

**The *Augustae* of the Theodosian Dynasty (379 - 455 CE):
an enquiry into their portrayal by the contemporary textual sources.**

by

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Abstract

Between 379CE and 455CE seven female members of the Theodosian Imperial Family were elevated to the role of *Augusta* (Empress), thereby enhancing their ability to influence events and causing their deeds to be recorded by the contemporary historians, clergymen and poets. This dissertation explores the possibility that these male authors portrayed the *Augustae* in a way which adversely shaped public opinion at the time, and still colours our judgment today. It aims to gain a better understanding of these women by first identifying the personal pressures which may have caused the authors to misrepresent them, and then by investigating how the important issues of the day might have affected both the authors and the *Augustae* themselves. Concentrating on key factors in the lives of three *Augustae*: Eudoxia, Pulcheria and Galla Placidia, it makes a close study of the contemporary textual sources and then investigates each author's motives and the environment in which he lived and worked. Using modern scholarly research into the role of an *Augusta*, the lifestyle of women in Late Antiquity, and the effect of gender bias upon a male dominated society, it investigates how the social, religious and political issues which impacted on the life of an *Augusta* could be used, misused, or ignored by the male authors. It finds that all three *Augustae* were portrayed by the contemporary authors in a way which gives a misleading, and sometimes unfavourable, view of their conduct and achievements. The dissertation concludes that a better appreciation of the *Augustae* can be gained by studying the authors themselves, and considering the important issues of the day, rather than by relying solely on the contemporary texts.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>CTh</i>	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> (Theodosian Code), C. Pharr (trans.) 1952, <i>The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions</i>
<i>Decline and Fall</i>	Gibbon, E. (1781) <i>The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i> , Volume III, [Everyman's Library edition, 1927]
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> (Ecclesiastical History)
<i>OCD4</i>	<i>The Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> (4 ed.)
<i>ODByz</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i>
<i>ODLA</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity</i>
<i>PLRE II</i>	Martindale, J. R. (1980) <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , Volume II, A.D. 395-527
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Pauly's Real Encyclopedia of Classical Antiquity) (1907), Band VI,1.

All other abbreviations follow the style of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th Edition.

1. Introduction

"Study the historian before you begin to study the facts." ¹

The Theodosian Dynasty ruled the Roman Empire from 379CE until 455CE,² and during that time seven female members of the Imperial Family were elevated to the role of *Augusta* (Empress), thereby enhancing both their status and their ability to influence events.³ However, their many accomplishments were mostly overlooked, downplayed, or misunderstood by the male authors of the time, who focused mainly on achievements expected of an imperial woman, such as giving birth to a healthy male heir, whilst ignoring deeds considered outside the perceived role of women in society. Their attitude to women is well illustrated by the fourth century historian Eunapius who, when describing an unnamed "woman of manly virtue" remarks that she "undertook and carried out a deed of such nobility and courage that if I set it in my narrative, it will not be believed".⁴

This damning opinion can also be seen in the willingness of male authors to condemn women for inappropriate behaviour, or to blame them when things go wrong,⁵ and their attitude makes it difficult for us to get a true understanding of the *Augustae*. But a study of the authors themselves, plus a look at the main social, religious and political issues of the day, may help us to appreciate why the *Augustae* were so often misrepresented. It may give us a better insight into the lives of these women, and a greater appreciation of their accomplishments than is at first apparent from the sources, and this is the aim of my dissertation.

¹ Carr, 1961, p.23

² From now on all dates are CE unless otherwise stated.

³ Appendix C contains a full family tree.

⁴ Eunap. *Universal History*, fr.79 (trans. Blockley)

⁵ Herrin, 2001, p.7

Research Methodology

My research will be a combination of textual and cultural-historical analysis, and consists of three parts:

1. A study of the work of the contemporary historians will enable me to discover how events were perceived at the time, or shortly after. However, it should be remembered that although their opinions, unlike those of later authors, were unaffected by the different values of another period, their descriptions may be less coherent. As Alan Cameron observes, "eyewitnesses do not always see clearly - or tell the truth".⁶
2. A comparison of the historians' viewpoint with that of the Church Fathers, and other prominent clergy, will identify any important differences. The opinions of the clergy were necessarily prejudiced in favour of the Church, but their letters and homilies are important because we are hearing their thoughts in real time, rather than reading a record produced for posterity.
3. A study of the important social, religious and political issues of the time will help to compensate for the fragmentary nature of some of our sources, which can, on occasion, result in us gaining a false view of events. It will also allow me to evaluate the impact of these issues on both the *Augustae* and the writers themselves.

Literary Review

Since the publication of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, at the end of the eighteenth century,⁷ a number of modern historians have written about the *Augustae*, but few offer insightful comments into their character,⁸ and many display a lack of understanding

⁶ Cameron and Long, 1993, p.1

⁷ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 1781 [reprint 1927]

⁸ *Infra*, n.80; n.154; n.222

of, or indifference to, the roles which they played. Some can also be patronising, as seen in Stewart Oost's 1968 *Biographical Essay on the Augusta Galla Placidia*,⁹ where Oost remarks that "anyone acquainted with the methods of women will have little doubt of the nagging pressure Placidia brought to bear" on her younger brother, the Emperor Theodosius II.¹⁰

Fortunately, in 1982 Kenneth Holum produced his influential study of the *Augustae* of the Eastern Court which, for the first time, put women at the centre of events.¹¹ He includes historical information, an account of their backgrounds, and a detailed description of their lives, thereby allowing us a valuable insight into the role which an *Augusta* could play in a male dominated society. His work has proved particularly valuable to me when researching the characters and motives of two of the *Augustae*, Eudoxia and Pulcheria - both subjects of case studies in this dissertation.

Several other scholars followed Holum's example, and in 2015 Anja Busch produced a study of the women of the Theodosian Dynasty which includes chapters on the background and meaning of the title of *Augusta*, and the social, religious and political roles assumed by these women at the Imperial Court.¹² This extra information proved very informative and led me towards two developing fields of academic study: the research into the lifestyles of women, and the study of gender.

In 1993, Gillian Clark wrote a short, but influential, work on the lifestyle of women in Late Antiquity, which includes information on all aspects of women's lives, including the laws on

⁹ Henceforth referred to as Placidia.

¹⁰ Oost, 1968, p.163

¹¹ Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 1982

¹² Busch, *Die Frauen der theodosianischen Dynastie*, 2015

marriage and the effect of Christianity upon traditional family values.¹³ This was followed in 2001 by Judith Evans-Grubbs' research into the Roman laws of betrothal and marriage;¹⁴ and more recently, by Elizabeth A. Clark's 2021 portrait of the female ascetic lifestyle.¹⁵ Together with A. H. M. Jones' 1964 study of the government in Late Antiquity, which is still essential reading when researching the lives of those who lived at Court,¹⁶ these authors enabled me to re-evaluate the effect of social, religious, and political issues on the lives of the *Augustae*.

Recently, gender studies has highlighted the gender bias discernable in the work of many ancient writers, and Victoria Leonard and Wendy Mayer, two scholars who have explored this issue in some detail, believe that the failure amongst modern historians to recognise this masculine bias has impeded our critical understanding of events.¹⁷ Leonard, in her article on Placidia's value as a hostage of the Goths, points out how Placidia could be ignored by the ancient historians completely, or portrayed as "voiceless and entirely passive" one moment and a forceful character the next.¹⁸ She observes that all too often, even amongst modern scholars, female silence "is understood to signify complicity rather than resistance",¹⁹ and I shall be exploring this issue further in my case study on Placidia's younger years.

Wendy Mayer believes that some modern scholars may actually perpetuate this masculine bias through their "selective reading of the sources".²⁰ In her work on the destruction of Eudoxia's reputation she describes how Eudoxia's image still suffers because "secondary literature either

¹³ Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 1993

¹⁴ Evans-Grubbs, *Women and Law in the Roman Empire*, 2002

¹⁵ Elizabeth Clark, *Melania the Younger: From Rome to Jerusalem*, 2021

¹⁶ Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, Vol.1, 1964

¹⁷ Leonard, *Galla Placidia as 'Human Gold': Consent and Autonomy in the Sack of Rome*, CE 410, 2019; Mayer, *Doing Violence to the Image of an Empress: The Destruction of Eudoxia's Reputation*, 2006

¹⁸ Leonard, 2019, p.337

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.335

²⁰ Mayer, 2006, p.206

ignores or conveniently writes off" passages in the ancient texts which disagree with Eudoxia's reputation as a power-hungry female.²¹ This is an important point to watch for, not just in the case of Eudoxia, but for all the *Augustae*, when analysing the views of modern scholars.

Dissertation Structure

Chapter Two will contain a brief description of the lives and objectives of those contemporary historians who are at the centre of my enquiry. We often know little about them, except for personal references included in their writing, but any knowledge which we have regarding their background, and their views on religion, will enable us to identify prejudices which may appear in their descriptions of events.²²

Chapter Three will examine the evolving role of an *Augusta*, from its foundation by Augustus through to its use, first by Constantine, and then by Theodosius, as a means of stabilising their new dynasties and supporting the growth of Christianity. The chapter will end with a brief introduction to all seven Theodosian *Augustae*.

Chapters Four to Six consist of case studies of the three *Augustae* who have made the greatest impact on history: Eudoxia, Pulcheria, and Galla Placidia;²³ and each study focuses on an area where our contemporary sources arguably give us a false picture of events. Was Eudoxia, for example, as headstrong as Philostorgius seems to suggest;²⁴ were Pulcheria's motives as saintly

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.208

²² Theodoret, for example, declares his hatred of the Arian heresy at the beginning of his Ecclesiastical History (Theodoret, *HE*. I.1).

²³ Seeck, *RE*, 1907, p.917; Given, 2014, p.23; Atkinson, 2020, p.1

²⁴ Philostorgius, XI.6

as Sozomen implies;²⁵ and why was the young Galla Placidia treated as unimportant and ignored by many of the contemporary writers? It is hoped that answering these questions will help me to achieve a better insight into the characters of the *Augustae*, and the motivations of those contemporary historians, clergymen and poets on whom we have come to rely.

²⁵ Sozom. IX.1-3

2. The Ancient Textual Sources

During my research I studied approximately sixty ancient textual sources, ranging in date from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries. Details of the authors, with appropriate references, can be seen in Appendix A, and many of these will be cited during this dissertation. However, my focus is on those who were contemporaries of the *Augustae* and recorded events as they were perceived at the time, or shortly after, and these fall loosely into three categories: the historians;²⁶ the ecclesiastical sources; and the poets and orators. The eight historians who form the nucleus of my research are described more fully below, while the other authors will be introduced briefly as they occur.

The Historians

The first four are the Church Historians Philostorgius, Socrates Scholasticus,²⁷ Sozomen and Theodoret, whose aim was to continue the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Ecclesiastical History) written by Eusebius of Caesarea (c.260 - 339), which ended in the 320s. Unlike Eusebius, however, they record events which involved the Imperial Family and affairs of state, as well as matters concerning the Church,²⁸ and sometimes seem uncertain where the boundary lies between politics and religion.²⁹ All four lived and worked in the Eastern Empire, which makes their descriptions of events in the East especially interesting, but their personal involvement with different sectors of Christianity, and occasionally with the Eastern Court, subjected them to pressures which are noticeable in their work.

²⁶ Including the contemporary chroniclers, although these are used mainly for confirmatory purposes as they seldom describe events in any detail.

²⁷ Henceforth referred to as Socrates.

²⁸ Rohnracher, 2002, p.12

²⁹ Croke, 2007, p.1174

Philostorgius (c.368 - c.439) was a native of Cappadocia who worked in Constantinople as either a lawyer or a clergyman,³⁰ and he is the only Church Historian who was an Arian rather than an Orthodox Christian. Only a few scattered fragments of his work survive, but Photius (c.810 - c.893) provides an epitome in his *Bibliothèque*,³¹ and he believed that Philostorgius' whole purpose in writing had been to praise the Arians whilst insulting the Orthodox.³² This unique viewpoint, plus the fact that Philostorgius' background gave him access to different sources, makes his work especially interesting.

Socrates (379 - after 439) was born and lived in Constantinople, and his title 'Scholasticus' suggests that he was a lawyer.³³ He was a committed Orthodox Christian but was sympathetic to other sects, such as the Arians, and did not discount the writings of the pagan authors.³⁴ He utilises a large number of sources, including official documents and eyewitness reports, and he is the most impartial and fair-minded of all his contemporaries, which makes him a valuable source. Six of the seven *Augustae* are mentioned by him in his work.

Sozomen (c.380 - c.448) was an Orthodox Christian who was born and educated in Palestine but subsequently worked as a lawyer in Constantinople.³⁵ His work contains a fulsome dedication to the Emperor Theodosius II,³⁶ which suggests that his provincial background made him overly anxious to please the Imperial Family, and this sometimes influences his narrative.³⁷ He utilises many different sources, including Philostorgius and Socrates, who had both

³⁰ Walford, 1855, p.427

³¹ The *Bibliothèque* (library) was written in c.859 and consisted of comments on authors he had read plus epitomes (summaries) of 280 books, many of which are now otherwise lost.

³² Phot. *Bibl. Cod.*XL

³³ Healy, 2018, ebook

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Healy, 2012, ebook

³⁶ Sozom. Pref.

³⁷ Chesnut, 1976, p.195

published their work slightly earlier.³⁸ It is thought that Socrates was his main source, and that he sometimes corrected Socrates' mistakes, but he never admitted to either.³⁹

Theodoret (c.393 - 466) was born in Antioch and became a Bishop in 423.⁴⁰ His *Ecclesiastical History* emphasises the struggles of the Orthodox Church against the Arian heresy from the perspective of his native city,⁴¹ and his sources include the Antiochene archives as well as Socrates and Sozomen, both of whose work he occasionally alters to suit his argument.⁴² He also records his own experiences, and as he was frequently involved in theological controversies his work gives us a different perspective which is immensely useful.

The next two historians, Orosius and Olympiodorus, relate much needed information on events in the Western Empire, which are often dealt with only superficially by the Church Historians mentioned above.

Orosius (c.380 - after 418) was a Spanish Orthodox priest who wrote, at the request of St. Augustine (354 - 430),⁴³ a defence of Christianity entitled *The Seven Books of History against the Pagans*. His homeland had suffered greatly from barbarian incursions and, perhaps because of this, he wished for a peaceful solution to be found between the Romans and the Goths, who were themselves Arian Christians.⁴⁴ He is one of the few historians who lived in, and consequently understood, the situation in the Western Empire at the beginning of the fifth century.

