UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

WOMEN AND IMPERIAL POWER IN BYZANTIUM 780 - 1056
A STUDY OF THE REIGNS OF THE EMPRESS EIRENE AND SIX LATER EMPRESSES

by

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ABSTRACT

Doctor of Philosophy

WOMEN AND IMPERIAL POWER IN BYZANTIUM 780 - 1056: A STUDY OF THE REIGNS OF THE EMPRESS EIRENE AND SIX LATER EMPRESSES

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At different times and for various reasons the Byzantine Empire came under the rule of a woman. This thesis is concerned with a study of seven of those Empresses. It traces the link between the innovation of the role of the Augusta inaugurated by Augustus for Livia and the extension of that role by Eirene and her successors.

The thesis reconstructs the histories of the reigns of Eirene, Euphrosyne, Theodora, Zoe, Theophano and of Zoe and her sister Theodora. The circumstances in which they came to acquire and hold supreme power are examined in order to ascertain whether and to what extent the fact that they were women affected their style or policies of their reigns.

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INTRODUCTION

At different times and for various reasons the Later and Eastern Roman Empire[1] came under the rule of a woman. The following chapters are concerned with the study of seven of these empresses as rulers over the vast, closely organised system that was the Byzantine Empire and with the circumstances in which they came to acquire and hold supreme power. The study will also consider whether or to what extent the fact that these monarchs were women can be discerned in the style and policies of their reigns.

If we are to understand how it was possible, and indeed acceptable for a woman on her own to rule the Roman Empire, not by indirect influence nor as a power behind the throne but in her own right, we shall need to look briefly at the character and development of imperial rule from Augustus onwards and at the roles the women of the ruling families played.

In Book VI of his *Histories* Polybius tried to analyse the Roman constitution. Having examined various constitutional forms, he saw the Roman πολιτεία as developing κατὰ φύσιν[2]. F.W. Walbank[3] in his commentary remarks that:

> '...it is no longer of the separate constitutional forms that he is speaking but of the 'constitution' which is in some sense continuous behind (and through) the separate forms.'

Later in Book VI (10. 13-14) Polybius says:

> 'What Lycurgus achieved by reason, the Romans had achieved by a natural political development, during which they had consistently used the experience gained in disaster to enable them to choose the better course in a series of struggles and crises. Thus Rome, too, like Sparta, had ended up with a mixed constitution.'

Walbank[4] says it is not too difficult to reconcile the notion of the biological law of birth, growth, prime decay and end with the *anacyclosis* 'since it could be conceived as a device for putting a brake on the wheel of change'. However, the *anacyclosis* - the inexorable wheel of change - represents perpetual change and cannot have the brake put on it permanently. Nevertheless, Polybius was essentially right about the

Roman constitution; it was unwritten and ideas about it were always flexible enough to allow for the 'series of struggles and crises' to be resolved. What Polybius could not foresee was that the added dimension of the Christian church being closely involved in the constitution would add one more part to the biological cycle after the end, that of the heavenly world beyond this one. Thus the cycle could move on in a new direction to a greater dimension. No doubt Polybius would have been appalled at the idea of women occupying positions of supreme political authority, but might have understood how the constitution could absorb the idea of a ruler having a special relationship with the gods, such a special relationship that he could come to be seen as deriving his right to rule directly from that relationship. Having developed from kings into a republic κατὰ φύσιν, the constitution could adapt itself to the Principate and subsequently to Imperial rule without losing its essential elements or identity. The army, the Senate and the people remained as three basic elements which made or broke their rulers and they were basic elements until the end of the Empire in 1453. Once Constantine the Great had espoused the cause of Christianity he added another element to the essentials of the constitution - the Church.

