Andronikos III. The manuscript was written and decorated after Andronikos’s death in 1341 and before Anna was compelled to recognize Kantakouzenos as co-emperor with her son John V in
A further example of female imperial patronage is offered by a silver-relief cross, now in the Dionysiou Monastery on Mount Athos, commissioned in the first half of the fifteenth century by the empress Helena Palaiologina, wife of Manuel II and mother of the last Byzantine emperor.22

In sum, it seems that after the reconstruction program of the first two Palaiologan emperors, imperial patronage diminished as a result of the financial difficulties experienced by the state. Furthermore, two distinct motivations appear to have prompted imperial donations. Most, including restorations and diplomatic gifts, served the requirements of the state, whereas others reflect private needs and thus are closer to aristocratic intentions for commissioning works of art.

ARISTOCRATIC PATRONAGE
As Angeliki Laiou has pointed out, it was part of the ideology of the Palaiologan aristocracy that its members actively participated in intellectual and artistic life as patrons, commissioners, and recipients.24 The following examines select works of art commissioned by the high, middle, and minor provincial aristocracy.

Michael Doukas Glabas Tarchaneiotes, a rich landowner and patron of literature and art, became before 1300 protostrator, one of the highest offices in the Late Byzantine military hierarchy.25 Two significant monuments sponsored by Glabas and his wife, Maria, have survived. In 1303 Glabas and his wife renovated the small tenth-century chapel of Saint Euthymios, attached to the great basilica of Saint Demetrios in Thessalonike.26 The dedication to Saint Euthymios, founder of Palestinian monasticism, is thought to reflect the ecclesiastical policy of Emperor Andronikos II, who was attempting to reconcile with monastic leaders after the controversy caused by the Unionist policy of his father, Michael VIII. The monastic context of the chapel's program and function has been especially stressed in current scholarship.27 The three-dimensional perception of space and figures and the emphasis on the volume and plastic rendering of the faces place these wall paintings among the best representatives of the so-called Heavy Style. Reaching its peak about 1300, this style emphasized the stereometric rendering of figures and architectural complexes. One of the two painters who worked on the frescoes in the chapel has been identified with the legendary Manuel Panselinos, who according to a later tradition painted the church of the Protaton on Mount Athos.28

The second instance of Michael Glabas's patronage was the renovation of the monastery of Saint Mary Pammakaristos in Constantinople.29 Between 1315 and 1320, after Glabas's death, his widow commissioned a funerary chapel in memory of her husband. Four inscriptions, located inside the parekklesion and on its facade, commemorate the patrons. The mosaics of the chapel embody the finest qualities of the so-called Second Palaiologan Style, which flourished in the first decades of the fourteenth century. Their compositions are characterized by a restrained classicism, and their figures by a sense of moderation and elegance. The sumptuous mosaic decoration, the ostentatious dedicatory inscriptions, and the pompous epigrams that accompanied the now-lost funeral portraits of Glabas and members of his family give an idea, as Cyril Mango has observed, of the “aggressively aristocratic tone” of a typical monastery patronized by an aristocrat in the Palaiologan period.30

Theodore Metochites (1270–1332) was another prominent patron belonging to the high aristocracy. Entrusted by Andronikos II with the important office of logothetes tou genikou, he renovated the katholikon, or main church, of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople from about 1316 to 1321 and commissioned the capital’s best workshops to decorate the church and narthexes with mosaics and to adorn his funerary chapel with wall paintings.31 Dressed in a sumptuous garment, he is depicted in the esonarthex above the Royal Door kneeling in front of
the enthroned Christ and offering him a model of the church (fig. 45). The entire decoration displays an accomplished technique as well as a close familiarity with both the classical heritage and the ecclesiastical tradition. Metochites’ personal intervention is particularly evident in the development of the iconographic program for his funerary chapel, an area in which patrons did not feel confined by dogmatic schemes. The sophisticated iconography and style, the extravagance of the materials used, and the exquisite decoration are characteristic of the refined tastes of a fourteenth-century aristocrat in the capital.