³⁸ Ikican, 2022, p.304-306

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Treadgold, 2007, p.157

⁴¹ Rohnracher, 2002, pp.132-4

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.* pp.135-136

⁴⁴ Oros. VII.41

Olympiodorus (c.380 - after 425) was a moderate pagan who was originally from Thebes in Egypt, but later became a diplomat and travelled to the West on behalf of the Eastern Court.⁴⁵ This left him well placed to collect firsthand information about life in the Western Empire, and he conveys a relatively unprejudiced viewpoint which is carefully neutral over religion but still manages to give an insight into Western affairs.⁴⁶ His work survives only in an epitome provided by Photius,⁴⁷ but he is a frequent source for other historians and Zosimus made exclusive use of him in his *Historia Nova* (New History) from 407 onwards.⁴⁸

The last two historians are the pagans Eunapius and Zosimus, whose anti-Christian outlook provides us with a valuable alternative viewpoint which serves to remind us that the Christian sources, to quote one scholar, also "had their own axe to grind."⁴⁹

Eunapius (349 - after 404) was a sophist and rhetorician from Sardis who was a direct contemporary of John Chrysostom and may have been an eyewitness to some of the events which preceded John's exile.⁵⁰ Although his *Universal History* only survives in fragments, Photius believed that Zosimus copied much of his work directly from Eunapius,⁵¹ and a comparison between the fragments of Eunapius and Zosimus' *New History* suggests that for the years leading up to 407 this may well have been the case.⁵²

⁴⁵ Treadgold, 2007, pp.90-91

⁴⁶ Matthews, 1970, pp.92,96

⁴⁷ Phot. *Bibl. Cod.*LXXX

⁴⁸ Blockley, 1981, p.28

⁴⁹ Gregory, 1973, p.67

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; see also pp.23-26 below.

⁵¹ Phot. *Bibl. Cod.*XCVIII

⁵² Blockley, 1981, p.2

Zosimus (c.435 - c.501) was a retired treasury official from the East who commented on events in both the Eastern and the Western Empires.⁵³ According to Photius he was "an impious heathen",⁵⁴ and his *New History*, which was written to counteract the Christian viewpoint of the Church Historians,⁵⁵ describes the misfortunes he believed Christianity had brought to the Roman Empire.⁵⁶ He was not a true contemporary of the *Augustae* but is included here because he is our best source for both Olympiodorus and Eunapius.

⁵³ Ridley, 1982, p.xi

⁵⁴ Phot. *Bibl. Cod.XCVIII* (trans. Freese)

⁵⁵ Croke, 2007, p.1162

⁵⁶ Liebeschuetz, 2003, p.207

3. The *Augustae*

Historical Background

The title of *Augusta* was first awarded by the emperor Augustus to his wife Livia in his will, and after his death in 14CE she was officially adopted into the Julii family and renamed Julia Augusta.⁵⁷ The title, which became the highest available to any imperial woman in the Roman Empire,⁵⁸ was not conferred automatically on the wife of an emperor, but was awarded mainly for dynastic reasons, such as the birth of a legitimate heir.⁵⁹ However, it could also be awarded to a mother, daughter or sister of an emperor for political reasons, such as the lack of an obvious successor,⁶⁰ and the first Christian *Augusta*, Helena (c.248 - c.328), was the mother of the Emperor Constantine I, whilst two of the Theodosian *Augustae*, Pulcheria and Honoria, were imperial sisters rather than wives, although Pulcheria later became the wife of the Emperor Marcian. Helena was a devout Christian, and Constantine's decision in 324 to award her the title of *Augusta* was taken both to stabilise his new dynasty and to support the growth of Christianity.⁶¹ Consequently, in 379, when Theodosius was also forming a new dynasty and promoting Christianity, it was Helena who became the role model for Theodosius' first wife Flacilla (Flaccilla) when she became the first *Augusta* to be anointed since Helena and Constantine's wife Fausta, fifty-five years earlier.⁶²

Status

The status of an *Augusta* was defined in the third century by the jurist Ulpian (d.228) as being below that of the emperor, but endowed by him with the same privileges as he had

⁵⁷ Tac. *Ann.* I,8; Cass. Dio LVI.46,1; Ov. *Fast.* I.536

⁵⁸ Busch, 2015, p.191

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p.192; c.f. Bury, 1923, p.10

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; c.f. Hillner, 2022, p.9

⁶¹ Hillner, 2022, pp.9-10

⁶² Holum, 1982, p.31

himself.⁶³ Thus, whilst still dependent on the emperor, an *Augusta* obtained a political and social power which enabled her to act as the emperor's representative,⁶⁴ and this distinguished her from female relatives who did not hold the title.⁶⁵ She held her own court; had her own retinue of attendants; authenticated documents with her own lead seal; and was entitled to wear the imperial insignia;⁶⁶ thereby allowing her to involve herself, if she wished, in the affairs of both the Imperial Court and the Christian Church.

Her status was recognised in official letters and legal documents, and statues were often erected in prominent places which were inscribed with her name and title,⁶⁷ but perhaps most significantly, she was able to issue her own coins, which enabled her imperial status to be recognised throughout the Empire. This sign of status was utilised by Helena, and copied, with modifications, by all the Theodosian *Augustae*. Examples of all seven can be seen in Appendix B, but those issued by Helena and Flacilla are also reproduced below.

Fig.1: Coins issued by Helena and Flacilla.



Ob: FL[avia] HELENA AVGVSTA
Rev: SECVRITAS REI PVBLICE
Gold double-solidus, Ticinum, 325CE
Source: Holum, 1982, p.35, fig.3.



Ob: AEL[ia] FLACCILLA AVGVSTA
Rev: SALVS REI PVBLICAE
Gold solidus, Constantinople, 383-87CE
Source: Holum, 1982, p.36, fig.6.

⁶³ Ulpian, *Digest.* 1,3,31, quoted in Busch, 2015, p.198.

⁶⁴ Busch, 2015, p.198; c.f. Bury, 1923, p.9

⁶⁵ Two examples are Maria and Thermantia, who were both married to the Emperor Honorius but were never awarded the title, presumably because they remained childless. See Appendix C.

⁶⁶ Busch, 2015, p.196

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.199; One example is the silver statue of Eudoxia which was erected in 403 near the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The marble base, complete with inscriptions in Latin and Greek, still survives today (Seeck, 1907, RE VI,1,'Eudoxia 1').

On the obverse both *Augustae* wear the imperial *paludamentum* (cloak) and diadem crown of an emperor, thus signifying that their power is equal to his. On the reverse, Helena's coin shows the goddess Securitas, with the inscription "The security of the state", whilst Flacilla's shows the goddess Victory with the inscription "The well-being of the state". But Victory is shown seated and drawing the Chi-Rho (cross), thus emphasising religious, as well as dynastic, legitimacy, and reflecting Theodosius' desire for the Empire to officially embrace the Christian Church.⁶⁸

The Theodosian *Augustae*

Our sources suggest that Helena's Christian piety and good works were a huge influence on Flacilla (c.355 - 386), the first Theodosian *Augusta*, with Sozomen remarking on her faithful guardianship of the Orthodox faith,⁶⁹ and Theodoret recalling her ministering to the sick.⁷⁰ In addition, Bishop Gregory of Nyssa (c.331 - 395) gave an oration at Flacilla's funeral in which he was effusive in his praise of her virtues, and Kenneth Holum suggests that this was done at the Emperor's request, to promote an idealised view of an *Augusta*, which was based on Helena and could be copied by all future *Augustae*.⁷¹

However, although Flacilla's successors endeavoured to follow her example, and even used her Spanish *nomen*, Aelia, in order to emphasise the dynastic link,⁷² they lived in a very different era. Theodosius I had been a military commander and strong emperor, but after his death the Empire became divided into East and West, and a succession of lethargic, and sometimes very

⁶⁸ Shortly after Flacilla's coin was issued, Theodosius introduced a ban on all forms of pagan worship (CTh. XVI.10-12 (trans. Pharr)).

⁶⁹ Sozom. VII,6

⁷⁰ Theodoret, HE. V.18

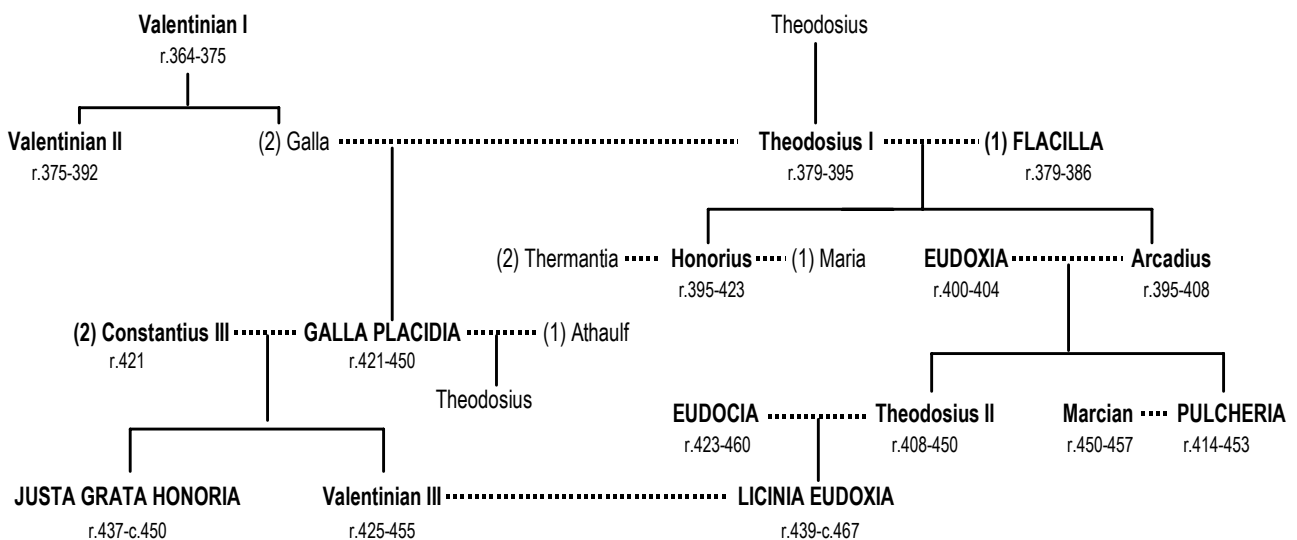
⁷¹ Holum, 1982, pp.43-44

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.65; Busch, 2015, p.26

young, 'stay at home' emperors, allowed powerful military commanders to exercise their authority abroad. Furthermore, eunuchs influenced the weak emperors and controlled the burgeoning bureaucracy, whilst the Church continued to steadily increase its power. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the role of an *Augusta* also changed. Whilst their dynastic value was still rooted in childbearing, and their public persona in piety and good works, they also began to assert their authority, both in imperial politics and in ecclesiastical affairs - for the Church was eager to harness their influence, provided they acted in a suitable manner. Consequently, the historians of the Theodosian Dynasty could no longer automatically relegate these women to a background role but were forced to lay aside their pre-conceived notions of an imperial woman and report their deeds. Whether they always reported them accurately is the focus of this dissertation.

Fig.2: A simplified family tree showing the seven *Augustae* (in capitals).

(For full version see Appendix C)



Research into the lives of the six *Augustae* who came after Flacilla suggests that the contemporary male authors concentrated on recording those events which caused conflict and

notoriety, or were judged to be unusual or unseemly. This means that the actions of the *Augustae* can be misinterpreted unless the social, religious and political issues of the time are also considered. In the next three chapters, case studies of Eudoxia, Pulcheria and Galla Placidia will highlight this problem in more detail, but the following brief examples in the lives of the remaining three *Augustae* indicate that they were similarly affected.

In the case of Eudocia (c.401 - 460), the wife of Theodosius II, the main events in her life are virtually ignored by the contemporary authors, as an ongoing battle for power at the Eastern Court between Eudocia and Theodosius' sister Pulcheria would have made silence the safest option for those writing at the time.⁷³ In the Western Empire, Justa Grata Honoria (c.418 - c.455) and Licinia Eudoxia (422 - c.493) were similarly ignored, until each was forced into a marriage that caused her to seek help from Rome's enemies. The historian and diplomat Priscus (c.410 - after 474), writing not long afterwards, then relates how Justa Grata Honoria's plea to Attila the Hun caused an escalation in the war between Attila and the West,⁷⁴ whilst Licinia Eudoxia's plea to the vandal king Geiseric caused him to sack Rome.⁷⁵

In fact, both *Augustae* were merely convenient scapegoats for these disasters, which were becoming increasingly common as the Western Empire neared its end. To quote Clover: "if Romans were no longer able to control an invasion, they were at least capable of assigning the responsibility to one of their number",⁷⁶ and if it was a woman, then so much the better. But although both women may have been unfairly characterised as weak, the same cannot be said of the three *Augustae* whose case studies now follow.

⁷³ Brief details are supplied by Socrates VII.21, VII.47; Later Authors provide more details: Malalas. XIV.6-8; Theodore Lector, *HE* I.17-18; *Suda*, n2145. See Burman, 1994, pp.63-87, for a full discussion of events.

⁷⁴ Priscus, frs.17, 20-22

⁷⁵ Priscus, fr.30

⁷⁶ Clover, 1966, p.151

- Case Study 1 will examine whether Eudoxia was solely responsible for the downfall of John Chrysostom, as has often been suggested, or whether she was manipulated by John's enemies at court, on whom she had come to rely.
- Case study 2 will explore the circumstances surrounding Pulcheria's vow of chastity, and study her possible motives when the political, religious and social issues of the day are taken into account.
- Case Study 3 will investigate why Galla Placidia is frequently portrayed, in her younger years, as no more than a political tool, when she is celebrated in her later years for her indomitable will.

Each case study will commence with a synopsis of the *Augusta's* life, which will put the described events into perspective, and will conclude by commenting on the work of later authors, who frequently had a different agenda, and on those modern scholars whose work contributed most to my research.

4. Case Study: Eudoxia's 'Friends' at Court

Synopsis⁷⁷

Aelia Eudoxia (d.404), the daughter of the Frankish general Bauto, married Flacilla's elder son, the Eastern Emperor Arcadius, on April 27, 395 and bore him four daughters and one son, the future Emperor Theodosius II. She had considerable influence over her weak husband and was proclaimed *Augusta* on January 9, 400. Although she was a zealous supporter of the Orthodox faith, her dominating personality caused a conflict with the Bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom (349 - 407), and when he preached against the vices of women she is believed to have taken this as a personal insult and begun to orchestrate his downfall.⁷⁸ John was eventually deposed and exiled in the autumn of 403 after the so-called "Synod of the Oak",⁷⁹ but was recalled almost immediately and then exiled permanently on June 20, 404. Three months later the stress of a violent storm caused Eudoxia to miscarry, and she died on October 6, 404.