To speak of the 'Roman Constitution' as a fact is useful shorthand only. It never existed as a written document or even in any completely realised sense as an orally transmitted entity. There were traditions and concepts which were modified, dropped and revived through the years. Rulers could be appointed by acclamation by the army; there was a ceremony of raising the new emperor on a shield, introduced from the Germans, which persisted into the Late Antique period and was revived by Constantine VII Porphyrogennitus[5]. The new emperor had to be accepted by the Senate and acclaimed by the people in the Forum, occasionally later in the hippodrome[6]. The concepts of *patria potestas*, *imperium* granted by the people to the ruler, and *felicitas*, all played their part in helping to make up that essential charisma[7] without which no ruler could hope to survive. After Augustus had transmuted the Republic into the Principate, easing it into a monarchy in all but name[8], his charisma was so strong that it allowed the Julio-Claudian dynasty to survive subsequent rulers, some of whom were obviously incompetent. The Republican virtues of *pietas*, *gravitas*, and *auctoritas* were united

in Augustus' assumption of the role of *Pontifex Maximus*, a role the emperors kept until Gratian, and used with certain effect in their dealings with the Church, even in the time of Leo III in A.D. 726[9].

Dynasties and the succession naturally occupied the emperors' minds and at times, more particularly, those of their wives . It is here that the women up to the time of Constantine I, with the notable exceptions of the Syrian Julias[10], Maesa, Soehamias and Mamaea, exercised their indirect influence with varying degrees of success. Sir Ronald Syme[11] discusses the enormous complications relating to the succession that the marriage connections of Augustus' family could have produced if he had died while Gaius and Lucius were still alive and minors. He says that:

> '...the family circle of Augustus at one time comprised no fewer than three pairs of women bearing the names Octavia, Antonia and Marcella, all of whom, except the daughters of M. Antonius, were twice married; the ramifications of the dynasty grew even more complex, producing by now a large number of collateral connections, the husbands or the sons of the women of his house.'

While the place of women was idealised as on the tombstone of Claudia[12] '*domum servavit, lanam fecit*', in reality, feminine persuasion in various forms was exercised from the bedroom and even in the dining room on matters of political or public interest. Women were accustomed to, though not always favourably disposed towards accepting successive marriages in order to cement political alliances between families. They used their influence over husband or son to further other alliances, always with an eye on their men having a network of family connections which could bring them to public office and power and sustain them in it. We should remember that the ladies in these political betrothals or marriages had to be members of a family which itself possessed enough influence to make them seem to be an advantageous match. A woman's family had to be well placed from the prospective bridegroom's point of view; she, for her part, needed to be able to carry her family's loyalty with her. We should, therefore, assume in many cases in order to be successful in the marriage market she needed some mark of character, some spark of intelligence and wit to enable her to understand, and at

times to manage, her husband's ambitions and to have the capacity to enlist the support of her father's family when it was needed; also the ability to enlist the support of her maternal relations. Much of her expertise would reflect the abilities and advice of her own mother.

Correspondingly, the emperor was *pater patriæ* and so as head of the State family he naturally needed his female counterpart. The empress had the roles of mother, or wife or sister or daughter or neice to the ruler. Thus she functioned only in relation to the emperor and she had no power of her own; even the mother of sons who might represent the dynasty's continuation occupied a power base that was not entirely secure since it was possible for an emperor to adopt as successor somebody outside his immediate family. This factor did not inhibit, but may indeed in some cases be seen to have stimulated the women's efforts to influence affairs. Suetonius[13] records that Tiberius often warned Livia to remember she was a woman and must not interfere in affairs of State; although Suetonius comments that he did occasionally need, and in fact, followed Livia's advice. Plotina, Trajan's wife, seems to have organised the marriage of Hadrian to her husband's neice and to have had a hand in forwarding Trajan's adoption of Hadrian as his heir and successor[14]. The Historia Augusta records Marcus Antonius' reason for not divorcing his wife Faustina was that he would, as he said, have had to restore her dowry, which was the Empire[15]. He had Faustina with him during his campaigns, giving her the title of *mater castrorum* and the Historia Augusta claims that he promoted his wife's lovers[16].