Aside from the previously mentioned extant examples, written sources attest to a great number of donations by the high aristocracy in Constantinople around the end of the thirteenth century and in the first decades of the fourteenth. George Akropolites and his son, Constantine, who both held the office of megas logothetes (the highest rank in the civil administration), restored the monastery of the Anastasis in the 1260s or 1270s. Nikephoros Choumnos renovated the monastery of the Virgin Gorgoepekoos between 1294 and 1308, and his daughter, Eirene Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina, restored the monastery of Christ Philanthropos after 1307. Numerous and noteworthy are the donations of members of the ruling Palaiologan family. Maria-Martha, sister of the emperor Michael VIII, founded in the 1260s the monastery of Kyra Martha. In the 1280s Theodora Palaiologina Raoulaina renovated the monastery of Saint Andrew in Krisei. Another niece of the same emperor, Theodora Palaiologina Synadene, founded the nunnery of Our Lady of Certain Hope about 1300.12

The numerous aristocratic religious foundations mentioned in the sources and the exquisite quality and sumptuousness of the monuments preserved testify to the great prominence and extent of aristocratic patronage in the early decades of Palaiologan rule. It was apparently regarded as very
prestigious for the high aristocracy, including members of the ruling family, to found new churches (mainly monasteries) or renovate earlier foundations. Significantly, these activities were mainly confined to Constantinople. After the mid-fourteenth century, however, high aristocratic patronage diminished in frequency and wealth owing to the adverse effects of the second civil war, the conquests of the Serbs, and the military advance of the Ottoman Turks.\textsuperscript{33} 

As a consequence a shift may be observed: members of the powerful aristocratic families redirected their patronage from Constantinople to the despotate of Morea and principally to its capital, Mistra.\textsuperscript{34} According to his monograms Manuel Kantakouzenos, son of the emperor John VI and first despot of Mistra (r. 1349–80), built a church, known today as Saint Sophia, close to the palace. This church has been identified with that of Christ Zoodotes (Life-giving), which sources indicate was founded by Manuel.\textsuperscript{35} Stylistically the mural decoration of Saint Sophia and its chapels bears a close resemblance to the frescoes of the church of the Virgin Peribleptos, founded most probably between 1365 and 1374 by Isabelle de Lusignan, wife of the despot Manuel.\textsuperscript{36} The wall paintings of both churches—Christ Zoodotes and the Virgin Peribleptos—are attributed to the same workshop, and their style reflects a classicizing, idealizing tendency, which is in accordance with aristocratic taste during the period.

The last prominent dated example of high aristocratic patronage before the fall of Constantinople is the church of the Panagia Pantanassa at Mistra, founded in the year 1428 by John Phrangopoulos, who held the high offices of protevstrator and katholikos mesazon. The Pantanassa’s patron, who stood at the pinnacle of the despotate’s military and administrative echelons, propagated his name and titles in several painted or engraved monograms and inscriptions.\textsuperscript{37} In the frescoes of the Pantanassa, the antique heritage and the older Byzantine tradition mingle with new principles regarding the rendering of space and its relationship to the figures, as well as the treatment of color and light in modeling both flesh and drapery. A tendency to look back to models of the golden period of aristocratic patronage—the beginning of the fourteenth century—is evident. The imposing size of the monument...
and its accomplished decoration bespeak the “semi-imperial aspirations” of the donor, as Doula Mouriki has observed.\(^3\) A highly ambitious work, the Pantanassa represents the last brilliant example, before the fall of Constantinople, of the splendid art cultivated by the high aristocracy during the final phase of Byzantium.

An examination of illuminated manuscripts leads to similar conclusions regarding the role of the high aristocrat as patron. In fact, most of the sumptuous illuminated manuscripts in the Late Byzantine period were commissioned by such persons. Among the examples are the codex containing the works of Hippocrates in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (gr. 2144), which includes the portrait of its patron, the megas doux, or commander of the fleet, Alexios Apokaukos (text, ca. 1338; illuminations, 1341–45) (fig. 46), and the famous typikon of the monastery of Our Lady of Certain Hope, Constantinople, ca. 1300 (with later additions). Tempera and gold on vellum. Lincoln College, Oxford (Ms. gr. 35, fols. 1v–2r).