Introduction

*"Eudoxia was far more the led than the leader, in the whole affair."*⁸⁰

The belief that Eudoxia was solely responsible for the downfall of John Chrysostom has changed little over the years, and it is seldom that any defence has been offered by modern scholars for her apparent behaviour.⁸¹ However, two scholars who do offer a slightly different view of events are Baur and Liebeschuetz. Baur, as the above quote suggests, maintains that Eudoxia's

⁷⁷ This synopsis is taken from Seeck, *RE*, 1907, 'Eudoxia 1'.

⁷⁸ This is the view generally held. For a full description of their conflict see Ommeslaeghe, 1979, pp.131-159; c.f. Holum, 1982, pp.48-78.

⁷⁹ The synod was held outside Constantinople in a suburb of Chalcedon called the Oak.

⁸⁰ Baur, 1960, p.229

⁸¹ Mayer, 2006, pp.205-213, contains a review of modern scholarship's selective reading of the ancient texts.

inexperience, passionate disposition, and weak husband, allowed her to be manipulated by John's enemies;⁸² whilst Liebeschuetz goes one step further, and names those enemies as Eudoxia's friends who held powerful positions at the Imperial Court.⁸³ Therefore, the purpose of this case study is as follows:

- To look for evidence that Eudoxia was manipulated by here 'friends' at court.
- To identify who these people may have been.
- To assess their success in turning Eudoxia against John.

I shall be examining the main contemporary sources whilst taking into account the current political situation, and my study will be in three parts: the circumstances surrounding Eudoxia's elevation to *Augusta*; the events leading up to the Synod of the Oak, and the subsequent events leading to John's final exile. In order to understand the political issues which were involved I shall first look briefly at the system of government which existed in Constantinople at the time, and the division of power between the Church and the Imperial Court.

The system of government in Constantinople

During the fourth and fifth centuries, the authority of the Senate in Constantinople had been eroded by the power of the Imperial Consistory.⁸⁴ This was a body of high-ranking court officials who were personally chosen by the emperor to advise him over important decisions,⁸⁵ and the emperor was expected to listen and take part in their discussions before making his final judgement.⁸⁶ The Consistory was led by the emperor's chief adviser, the praetorian prefect,⁸⁷

⁸² Baur, 1960, pp.34, 229

⁸³ Liebeschuetz, 1984, p.87

⁸⁴ Jones, 1964, p.329; c.f. Cameron and Long, 1993, p.334

⁸⁵ Jones, 1964, p.333

⁸⁶ Brown, 1992, p.10

⁸⁷ Also known as the 'city prefect'

who was also the Senate's representative when liaising with the emperor.⁸⁸ It is thought that the empress may have attended some of their sessions, although this is only conjecture.⁸⁹

The division of power between the Church and the Imperial Court

Important decisions in the Eastern Church were made at a Church council, or Synod, which was attended by bishops who had been summoned by the emperor.⁹⁰ Their decrees were enforced by imperial edicts, but the emperor was there to impose the authority of the bishops, not to make a judgement.⁹¹ Three entries in the Theodosian Code, dated towards the end of the fourth century, state that a bishop can be tried only by his peers unless he has committed a criminal offence, at which point his case may be referred to the Imperial Court.⁹² A further entry, dated February 400, states that any bishop who causes public unrest after being deposed then becomes subject to imperial law and must be sent into exile at least one hundred miles away.⁹³ This is essentially what happened to John on 20 June, 404.

The circumstances surrounding Eudoxia's elevation to *Augusta*

This section investigates whether Eudoxia's sudden elevation to the rank of *Augusta* was instigated by the influential courtier Aurelian in order to use her as a weapon against John. The title was normally awarded to the wife of an emperor for dynastic reasons such as the birth of a male child,⁹⁴ but when Eudoxia was proclaimed *Augusta* on January 9, 400, although she had given birth to three girls and was once again pregnant, she had not yet produced a son.

⁸⁸ Liebeschuetz, 1984, p.87; c.f. Cameron and Long, 1993, p.181, n.130

⁸⁹ Kazhdan, 1991, *ODByz*: 'Consistorium'

⁹⁰ Price, 2018, *ODLA*: 'councils of the Church'

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *CTh*. XVI. 2,12 (355); 2,23 (376); 11,1 (399)

⁹³ *Ibid.* 2,35 (400)

⁹⁴ See p.12 above

Her title may have been a reward for her part in the recent disgrace of the Emperor's chief minister, the powerful eunuch Eutropius, which Philostorgius records with some relish. He describes how Eudoxia, when Eutropius threatened to banish her from court, appeared before Arcadius in floods of tears with two weeping children in her arms, and persuaded her husband to banish Eutropius instead.⁹⁵ Philostorgius, who was no admirer of Eudoxia's "barbarian manner",⁹⁶ may have exaggerated Eudoxia's use of feminine wiles to obtain her husband's sympathy, but the story has some element of truth, because Sozomen also remarks that Eutropius had to flee because he had insulted the Empress.⁹⁷

However, it is the direct consequences that are interesting. Shortly after this occurred, in the autumn of 399, Eutropius was replaced as the Emperor's chief advisor by Aurelian, who was immediately appointed as praetorian prefect, and then made consul on January 1, 400.⁹⁸ It is possible, therefore, that it was Aurelian, in his new position of power as the leader of the Imperial Consistory, who was behind Eudoxia's sudden proclamation as *Augusta* just nine days later.⁹⁹ This would hint, at the very least, of complicity between Eudoxia and Aurelian,¹⁰⁰ but as Aurelian is known to have been devoted to one of John's main enemies, the monk Isaac,¹⁰¹ it could also be taken as evidence that Aurelian was intending to use Eudoxia as a weapon against John.

⁹⁵ Philostorgius, XI.6

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* (trans. Amidon)

⁹⁷ Sozom. VIII.7. For other descriptions of Eutropius' downfall see Socrates, VI.5.4-7; Zos. V.17,4-18,1-4.

⁹⁸ The chronology used here is the one argued in Cameron and Long, 1993, pp.161-175; c.f. Baur, 1960, p.45; Holum, 1982, p.67.

⁹⁹ The suggestion to appoint an *Augusta* had traditionally been made by the Senate (Cameron and Long, 1993, p.172), but by the fifth century only their support was necessary (Jones, 1964, p.324).

¹⁰⁰ Holum, 1982, p.64

¹⁰¹ Cameron and Long, 1993, p.75

Furthermore, Aurelian may have influenced the design of the coins which were issued to proclaim Eudoxia's new status. Although the coins were similar in many ways to those of her mother-in-law Flacilla,¹⁰² the obverse, as seen below, now shows the *manus Dei* (hand of God) above Eudoxia's head, thereby signifying her divine right to rule.¹⁰³

Fig.3: Coin issued by Eudoxia.



Ob: AEL EUDOXIA AVG, manus dei
 Rev: SALVS REI PVBLICAE,
 Gold solidus, Constantinople, c.400
 Source: Holum, 1982, p.36, fig.7.
 (see also Appendix B)

This was an innovation that, according to Honorius, the Emperor of the West, caused objections throughout the Roman world.¹⁰⁴ The symbol had previously been reserved solely for victorious emperors who were thought to have received divine favour in battle,¹⁰⁵ and when it was used to celebrate Arcadius' victory over the barbarians it was ridiculed by Eunapius, because the Emperor had taken no part in the encounter.¹⁰⁶ One may speculate, therefore, that its adoption by Eudoxia caused equal derision. Moreover, it has been suggested that Eudoxia's use of a religious symbol to indicate equality with the Emperor was particularly offensive to John Chrysostom, and the start of his antipathy towards her.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, this may have been exactly what Aurelian had planned, although this is only conjecture. Even if Aurelian was behind both Eudoxia's sudden elevation to *Augusta*, and the design of her coins, I believe it

¹⁰² See Appendix B and p.13 above.

¹⁰³ Langa, 2006, p.48; c.f. Holum, 1982, p.66. The inclusion of the *manus Dei* was copied by all the succeeding Theodosian Augustae - see Appendix B.

¹⁰⁴ Holum, 1982, p.66

¹⁰⁵ Langa, 2006, p.48

¹⁰⁶ Eunap. *Universal History*, fr.68

¹⁰⁷ Stebnicka, 2009, abstract

more likely at this stage that Aurelian, who was not so popular with Arcadius as Eutropius had been, was more interested in having Eudoxia as a powerful ally at court than in using her as a weapon against John.¹⁰⁸

The events leading up to the Synod of the Oak

Socrates and Sozomen both tell us that Eudoxia had initially been on good terms with John,¹⁰⁹ but during the years leading up to the Synod of the Oak that relationship changed, and there is some evidence that three men and three women at the Imperial Court were successful in influencing her against him. The evidence comes from two sources: John's disciple Palladius (c.363 - c.410), who wrote his *Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom* shortly after John's death;¹¹⁰ and Zosimus, who was probably quoting from the contemporary pagan historian Eunapius.¹¹¹

The three men are Aurelian, who remained influential at court although no longer praetorian prefect;¹¹² the veteran general and ex-consul Saturninus;¹¹³ and Count John,¹¹⁴ who was a close confidant of both Arcadius and Eudoxia,¹¹⁵ and according to Zosimus the real father of Eudoxia's son, the future Emperor Theodosius II.¹¹⁶ All three men had been surrendered by Arcadius to Gaïnas, the leader of the barbarians, in April 400, in order to appease him when his troops were endangering Constantinople.¹¹⁷ When Gaïnas was subsequently defeated, and the three exiles

¹⁰⁸ Cameron and Long, 1993, p.172

¹⁰⁹ Socrates, VI.8; Sozom. VIII.8

¹¹⁰ Rousseau, 2012, OCD4: 'Palladius (2)'

¹¹¹ Phot. *Bibl. Cod.*XCVIII

¹¹² Liebeschuetz, 1984, pp.97-98

¹¹³ Zos. V.9,3

¹¹⁴ Referred to throughout as Count John to distinguish him from John Chrysostom.

¹¹⁵ Socrates, VI.9-10; Sozom. VIII.4

¹¹⁶ Zos. V.18,7-9

¹¹⁷ Socrates, VI.6; Sozom. VIII.4; Zos. V.18. Socrates and Sozomen do not mention Count John.

returned to the city, they were hostile towards John, who had done nothing to prevent their exile even though, according to Theodoret, he possessed considerable influence over Gaïnas.¹¹⁸

In addition, all were friends with one of John's most powerful enemies, the Syrian monk Isaac,¹¹⁹ who, according to Photius, accused John at the Synod of the Oak of collaborating with Gaïnas to obtain Count John's exile.¹²⁰ It is probable, therefore, that Palladius' description of the "two, or at the most three from the royal court" who were working towards John's downfall, refers to these men.¹²¹ In addition, Zosimus states that it was shortly after the three men returned from exile that Eudoxia became John's open enemy,¹²² and so, for the first time, we have possible evidence that three members of the Imperial Court were influencing Eudoxia against John.

The three women are Eudoxia's personal attendants, Marsa, Castricia and Eugraphia, who Palladius identifies as being "united in their hatred of Christian teaching".¹²³ Zosimus does not name them but tells us that Eudoxia was "devoted to those who especially dominated her, namely [...] her female attendants".¹²⁴ Marsa, in particular, is thought to have possessed considerable influence as she was the widow of the general Promotus, in whose house Eudoxia lived after the death of her own father.¹²⁵ Marsa's name suggests that she was a Goth and, like her husband, a committed Arian, and therefore at odds with John,¹²⁶ while Castricia was the

¹¹⁸ Theodoret, *HE*. V.33): John was on such good terms with Gaïnas that he visited him on a diplomatic mission after he had left the city; c.f. Liebeschuetz, 1984, pp.97-98

¹¹⁹ Palladius, *Dialogue*. VI; Cameron and Long, 1993, p.72

¹²⁰ Phot. *Bibl.* Cod.LIX

¹²¹ Palladius, *Dialogue*. IV (trans. Moore)

¹²² Zos. V.23,2

¹²³ Palladius, *Dialogue*. IV (trans. Moore)

¹²⁴ Zos. V.24,2 (trans. Ridley)

¹²⁵ Zos. V.3,2

¹²⁶ Baur, 1960, p.189

widow of Saturninus, who probably blamed John for her husband's death, which occurred shortly after he returned from exile.¹²⁷ Eugraphia, according to Palladius, was "an absolute maniac",¹²⁸ who hosted a meeting of John's enemies in order to plan his downfall.¹²⁹

The evidence that these women influenced Eudoxia against John is centered on a sermon John gave against the vices of women. This, according to Palladius, offended Eugraphia because she thought it was directed against herself and her friends.¹³⁰ Zosimus does not mention Eugraphia, but does describe Eudoxia's displeasure,¹³¹ whilst both Socrates and Sozomen tell us that Eudoxia was offended when John's words were reported back to the palace by people who wished to cause trouble between them.¹³² But although it is easy to believe that it was Eudoxia's three female attendants who were stirring up trouble, this is only conjecture and not proof. Nevertheless, whoever did so was very successful, because Eudoxia then complained to the Emperor, who subsequently convened the Synod of the Oak which led to John's first exile.¹³³

Subsequent events leading to John's final exile

In the events that followed it is difficult to find any sign that Aurelian, Count John or Eudoxia's female attendants, were able to influence her against John. When John refused to attend the Synod no proper verdict could be reached, and the bishops were forced to refer the matter back to the Emperor.¹³⁴ But although Arcadius backed the bishops' request that John be

¹²⁷ Liebeschuetz, 1984, p.96

¹²⁸ Palladius, *Dialogue*. IV (trans. Moore)

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* VIII

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Zos. V.23

¹³² Socrates, VI.15; Sozom. VIII.16

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Socrates, VI.15; Sozom. VIII.17-18

deposed and sent into exile,¹³⁵ he refused their second request, that he should try John for treason.¹³⁶ Therefore, although Aurelian and Count John remained influential at court,¹³⁷ the extent of their power within the Emperor's Consistory is uncertain, and any influence over Eudoxia must have been short-lived, because Sozomen tells us that it was Eudoxia who requested John's immediate recall.¹³⁸

Not long after John returned from exile a statue of Eudoxia was erected near his church,¹³⁹ and when the noisy celebrations disrupted his devotions John made a fiery speech in which he compared Eudoxia to Herodias. But although both Socrates and Sozomen report the occasion in some detail, and comment on Eudoxia's subsequent anger, neither mentions her female attendants.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, although the assumption is easily made that these were the people who reported John's words to Eudoxia, there is no evidence that this was the case. The speech, however, did lead to John's second deposition and, due to the civil unrest that followed, it was once more the Emperor and his Consistory, rather than the bishops, who pronounced sentence. John was sent into exile over 100 miles away, as the law demanded,¹⁴¹ but we have no idea whether Aurelian and Count John played a part in the decision, and there is no indication that Eudoxia was influenced by them in any way.