If the autocracy could survive without the emperor begetting heirs, was there something essential in the idea that the Head of State should be male and a <u>married</u> man? And was there in the Roman mind an implicit assumption that the emperor should have a female counterpart? The female members of Augustus' family, with two notable and disastrous exceptions, were an important source of propaganda for his new regime. A series of brilliant portrait busts survive, ranging from Livia, through Agrippina, Sabina and Faustina, wife of Antoninus Pius whom he deified after her death, even to Plautilla, murdered by her husband Caracalla, and there is a very fine portrait bust of his mother Julia Domna, Severus' second wife. This view, that the emperor's family,

including his wife, were an essential part of the picture of stable domestic felicity is strengthened by coin evidence[17], however far from domestic actuality this image might have been. The idea that the emperor held *patria potestas* over all the countries he ruled much in the same way that a father held power over his family needed to have a visible counterpart in the emperor being seen to be *paterfamilias* in his own family. The sentiment that Caesar's wife must be above reproach may have been regarded as one of Julius Caesar's better witticisms, but its capacity to amuse derived from a consciousness that it expressed how things should be but were not in a period of moral laxity. It was important that Caesar's wife should exist; this idea was one which the Romans understood and valued and was given its most distinguished literary expression by Virgil. Aeneas rejected Dido, the representative of carnal love, but found it essential to marry the virginal and retiring Lavinia, even though he had conquered her father's land and already had his heir by his first, Trojan, wife, Creusa. The prototype for the emperor as husband and father was to be seen in the pantheon, with the ruler as Jupiter and his consort Juno. Diocletian saw the advantage of the analogy and took the surname Jovius and his junior co-emperor Maximian took the name of Herculius, Jove's son[18]. But this only established the father-son relationship. Deliberately so, Diocletian, having seen what havoc dynastic pretensions could cause, as had so recently been endured during the Severan dynasty, was determined on the principle of adoption by father of the one who, as son, was the best man for the succession.

The Severan dynasty, with its Syrian connections made through his second marriage to Julia Domna whose family, males or females, provided the chief priests in the cult of the Sun, demonstrated that the succession could be maintained, not by adoption, but through the female line. Once the Helios cult was brought to Rome, power descending through females could be shown if not altogether accepted. The dynasty proved that women could exercise almost unfettered power. Julia Mamaea, profiting by Julia Sohaemias' example, ruled the Empire while Alexander was emperor. The astute jurist Ulpian virtually wrote her sister into the succession by inscriptions put up around the empire, on which Julia Sohaemias was called 'mother of Augustus'[19]. The Historia Augusta says of Heliogabalus that he took his grandmother Varia (Julia

Maesa) to the Senate House so that he might be accorded more respect and it implies here that Julia Maesa therein expressed an opinion and drafted a decree. Nevertheless, the point must be made that, powerful though they might be, these women were always behind the throne never on it[20]. It was during Julia Maesa's regency that Ulpian defined the Augusta's position in relation to the law. He expressed an opinion that the emperor is above the law; although the Augusta is not above the law she can acquire from the emperor the same privileges that he possessed himself.[21]

Real and actual power, the signature that mattered, always belonged to the Princeps or Imperator, never to the female. Fergus Millar in his book *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London 1977) quotes not one single example of an empress causing, influencing, or signing a decree or instruction. Indeed his index, which he admits to be selective, makes not one mention of an empress, though they are referred to from time to time in the text. It must not be thought that the empress always held the title of Augusta. This was a title given by the Senate, whether or not prompted by the emperor, and was occasionally even refused by the lady in question. The history of the title starts, of course, in Augustus' reign. He adopted Livia into his family under his will so that she became Julia Augusta. Agrippina the Younger was the first to hold the title in her husband's lifetime[22]. Poppaea and her new-born daughter Claudia were both made Augustae as a congratulatory birth gift from the Senate[23]. Coin evidence shows that Titus' daughter Flavia Julia had been made Augusta in her father's lifetime[24], and Plotina and Marciana, wife and sister respectively of Trajan both declined the Senate's first offer of the honour, but accepted later[25]. However, during the Dominate there were no Augustae. If any of those emperors so honoured their wives or daughters no record remains. This accords with Diocletian's idea that there should be no dynastic hopes for the rulers, the succession should be by adoption from outside the family. Constantine I is the first emperor after this gap to use the device. He elevated both his mother Helena and his wife Faustina to the rank of Augusta in the year of Chrysopolis, A.D. 323[26]. Helena had been his father's concubine, so such an honour 'legitimated' her into the family by using the same device whereby Livia had been taken into Augustus' family. Faustina, Constantine's second wife,