\(^{38}\) The latter was written about 1300 by the first patroness of the monastery, Theodora Synadene, and was completed by her daughter Euphrosyne. Its rich gallery of historical portraits contains likenesses of the noble founder, her husband, her parents and other family members, and members of the monastic community (fig. 47).

The Palaiologan icons that have survived present a similar pattern of patronage by the high aristocracy. An icon of the Virgin in the State Tret’iakov Gallery, Moscow, from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, includes portraits of the donors,

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Fig. 47. Constantine Palaiologos and Eirene, Parents of the Foundress of the Convent of Our Lady of Certain Hope (left); Theodora with Her Husband, John Synadenos (right), from the typikon of the Convent of Our Lady of Certain Hope, Constantinople, ca. 1300 (with later additions). Tempera and gold on vellum. Lincoln College, Oxford (Ms. gr. 35, fols. 1v–2r)
Constantine Akropolites (d. 1324) and his wife, Maria, on its silver revetment (fig. 48). Another example is the icon of Christ Pantokrator in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, that was a donation, according to the inscriptions, of two brothers, both of whom were depicted on the margin of the icon (fig. 49). These high-ranking officials—the megas stratopedarches Alexios and the megas primikerios John—founded the Pantokrator Monastery on Mount Athos in 1363. The gilded-silver revetment of an icon of the Virgin Artokosta, today in the church of San Samuele in Venice, was donated by the despot John Kantakouzenos (r. 1380–83), whose portrait is included in the revetment, which was restored about 1425. The icon comes from a monastery of the same name in Kynouria, in the Peloponnese. A final example, an icon of Saints Peter and Paul in the treasury of the monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, was commissioned in 1417, according to an inscription on the revetment, by the despot of Thessalonike, Andronikos Palaiologos, son of the emperor Manuel II.

Additionally, in the field of the portable arts, the precious gilded-silver and jasper chalice of Manuel Kantakouzenos Palaiologos, despot of Morea, now in the treasury of the Vatopedi Monastery, is typical of the superb quality and refined taste of high aristocratic commissions.

The donations of the high aristocracy clearly occupy a dominating position in the Palaiologan period and represent the avant-garde in artistic developments, particularly in the dissemination of new stylistic trends to the provinces. Members of the middle aristocracy, who disposed of sufficient financial means and held offices ranking in the middle of the administrative and military echelons, also dispensed patronage, as exemplified by three monuments. The church of the Virgin Peribleptos at Ohrid, later dedicated to Saint Kliment, was founded in 1294–95 by the megas hetairiarches Progonos Sgouros (fig. 50). Its wall paintings, among the most
representative examples of the Heavy Style, are the work of two famous painters from Thessalonike, Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, who signed their names on several inconspicuous parts of the frescoes. Both were later hired by the Serbian king Stefan Uroš II Milutin to serve in his court and paint the churches he founded.

The church of Christ at Veroia in Macedonia, consecrated in the year 1314–15, was sponsored by Xenos Psalidas and his wife, Euphrosyne. Although they did not belong to the great aristocratic families of Byzantium, the sponsors had the financial means and sophisticated taste to choose Kallierges, “the best painter in all of Thessaly,” according to the dedicatory inscription.

The last example of a monumental donation by the middle aristocracy is the church of Saint Nicholas at Platsa in the Mani, in the Peloponnese, which was renovated in 1337–38 by Konstantinos Spanes, tzamos (military commander) of the mountainous area of Mount Taygetos in Laconia. The donation of Spanes surpasses in quality all the contemporary monuments of the Mani owing to the selection of an excellent workshop, probably summoned from Mistra. The dynamic figures, dramatic expressions, and audacious white highlights applied to the uniform ocher flesh tones with bold, rapid strokes reflect the influence of a progressive, expressionistic style that probably originated in Constantinople and...
radiated out to the provinces. The quality of the frescoes harmonizes with the sophisticated content of the dedicatory inscription, its eminent placement, and its scholarly, metrical language.

In certain respects, these three monuments, which in my opinion represent donations of the middle aristocracy in the provinces, seem to copy works sponsored by the high aristocracy, but they differ in using the technique of fresco rather than that of the more expensive mosaic. They are distinguished by the selection of excellent painters who came from great artistic centers and who were familiar with the newest stylistic developments.