Later textual sources and modern scholarship

Later sources were of limited use in my investigation, as the ecclesiastical authors are interested primarily in John's speeches and homilies, whilst the historians add little to our

¹³⁵ Theodoret, *HE*. V.34

¹³⁶ Palladius, *Dialogue*. VIII

¹³⁷ *Supra*, n.112

¹³⁸ Sozom. VIII.18; c.f. Socrates, VI.16; Theodoret, *HE*. V.34; Palladius, *Dialogue*. IX

¹³⁹ *Supra*, n.67

¹⁴⁰ Socrates, VI.18; Sozom. VIII.20

¹⁴¹ *CTh*. XVI. 2,35 (400)

knowledge. Even the chronicler Theophanes (c.752 - 818), whose description of events leading to John's second deposition is arguably superior to those provided by Socrates or Sozomen,¹⁴² is unable to provide us with new information.

Modern scholars, with few exceptions, blame Eudoxia for John's downfall.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, Baur appreciates that Eudoxia was vulnerable to manipulation, even if he lays the blame, rather patronisingly, on her "womanly vanity",¹⁴⁴ and Holum excepts that Eudoxia was up against the traditional prejudices against women,¹⁴⁵ although his frequent use of the allegorical 'Egyptian Tale', by Synesius of Cyrene (c.370 - c.413), can make it difficult to follow his arguments.¹⁴⁶

Alan Cameron's work on the Gothic rebellion of 399-400 provides much needed clarification over dates, plus useful insight into intrigues and relationships at the Imperial Court,¹⁴⁷ whilst Liebeschuetz's detailed descriptions of John's enemies, ranging from bishops and monks within the Church, to dominating political figures within the administration, sets the extent of Eudoxia's involvement into better context.¹⁴⁸ Lastly, Mayer's account of the destruction of Eudoxia's reputation shows that modern scholars, whilst still not in agreement over Eudoxia's character and motives, are now more likely to question the stereotypes so often employed by ancient authors when describing powerful women.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² Theophanes, AM5898 [405/6]; c.f. Socrates, VI.18; Sozom. VIII.20

¹⁴³ Teetgen goes so far as to claim that Eudoxia knew she was responsible for John's downfall, and "the remorse and misery of her last months give a final touch to as pitiable a tale as ever roused indignation" (1907, p.15).

¹⁴⁴ Baur, 1960, p.229

¹⁴⁵ Holum, 1982, p.78

¹⁴⁶ Synesius' *De Providentia* (Egyptian Tale), c.400, is an allegory of events surrounding conflict at the court of Arcadius, and can thus be said to involve Eudoxia, although only obliquely (Natal, 2018, ODLA: 'Synesius').

¹⁴⁷ Cameron and Long, 1993

¹⁴⁸ Liebeschuetz, 1984, pp.85-111

¹⁴⁹ Mayer, 2006, pp.205-213

Conclusion

In this case study my aim has been to investigate whether Eudoxia's behaviour towards John Chrysostom was due to her manipulation by his enemies at court and, if so, to identify who these people were and judge their success. After studying Eudoxia's sudden elevation to *Augusta* I concluded that, if this was a plan by Aurelian to manipulate her, his purpose was probably personal and unrelated to John's downfall. In the events leading up to the Synod of the Oak I found some evidence, albeit not conclusive, that three influential men at court, together with Eudoxia's three female attendants, may have persuaded her to act against John. In considering the events that led to John's final exile I could find no evidence that Eudoxia was manipulated in any way.

Consequently, my judgement rests on those sources who describe events leading up to the Synod of the Oak. But even here, although Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret provide useful information, they prudently treat Eudoxia with restraint,¹⁵⁰ and only the descriptions given by Palladius and Zosimus are illuminating. These two authors came from different religious backgrounds and had opposing viewpoints, but neither was afraid to voice his opinion, and although Zosimus, writing nearly a century later, could quote Eunapius in relative safety, Palladius' defence of John had already cost him dearly and led to his exile.¹⁵¹ The fact that their descriptions tally so closely gives them credibility, and I believe that in this instance Eudoxia was successfully manipulated into acting against John. The evidence is only circumstantial, but it does indicate a more vulnerable side to Eudoxia's character than has traditionally been granted her by authors, both ancient and modern.

¹⁵⁰ Bralewski, 202, p.60: The three Church Historians were all writing during the reign of Eudoxia's son, the Emperor Theodosius II, who frequently acted out of loyalty towards his mother.

¹⁵¹ Rousseau, 2012, OCD4: 'Palladius (2)'

5. Case Study: Pulcheria's Vow

Synopsis¹⁵²

Aelia Pulcheria (399 - 453) was the elder sister of Theodosius II, who became emperor of the Eastern Empire when he was seven and Pulcheria nine. Pulcheria played a prominent role in educating her brother, and in 414, when only fifteen, she was proclaimed *Augusta* and took over the administration of state affairs. At the same time she took a vow of chastity which she probably kept until her death, despite her marriage in 450 to the Emperor Marcian. After her brother's marriage, in 421, she was occasionally marginalized by his wife Eudocia, but her wealth and patronage ensured her continued influence in the affairs of both Church and State. From 431 she played a pivotal role in the Nestorian controversy, when Bishop Nestorius (386 - 451), believing the Virgin Mary to be the mother of Christ's human nature but not his divine nature, tried to downgrade Mary's status from *Theotokos* (Mother of God) to *Christotokos* (Mother of Christ).¹⁵³

Introduction

*"From a motive, either of prudence or religion, she embraced a life of celibacy."*¹⁵⁴

Pulcheria's vow of chastity underpins every account of her life, whether written by ancient authors or modern scholars, and influences the way we judge her every action. But what do we know about her actual vow? And was she, as Gibbon suggests in the quote above, acting from prudence or religious fervour, or did she also have a political motive?

¹⁵² This synopsis is taken from *PLRE II*, 'Aelia Pulcheria'.

¹⁵³ For more details on the controversy, and the subsequent Ecumenical Councils, see Holum, 1982, pp.147-174; c.f. Cooper, 2004, pp.39-51

¹⁵⁴ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 1781 [reprint 1927], III. XXXII

I hope to suggest some answers to these questions by closely examining the contemporary sources and taking into account the following:

- The unique value of these authors is their first-hand knowledge of the vow's social, religious and political implications, but might this knowledge have inhibited their work?
- Could their lack of understanding of female issues also impact on their narrative?
- Might we learn more if we consider Pulcheria's background, and the concept of female chastity held by society during her lifetime?

My study consists of three sections: the nature of Pulcheria's vow; her possible motive or motives; and her subsequent relationship with the Virgin Mary; but I shall begin with a brief study of the history of female chastity in the Roman Empire, and how it was regarded when Pulcheria took her vow.

A brief history of female chastity from the first to the early fifth centuries

The original laws on marriage in the Roman Empire were set up by Augustus, who decreed that women between the ages of twenty and fifty must marry and have children or their inheritance rights would be compromised.¹⁵⁵ In 320 Constantine annulled all penalties attached to celibacy and childlessness, and approximately a year later he permitted women of good character over the age of eighteen to control their own property.¹⁵⁶ For the first time this made a life of celibacy attractive for an independently minded woman of good birth and fortune, who did not regard obedience to her husband's wishes, and the bearing of his children, to be an ideal lifestyle. She could even remain at home, in a domestic form of asceticism, rather than live in a

¹⁵⁵ *lex Julia et Papia*, quoted in Evans-Grubbs, 2019, pp.106-7

¹⁵⁶ *CTh.* VIII.16,1; II.17.1a

monastic institution.¹⁵⁷ However, this was a disaster for families who relied on a daughter marrying well and producing heirs to continue the family line, and not choosing, as some now did, to give their inheritance to the Church for the funding of new churches or the shrines of martyrs.¹⁵⁸

This left the Church Fathers of the late fourth century in a particularly invidious position. Still competing for dominance with paganism, they needed the support of the powerful dynastic families, which meant advocating marriage. But encouraging female chastity not only established the Church's claim to moral superiority but helped to enrich its coffers,¹⁵⁹ and it is noticeable that Bishop Gregory of Nyssa was quick to praise his sister Macrina (d.379), who took a vow of chastity after her fiancé died and gave all her wealth to the Church for the benefit of the poor.¹⁶⁰

Furthermore, they faced another dichotomy. By encouraging female autonomy they were denying one of the central precepts of the Church: that Eve's disobedience had brought sin into the world, for which women must be punished and remain forever subservient to men.¹⁶¹ But by preaching about the sins of Eve they were discouraging females from embracing the new aesthetic lifestyle. Fortunately, the second century Church Father Irenaeus (c.130 - c.202) had taught that, although Eve had disobeyed God, the Virgin Mary had been obedient to God,¹⁶² and so, by the late fourth century, many Church Fathers were extolling Mary's virtues. An example is the treatise *De Virginibus* by St. Ambrose (c.339 - 397), in which the description of

¹⁵⁷ Sinopoulos-Lloyd, 2012, p.24

¹⁵⁸ A famous example is Melania the Younger (385-439), who was forced into marriage by her father, but after his death both she and her husband gave away their wealth and embraced a life of asceticism (Clark, 2021, ebook).

¹⁵⁹ Sinopoulos-Lloyd, 2012, p.23

¹⁶⁰ Gregory of Nyssa. *Letter 19,7* and *Life of Macrina* 6,12 (trans. Silvas)

¹⁶¹ Barker, 2014, p.23

¹⁶² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.19

the Virgin's lifestyle resembles a textbook for those contemplating a life of asceticism.¹⁶³

However, when Pulcheria was growing up the signals given out by the Church Fathers were still somewhat confusing, and this must be kept in mind when studying her life.

The Nature of Pulcheria's Vow

This section examines the nature of Pulcheria's vow and asks: whilst it is often assumed that Pulcheria took a deliberate, and very public, vow of chastity, do our sources bear this out?

The most detailed descriptions of Theodosius II's early reign are given by the Church Historians Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, yet Philostorgius and Socrates make no mention of Pulcheria's vow, whilst Theodoret merely remarks that Pulcheria and her sisters committed themselves to virginity.¹⁶⁴ Only Sozomen describes how Pulcheria, in her fifteenth year, devoted her virginity to God and urged her two younger sisters to do the same.¹⁶⁵ Taking God, the priests and all her subjects as witnesses, she then affirmed her intention publicly by setting up a jewelled altar in the Great Church of Constantinople, inscribed with her vow for everyone to see.¹⁶⁶

But this very believable description of an important public event then begs the question: why is it only mentioned by Sozomen? However, a look at each author suggests the answer.

Philostorgius was a committed Arian whose focus was on attacking, rather than praising, Orthodox Christians, and so it is understandable that he ignored Pulcheria's vow and referred

¹⁶³ Ambrose, *De Virginibus*. II.1-2

¹⁶⁴ Theodoret, *HE*. V.36

¹⁶⁵ Sozom. IX.1. As far as can be ascertained from extant sources, this is the only description of Pulcheria's public vow.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*. This is also the only description of the altar.

to her only once, as assisting her brother with imperial affairs when he was first proclaimed Emperor.¹⁶⁷

Socrates also refers to Pulcheria only once, when he likens the Emperor's Court to a monastery where Theodosius and his sisters rise early and spend their days praising God.¹⁶⁸ But this may have been because of the political situation at the palace in 439, when Socrates was writing his account.¹⁶⁹ At that time, Pulcheria had temporarily lost her pre-eminent position at court to Theodosius' wife Eudocia, who was at the height of her power,¹⁷⁰ and Socrates enjoyed Eudocia's patronage.¹⁷¹ As he actually voices concern that his recording of contemporary events might make him a victim of political jealousy,¹⁷² this suggests that he ignored the vow for political reasons.

Sozomen, on the other hand, published his work slightly later than Socrates, in 443,¹⁷³ by which time Eudocia had been accused of adultery and left Constantinople in disgrace, whilst Pulcheria had regained her pre-eminent position.¹⁷⁴ This may explain Sozomen's fulsome tribute to Pulcheria, which takes up three chapters in Book Nine, and was almost certainly politically motivated.¹⁷⁵ No doubt Sozomen, always anxious to please the Imperial Family,¹⁷⁶ thought praising Pulcheria was a wise move, and his description of Pulcheria's public vow may even have been written at her instigation.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁷ Philostorgius, XII,7

¹⁶⁸ Socrates, VII.22,5. Socrates may have been politely criticising the Emperor's lifestyle (Urbainczyk, 1997, p.12).

¹⁶⁹ Holum, 1982, p.95

¹⁷⁰ Marcellin. 439,2: Eudocia had just returned from Jerusalem with the relics of Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

¹⁷¹ Holum, 1982, p.95

¹⁷² Socrates, VI, Intro.; c.f. Borowski, 1974, p.14

¹⁷³ Chesnut, 1976, p.193

¹⁷⁴ Gregory, 1991, ODByz: 'Athenais-Eudokia'

¹⁷⁵ Sozom. IX.1-3

¹⁷⁶ *Supra*, n.36

¹⁷⁷ See p.36 below

Finally, Theodoret's cautious mention of Pulcheria's virginity was probably linked to his role in the Nestorian Controversy, which started in 431 and undoubtedly influenced his writing.

Theodoret took Nestorius' side and was consequently dismissed from his bishopric in 449 and not reinstated until 451.¹⁷⁸ He is thought to have written his *Ecclesiastical History* during this period,¹⁷⁹ and may have chosen to end his work at 428 in order to avoid describing his own involvement in the affair. Similarly, he may have felt it prudent to avoid any unnecessary comments regarding Pulcheria which might lead him into further conflict.¹⁸⁰

So current circumstances, together with political and religious prejudices, may well have caused the differences in each historian's description. However, the contemporary ecclesiastical authors who mention Pulcheria's vow are also surprisingly few.

Atticus (d.425), the Bishop of Constantinople, may have contributed to Pulcheria's decision by writing a treatise, since lost, for her and her sisters entitled *On Faith and Virginity*,¹⁸¹ and some scholars also believe that he oversaw their vows personally although I have found no supporting evidence.¹⁸² But as he subsequently addressed all three sisters in a sermon as having been "renewed in Christ",¹⁸³ this certainly suggests that they took a vow. Atticus' successor, Bishop Proclus (c.390 - 446), describes Pulcheria as having "devoted her virginity to Christ" in a sermon in which he extolled her for saving the relics of the Forty Holy Martyrs,¹⁸⁴ while Bishop Cyril of Alexandria (c.375 - 444) refers to "the sacred and wholly pure brides of

¹⁷⁸ Rohnracher, 2002, p.129; c.f. Treadgold, 2007, pp.157-8

¹⁷⁹ Leppin, 2003, p.226

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Holum, 1982, pp.138-139: it is known only from a reference in the literary catalogue of Gennadius, c.480.