was similarly taken into the same family and thus elevated to secure Constantine's dynastic ambitions. By the time of Constantine V in A.D. 761, his son's bride was crowned Augusta in the Triclinium of the Augusteion, then went to the Oratory of St. Stephen where she took the crown of marriage with Leo IV, who was already his father's co-emperor[27]. The chronographer Theophanes does not mention the Senate, but by then the Senate had been meeting in the palace[28] and one may assume that their assent was given at this time. This ceremony must have made it abundantly clear that Constantine's eldest son by his first wife was to carry on the Isaurian dynasty and not his sons by his third wife[29], a lesson well learned by this son, Leo IV, who went to great lengths to establish his son as his successor.[30]

From the time of Constantine I women took a more positive (and better documented) part in the government of the Empire. From that time onwards the sources show far more directly the influence of the empress on the affairs of state, culminating in a remarkable series of women from Eirene the Athenian to Theodora the Macedonian and beyond[31]. They ruled in their own right and remained in the seat of power with the consent of those they ruled. From the time of Constantine I there gradually developed a new theory of kingship. Once Christianity was officially recognised by the emperor the Roman Empire was thought of as the earthly copy of the Kingdom of Heaven, ruled over by the Vice Regent of God. Though the Empire was in fact only that part of the Mediterranean countries that remained under Roman rule, it was in this theory the whole world, and in a more actual sense was expected to be so once the barbarians had become converted to Christianity. Therefore, it was the duty of the Vice Regent of God to bring light to the pagan countries and thus bring them under his rule into God's Kingdom on earth. If the emperor was the Vice Regent of God, then it could follow that the empress was the Vice Regent of Mary. But Christ's mother was always subservient to her Son, she was the intercessor, but she was also the caring, nurturing, idealised mother. This was a concept that could be used by the royal ladies and was seized upon by Sophia, wife of Justin II, particularly in her aspect as intercessor[32].

However, the role of the empress, once the State was Christian is much more complex and reflects the uneasy relationships that existed

between emperor, church and state as well as the Church's ambivalent attitude towards women. Jean Daniélou[33] traces three aspects or images of the early church as the Aged Woman, the Bride of Christ or Wisdom (ἡ Σοφία). The Aged Woman characterises the church as a pre-existent entity, and there seems also to have been a possibility of equating the pre-existent church with Wisdom, the Wisdom of God, though this should perhaps be regarded as part of the Gnostic doctrine and not in the direct line of Jewish Christianity. Nevertheless, this not only influenced St. Paul, but also made its own contribution to early Christian thought. The Bride of Christ aspect is illustrated by Clement of Alexandria[34]:

> '...the living church is the body of Christ, for scripture says "God made man, male and female. The male is the Christ and the female is the Church. And the Books and the Apostles plainly declare that the Church existeth not now for the first time, but cometh from on high (ἄνωθεν); for She was spiritual as our Jesus was also spiritual.'

The reference to the Books and the Apostles allude to the Revelation of John where the Church is spoken of as Bride of Christ.

Thus, it can be seen that the essential role of the woman, that of the mother, the caring home-making, nurturing fecund female was missing. Her dangerous power of sexuality had been encapsulated and made safe by the Church, stopping her natural process short - the Bride of Christ was never 'defiled' and so never bears children[35]. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was called 'ever virgin' and after the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431, was called Theotokos - Mother of God. Shortly before that Council Cyril of Alexandria wrote to the monks of Egypt defending the term. He could only cite three texts to support his argument and was reduced to quoting Athanasius' presumed agreement before they were convinced.[36] With this aspect of Christianity adding another dimension to the concept of the emperor as Vice Regent of God, it was essential for the empress to express her femininity in an acceptable form and so complement the role of the emperor. With the idea of a primogenitive dynasty firmly established (albeit tempered with usurpation if the emperor had lost the blessing of God, pictured so often as a hand appearing from a cloud over the emperor or empress)[37], the empress had to balance the secular necessity of producing an heir with being seen as a virtuous, pious and chaste woman. So long as she

allied herself consciously with the Church, preferably the ruling church party, she not only won support for her own rule, but also reinforced the charisma of the current emperor.