With regard to the portable arts, similar conclusions can be drawn from the few extant objects that may be assigned to the middle aristocracy. One of these is the epitaphios of Nikolaos Eudaimonoianes, a member of a mighty aristocratic family in the Morea (fig. 51), a fine embroidery probably executed in a Peloponnesian workshop in 1406–7. An example of a donation that can be attributed to the minor provincial aristocracy is the church of the Virgin Chrysaphitissa at Chrysapha in Laconia on the Peloponnese, which was renovated in 1288–89 by a certain sevastos Michael and his wife, Zoe. The scholarly text of the inscription, written in metrical verse, and the effigies of the donors in the narthex indicate the aspirations of the patrons. Nevertheless, the linearity of the frescoes, the flat rendering of the figures, and a somewhat naive approach reveal the provincial taste of the donor.

Of analogous quality is the church of Saint Kyriake, near Marathos in the Mani, which on stylistic evidence can be dated to about 1300 (fig. 52). Although the donor couple is depicted in a prominent place (the apse on both sides of the Virgin Blachernitissa), the humble dimensions of the church and the mediocre quality of its decoration indicate the limited financial means of the minor provincial aristocracy as well as the meager artistic resources available to them.
ECCLESIASTICAL AND MONASTIC PATRONAGE
Ecclesiastical patronage was of great importance during the Palaiologan period, especially in Thessalonike and more broadly in Macedonia.54 The church of the Holy Apostles in Thessalonike is a typical example.55 Monograms and inscriptions, carved in marble or made of brick, provide the name and rank of the patron, Patriarch Niphon of Constantinople (r. 1310/11–14), who had the church built and decorated with mosaics. The ambulatory and narthex wall paintings were sponsored after 1328 by the second ktetor (donor) of the church, the abbot Paul, who is depicted in the narthex, kneeling in front of the Virgin. The impressive building, the prominent placement of the patron’s inscription and monograms on the facades, and the close stylistic affinities with the decoration of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople (ca. 1316–21) indicate that the patriarchal foundation in Thessalonike was in every way the equal of the lavish donations of the high aristocracy in its quality, sumptuousness, and taste.

Among the most important ecclesiastical foundations of the period was the church of the Metropolis (Saint Demetrios) in Mistra,56 founded soon after the Frankish surrender of the city’s castle to the Byzantines in 1261, during the first years of Michael VIII’s reign. The Metropolis’s wall paintings were executed gradually between 1270 and 1320 on the initiative of several successive metropolitans of Lacedaemonia and thus represent different styles. An early phase of the Heavy Style is attested in the wall paintings of the funerary chapel of Metropolitan Eugenios (fig. 53), in the diakonikon, with its unique eschatological composition, and in certain frescoes in the nave. The same style, at its peak, is reflected in the nave paintings assigned to Metropolitan Nikephoros Moschopoulos, whose patronage is attested in inscriptions engraved in the church.57

Fig. 52. Portrait of an anonymous foundress, ca. 1300. Fresco, apse of Church of Saint Kyriake, Marathos (Mani), Greece

Fig. 53. The Metropolitan Bishop Eugenios (detail), ca. 1270–80. Fresco, diakonikon of the Metropolis Church (Saint Demetrios), Mistra, Greece
Of Constantinopolitan quality and taste is the church of the Aphendiko in Mistra, dedicated to the Virgin Hodegetria and founded about 1310 by the abbot Pachomios. Pachomios had a close relationship with the emperor Andronikos II, who issued a series of chrysobulls granting privileges in favor of the monastery. The texts of four of the chrysobulls, issued between 1314/15 and 1322, are painted on the walls of the church’s southwestern chapel. For his funerary chapel, at the northwestern corner of the narthex, Pachomios ordered a unique composition that is thought to be the pictorial expression of a prayer (nekrosoimion theotokion) said during the funeral service. Accordingly,
Fig. 55. The Nun Theotime in *Prosleynesis* before the Enthroned Virgin and Child, from a Greek psalter. Byzantine, ca. 1274. Tempera and gold on vellum. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Gr. 61, fol. 256v)
Patronage and Artistic Production

groups of apostles, prophets, the righteous, and saints join their prayers with the supplications of the Virgin and John the Baptist, addressing them toward Christ for the salvation of the patron, who is also depicted in the chapel. The accomplished frescoes reveal affinities with Constantinopolitan painting.

