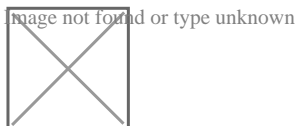


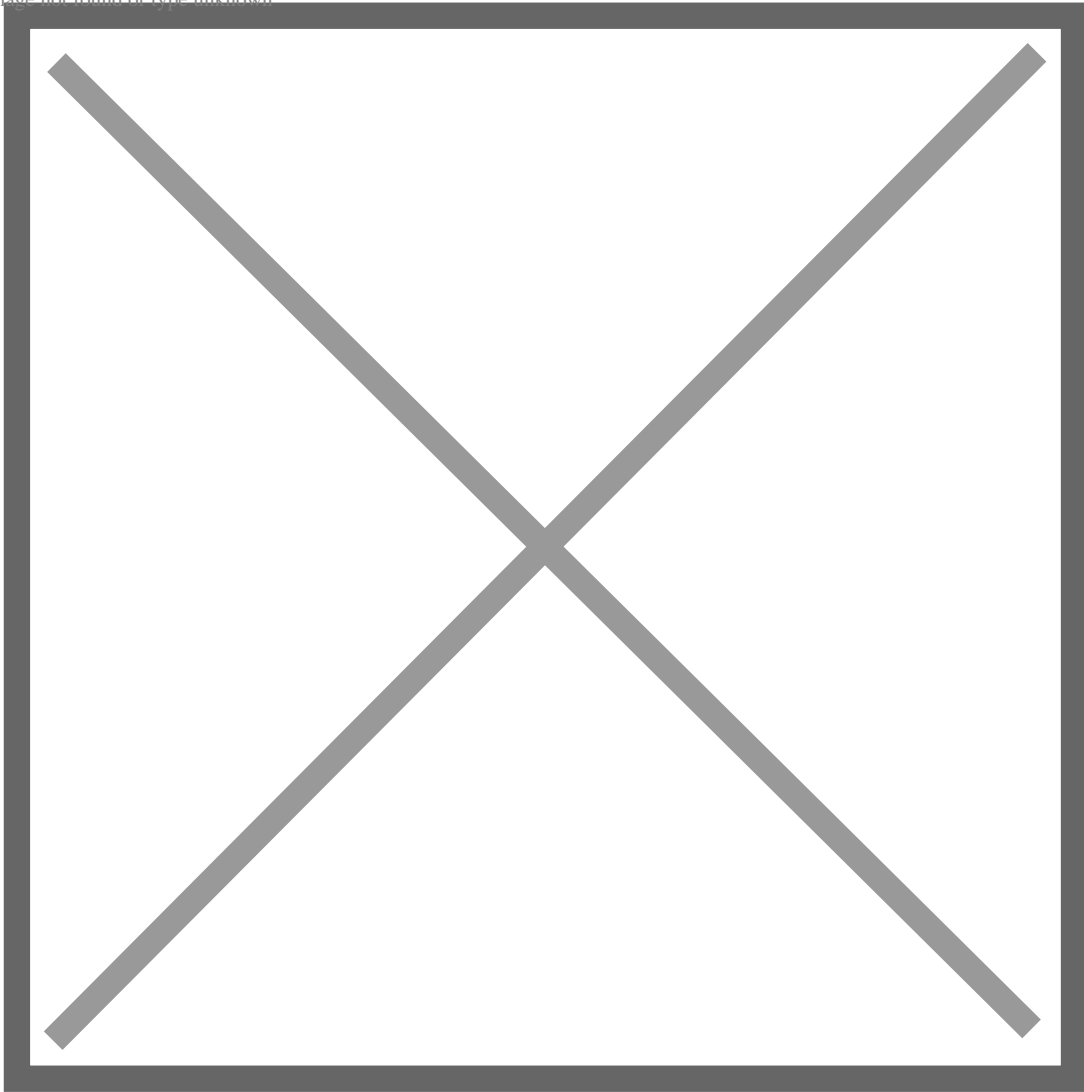
From Survival to Recovery (16th century - 1830) (Kriton Chrysochoidis)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



The last decades of the 16th century saw the beginning of a new period in the history of the Monastery, a period marked by distinct economic recovery and an increase in its influence which were to continue until the War of Independence of 1821. Donations from Russian princes became markedly more frequent, while systematic visits by Vatopaidi monks to their territories for the collection of alms began. Most important, however, was the beginning of the annexation of large metochia in the Danubian countries, while in Turkish-held regions new metochia were acquired and the existing ones were extended and their potential exploited. Building within the Monastery complex became more frequent and its spiritual and cultural influence made itself felt, particularly in the Greek East. In spite of all this, economic crises and difficulties continued to occur from time to time.