Constantine I's reign proved to be a watershed in the history of imperatorial power and the way in which it was expressed. To the acclamations of army, Senate and people must now be added another and vital element - the Church. Crowning by the patriarch was not essential until a considerable time after Constantine I[38], but some visible compact with the Church became essential to set the Church's seal of approval on the ruler. If the emperor ruled as Vice Regent of God, this was plainly the Church's business and the relationship between the Church and the emperor suffered a series of definitions, modifications and re-definitions, never satisfactorily settled and varying with the relative strength and security each side enjoyed. If the relationship between emperor and the Church was open to a series of interpretations, how much more was that between the empress and the Church. This thesis will seek to show that it was this relationship that was crucial to her reign.

It may be helpful to consider briefly how the concept of the emperor ruling as Vice Regent of God arose. Diocletian, by assuming the surname of Jovius indicated that he ruled as vice regent of Jove, the King of the Gods[39]. But Constantine, by giving official sanction to the Christian church was called Isapostolos , the equal of the Apostles[40], sometimes the Thirteenth Apostle[41]. The substitution of the Christian God for the pagan Jove was a natural step in the Christianisation of the court, applicable to the Eastern court at first[42] and so the emperor was now the Vice Regent of the Christian King of the Heavens. Constantine was also the final court of appeal as were all the previous emperors and it should be remembered that St. Paul, a Roman citizen, appealed to the emperor as the final authority. Fergus Millar says:

> "But it may be firmly claimed that we cannot begin to assess what an emperor was without taking into account the sheer volume of approaches to him verbally and in writing made by his subjects.Against this background it was only to be expected that the establishment of the church as a social institution, with property, rules and grades of membership would lead to requests about its affairs being placed before the emperors.'[43]

The bringing together of Church and State by Constantine caused enormous problems of identity which subsequent emperors and church leaders never satisfactorily solved; indeed they are still debated by the representatives of the churches in exile from communist countries today.

The Donatus schism went far beyond the question as to whether or not a bishop who had given the holy books to the local praetorian prefect should be anathematised or be allowed to continue as a bishop with authority over his flock. Donatus invoked Constantine's authority as the final arbiter of this quarrel. The principle that the emperor as head of state was the only person who could call a church council, the equivalent of a civil court of appeal, was established, although Constantine deferred to his bishops in their deliberations[44]. At the same time, Constantine established the principle that as head of state he could make and unmake bishops exactly in the same way as he had the power to appoint praetorian prefects and consuls. Both these principles, based on Roman legal practice, endured through the Byzantine empire and were to be exploited by the empresses as Regents for their sons or in their own right as heads of state. (Both Empresses Eirene and Theodora summoned ecumenical councils to re-establish ikon veneration, having first appointed patriarchs of their own choosing through a convocation of bishops which they had summoned[45]. Donatus was unsuccessful in his appeal; Constantine's church council decided against him and he was not slow to see how dangerous for the church the emperor's influence was. He questioned what the emperor had to do with the church but by now the principle that the church was within the state, not the state within the church had been established, largely through his appeal to Constantine. This also implied that no-one is above the emperor except God alone who made him emperor and thus the state in the person of the emperor was obliged to represent the people to God[46]. The pagan principle had been transferred to a Christian setting in that the emperor as *Pontifex Maximus* sacrificed to Jupiter for the sake of the Roman people - Jupiter had become the Christian God, or more probably for Constantine Apollo, as the Sun God had become the Judaeo-Christian God. This principle was neatly summed up by a much later Byzantine emperor, Leo III in a letter to Pope Gregory 'I am emperor and priest ὅτι βασιλεὺς καὶ ἱερεύς εἰμί'[47], by which time the Pope had acquired the title Pontifex Maximus, disowned by Gratian, and never annexed again by a Byzantine emperor.