When compared with the churches sponsored by donors ranking high in the ecclesiastical echelons, the donations of simple monks or priests, scattered throughout the Byzantine provinces, are much more modest and usually do not surpass the level of provincial art. One example is the church of the Virgin Zooodchos Pege Eleousa in Geraki, in the Peloponnese, commissioned by two priests in 1430–31 (fig. 54). Ecclesiastical and monastic donors are furthermore attested for manuscripts, such as a Greek psalter (ca. 1274) in the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, sponsored by the nun Theotime, who is depicted prostrated before the enthroned Virgin (fig. 55).

PATRONAGE OF THE NONELITE POPULATION

Although, according to epigraphic evidence, those who were not among the elite did act as donors individually, with their families, or in collaboration with two or three others, the usual patronage pattern for this group during the period is collective sponsorship. The main evidence for this pattern comes from dedicatory inscriptions in humble churches of the Mani. A representative example occurs in the church of Saint John the Baptist at Megale Kastania, which probably dates to the mid-thirteenth century. Without listing individual names, the dedicatory inscription mentions that the church was built and decorated at the expense of both the notable inhabitants (prokritoi) of the village and the common people (koinos laos).

Further evidence is offered by the church of the Holy Anargyroi at Kepoula, dated to 1265. Of the twelve donors and their families mentioned in the inscription, all residents of Kepoula, three are priests and one is a lector (anagnostes) of the church and a notary (nomikos), both low offices in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The humble offerings of these donors, ranging from a quarter of a gold coin to one gold coin—with the exception of the lector and notary, who donated eight gold coins—provide insight into the poor means at the disposal of the populace in a Byzantine province during the period.

Another inscription of similar context is again located in the Mani, in the church of the Archangel Michael at Polemitas, and is dated to the year 1278. It contains a long list of the names of the sponsors, more than thirty persons with their families, including three priests, a lector, and a nun, all inhabitants of the village. Their donations consisted mainly of arable land (choraphia) of a very modest extent and olive trees, offered in common by relatives. Interestingly, the dedicatory inscriptions at Kepoula and Polemitas name the fresco painters, who were villagers themselves originating from neighboring communities.

Artistically, the mural paintings of these churches are mediocre (figs. 56, 57). They belong to a conservative provincial stylistic trend that was very widespread in the Greek provinces, whether under Byzantine or Latin rule, during the second half of the thirteenth century. Linearity, simplification, and Komnenian references mingled with echoes of contemporary progressive tendencies are the main features of this trend.

In sum, the monuments erected by the rural populations of the Byzantine provinces, whose patronage pattern is based mostly on the collaboration of large numbers of lay and clerical members of the same community, are humble buildings erected with modest materials and decorated with wall paintings of a rather poor, provincial quality.

The following general conclusions can be drawn regarding patronage in the Late Byzantine period and its effect on artistic production. The financial means and social
Fig. 56. Saint Kyriake (detail), 1265. Fresco, Church of the Holy Anargyroi, Kepoula (Mani), Greece

Fig. 57. Saint Therapon (detail), 1278. Fresco, Church of the Archangel Michael, Polemitas (Mani), Greece
position of patrons had a direct impact on the size of the monument sponsored, the lavishness of its materials, the selection of the workshops, and the display of the patron’s name and titles with monograms, inscriptions, and portraits. The education of the donor is reflected in the iconographic program and its theological implications, as well as in the metrical, sometimes pompous, inscriptions.