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In 1584, Tsar Ivan donated to the Monastery, through its emissaries in Moscow, 820 roubles, a hundred of which were intended for the infirmary, in memory of his dead father. His envoy to the Holy Mountain, charged with the distribution of alms for the same reason to the other monasteries, Ivan Mes'enin, gave to an unnamed skete near the Monastery, which had 80 monks, 22 roubles⁵⁵. A few years later, in 1589, Tsar Theodore Ivanovich gave permission for the first time, as far as we know, to a Vatopaidi monk, the Ecclesiarch* Grigorios, to enter Russian territory to collect alms for the Monastery. This permission was renewed in 1627⁵⁶. In 1656, sacred relics (a piece of the True Cross and the skull of St John Chrysostom) were taken to Moscow and remained there until after 1688. This was the occasion for the expression of even greater support for the Monastery. Funds were granted in 1688 for the building of a church and the repair of the aqueduct⁵⁷. The favour shown by Orthodox Russia was to continue in the next century, but it was not to take the form of the dedication or creation of any metochi. The Russian authorities, however, gave favoured treatment to the Vatopaidi estates in Bessarabia after

1812 and in the decades which followed, when the region was annexed to Russian territory.

It was in the Danubian principalities, and particularly in Moldavia, that the impressive dedications of metochia took place⁵⁸. The first major metochi was attached to Vatopaidi a little before 1606. Anna, widow of the Great Chancellor Ioannis Golia, dedicated to it the monastery which bore his name at Jassy. Prince John Mogila confirmed the donation with a wax bull. By the early 18th century the Monasteries of Pretsista (1646), Barboi (1669), St Nicholas of Myra (1689) and Rakitsasa (Raketosi, 1729) had been added. In the early 19th century large estates in neighbouring Bessarabia were already in the possession of the Monastery. Successive donations of churches, sketes, agricultural and urban properties by princes and officials of the princely court, nobles and clergy to these foundations, purchase and productive management made these metochia, and by extension the Monastery, into an all-powerful economic organisation with prestige and a multiplicity of influence⁵⁹.

The importance of the Danubian monasteries-metochia for Vatopaidi was such that after the mid 17th century it was not ordinary priest-monks who in the case of many of them were appointed as abbots and latter as general inspectors of all the estates in the area, but bishops, consecrated titular metropolitans or bishops for this purpose. Thus, in 1670, the Prohegumenos of Vatopaidi and Abbot of the Golia Monastery, Grigorios, was consecrated Metropolitan of Laodicea and undertook the duties of general inspector of the estates. He it was who in 1689 became the first Abbot of the newly dedicated Monastery of St Nicholas of Myra. Among his successor was Cosmas, Metropolitan of Laodicea, who, as Abbot of St Nicholas of Myra in Moldavia, was consecrated in 1705⁶⁰. He was succeeded by the former Bishop of Nyssa, Neophytos, and after his death in 1739, the Abbot of Golia, Gerasimos, Bishop of Sevasteia. From 1768 onwards, the general inspectors of the metochia were consecrated with the title of Metropolitan of Eirinoupolis and Vatopaidi. The first of these whom we hear of was the vigorous Prohegumenos of the Monastery Sophronios, while in 1802, the priest-monk of Vatopaidi Grigorios was consecrated at the Monastery by the former Patriarch of Constantinople Grigorios V⁶¹. The boundless economic scope for action which the general inspectors acquired during their management of the estates proved beneficial not only for the Monastery itself, but also for the Greek nation in general. As examples might be mentioned the building of the Paramythia Chapel in 1678 and the gift of valuable vestments and vessels by Grigorios of Laodicea and the financial aid to the Athonite Academy of 2,500 piastres in 1784 and a generous subsidy to the Monastery in 1786 by Sophronios of Eirinoupolis⁶². However, the figure who

exceeded everyone else in his generosity and in undertakings in support of culture and the national interests was Grigorios of Eirinoupolis. During the course of his long career he gave lavishly to Greek educational foundations, such as the Theological School of Chalki, the Greek school in his native Ephesus, and the schools of Sparta, while his financial support for the struggle for independence and in making good losses caused by the prolonged military operations was of the greatest importance⁶³.