The Donatist quarrel also established another principle which had far-reaching effects. Once a bishop was taken into apostolic succession he could not lose the grace thus bestowed on him. A bishop's charismatic power could not be lost and, providing his motives were pure, the erring prelate would be forgiven by God in his infinite mercy. This, of course, applied to the emperor as the equal of the Apostles; he was not just in the line of the apostolic succession, it was as though he had been an apostle called directly by the Son of God himself. This charismatic power could be handed on by the emperor to his successors and, of course, to his female family if he chose[48]. Once crowned by the emperor as Augusta, the empress also possessed this charismatic power. Diehl[49] asks how it was that the constitution could survive so bizarre an arrangement as a bride show[50] as a method of choosing the empress, he points out that the girls could have been anybody, they were not necessarily well connected and the whole affair was the exact opposite of a well-organised diplomatic alliance. However, if the emperor conferred his own power onto his bride, the magic laying on of hands through the medium of crowning ensured the succession of mystic power.

Though the principles had been established through the inter-dependence of church and state, the church hierarchy realised soon enough that their freedom to decide matters of faith and church organisation had been curtailed. It was essential to place matters on a surer footing and to this end Bishop Hosius of Cordova wrote to Constantine I setting out his theory that the emperor is responsible to God for secular matters and the bishops for the affairs of the church[51]. However, it was asked what was the church's business and what was the state's? Both church and state were concerned with private morals[52]. On the one hand, the early church had been concerned that its members should live blameless lives not only for their own sakes, but also to avoid the notice of the civil law and so bring the whole sect into disrepute. A.N. Sherwin-White points out[53] that the command in I Peter IV 15-16 may be insisting that Christians be charged only *ob nomen* not *ob scelera*. Sherwin-White says that the proceedings taken against cults alien to the Roman state were directed against the criminal by-products of the sects *flagitia, scelera.*[54] On the other hand, the state had legislated in the private sphere. Augustus, followed by later emperors in their own way, had legislated about marriage and the number of children in a family, even

to the granting of special privileges to parents of large families. It is interesting to note here that women were included in the benefits if only to be granted freedom from wardship. In matters of Christian faith, however, Constantine I was concerned that the church should be united. Having settled the vexed question of the Donatists, he thought he had achieved this end, but Arius was dividing the East just as Donatus had divided Africa. Constantine, wanting to visit Egypt, wrote to both Bishop Alexander of Alexandria and Bishop Arius "Open to me by your agreement the road to the East, which you have closed by your discord"[55]. In vain, and in order to settle the disagreement Constantine convened the first ecumenical council at Nicaea in 325 and he had to convene yet another in Tyre in 335. It should be observed that it was the emperor who convened the councils, not the bishops. Thus the pattern was set for further ecumenical councils; they were convened by the reigning monarch, not the Patriarch. The concern for church unity remained an imperial preoccupation to the end of the empire and the problem of what was the state's province and what the church's was never resolved; indeed, if it was thought that church and state are all part of God's kingdom on earth, how is it possible to separate the two?

The essential part of the concept of the emperor ruling as Vice Regent of God was that it was his duty to see that the world was brought into the commonwealth that was the Byzantine Empire. Eusebius saw Constantine I as the 'bishop' of those who were outside the empire[56] and it remained at least a theory that the world would sooner or later be embraced by orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the concept of Vice Regent of God begged a number of questions. If a bishop kept his grace, provided his motives were pure, it could also be held that if his motives were evil then he could be deposed. One could argue that the office was holy but the holder, being human, could fall from grace. Just so with the emperor. Sir Steven Runciman says:[57]

> 'The office was holy not the man. He was, so to speak, an actor playing an exalted role; and if he were thought to be unworthy of the role he would be dismissed. ...The emperor knew his limitations. His autocracy was not irresponsible. He must do his duty and respect law and tradition, and if he broke the moral laws the people would obey him no longer. He represented God before the people, but he also represented the people before God.'