¹⁸² Russell, 2000, p.215, n.7; c.f. Bury, 1923, p.214

¹⁸³ Atticus, *Sur la Sainte Mere de Dieu*, quoted in Holum, 1982, p.139.

¹⁸⁴ Proclus *Or.*12, quoted in Holum, 1982, p.137/138. Pulcheria's involvement is described fully in Sozomen, IX.2.

Christ" in his treatise addressed to "the Most Pious Princesses".¹⁸⁵ Lastly, Pope Leo I (c.395 - 461) addresses Pulcheria in his letters as "Your Piety",¹⁸⁶ which again suggests that she had taken a vow.

However, with the exception of Sozomen there is no indication from any source, either historical or ecclesiastical, that her vow was a public event, and so it is tempting to conclude that Sozomen invented the occasion. But in that case would Sozomen's colleagues not have commented on the missing jewelled altar in the Great Church of Constantinople?

Pulcheria's Motive or Motives

In this section I consider why Pulcheria chose to take her vow and, as Sozomen is the only contemporary author who suggests a motive, the section is based on my re-evaluation of his work once Pulcheria's background, and current views on female asceticism, are taken into account.

According to Sozomen, God had ordained that only piety could protect the Empire,¹⁸⁷ thereby suggesting that Pulcheria's motive was purely unselfish. He tells us that "to avoid all cause of scandal and opportunity for intrigue, she permitted no man to enter her palace",¹⁸⁸ and this rings true, because both Empire and Dynasty were vulnerable with a child emperor in power, and Pulcheria needed to ensure that her virginity, and that of her sisters, could not be questioned. Indeed, it is noticeable that the head eunuch, Antiochus, and the praetorian prefect of the East, Anthemius - the two most powerful people in the palace - were removed

¹⁸⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, *Address to the Most Pious Princesses*, quoted in Holum, 1982, pp.159/160.

¹⁸⁶ Leo I, *Letters* 60, 79, 95 (trans. Hunt)

¹⁸⁷ Sozom. IX.1,2

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* (trans. Walford)

from office shortly after she took her vow.¹⁸⁹ This may have been at Pulcheria's instigation, as either might have organised the downfall of her or her sisters by engineering a rumour suggesting an illegitimate child, or might have forced one of them into marriage with someone who had aspirations to become Emperor.¹⁹⁰

Nevertheless, there is reason to be cautious here. Although Sozomen gives his work an appearance of authenticity by inviting sceptical readers to check the official records,¹⁹¹ surely forbidding men to enter the palace was impractical? If the *magister libellorum* (master of petitions), for instance, was not allowed access to Pulcheria, then how could she have governed the Roman Empire excellently, as Sozomen suggests?¹⁹² Furthermore, her caution seems unnecessary, as the law stated that any person found guilty of raping a virgin, or soliciting her into marriage, would suffer capital punishment.¹⁹³ Given Pulcheria's influential position, would anybody dare to try? It is far easier to conclude that Sozomen was writing a narrative, agreed beforehand with Pulcheria, which presented her in the best possible light.

However, Pulcheria may have had two other motives, and the first concerns her background. Having seen her mother, Eudoxia, die from a miscarriage after being pregnant for six out of the nine years of her marriage, maybe Pulcheria never wanted children - for there was every reason to believe that Theodosius would marry and produce heirs, so it was unlikely that a child of Placidia's would become emperor.

¹⁸⁹ Borowski, 1974, pp.61,71

¹⁹⁰ Busch, 2015, p.112; c.f. Holum, 1982, p.93

¹⁹¹ Sozom. IX.1,11

¹⁹² Sozom. IX.1,3

¹⁹³ CTh. IX.25.2 (364)

The second motive becomes apparent when Pulcheria's actions are considered alongside the female ascetic lifestyle which was becoming popular at the time. According to Sozomen, when Pulcheria was fifteen she was wise above her years, well versed in both Latin and Greek, and a pious student of the Orthodox faith.¹⁹⁴ It is inconceivable, therefore, that she did not know the Church Fathers' views on virginity, or had not heard about female ascetics like Olympias (360 - 408), the protégée of John Chrysostom, who had been a figure of such importance in the life of her mother.¹⁹⁵ Olympias lived with other women in a nunnery, and gave her immense wealth to John to use as he wished,¹⁹⁶ but many Church Fathers advocated staying at home, devoting the majority of the day to prayer and meditation, and using 'free time' for spinning and weaving.¹⁹⁷ This lifestyle is very like the one which, according to Sozomen, Pulcheria and her sisters now embraced.¹⁹⁸ So was that her motive all along?

If so, then she could live the aesthetic lifestyle of her choice whilst remaining in luxury at the palace; she could preserve her status and the control which she exercised over Theodosius; and her selfless behaviour and piety would be seen and admired by all.¹⁹⁹ In addition, she did not need to give away her wealth or leave it to the Church to distribute, as Olympias had done. Instead she could control her own funds because a new law, issued that same year, decreed for the first time that all contracts made by women should be considered binding.²⁰⁰ It is, in fact, perfectly feasible that Pulcheria drafted this law, although this is only speculation,²⁰¹ as is much of the above.

¹⁹⁴ Sozom. IX.1,3

¹⁹⁵ See pp.18-28 above

¹⁹⁶ Holum, 1982, p.144

¹⁹⁷ Sinopoulos-Lloyd, 2012, p.24

¹⁹⁸ Sozom. IX.3

¹⁹⁹ Busch, 2015, p.118

²⁰⁰ CTh. II.16,3

²⁰¹ Kuefler, 2007, p.325, n.28

To summarise, I suggest that Sozomen's narrative may have been influenced by Pulcheria, but if her background and current views on female aestheticism are taken into account, then her motives may have been far more complex than Sozomen suggests.

Pulcheria's Subsequent Relationship with the Virgin Mary

Following her vow Pulcheria developed a special relationship with the Virgin Mary, but why did she do this? The lack of information suggests that even the Church Historians were reluctant to comment on a subject they did not fully understand.

However, some modern scholars have suggested that her motive was to harness the spiritual power of the Virgin Mary to the imperial power she already possessed,²⁰² and Pulcheria's very public demonstrations of her relationship with Mary bear this out. In Constantinople she built three churches dedicate to Mary, and endowed each with Marian relics,²⁰³ whilst her forceful defence of Mary's position as *Theotokos* was acclaimed by the crowd at the Council of Ephesus in 431.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, the subsequent verbal and written attacks made on her by Nestorius and his supporters may well have gained her more friends than enemies.²⁰⁵

But although power may have been one motive, I should like to suggest a second. Socrates, whilst recording Nestorius' attack on the *Theotokos*, quotes a passage from Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* which describes how "the devout empress Helena adorned [Bethlehem] where

²⁰² Holum, 1982, pp.142-143; Limberis, 1994, p.50; Swanson, 2003, p.iii; James, 2006, p.145; Sinopoulos-Lloyd, 2012, abstract.

²⁰³ Swanson, 2003, p.iii: the churches are Blachemai, Chalkoprateia, and Hodegoi.

²⁰⁴ Holum, 1982, p.170

²⁰⁵ For example, Nestorius *Heracleides* I,3: she was "corrupted by men" (*corrompue par les hommes*), *Letter to Cosmos* 8: she "gave birth to Satan" (*tu as enfanté Satan*) (trans. Nau).

the *Theotokos* gave birth with the most splendid monuments".²⁰⁶ Socrates' purpose, according to Kate Cooper, is to remind his readers that a slight to the Virgin Mary is a slight to all imperial women,²⁰⁷ but it also reminds us that Helena, the first Christian *Augusta*, had associated herself with the *Theotokos*, and Helena was the role model for all the *Augustae* of the Theodosian Dynasty.²⁰⁸ So Pulcheria may simply have been embracing the family tradition, and her acclamation by the bishops at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 as "the New Helena",²⁰⁹ suggests that this was well-known and appreciated at the time.

Nevertheless, it was probably not her primary reason, and overall I agree with historian Richard Price's statement that Pulcheria, by linking her own authority to the status of the Virgin, was skilfully promoting both.²¹⁰

Later textual sources and modern scholarship

Later authors provide little in the way of new information, and their different circumstances and religious viewpoints mean that they must be read with care. It seems that information was included, or missed out, as the situation dictated, and this is apparent in the way in which two later authors deal with Nestorius' allegation that Pulcheria was an adulteress. Whilst contemporary historians prudently remain silent, the historian Theodore Lector (d. after 518), writing after the Theodosian Dynasty had ceased to exist, feels secure enough to include the allegation in his Church History.²¹¹ But three hundred years later, the chronicler Theophanes, who had himself embraced the monastic life,²¹² believes that Pulcheria "managed the Empire

²⁰⁶ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, III.43, quoted in Socrates, VII.32,15 (trans. Zenos)

²⁰⁷ Cooper, 2004, p.45

²⁰⁸ See p.12 above

²⁰⁹ Quoted in Holum, 1982, p.216

²¹⁰ Price, 2004, p.31

²¹¹ Theodore Lector, *HE*, I.5

²¹² Mango, 1997, pp.xliv/xlviii

excellently with the help of God",²¹³ and expunges any suggestion of immorality from his text. Because of examples such as this I have used the later authors mainly for verifying the main facts.

Modern scholars have not moved on substantially from Gibbon, who shows little understanding of Pulcheria's virginity or her political acumen.²¹⁴ Many historians, including such influential ones as J. B. Bury and A. H. M. Jones, say little about her,²¹⁵ while religious authors focus on her subsequent sainthood and ignore her historical impact.²¹⁶ However, since Holum's seminal work of 1982 scholars have become more interested in Pulcheria's pious lifestyle,²¹⁷ and both Kate Cooper and Liz James have given me a better appreciation of Pulcheria's attachment to the Virgin Mary.²¹⁸ In addition, Kathryn Chew's clear understanding of the relationship between Pulcheria's political and religious power has helped me to formulate my own view, whilst her comments on the motivations of the contemporary authors have proved especially useful.²¹⁹

Conclusion

This case study re-evaluated our knowledge of Pulcheria by bearing in mind the political, religious and social issues of the day and identifying the pressures which may have constrained the contemporary authors.

When studying Pulcheria's vow, and her possible motives for taking it, I discovered that our knowledge has been severely limited by the religious affiliations of the historians and the

²¹³ Theophanes, AM5901 [408/9] (trans. Scott)

²¹⁴ *Supra*, n.154

²¹⁵ Bury, 1923; Jones, 1964

²¹⁶ Jividen, 2016, p.26

²¹⁷ Holum, 1982

²¹⁸ Cooper, 2004; James, 2006

²¹⁹ Chew, 2006

political environment under which they worked. These drawbacks resulted in a preferred narrative, still used by many scholars to this day, which is based almost entirely on the work of Sozomen. This takes no account of her background, or the views on female aestheticism held by society at the time, and may even have been written under pressure from Pulcheria herself. My investigation into Pulcheria's special relationship with the Virgin Mary shows the same limitations, although here we must also contend with prejudice from the clergy, and a possible reluctance by male historians to describe a female whose actions they do not fully understand.

My research indicated that Pulcheria was a pious Orthodox Christian, who may have been influenced in her choice of an aesthetic lifestyle by its popularity when she was growing up. Although reared to treat Helena as her role model, she was a sister, rather than wife or mother, of the Emperor, and so she chose to maintain her influence over Theodosius, and thus over the Eastern Empire, by becoming known for her piety. Her self-identification with the *Theotokos* was an integral part of what I believe to have been her single-minded pursuit of power.

6. Case Study: Galla Placidia's early years

Synopsis²²⁰

Aelia Galla Placidia (c.388 - 450)²²¹ was the daughter of Theodosius I and his second wife Galla, and the half-sister of the Emperors Arcadius and Honorius. After her parents' death she was brought up in the West, in the household of Stilicho, Theodosius' *magister militum*, and his wife Serena, Theodosius' niece. In 408 she was in Rome when the city was besieged by the Visigoths, and was taken hostage by them in 410 when they left Rome after sacking the city. In 414 she married Athaulf, their king, and in 415, after the death of Athaulf and their son Theodosius, she was returned by the Visigoths to the Emperor Honorius in Ravenna.

She married the future Emperor Constantius III in 417 and they had two children: a daughter, Justa Grata Honoria, and a son, the future Western Emperor, Valentinian III. When Constantius was made emperor in 421 she was proclaimed *Augusta*, but Constantius died soon afterwards, and following a bitter quarrel with Honorius she fled with her children to Constantinople. In 423, after Honorius' death, the Eastern Emperor Theodosius II supported her and her son against the usurper John, and after John's defeat Valentinian became the new Emperor of the West. Placidia ruled as his regent for twelve years, remaining a political force and upholding the Orthodox faith until her death in 450.

²²⁰ This synopsis is taken from *PLRE II*, 'Aelia Galla Placidia'.

²²¹ Placidia's birth is not recorded. I have used the generally accepted date of 388 but she may not have been born until 392 (Oost, 1965, pp.1-4).

Introduction

*"The youth of Galla Placidia was stormy enough. She was a woman of strong character and will."*²²²

Placidia was in her early thirties when she was proclaimed *Augusta*, and from that point on she is portrayed by modern scholars as a woman of indomitable will, ruling the Western Empire on behalf of her young son Valentinian III.²²³ However, during her earlier years she is often ignored,²²⁴ or portrayed as a compliant young woman who is treated as a political tool, to be married off or ignored as circumstances dictated.²²⁵ But was she compliant or, as the above quote by Bury suggests, were there indications, even in her youth, of the commanding figure she was to become? The purpose of this case study is to try and answer this question.

My investigation focuses on the marriage problems Placidia encountered as a young imperial princess whose husband could potentially threaten the future of the dynasty. She married twice, to Athaulf, the king of the Goths, and then to the future Emperor Constantius III, but whilst still a child she may have been a pawn in an unsuccessful plot by Stilicho to marry her to his son, Eucherius. These three events will be studied separately by closely examining the contemporary authors,²²⁶ whilst keeping in mind the following questions:

- Are our sources reliable, or motivated by prejudice?
- Might a lack of understanding of the importance of women shape their narrative?
- Does a knowledge of Placidia's family history and the laws on marriage increase our understanding of events?

²²² Bury, 1919, p.1

²²³ Lawrence, 2013, p.2; Salisbury, 2015, p.1; Atkinson, 2020, p.5

²²⁴ Treadgold, 1997; Lee, 2013; Mitchell, 2015

²²⁵ Oost, 1968, p.64; Heather, 2006, p.239; Herrin, 2013, p.4; Salisbury, 2015, p.52; Leonard, 2019, p.344

²²⁶ These are mainly historical. The ecclesiastical authors offer no pertinent information (see Appendix A).