In the Turkish-held regions of the east, from Belgrade to Pontus and Athens, the dedication to the Monastery of monasteries and churches by patriarchs, bishops and community leaders continued in this period. The purpose of the donors – the reconstitution and revival of these foundations – recurs as a constant motif in all the relevant documents.

In 1619, the Metropolitan of Trebizond Dionysios dedicated the monastic house (monydron) of St Gregory of Nyssa⁶⁴, while in 1626, the Monastery, in response to the request of the Metropolitan Serapheim and the clergy of Belgrade, agreed to undertake the oversight of a monastic house in this Serbian city⁶⁵. In 1635, Patriarch Kyrillos II, from Veria, annexed to Vatopaidi the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos at Mavros Molos near Constantinople. Two years later, however, on his recovery of the patriarchal throne, Cyril Loukaris, detached it from Vatopaidi and dedicated it to the Monastery of Iveron⁶⁶. In 1663, the priest Symeon, supplementing the dedication some two centuries earlier of monasteries at Meleniko to Vatopaidi, presented it with the monastic house of Our Lady Tambayia⁶⁷. Such donations continued in the 18th century. In 1758 the parishioners of the Church of St Demetrius the Younger in Athens, by the good offices of Metropolitan Anthimos, donated the Chapel of St Kyriaka as accommodation for Vatopaidi's 'travellers'⁶⁸, while in 1761 the Metropolitan of Mesimvria Anthimos sought to ensure from Vatopaidi the survival of the monastic house of St Nicholas in his province⁶⁹. In 1772 the monks of Vatopaidi set up a metochi on Samos, building there the Church of the Annunciation, and in 1789 the community leaders of Afousia donated the ruined monastic house of St John the Baptist⁷⁰. When we come to the early 19th century, we hear of the annexation of the monydron of St George at Voulgaro on Thasos (1808) and the Chapel of St Andrew at Arta⁷¹.

The dedication of monasteries and churches was almost always accompanied by the simultaneous gift of their, usually insignificant, property. Nevertheless, new donations, exchanges and purchases of estates, in which the leading part was played by the businesslike 'travellers' of the alms missions or the permanent

stewards, built up significant areas of property, which, even if they did not yet yield serious revenue for the Monastery, contributed to their own maintenance, thus increasing the spiritual influence of Vatopaidi.

All the agricultural metochia of any importance which the Monastery possessed in the late 16th century were retained during the following centuries. They were systematically put to use and extended by new purchases⁷². From Moudania in Asia Minor and the islands of the Aegean to Kalamata, new metochia were continually added to its property register⁷³. Although these metochia too seem to have been extended and enlarged after the original donation, the question remains of whether so great a spread of what were often small properties can have yielded anything worthwhile for the Monastery.

However, the upturn in Vatopaidi's fortunes observable from the late 16th century remains an undoubted fact. This made possible the undertaking of extensive work on the building complex of the Monastery. The frenzy of restoration, extension and the erection of new buildings – chapels, but also buildings to meet increasing everyday needs – inside and outside the Monastery, as well as the execution of artistic work, was gradually to increase, to be interrupted, though only temporarily, at the time of the Greek Revolution⁷⁴. Vigorous senior monks in the Monastery, abbots returning from the Danubian monasteries-metochia, monks of Vatopaidi who held high rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and retired prelates competed in carrying out improvements at this great monastery. In the 18th century two sacristans of the same name seem to have played a leading role in restoration work: the Prohegoumenos Philotheos from Paros in the early part of the century and the Prohegoumenos Philotheos from Moudania in its closing years.

In spite of its considerable prosperity, the life of the Monastery was not without problems. A series of documents, dating chiefly from the 17th century, witnesses to the running up of large debts, mainly because of the Ottoman tax officials, but we are not yet in a position to identify the causes of these or the mechanism by which they arose. However, they resulted in the loss, even if only temporarily, of a part of its property.

In 1610 the Monastery lost, for about a century, its kellia* in the Stoumbos part of the Holy Mountain because of a debt of 81,000 aspra to the Aga of Sidirokafsia, while in 1615 it suffered the loss, by the intervention of a state official, of 10,000 aspra. In the middle of the century (1651), a debt of 1,260 piastres was the cause of the loss of half a metochi at the Kotzino castle on Lemnos⁷⁵. In 1694 the Monastery was, for some reason which we do not know, in dire financial straits, with the result that the Megale Mese* decided to write off a debt of 400 piastres⁷⁶,

while there were painful financial consequences of the accidental killing of the Aga of the Holy Mountain on the Monastery's boundaries in 1745⁷⁷. In addition, piracy must still have been a scourge to the shores of Athos, which would inevitably have caused problems for a coastal monastery such as Vatopaidi. It was this which forced the Venetian official Morosini to issue an order in 1664 forbidding Venetian corsair vessels to trouble the Holy Mountain⁷⁸. These periodical economic crises set in motion alms missions, which went as far afield as the Orthodox of Venice and regions of Austria⁷⁹.