It was as well that the line between the church and the state was so blurred and that the obverse of the emperor chosen by God was amenable to the reverse being true - that where the hand of God was removed from one holder of the holy office and placed on another, the new ruler could be accepted. The Empress Eirene recognised this in her own abdication speech to her usurper, Nikephoros:

> 'The manner of your advancement I assign to the Lord without whom I am persuaded nothing happens. ...Now, too, taking you to be devout and promoted according to God's will I reverence you as emperor ...'[58]

If these threads are drawn together it can be seen that the extraordinary phenomenon of an Augusta ruling the Roman Empire was not unreasonable. There was no constitutional objection, but there was undoubtedly male prejudice. Nevertheless, the situation where it could happen had to be built up gradually, it did not happen all at once. The church had given women a place but had also rationalised them into a safely negative or passive role. The wife/mother image, which was successfully incorporated into the dynastic pretensions by the Augustan and, more successfully still, the Severan dynasty, was an innappropriate one for Constantine I until his mother, the discarded concubine of his father, had become converted to Christianity and convincingly demonstrated her piety to all by her pilgrimage to Jerusalem where she 'found' the True Cross and thus allied herself publicly with the church. She may have previously made her place in Constantine's household more secure by becoming involved in the accusations which led to the murder of Faustina and Crispus, but her unassailable reputation for piety and dowager status made her a formidable factor in Constantine's rule and she became the model for future empresses, some of whom were approvingly called The New Helena[59].

Helena demonstrated that the Augusta's special relationship with the church could earn her a special place in the affections of the people. Her example was eagerly followed by the ladies of the Theodosian dynasty[60]. Justinian's wife, Theodora and her niece Sophia, Justin's wife, showed that by supporting and promoting the cause of one faction of the church they could bring some stability to the empire. Influential though they were, they ruled along with their husbands,

neither signed any edicts, though Theodora may have held her own court of justice. Whether, as in the case of Pulcheria, the Emperor her brother, was an ineffectual ass, or as in the case of Sophia, the Emperor her husband, was mad, yet it was always the emperor who signed the edicts and it was in his name that government was carried on.

But from the reign of Eirene in 780 onwards this was not the case. At the beginning of her reign the thematic troops took an oath of alleigance to Eirene and Constantine and when she deposed her son, edicts were sent out in her name as 'βασιλεὺς.' On coins and seals Eirene and Constantine appear together, but during her sole reign Eirene's coins have her portrait on obverse and reverse. But she made the point that she was within the Isaurian dynasty amply plain by putting her three predecessors on the reverse of a solidus at the beginning of the joint reign with her son in imitation of her late husband's bronze[61].

It has been suggested by Runciman[62] that these women, Eirene in particular, ruled as Vice Regent of Mary, the Mother of God, the Theotokos. While this might perhaps be true initially of the reigns of both Eirene and Theodora, I do not believe it could be true later in their reigns. Neither wished to relinquish the reins of power to their sons, even to the extent that Eirene actually deposed her son and Theodora was unwilling to retire to a monastery when her son came of age. This idea was hardly open to the other five empresses in this study. Euphrosyne, a nun with dispensation from her vows to marry the emperor, Michael II, was only stepmother to Theophilos and was childless. Theophano reigned briefly as Regent for her two little sons before marrying secondly, the Strategos Nikephoros Phokas, thus raising him to the rank of emperor. On his death she was not allowed to marry the usurper John Tzimisces but had to retire from public life. Zoe Carbunopsina was fourth wife of Leo VI; the marriage caused an empire-shaking scandal, all but brought down Leo's rule and, during her Regency, she and the Patriarch endured each other in a state of mutual dislike and mistrust. The Macedonian sisters had no children, Zoe, thrice married, gave the empire four rulers, one by adoption and her sister Theodora ruled jointly with her for a very brief time and then on her own after her late sister's husband's death. She was then an unmarried woman of 72 who may have been relieved of her nun's vows on

the earlier occasion or when she assumed power on Constantine IX's death[63]. None of the sources alludes to the idea of women ruling as Vice Regent of Mary, though one would have expected some mention of such a concept. It might be suitable for a regent but hardly for an empress wielding sole power, or for the much married, even though acting as regent. The essential role of the Theotokos was nurturing her Son, an entirely subservient role, and her later role after her assumption was that of an intercessor, albeit the principal one. Such a symbolic device, while no doubt appealing to the Byzantines, was unnecessary, the female members of successive emperors' households had in the past taken a prominent part in public affairs and it was only a short step to sole rule, dictated by necessity and the absence of an obvious alternative.