In order to assist my investigation I shall start with a short study of relevant Roman marriage laws and the problems attached to political alliances.

The Roman marriage laws

Marriage during the fifth century was still a civil affair, as it had been since the early days of Empire.²²⁷ Betrothal (*sponsalia*) could take place at a very young age if arranged by the parents as part of a family alliance,²²⁸ but the minimum age for marriage was fourteen for boys and twelve for girls, although penalties were seldom incurred if the girl was younger.²²⁹ The law stated that all parties must give their consent,²³⁰ but in practice the bride was offered little choice. However, in 320 Constantine outlawed the practice of abducting the bride in order to force agreement from her family,²³¹ and from 380 it was specifically forbidden to coerce any woman into marriage.²³² Around the same time, the rules on betrothal and the exchange of nuptial gifts became strictly defined, with the gift now subject to public record,²³³ and in 382 another law stated that the groom's gift to the bride was legally hers to keep and pass on to her children, and could not be taken from her by her family.²³⁴

In the early 370s the intermarriage between Romans and barbarians also became subject to a new law which, on first reading, appears to prohibit all such marriages,²³⁵ but is now thought to have applied only where persons of unequal status were concerned.²³⁶ Certainly, there is

²²⁷ Marriage did not become a religious ceremony until the twelfth century (Sessa, 2018, p.91).

²²⁸ Evans-Grubbs, 1987, p.92

²²⁹ *Justinian. Digest*. XXIII.2,4; Hopkins, 1965, pp.313-4: officially the couple remained betrothed until the bride came of age.

²³⁰ *Justinian. Digest*. XXIII.2,2

²³¹ *CTh*. IX 24.1

²³² *Ibid*. III.6.1, 10.1, 11.1

²³³ *Ibid*. III.5.1

²³⁴ *Ibid*. III 8,2

²³⁵ *Ibid*. III.14.1

²³⁶ Mathisen, 2009, p.155

evidence of many mixed marriages, including that of the half-vandal Stilicho to Theodosius' niece Serena. The law did not address the religious implications, but it is thought that the established Church may have tried to introduce bans between their Orthodox members and the Arian barbarians,²³⁷ although it is unclear how the ban could have been legally enforced.

The problems of political alliances

Marriage amongst the upper echelons of society was a common way of cementing a political alliance. However, difficulties could arise when the marriage involved a member of the Imperial Family, because a new cadet branch of the family could conceivably pose a threat to the current regime.²³⁸ This had occurred when Constantine's six half-siblings became a constant threat to him and his three heirs after they married,²³⁹ and a tradition of chastity had then developed amongst the women of the Imperial Family in order to protect the male line of descent.²⁴⁰ Placidia's own mother Galla, one of three virgin daughters of Valentinian I,²⁴¹ had only been permitted to marry Theodosius because a crisis necessitated an alliance between Theodosius and Galla's brother, Valentinian II,²⁴² and Placidia would have been aware of this as she grew to marriageable age herself.

The attempt by Stilicho to marry Placidia to his son Eucherius

Information regarding Placidia's early years, from the time of Theodosius' death in 395 when she was seven, until the siege of Rome by the Visigoths in 408, is very scarce. She is not mentioned by any historian or chronicler during that period, but it seems probable that she was

²³⁷ Sivan, 1999, p.513.

²³⁸ Lawrence, 2013, p.110

²³⁹ James, 2013, p.99

²⁴⁰ Lawrence, 2013, p.28

²⁴¹ Socrates, IV.31,17

²⁴² Lawrence, 2013, p.110, n.293

brought up by Serena, under the aegis of her husband Stilicho, now Honorius' *magister militum* and a figure of some importance. According to several sources, Stilicho's ambition was to make his son, Eucherius, the next emperor in the West,²⁴³ and this has led to speculation by some modern scholars that Placidia was being raised by him to become Eucherius' wife.²⁴⁴

However, the only evidence for this is in a panegyric, which is never a reliable source of information because it is a poem performed live by its author in order to eulogise the person addressed. In this case the poet was Claudian (c.370 - c.404) and he was addressing his patron, Stilicho, on the occasion of Stilicho's first consulship in 400. Claudian describes how Stilicho was presented with a consular robe embroidered with scenes from the future, and one scene is particularly illuminating:

... Here Venus, carried by doves,
joins a third marriage in royal partnership.
Winged Loves crowd round the bride,
born from emperors, sister to emperors.
Eucherius lifts the veil from the timid virgin's face,
and Thermantia smiles on her happy brother.
For the palace looked for crowns from both sexes,
and produced both queens and husbands for queens.²⁴⁵

In the fourth line, the phrase "born from emperors, sister of emperors"²⁴⁶ can only refer to Placidia, who was the daughter of Emperor Theodosius I, granddaughter on her mother's side of Emperor Valentinian I, and sister to two Emperors, Honorius and Arcadius.

²⁴³ Philostorgius, XII.2; Oros. VII.38,1; Marcellin. s.a.408,1; Jord. *Romana* 322; c.f. Zos. V.34,7: Zosimus disagrees, but his source was almost certainly Olympiodorus, who is generally uncritical of Stilicho.

²⁴⁴ Oost, 1968, p.73; Salisbury, 2015, p.48; Atkinson, 2020, p.52; Lawrence, 2013, p.25; c.f. Nagl, 1908, p.11

²⁴⁵ Claud. *Cons. Stil.* II, lines 354-361 (trans. Bernstein)

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* line 357: *progenitam Augustis Augustorumque sororem*. My own translation also translates 'emperor' in the plural, but Platnauer translates it in the singular as "daughter and sister of an emperor", which provides a slightly less powerful link with Placidia (Platnauer, LCL.136, 1922).

This is, of course, a description of an imaginary event, written in order to glorify Stilicho, but the circumstantial evidence allows us some insight into Stilicho's thoughts and ambitions. In 400, when Claudian performed the panegyric, Stilicho's elder daughter Maria had been married to Honorius for five years, but the couple remained childless.²⁴⁷ In addition, there was a rumour that the Emperor was impotent²⁴⁸ which suggested that even if Stilicho could subsequently marry Thermantia, his younger daughter, to Honorius she might not produce an heir.²⁴⁹ Claudian's description of Placidia cleverly emphasises the fact that she was descended from not one, but two, dynasties and this gave her a dynastic legitimacy even greater than that of Honorius.²⁵⁰ So it would make sense for Stilicho to marry Placidia to Eucherius, thereby making his son ideally placed to become the next Emperor of the West.

However, after the death of the Eastern Emperor Arcadius in 408, a rumour that Stilicho was plotting to kill Arcadius' young heir Theodosius II and make Eucherius the new emperor of the East, caused Honorius to have both Stilicho and his son executed.²⁵¹ Thus Stilicho's intentions regarding Placidia remain unknown. Even so, it is worth noting that Claudian, who is aware of the importance of women in his dramatic rendering of events, has, in this instance, been of more use as a source than the historians and chroniclers, to whom women frequently appear unimportant.

But regardless of Stilicho's intentions, the question is: was Placidia willing to be used as his tool? She was no doubt aware, even at a young age, of her unique situation. Indeed, she need only study the recent history of her own family to understand both the problems and the

²⁴⁷ PLRE II, 'Maria 1'

²⁴⁸ Philostorgius, XII.2; c.f. Zos. V.28,2

²⁴⁹ Thermantia was married to Honorius in 408, shortly after Maria's death, but both marriages were unconsummated, and Honorius died childless (Jord. *Romana*. 322, *Get*. 154; Marcellin. s.a.408,1; c.f. Zos. V.28,2-3)

²⁵⁰ Lawrence, 2013, p.11

²⁵¹ Sozom. IX.4,2; Zos. V.32,1

unique strength of her position. So the fact that in 400, when Placidia was twelve, no formal betrothed had been announced, suggests that either Stilicho was cautious about advertising his ambition or Placidia was aware of the situation and unwilling to be forced into marriage. It seems unlikely that she would have prevailed against Stilicho, even though the marriage laws were on her side, but whether she was already showing signs of her later forceful character by challenging his authority is, unfortunately, impossible to judge.

Marriage to Athaulf the king of the Visigoths

Placidia had been trapped in Rome for over two years when the Visigoths sacked the city in 410.²⁵² When they left they took Placidia with them and she remained their hostage for over three years before marrying their leader, Athaulf, in Narbonne in January 414.²⁵³ Their wedding is recorded by a number of contemporary historians and chroniclers,²⁵⁴ but they tend to treat her as a passive participant with no voice of her own, which makes it difficult to know whether she was a willing bride. Modern scholars are inclined to do likewise,²⁵⁵ although Salisbury reminds us that Tacitus believed the Goths to have a tradition of consulting their women,²⁵⁶ and suggests that Placidia may actually have been instrumental in bringing the wedding about.²⁵⁷

Two contemporary historians give us a helpful and reasonably unbiased view of events, although always from a Roman viewpoint. The first is the Spanish priest Orosius, who understood that the Visigoths wished to stop fighting the Romans and become their allies, and

²⁵² Zosimus makes an unsubstantiated claim that Placidia authorised the execution of Serena during this time (Zos. V.38,1). But whether she was the compliant tool of the Senate or took the initiative herself is unknown.

²⁵³ Olympiodorus, fr.24; Hydatius, s.a.414

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; Philostorgius, XII.4; Prosper, s.a.416; Oros. VII.40,2 43,2; *Gallic Chronicle of 452*. s.a.416; Jord. *Romana*. 323, Get. 160

²⁵⁵ Becker-Piriou, 2008, p.520: she was an object to be exploited (*comme objet ou enjeu des négociations*); c.f. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 1781 [reprint 1927], III.XXXI: she submitted without reluctance.

²⁵⁶ Tac. *Germ.* VIII

²⁵⁷ Salisbury, 2015, p.78

knew that Placidia was "a woman of keen intellect and clearly virtuous in religion".²⁵⁸ So when he heard from a witness that Athaulf now wished to put the might of the Goths at Rome's disposal,²⁵⁹ Orosius saw her capture by them as a gift of God, and her marriage as a way in which she could actually influence events and help to further the cause of peace.²⁶⁰

The second is Olympiodorus, who provides us with our only description of the marriage, which he portrays as a traditional Roman wedding, with barbarians and Romans celebrating together, complete with nuptial hymns and an exchange of wedding gifts.²⁶¹ However, whilst Placidia is dressed as an imperial Roman bride, Athaulf is dressed, not as a king, but in the uniform of a Roman general,²⁶² thereby demonstrating his desire to stop fighting Rome and serve the empire as a soldier. Thus Olympiodorus, like Orosius, suggests that Placidia is not being exploited but, on the contrary, is Athaulf's partner in his wish for peace.

Nevertheless, there is one discordant note. Olympiodorus tells us that the marriage took place: "With the advice and encouragement of Candidianus",²⁶³ who was the author's personal friend and a soldier in Placidia's retinue.²⁶⁴ This suggestion, that either Placidia or Athaulf needed reassurance, throws some slight doubt upon Placidia's thoughts at the time.²⁶⁵ However, a look at Placidia's personal circumstances suggests two additional reasons why Placidia might have welcomed the marriage.

²⁵⁸ Oros. VII.41,7; 43,7 (trans. Fear)

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* VII.43.4-6

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* VII.40,2 43,7

²⁶¹ Olympiodorus, fr.24

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.* (trans. Blockley)

²⁶⁴ Blockley, 1981, pp.34-35

²⁶⁵ Sivan, 2011, p.22; Dunn, 2015, p.382; c.f. Oost, 1968, p.127; Atkinson, 2020, p.91

The first was the opportunity to break free from Honorius and the influence of the Western Court. By forging her own political alliance she could use her unique position, as the offspring of two imperial families, to attain a position of power in an alternative, yet potentially legitimate, new regime.²⁶⁶ The second was the opportunity to give Honorius a shock. During her long period as a hostage Placidia may have felt more valued by her captors than by her brother, who reneged on a deal whereby Placidia was to be returned to him in exchange for grain to feed the hungry Goths.²⁶⁷ She was also aware that any offspring from her marriage could conceivably threaten Honorius' imperial throne - and it is noticeable that her son, born the following year, was named Theodosius,²⁶⁸ possibly with this thought in mind.

The marriage was potentially problematic because it was between two people of different ethnicities and different Christian denominations, but marriages between barbarians and Romans occurred regularly.²⁶⁹ Indeed, a number of Placidia's maternal relatives were Arians or had Arian sympathies,²⁷⁰ and the marriage was an entirely civil affair, with no record of any religious disagreement.²⁷¹ It is unlikely, therefore, that these potential difficulties would outweigh the advantages in Placidia's mind. In fact I believe that Placidia, although she may have suffered as a hostage, was not a compliant victim but a willing participant in a marriage which she judged advantageous to herself and, to do her justice, might prove beneficial to both the Romans and the Goths.

²⁶⁶ Lawrence, 2013, pp.120,272

²⁶⁷ Olympiodorus, fr.22

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* fr.26

²⁶⁹ Stilicho had a barbarian father, as did Eudoxia, the wife of the Eastern emperor Arcadius.

²⁷⁰ Placidia's maternal grandmother Justina, the wife of the Emperor Valentinian I, had been a devout Arian, whilst her uncle, the Emperor Valentinian II, had known Arian sympathies.

²⁷¹ Salisbury, 2015, p.96

Marriage to the future Emperor Constantius III

By the autumn of 415 both Athaulf and their baby son were dead, and Placidia endured a few stressful days back in captivity.²⁷² However, she was exchanged for 600,000 measures of grain in a treaty negotiated by Honorius' new *magister militum* Constantius, who was promised her hand in marriage by Honorius if he obtained her release.²⁷³ By the Spring of 416 she was back in Ravenna, and on 1 January 417 she married Constantius,²⁷⁴ having become, to all intents and purposes, a compliant bride, exploited by her new husband's quest for power, and her brother's wish to ensure Constantius' loyalty.²⁷⁵

However, Olympiodorus - the only contemporary source who offers relevant information - shows that Placidia, although out-manoeuvred, was by no means compliant. Her status at court had enabled her to refuse the marriage for almost a year after her return, even though her frequent rejections made Constantius angry,²⁷⁶ and it was not until Honorius publicly "took her by the hand and, despite her protests, gave her over to Constantius", that she was forced to comply.²⁷⁷ But although Honorius' intervention made the marriage laws unenforceable,²⁷⁸ another law enabled her to retain some independence as a married woman. This law stated that a bride's nuptial gift was legally hers to keep,²⁷⁹ and part of Athaulf's nuptial gift had been "fifty handsome young men" who had subsequently accompanied her to Ravenna, and were,

²⁷² Olympiodorus, fr.26: Athaulf's replacement Sigeric, who reigned for one week before being assassinated by Wallia, humiliated Placidia by making her walk twelve miles in front of his horse; c.f. Oros. VII.43,8

²⁷³ Olympiodorus, frs.22,26,30; c.f. Oros. VII.43,12-13; c.f. Jord. Get. 164-165: Wallia, the new king of the Goths, also agreed to fight on behalf of Rome.