The idiorrhythmic system, in spite of the efforts of Patriarchs Ieremias II of Constantinople and Silvestros of Alexandria which have been mentioned above, became established as the manner of organisation of the internal life and administration of the Monastery. In the 17th century the role of the 'Dikaïos' in its administration took on added importance, but gradually, by the end of the century, real power in the Monastery passed into the hands of the Sacristan, who was charged with the safeguarding of the treasures and relics and had wide administrative powers⁸⁰. The title of Abbot continued to be given for short terms of office to monks who had distinguished themselves, but did not represent any real authority.

It was around 1740 that there was a change in the system of administration of the Monastery, which now became more collective. It passed into the hands of a three-member committee, appointed for life, consisting of the Sacristan and two Prohegumenoi. These decided on all issues, monitored the management of the Monastery's affairs, and drew up annual financial reports⁸¹.

In January 1821, on the prompting of the Patriarch's emissary, the Metropolitan of Caesarea, the conversion of Vatopaidi into a coenobium was resolved upon for the third time. The decision was forwarded by the monks to the Patriarch with the request that he would ratify the new system. No reply was ever received. The upheaval which followed the Greek Revolution precluded any such change.

The idiorrhythmic system seems to have had an influence on the way that, if not all, then a large number of metochia, particularly in Moldo-Wallachia, were managed. The Vatopaidi stewards undertook the management of the monasteries-metochia for a specific period, which does not seem to have been longer than five years, against the payment of an annual lump sum. These monks (referred to in the documents as "abbots"), then shouldered all the financial obligations of the metochi (taxes, 'gifts', etc.), were responsible for maximising its resources and its smooth functioning, and enjoyed any surplus revenues⁸². The idiorrhythmic system was also reflected in the way in which certain institutions were organised and

functioned within the Monastery. The expenses of running the infirmary and the quarters for the aged were not provided out of the Monastery's budget but by compulsory contributions from monks with their own incomes derived from the various tasks which they performed (abbots, 'travellers' on alms missions, etc.)⁸³.

The long-standing renown and great prosperity of Vatopaidi attracted at this period also a large number of senior clergy and scholars, who chose its security in which to spend their declining years. Of the long list of these, we will mention only the former Patriarchs of Constantinople Kyprianos (after 1714) and of Alexandria Gerasimos II Palladas (1714)⁸⁴. In the early years of the 17th century, the deacon-monk Symeon or Synesios Elanikos, came from the West to retire to the Monastery. This hitherto little-known scholar possessed a considerable library (of manuscripts and printed books, mostly works of ancient Greek literature), was a copyist of manuscripts, and the author of works which reveal him as a man of great classical learning⁸⁵.

The culmination of the Monastery's intellectual life at this period was the founding in 1748, on the initiative of the monks and chiefly of Meletios of Vatopaidi, of the Athonite Academy, an institution with aspirations and ambitions which extended far beyond the Holy Mountain⁸⁶.

Nor was the world of Vatopaidi absent from the spiritual movements which developed on the Holy Mountain in the mid 18th century. The Skete of St Demetrius seems to have developed at that time into a centre for the Kolyvades* movement, sheltering important, though not particularly well-known, devotees of it. In 1756, Dionysios of Siatista settled there⁸⁷, while a little later he was joined by the monk Ierotheos, subsequently founder of the Monastery of the Prophet Elijah on Hydra, and his disciples⁸⁸. The compilation of the regulations for the running of the Skete by the ruling Monastery in collaboration with its monks indicates that Vatopaidi regarded the establishment there of the Kolyvades, who were at the time persecuted elsewhere, with favour⁸⁹.

The number of monks in the 17th century and down to 1821 does not seem to have increased much when compared with the figures for the preceding period. The Metropolitan of Samos Iosiph Georgirinis, before 1677, speaks of 300 monks, while in 1677 the British traveller J. Covel gives the figure as 350⁹⁰. However, Barskij in his account of his travels in 1744 records that he encountered only 60 monks, while there had been more than 100 at an earlier date. He calculated that there were more than 100 living in the nearby kellia⁹¹. Even if the information of the Russian traveller is correct and the number of monks really declined in the mid 18th century, at the beginning of the next century it increased again, so that there is

evidence of figures of 250 (1801, P. Hunt and J.D. Carlyle)⁹² and 234 (census of 1808)⁹³, while the Bulgarian 'chronicle' of the monks Nikiphoros and Ierotheos states that shortly before the Revolution there were 400 monks living in the Monastery and 60 in the Skete of St Demetrius⁹⁴.