Imperial patronage during the reigns of the first two Palaiologan emperors, Michael VIII and Andronikos II, expressed the rulers’ policy of restoring the state and its heritage; thereafter, as patronage was reduced owing to financial difficulties, it primarily served state diplomacy. Members of the high aristocracy took the lead in sponsoring artistic production from the very beginning of the period. The foundation of churches and monasteries, aiming at the salvation of the souls of their commissioners, is in harmony with the ideology of the donors and their desire to display their wealth and social standing. The foundations of the high aristocracy, distinguished by their size, quality, and sumptuous materials, were of primary importance in propagating the leading stylistic trends. Sponsorship by high officials of the clergy competes in quality with that of the high aristocracy. The middle aristocracy cannot rival the donations of the great magnates in regard to the cost of materials. Patrons at this level had sufficient means, however, to serve their ambitions by selecting excellent painters trained in the empire’s urban centers and were therefore familiar with the most up-to-date artistic trends. In this way, the middle aristocracy had its share in shaping artistic developments.

The donations of the local minor aristocracy share the same cultural context and artistic taste as those of the nonelite. The difference seems to be only financial and lies in the fact that local aristocrats could afford to sponsor a church individually, while the others usually raised collective funds for the construction of a church. The foundations of the minor clergy and the nonelite do not seem to take any part in the evolution of art. They are of provincial character, humble means, and mediocre quality. Retrospective and simplified features in their mural decoration intermingle with echoes of the official monumental art.

Finally, patterns of patronage similar to those in Byzantium were adopted in neighboring countries, including Serbia and Bulgaria, as well as in the Greek independent states that emerged after the Latin conquest of 1204. Imperial portraits, such as that of the Bulgarian ruler Ivan Alexander and his family receiving God’s blessing in a sumptuous Gospel Book of 1355–56 (see fig. 39), and the portraits of the Serbian kings, tsars, and patriarchs repeatedly depicted in their significant foundations clearly reveal an adaptation and further development of Byzantine patterns. These works thus reflect the prestige of Byzantium and the impact of its culture and ideology on the neighboring rival countries that prospered during the empire’s last phase.


Another obvious example of Manuel’s policy of reusing precious works in order to serve his diplomatic policy is the icon of the Virgin in the Diiuseum, Freising. Originally commissioned by the deacon Manuel Dishypatos, who was later metropolitan of Thessalonike, from 1258 to 1261, it was overpainted in order to be presented by Manuel to Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan sometime about 1399–1402; see Maria Vassilaki, “Praying for the Salvation of the Empire?” in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Aldershot, Hampshire, 2005), pp. 265–74.


29. Belting, Mango, and Mouriki, The Mosaics. See also Kidonopoulos, Bauten, pp. 80–86.


49. Doula Mouriki, Hoi toichographies tou Hagiou Nikolaou stin Plata tis Manés [The frescoes of Hagios
Nikolaos in Plata in the Mani (Athens, 1975).


54. Millet, Monuments byzantins de Mistra, pls. 64–87;


56. Millet, Monuments byzantins de Mistra, pls. 92–103;

61. Georgion Demetrokallès, Geraki: Höi toichographies tôn naion tôn kastrou [Geraki: The frescoes of the churches of the castle] (Athens, 2003), pp. 100–118. See also the church of the Phaneromenes at Phrangoúliamaka in the Mani, the wall decoration of which, in its second phase, was sponsored by a group of priests in 1322–23; Chara Kóstantinidí, Ἡ ναος των Φανερωμενων στα Φράγκουλιακά της Μανι [The Church of Phaneromenes at Phrangoúliamaka in the Inner Mani] (Athens, 1998).
63. On communal and cooperative patronage, see Cutler, “Art in Byzantine Society” (as in note 2 above), pp. 760–63.
64. Phané Drosoumíni, Scholia stis toichographies tòs ekklesias ton Ηαγια Ιωαννου ton Prodomon sto Megáli Kastáni Manís [Remarks on the frescoes of the church of Saint John Prodomos at Megalé Kastania in the Mani], Bibliothéke tès en Athénavhs Archaeologikês Hetairias, 98 (Athens, 1982); on the inscription, see also Kalopissi-Verti, Dedicatory Inscriptions, pp. 65–66 (with previous bibliography).
66. The total cost for the construction and decoration of the barrel-vaulted, single-nave church, which measures 3.95 by 2.43 meters (13 x 8 feet), amounted to fourteen and a half gold coins.