²⁷⁴ Oost, 1968, pp.139/142

²⁷⁵ Constantius understood, as Stilicho had, the significance of a family connection with the Emperor and the possibility of fathering his heir. But as *magister militum*, Constantius, like Stilicho before him, could easily become a threat.

²⁷⁶ Olympiodorus, fr.33. We do not know why she rejected him, but in fr.23 Olympiodorus describes him as unattractive, and she may also have come to appreciate her independence.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* (trans. Blockley). According to Atkinson, 2020, p.103, the public display of holding hands made them legally married, but I have been unable to find any law which specifically states this.

²⁷⁸ CTh. III.6.1, 10.1, 11.1 7

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.* III.8,2

according to Olympiodorus, quite capable of defending her interests if she was threatened in any way.²⁸⁰ They had assisted her in resisting Constantius, and were still there, fighting in the street on her behalf,²⁸¹ when she later quarrelled with Honorius.²⁸²

So, as Thomas Lawrence points out, she was no released hostage, thankful to be returned to her brother and suitor, but a former Gothic queen, complete with her own attendants, and well aware of her status.²⁸³ Essentially, she was already showing signs of the commanding figure she was shortly to become.

The later textual sources and modern scholarship

Later authors provide little extra information, although the historian Jordanes (died after 551) is interesting because he was from a Gothic background, and arguably had access to the now lost *Gothic History* by Cassiodorus (c.490 - c.580).²⁸⁴ Consequently, he looks at events from a different perspective, but in this instance, except for placing Placidia's wedding to Athaulf in Fréjus or Northeast Italy, rather than in Narbonne, he provides no additional information.²⁸⁵

Placidia's colourful life has attracted the attention of many modern scholars, and Stewart Oost, Hagith Sivan, Joyce Salisbury and Kenneth Atkinson, have all published works solely devoted to her.²⁸⁶ The earliest is by Oost, and although his comments on women are sometimes outdated,²⁸⁷ I still believe this to be the best account of her life written in English. All four

²⁸⁰ Olympiodorus, frs.24,38 (trans. Blockley)

²⁸¹ Olympiodorus, fr.38

²⁸² Cassiodorus writes that she was accused of inviting the enemy to take over (Cassiod. *Chron.* 423). Bury, 1919, p.2, believes that 'the enemy' is meant to mean the Visigoths.

²⁸³ Lawrence, 2013, p.185

²⁸⁴ Van Nuffelen, 2020, pp.36-37

²⁸⁵ Jord. *Get.* 160; c.f. Van Nuffelen, 2020, p.296, n.549-550

²⁸⁶ Oost, 1968; Sivan, 2011; Salisbury, 2015; Atkinson, 2020

²⁸⁷ See p.3 above

scholars have to cope with a scarcity of reliable information, which means that their descriptions are frequently based on comparative material, rather than on actual references, and it can sometimes be unclear which is being used.²⁸⁸ An example is Salisbury's three-page description of Placidia's upbringing,²⁸⁹ which is based, rather confusingly, on advice given by St. Jerome (c.347 - c.420) on how to bring up a daughter,²⁹⁰ and does not refer specifically to Placidia. Indeed, as already discussed, concrete information on her childhood is almost non-existent, which is possibly why Sivan wisely ignored it and began her study with Placidia's wedding to Athaulf.

All four speculate freely regarding Placidia's thoughts and emotions, and their contradictory views can be intriguing. At her wedding to Athaulf, for instance, she is seen by Sivan as a reluctant or battered bride,²⁹¹ by Atkinson as a mentally unfit victim,²⁹² by Oost as a hostage in love with her captor,²⁹³ and by Salisbury as Athaulf's willing partner.²⁹⁴ However, these works are biographies: a genre defined by Stadler as "a self-sufficient account of the kind of life led by a historical person that also evaluates the subject's character, goals, and achievements".²⁹⁵ As such, each does a reasonable job, and all proved helpful in my research.

Two other scholarly works have been especially valuable. The first is the dissertation on Honorius and Galla Placidia by Thomas Lawrence,²⁹⁶ which is a well-referenced tour de force and an invaluable aid. The second is R. C. Blockley's commentary, text and translation of

²⁸⁸ This is admitted by both Oost, 1968, p.vii; and Sivan, 2011, p.2

²⁸⁹ Salisbury, 2015, pp.41-43

²⁹⁰ Jer. Ep. CVII, *To Laeta*

²⁹¹ Sivan, 2011, p.14

²⁹² Atkinson, 2020, p.91

²⁹³ Oost, 1968, p.121

²⁹⁴ Salisbury, 2015, p.78

²⁹⁵ Stadter, 2007, p.1083

²⁹⁶ Lawrence, 2013

Olympiodorus,²⁹⁷ which allows the reader as good an insight as is possible, considering the fragmentary nature of this author's work. I could not have done without either of these.

Conclusion

This case study has examined the marriage problems encountered by Placidia during her early years. By studying the work of contemporary authors, the lives of the authors themselves, and the problems Placidia faced as an Imperial Princess, my aim has been to establish whether the impression frequently given of Placidia as a compliant young woman is accurate.

I found that Placidia's childhood was ignored by the historians and the chroniclers, but a study of the poet Claudian showed that although Stilicho probably saw her as a useful tool, she was not necessarily submissive to his plans. My study of the historians Orosius and Olympiodorus, and the problems of mixed marriages and political alliances, led me to conclude that Placidia was a willing participant in her marriage to Athaulf. However, this was not the case in her marriage to Constantius, where the information given by Olympiodorus, and my research into the Roman marriage laws, suggests that she was used as an unwilling tool by both Constantius and her brother, although she was never compliant and still able to retain some independence.

Except for Orosius and Olympiodorus, who offer some insight into Placidia's character, she was misunderstood and treated as an unimportant female by the contemporary historians, who seem reluctant to give her a voice. Even so, my investigation suggests that Placidia was not a compliant young woman. From at least the time of her marriage to Athaulf she was, as J. B. Bury wrote in 1919, "a woman of strong character and will".²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Blockley, 1981 (Commentary), 1983 (Text and Translation)

²⁹⁸ *Supra*, n.222

7. Conclusion

In this dissertation my overall aim has been to gain a greater appreciation of the *Augustae* of the Theodosian Dynasty by examining the work of the contemporary authors whilst considering the social, religious and political environment in which they, and the *Augustae*, lived and worked. I began by studying the lives and possible motives of the contemporary historians, whose male orientated view of events still forms the core of modern opinion; and then investigated the history and status of the role of *Augusta*, and its increasing importance as strong emperors gave way to weak ones, and Christianity challenged traditional male values. I concluded that the contemporary historians either saw the *Augustae* as a threat to these values, and therefore best ignored; or as a useful addition to the narrative, to be celebrated or criticised as events dictated. I then selected three of the *Augustae* and investigated an important element in the life of each, where a study of the relevant social, religious and political issues might augment the knowledge gained from the textual sources and give us a greater insight into events.

My study of Eudoxia explored the likelihood that she was successfully manipulated by the enemies of John Chrysostom into assisting with his downfall. By studying the events as described by the historians and ecclesiastical writers, plus the system of government in Constantinople and the division of power between the Church and the Imperial Court, I was able to identify John's enemies who were Eudoxia's friends at court. I discovered that, although unable to assert any major political influence over events, they were probably able, for a short time, to successfully manipulate Eudoxia into acting against John. This is not suggested by the Church Historians, who are careful to describe events without apportioning blame, but by the authors Palladius and Zosimus, who I am inclined to believe because their views coincide,

despite their different religious backgrounds and generally diverse opinions. I concluded that Eudoxia had a vulnerable side which was missed, either accidentally or deliberately, by many contemporary authors, who were following their own political or religious agenda. Contrary to her reputation, she was not solely responsible for John's downfall.

In my study of Pulcheria I investigated her vow of celibacy and the possible reasons behind it. I discovered that our knowledge of her vow stems solely from a eulogy written by Sozomen, and his apparent belief in the purity of Pulcheria's motives is still accepted today, even though her subsequent self-identification with the Virgin Mary suggests her real aim was to cement her hold on power. Nevertheless, if Pulcheria's knowledge of the increasingly popular female aesthetic lifestyle is considered, together with her background as a Theodosian princess who was reared to treat Helena as her role model, then her vow of celibacy does make some sense. However, I believe the main reason for her vow was her single-minded pursuit of power, and the male historians, except for Sozomen, chose to ignore this in their work because of their personal circumstances, or because she was a female whose actions they did not fully understand.

My study of the young Placidia examined the possibility that she was not a compliant young woman who readily acquiesced to being married off as a political tool, but a person of strong character and resolution. By taking into account the Roman marriage laws, and the advantages and drawbacks of marriage as a political alliance, I demonstrated that Placidia held a unique position at the Western Court and was never entirely without the ability to influence events. However, apart from the two historians Orosius and Olympiodorus, she was misunderstood or ignored by contemporary authors, who generally resided in the East and were unaware of Western affairs. It was left to the poet Claudian to recognise and comment on her important

position within the Imperial Family, because the contemporary historians were either reluctant to describe events or did not understand their true significance.

All three case studies show that the *Augustae* were misrepresented by the contemporary authors, but perhaps we should expect this if we consider the current social, religious and political environment in which they worked. Socially it was still a male dominated world, but one in which the increasing power of the Christian Church offered women new opportunities which could threaten the status quo. In addition, the political outlook was troubled, with a series of weak emperors failing to deal satisfactorily with their enemies or with their own burgeoning bureaucracy. Our authors, except for Zosimus, were close, both physically and in time, to the events which they described, and so it is hardly surprising if they were under pressure and did not always see things clearly. The outcome was unfortunate, as it is only very recently that research into the lifestyles of women in Late Antiquity, and a greater awareness of gender issues, has begun to correct these misrepresentations of the *Augustae* on which we have come to rely. Consequently, this dissertation concludes that a study of the contemporary authors, and the environment in which they and the *Augustae* lived, can give us a better insight into the *Augustae* than can be obtained by just reading the contemporary texts.

Appendix A

The Ancient Textual Sources

Historical:

Author	Dates	Work	Language
CHURCH HISTORIANS			
Philostorgius	368 - c.439	<i>HE from 320 to 425</i>	Greek
Socrates Scholasticus	c.379 - a.439	<i>HE from 306 to 439</i>	Greek
Sozomen	c.380 - 448/9	<i>HE from 323 to 423</i>	Greek
Theodoret	c.393 - 466	<i>HE from 323 to 428</i>	Greek
Evagrius	c.536 - after 594	<i>HE from 428 to 594</i>	Greek
CHRISTIAN HISTORIANS			
Orosius	c.380 - c.420	<i>HAPL7 from Creation - 417</i>	Latin
Cassidorius	c.485 - c.585	<i>Variae (letters) & Chronicle</i>	Latin
Jordanes	d. after 551	<i>Getica & Romana (both written 551)</i>	Latin
Procopius	c.500 - c.565	<i>De Bello Vandalico (Wars)</i>	Greek
PAGAN HISTORIANS			
Eunapius	349 - after 404	<i>History 270 - 404 (frag. nos. from Blockley)</i>	Greek
Olympiodorus	c.380 - after 425	<i>History of the West 407-425 (frag. nos. Blockley)</i>	Greek
Priscus	c.420 - after 474	<i>History - ends 450 (frag. nos. from Blockley)</i>	Greek
Zosimus	c.435 - c.501	<i>Historia Nova 27BC - 410</i>	Greek
CHRONICLERS			
Prosper Tiro	c.390 - c.455	379 - 455	Latin
Hydatius	c.400 - c.469	379 - 468	Latin
Chronica Gallica 452	d. mid 5C	379 - 452	Latin
Chronica Gallica 511	d. mid 5C	379 - 509/511	Latin
Marcellinus Comes	c.480 - c.540	379 - 534	Latin
John Malalas	c.491 - c.578	Creation - 565	Greek
Theodorus Lector	d. after 518	439 - 518 (Church History)	Greek
Chronicle Edessa	540 - 550	132BC - 540	Syriac
Victor Tonnennensis	d. after 566	444 - 566	Latin
John of Antioch	d. after 610	Creation - 610	Greek
Chronicle Paschale	d. after 628	Creation - 628	Greek
John, Bishop of Nikiû	fl. 680 - 690	Creation - c.640	Coptic
Theophanes	c.752 - 818	284/5 - 813	Greek
Zonaras	d. c.1159	Creation - 1118	Greek
Cedrenus (Kedrenos)	12C	Creation to 1057	Greek
George The Monk	9C	Creation - 842	Greek
Callistus	c.1256 - c.1335	Christ - 610	Greek
EPITOMISTS & COMPILERS			
Photius	c.810 - c.893	Bibliotheca	Greek
Suidus (Suda)	c.1000	Encyclopaedia (Ancient Greece - Late Antiquity)	Greek

Ecclesiastical:

Author	Dates	Work	Language
CHURCH FATHERS			
Saint Gregory of Nyssa	c.330 - c.395	Eulogies of 385/6, biography & letters re his sister	Greek
Saint Ambrose	c.339 - 397	Obituary of 395 & treatise on female asceticism	Latin
Saint John Chrysostom	349 - 407	Homilies & letters	Greek
Saint Jerome	347 - 419	Letters	Both
Saint Augustine	354 - 430	Treatises	Latin
Saint Leo the Great	c.395 - 461	Letters	Latin
BISHOPS			
Synesius	c.370 - c.413	Allegory (The Egyptian Tale) & letters	Greek
Proclus	c.390 - 446	Sermon	Greek
Atticus	d.425	Treatise & Sermon	Greek
Cyril of Alexandria	d.444	Letters	Greek
CHURCH OF THE EAST			
Nestorius	386 - 451	<i>Bazaar of Heracleides, Letter to Cosmos</i>	Gr/Syr
Sliba of Mansourya	after 450	<i>Hymn on Nestorius</i>	Syriac
Dioscorus	d.454	<i>Encomium of Macarius of Tkow</i>	Gr/Cop
Pseudo-Theopistus	after 454	<i>Vita Dioscori</i>	Gr/Cop
Rufus	after 512	<i>The Plerophories</i>	Syriac
Coptic Church History	6C	Church History	Coptic
Barhadbeshabba de 'Arbay	6/7C	Church History	Syriac
CHURCH BIOGRAPHERS			
Palladius	c.363 - c.410	<i>Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom</i>	Greek
Pseudo-Martyrius	early 5C	<i>Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom</i>	Greek
Mark the Deacon	early 5C	<i>Life of Porphyry</i>	Greek
Ennodius	473 - 521	<i>Vita Epiphani</i>	Latin
A Disciple of Daniel the Stylite	after 493	<i>The Life of Daniel the Stylite</i>	Greek
Cyril of Scythopolis	c.525 - after 557	<i>Vita Euthymii</i>	Greek
George of Alexandria	early 7C	The Life of St. Chrysostom.	Greek
Agnellus of Ravenna	794/804 - after 846	<i>Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis</i>	Latin