The spread of the Greek Revolution of 1821 to Macedonia, and particularly to Chalcidice, did not go unheeded by the monks of Mount Athos. In May of the same year the Athonites joined the movement of Emmanouil Papas. The Turkish governor of the Holy Mountain was arrested and placed under house arrest at the Koutlounousiou Monastery, while armed monks patrolled the peninsula's frontiers.

It is a matter of history that the uprising in northern Greece swiftly came to an inglorious end. The Athonite monks had to pay dearly for the part they had played. Turkish troops were billeted in all the monasteries, which were forced to maintain them. An extra-ordinary tax of 3,300 poungia (1,750,000 piastres) was imposed upon them collectively and all the regular taxes were doubled. The metochia in Chalcidice suffered serious damage and debts mounted, while a large number of monks abandoned Athos. It is estimated that after 1823 and until approximately 1830 fewer than 1,000 monks remained on the Holy Mountain.

The state of affairs had its effects on Vatopaidi. The extent of the economic consequences and the loss of manpower have not yet been established. It is certain, however, that at least for five years, until 1827, the collection of revenues from the metochia of Moldo-Wallachia, which were of vital importance to Vatopaidi, ceased, while a large number of items from the sacristy were sold. For a whole decade we hear of no building work at the Monastery, and the metochia in Chalcidice, after the looting and damage which they had suffered at the hands of the Turkish troops in 1822 and 1823, seem to have been passing through a grave crisis.

Notes:

55. Muraviev, 1858, p. 143. *The generous donations of the Russian Prince cannot have been unconnected with the efforts which he was making to have himself recognised as Tsar in the Orthodox world.*

56. Regel, 1898, No. XVIII, pp. 56-58 (the permit), No. XXI, pp. 68-70 (the renewal).

57. *Regel*, 1898, No. XXII, pp. 71-72 (document of Tsar Alexei Michalovich of 1656, by which a total sum of 1,800 roubles is donated, on condition that the sacred relics will remain in Russia for 20 years); No. XXIV, pp. 78-82 (document of the co-regents John, Peter and Sophia of 1688, by which money is granted for building and permission is renewed for Vatopaidi monks to visit Russian cities every four years, in consideration of the relics remaining longer in Moscow).

58. See the chapter by Florin Marinescu on the metochia in Romania; *Nasturel*, 1986, pp. 102-105.

59. Research into the very rich Romanian, Russian – and Greek – archive of the Monastery, not yet investigated, will reveal the extent of the presence of Vatopaidi in this area of the Balkans.

60. Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 5, No. 15. Cf. *Eustratiadis*, 1930, p. 55, No. 45.

61. Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, No. 153. Cf. *Eustratiadis*, 1930, p. 59, No. 60.

62. Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, No. 152.

63. According to evidence which it has not yet been possible to confirm, the total sums which he donated to the Greek uprising amounted to half a million piastres. Some years after his death, in 1846, his relatives made claims on his estate (*Eustratiadis*, 1930, pp. 64-65, Nos 80-84). For Grigorios, see *Ikonomou*, 1860 (a work more rhetorical than providing information on the man himself). *Gedeon*, 1932, pp. 154-155. There is considerable archival material on Grigorios in the Monastery's archive.

64. Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, No. 37. Cf. *Eustratiadis*, 1918, p. 88.

65. Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, No. 73.

66. Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 2, No. N 13 and Square 5, No. 43. Cf. *Eustratiadis*, 1930, p. 52, Nos 32 and 34.

67. Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 2, Nos Ξ 5 and 6.

68. *Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, Nos 43-45. Cf. Eustratiadis, 1918, p. 89.*

69. *Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 5, No. 23. Cf. Eustratiadis, 1930, p. 57, No. 51.*

70. *Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 2, No. O 1.*

71. *Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, No. 75. Cf. Eustratiadis, 1918, p. 167.*

72. *For example, in 1618, agricultural land was bought from Christians and Muslims at Aghios Mamas, in 1623 the cultivation of the mountain near Revenikia was taken over in consideration of a loan of 22,000 aspra to the inhabitants (Square 3, No. 83), in 1633, 16 hectares of land at Proavalakas were bought from the villagers for 20,000 aspra (Square 1, Nos Φ/Z and H), in 1660, 60 hectares were bought at Ormylia for 10,000 aspras (Square 2, No. M 27), and land at Meleniko in 1706.*

73. *The following donations could be mentioned indicatively: in 1654, a house and orchard at Moudania by Metropolitan Klimis of Proussa (Square 2, No. § 1). In 1718, 180 olive trees at Aghiassos on Lesbos (Square 3, No. 41). In 1749 and 1753, 176 olive trees, houses, and fields at Kaki Rachi on Thasos (Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, Nos 40 and 43. Cf. Eustratiadis, 1918, p. 89). In 1756/57, a metochi in Arta (Square 3, Nos 73-74).*

74. *It is interesting that of the Vatopaidi inscriptions (inscriptions on buildings, on paintings and on objects) known to and published by G. Millet, J. Pargoire, L. Petit (Millet, 1904), only five date from the 15th and 16th centuries. By way of contrast, 17 inscriptions date from the 17th century, 33 from the 18th, and 38 from the 19th. The recording of all the inscriptions on buildings, as well as those which concern the execution of paintings of a monumental character, will undoubtedly greatly increase the numbers, but will not significantly alter the ratios by century.*

75. *Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, No. 23. Cf. Eustratiadis, 1917, p. 771.*

76. *Gasparis, 1991, p. 14, No. 25.*

77. *Gasparis, 1991, p. 21, No. 44.*

78. Arkadios, 1919, p. 441 (publication of an old Greek translation of the Morosini document: Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 3, No. 110).
79. Manoussakas, 1983, pp. 436-438 (collection of income for the purchase of a large clock in 1745) and 439-442; Volidis, 1952, pp. 75-81; Kissas, 1983, pp. 248-263.
80. For lists – though not complete – of Dikaioi and Sacristans, see Theophilos, 1972, pp. 112-114 (Dikaioi) and 118-119 (Sacristans).
81. Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 1, No. Ω 58 (the document is an undated copy).
82. The earliest example which we have identified up to now dates from before 1485 and concerns the Spilaiotissa Monastery at Meleniko. The priest-monk Grigorios undertakes the administration of the monastery against a payment of 900 aspra per annum, regardless of whether the yield of the metochi is good or bad. He also undertakes the payment of the dosimata to the subashi, together with any other, extra-ordinary, charge [Archive of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Square 2, No. Ξ 3 (2)].
83. The terms of operation of the infirmary of Vatopaidi, self-financing in a sui generis manner, are given by Arkadios, ms., pp. 195-197.
84. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 1888, p. 122.
85. For minimal information on Symeon-Synesios, whose presence at Vatopaidi is reminiscent of the stay there 100 years previously of Maximos the Greek, see Sathas, 1868, p. 410; Zaviras, 1872, pp. 526-527 (contradictory information); Paschos, 1988, pp. 829-879. On his manuscripts, see also the contributions by Erich Lamberz on the library of Vatopaidi and its manuscripts, and of Triantafyllos Sklavenitis on the library of printed books.
86. See the chapter by Paschalis Kitromilides on the Athonite Academy.
87. Gedeon, 1884, pp. 618-620; Haralambidis, 1965, cols 82-83. see also Lamberz-Litsas, 1978, pp. 47-48 (ms. 14) and 80.

88. *‘Βίος καί Πολιτεία ‘Ιεροθέου τοῦ Μακαρίου Γέροντος’*, publ. the Holy Monastery of Our Lady Chrysopodaritissa, Athens 1994, pp. 94-150 (on the time of his stay at the Skete of St Demetrius). See also Mastroyannopoulos, 1986, pp. 27-33.

89. *The relationship between the ‘wordly’ Monastery of Vatopaidi and the Kolyvades movement is a subject which remains open for investigation.*

90. *For the particulars given by Georgirinis, see Gothoni, 1994, p. 59. For Covel, see Hasluck, 1910-11, p. 124.*

91. *Gothoni, 1994, pp. 77-78.*

92. *Walpole, 1817, p. 199; Anghelou, 1965, p. 40.*

93. *Alexandros Lavriotis, 1963, p. 260 (monks at the dependencies are also included); Alexandros Lavriotis, 1966, p. 25 (the 26 laymen in residence have not been subtracted).*

94. *Krastanov, 1994, pp. 96-97. The number of those living in kellia has not been calculated. The figures given for the Monastery are excessive, as are those for the total population of Mount Athos (7,150 monks).*