Poets and Orators:

Libanius	314 - 393	Pagan Orations	Greek
Themistius	317 - c.388	Pagan Orations	Greek
Claudian	c.370 - c.404	Poetry & Panegyrics	Latin
Merobaudes	? - c.460	Poetry & Panegyrics	Latin
Tzetzes	c.1110 - after 1180	<i>Chiliades</i>	Greek
Anthologia Graeca	Various	Bk.1 = 10C	Greek

References to Flacilla, Eudoxia and Pulcheria

Source	Flacilla	Eudoxia	Pulcheria
CHURCH HISTORIANS			
Philostorgius	X. 7	X.6	XII.7
Socrates Scholasticus	IV. 31	VI. 5-6, 8-11, 15-16; 18-19	VI. Intro; VII. 22, 32,
Sozomen	VII. 6	VIII. 4, 7-8, 10, 15-18, 20, 27	IX. 1-3
Theodoret	V 18, 19	V. 33, 34	V.36; Epistle 43
Evagrius			I, 20; II. 1
CHRISTIAN HISTORIANS			
Jordanes	<i>Rom. 311</i>		<i>Rom. 332</i>
PAGAN HISTORIANS			
Eunapius	Fr.60	Fr. 68	Fr. 72
Priscus			Fr. 3
Zosimus	IV. 44	V. 3, 9,17-18; 23-25	
CHRONICLERS			
Prosper Tiro		397, 403, 404	
Hydatius		404	450, 453/4
Marcellinus Comes		397, 399, 403, 404	399,414, 450, 453
John Malalas		XIII. 46	XIV. 3, 4, 27, 28, 34
Theodorus Lector			I. 5, 17, 18, 20, 24, 28
Chronicle Edessa		39	
John of Antioch	Fr. 212		Fr.220
Chronicle Paschale	385	395/6, 400, 404	396, 399, 414, 420-1, 450-1, 453
John, Bishop of Nikiû			LXXXIV, LXXXVII
Theophanes		AM 5898	AM 59: 00-01,05,11,20,30,40,42,43,45
Zonaras	XIII. 24	XIII. 25	XIII. 26-27
Cedrenus (Kedrenos)			pp.590/591 (Bonn edition)
George The Monk			IV. CCVI - CCVIII
Callistus			HE XIV.23, 46-47, 49; XV.14
EPITOMISTS & COMPILERS			
Photius		Cod. LIX, LXXVII; XCVIII	
Suidus (Suda)			pi,2145; pi,2146
CHURCH FATHERS			
Saint Gregory of Nyssa	<i>Funere Flaccillae & Funere Pulcheriae</i>		<i>Life of Macrina 6,12; Letter 19,7</i>
Saint Ambrose	<i>de ob. Theod. 40</i>		<i>De Virginibus II. 1-2</i>
Saint John Chrysostom		PG. 52, 61, 62, 63 & Letter to Pope Innocent I	
Saint Jerome	79.2		
Saint Augustine			<i>De bono coniugali, De sancta virginitate</i>
Saint Leo the Great			Letters 60, 77, 79, 95
BISHOPS			
Synesius		<i>Egyptian Tale</i>	
Proclus			Or.12
Atticus			<i>On Faith and Virginitiy</i>
Cyril of Alexandria			<i>Address to the Most Pious Princesses</i>

References to Flacilla, Eudoxia and Pulcheria

Source	Flacilla	Eudoxia	Pulcheria
CHURCH OF THE EAST			
Nestorius			I. 3
Aelius			PO. XIII. 278
Sliba of Mansourya			PO. XII. 303
Dioscorus			3-4
Pseudo-Theopistus			2-4
Rufus			<i>Pelagius' Vision</i> PO. VIII. 404
Coptic Church History			II. 36-50
Barhadbeshabba de 'Arbay			PO. IX. 27
CHURCH BIOGRAPHERS			
Palladius		many	
Pseudo-Martyrius		many	
Mark the Deacon		32-51, 92	
Ennodius		61	
George of Alexandria		Photius Cod. XCVI	
POETS & ORATORS			
Libanius	Or. XX, XXII		
Themistius	Or. XVIII, XIX		
Claudian	<i>Laus Serena; Epith. Honorius & Maria; IV Cons. Honorius</i>		

References to Eudocia, Galla Placidia, Justa Grata Honoria and Licinia Eudoxia

Source	Eudocia	Galla Placidia	Justa Grata Honoria	Licinia Eudoxia
CHURCH HISTORIANS				
Philostorgius		X. 7; XII. 2, 4-5, 12-13		
Socrates Scholasticus	VII. 21, 44, 47	IV. 31; VII. 24		VII. 44
Sozomen		IX. 4, 16	IX. 16	
Evagrius	I. 20-22			I. 20; II. 7; IV. 17
CHRISTIAN HISTORIANS				
Orosius		VII. 38; 40; 42; 43		
Cassidorius		<i>Variae</i> XI. 1; <i>Chron.</i> 423		
Jordanes		<i>Get.</i> 159-60, 164-5, 223; <i>Rom.</i> 311, 323, 326-7	<i>Get.</i> 223-4; <i>Rom.</i> 328	<i>Rom.</i> 329, 334
Procopius		III. 3, 4		III. 4, 5
PAGAN HISTORIANS				
Olympiodorus		Fr. 6, 22-24, 26, 30, 33, 36-38, 43	Fr. 33	
Priscus	Fr. 14	Fr. 30	Fr. 17, 20-22	Frs. 30, 38
Zosimus		V. 28, 32, 34, 38; VI. 12		

References to Eudocia, Galla Placidia, Justa Grata Honoria and Licinia Eudoxia

Source	Eudocia	Galla Placidia	Justa Grata Honoria	Licinia Eudoxia
CHRONICLERS				
Prosper Tiro		416, 423, 425		437, 455
Hydatius		409, 414, 416, 425, 432, 451		455, 462
Chronica Gallica 452		ARC: 21st, 29th, 31st; THEO: 1st, 5th, 9th, 27th	VAL: 1st	
Chronica Gallica 511		HON: 1st, 7th, 11th, 17th; VAL: 25th		VAL: 14th
Marcellinus Comes	421-2, 439, 444	408; 410, 414, 419, 424, 432	434	422, 424, 437, 438, 455
John Malalas	XIV. 4-8	XIII, 49; XIV. 7,		XIV. 26
Theodorus Lector	I. 17, 18			I. 31, 58
Victor Tonnennensis				14
John of Antioch		Fr. 224	Fr. 199	Fr. 200-201
Chronicle Paschale	420-1, 423, 444	385, 414	455	421, 437, 455
John, Bishop of Nikiû	LXXXIV, LXXXVII.			
Theophanes	AM 5911, 5940, 5942	AM 5895, 5915, 5931	AM 5943	AM 5926, 5947, 5949
Zonaras	XIII. 26	XIII. 25	XIII. 25	XIII. 27
Cedrenus (Kedrenos)	pp.590-591 (Bonn edition)			p.598; p.605-6
George The Monk	IV. CCVI			
Callistus	HE XIV.23; XV.9			XV.11-12; XVII.12
EPITOMISTS & COMPILERS				
Suidus (Suda)	pi,2145		omicron,404	
CHURCH FATHERS				
Saint Jerome		107, 127		
Saint Leo the Great	Letter 123	Letters 56, 58, 63		Letters 57, 64
BISHOPS				
Synesius		Letter 61		
CHURCH OF THE EAST				
Nestorius	II. 2			
CHURCH BIOGRAPHERS				
A Disciple of Daniel the Stylite				35
Cyril of Scythopolis	Vita Euthymii 30, 35			
Agnellus of Ravenna		27, 40, 41, 42, 48, 51	42	31, 48
POETS & ORATORS				
Claudian		Carm. Min. 47, 48a, 48b; IV 7; VI Cons. Honorius; Cons. Stilicho		
Merobaudes			Carm. 1	
Tzetzes	X 51, 65, 92			
Anthologia Graeca	I. 10			

Appendix B

Examples of coins minted for Helena and all seven of the *Augustae* showing a strong resemblance on the obverse, but with the *manus dei* (hand of God), signifying the divine right to rule, added from Eudoxia onwards. The coins minted in the West, for Galla Placidia and Justa Grata Honoria, show DN (*Domina Nostra*, or "Our Lady") instead of AEL (after Aelia Flaccilla) on the obverse and R.V. (Ravenna mint) on the reverse, but are otherwise similar to those minted in the East.



Ob: FL[avia] HELENA AVGVSTAE
Rev: SECVRITAS REI PVBLICAE

Gold double-solidus, Ticinium, 325CE
Source: Holum, 1982, p.35, fig.3.



Ob: AEL[i]a FLACCILLA AVGVSTAE
Rev: SALVS REI PVBLICAE

Gold solidus, Constantinople, 383-87CE
Source: Holum, 1982, p.36, fig.6.



Ob: AEL EVDODIA AVGVSTAE, manus dei
Rev: SALVS REI PVBLICAE,

Gold solidus, Constantinople, c.400
Source: Holum, 1982, p.36, fig.7.



Ob: AEL PVLCHERIA AVGVSTAE, manus dei
Rev: SALVS REI PVBLICAE,

Gold solidus, Constantinople, 414-419
Source: Holum, 1982, p.105, fig.12.



Ob: DNGALLA PLACIDIA PFAVG, manus dei
Rev: SALVS REI PVBLICAE, R V

Gold solidus, Ravenna, c.421-422
Source: Langa, 2006, p.73, fig.GP1.



Ob: AEL EVDODIA AVGVSTAE, manus dei
Rev: VOT XXX-MVLT XXXX T

Gold solidus, Constantinople, 425-429
Source: wikimedia commons "Aelia Eudocia.jpg"



Ob: DN JUST[a] GRAT[a] HONORIA PFAVG, manus dei
Rev: BONO REI PVBLICAE, R V

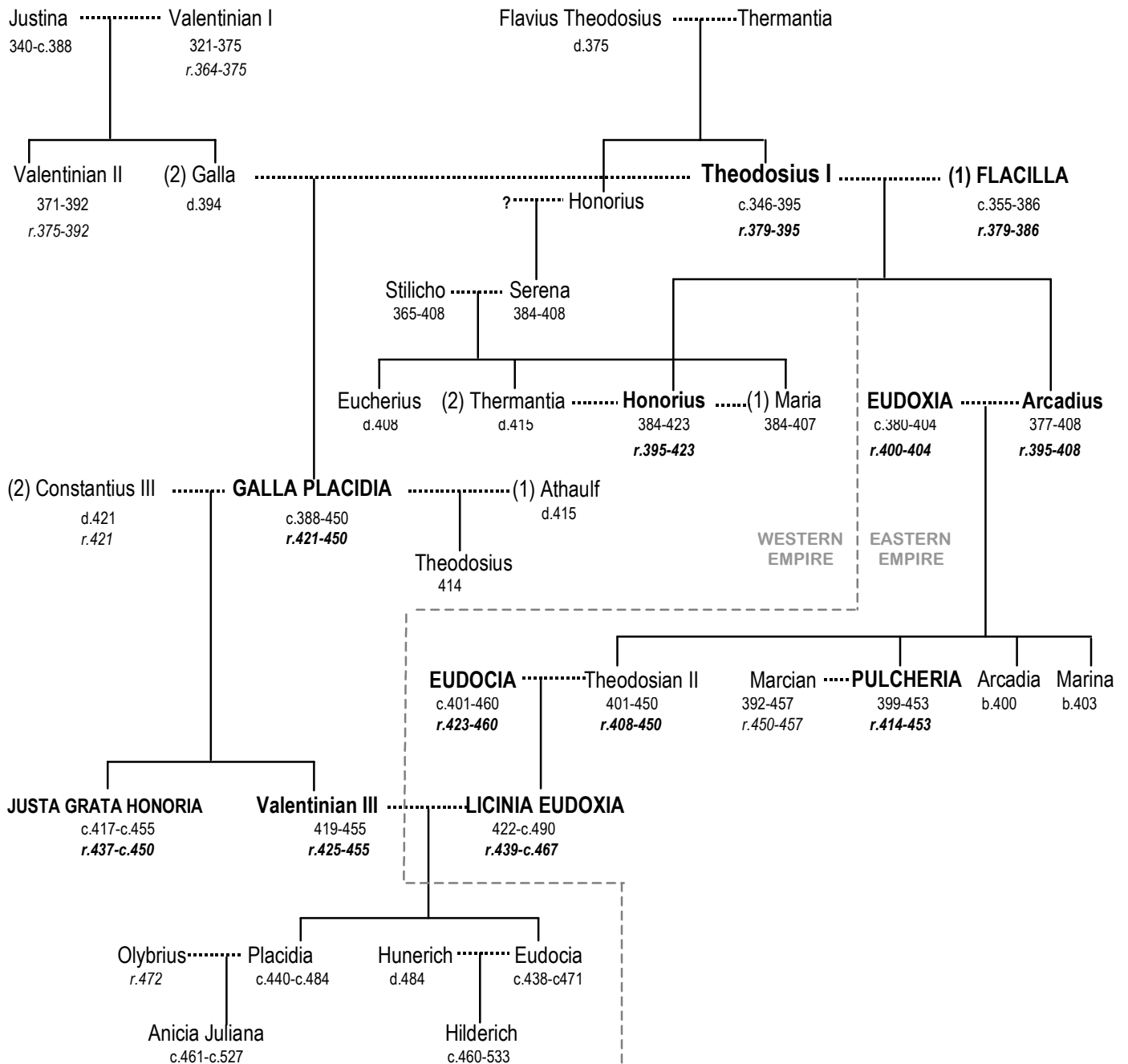
Gold solidus, Ravenna, 439
Source: wikimedia commons "Justa Grata Honoria solidus.png"



Ob: AEL [Licinia] EVDODIA AVGVSTAE, manus dei
Rev: IMP•XXXII•COS•XVII•P•P

Gold solidus, Constantinople, 441-450
Source: Heritage Auctions, www.HA.com

The Theodosian Dynasty



The Theodosian *Augusti* and *Augustae*, together with the dates of their reign, are shown in bold. The *Augustae* are shown in Capitals.

- - - - - represents the split between East and West after the death of Theodosius I

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