It will be seen from all the foregoing that the traditions of Rome were maintained, but developed. Augustus himself realised the part that Livia had played and by adopting her into his family, calling her Augusta, he gave public recognition to the place of women in the ruling house. Ulpian further exploited this recognition by writing Julia Mamaea into the Severan dynasty and Constantine I revived the principle of dynastic succession by creating his mother Augusta. Through Pulcheria marrying Anastasius; Ariadne, daughter, mother and wife successively of the emperor; and through Theodora and Sophia both exercising effective power, though through their husbands, the scene was set, traditions established and petticoat rule had become an established fact. Though men publicly deplored this, they recognised that it did work and was in fact little different from the rule of a male emperor. The following chapters will explore more overt feminine rule and attempt to estimate what, if anything, was feminine about it and whether, being feminine, it was more or less successful than male rule.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. J.B. Bury. *History of the Later Roman Empire* Vol I (London 1889) Preface vi-vii distinguishes the Later from the Eastern Roman Empire. 'Nothing can be easier than to apprehend that the Roman Empire endured one and undivided, however changed and dismembered from the first century B.C. to the fifteenth century A.D.; and that from the year 800 forward we distinguish it as Eastern on account of the foundation of a rival Empire, which also called itself Roman, in the West.'

2. Polybius *Histories*, Teubner ed. Vol II bk. 4, 12-13 (p.244)

3. F.W.Walbank . *Commentaries on Polybius' Histories*, (Oxford 1957) p. 649.

4. F.W.Walbank . *Sather Classical Lectures*. Vol. 42 (Berkeley Calif. 1972) p. 132.

5. Constantine Porphyrogennitos. *De Ceremoniis Aulae Byzantinae* Lib. I, XCII. (cf. Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae* Vol. CXII colls. 769-784). Anastasius, raised on a shield, crowned with a torque, was acclaimed by the army and people, he appeared crownless in the kathisma and was approved by the circus factions. They had first demanded to see Ariadne and insisted that she agree to nominate an orthodox emperor. This account of Peter the Magister preserved by Constantine, seems to be good evidence that the crowd believed Ariadne had the authority not only to depose the unpopular city prefect, but also to see that the new emperor was acceptable. It should be noted that they shouted for Ariadne, not the Senators or court officials, to appear in the kathisma and they made their requests to her as the head of the state, holding the residue of power; she was, after all, the daughter, mother and wife of the last three emperors. Nevertheless, one should note that the choice was made behind palace doors and one does not know how much influence Ariadne had there.

6. Alan Cameron *Circus Factions* (Oxford 1976) pp. 163-4 points out that Claudius (Suet. Claud. 7) was hailed by the mob at the games after Gaius' murder as 'brother of Germanicus' this being the final seal of approval of an unlikely candidate for Princeps. The whole idea of the circus factions' relations with the emperors is brilliantly set out in this book.

7. Charisma is discussed by Max Weber in *Sociology and Religion* ed. Birnbaum and Lenzer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1969) esp. p. 187 where he says: 'The mere fact of recognizing the personal mission of a charismatic master establishes his power. Whether it is more active or passive, this recognition derives from the surrender of the faithful to the extraordinary and unheard of, to what is alien to all regulation and tradition and therefore is viewed as divine - surrender which arises from distress or enthusiasm'.

8. Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars* (Gaius 22) remarks that Gaius nearly wore a diadem, thus abandoning the fiction of being Princeps of a republic.

9. Leo III wrote to Pope Gregory 'I am emperor and priest. Mansi XII Coll. 936C.

10. This is discussed more fully on page 5 of this chapter.

11. R. Syme. *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford 1960 ed) p. 421

12. I.L.S. 8403

13. Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars* Tiberius

14. op. cit. Trajan

15. *Historia Augusta* Marcus Antonius

16. ibid.

17. H.R. Mattingly *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* (London 1923) Vol. I. Introduction pp. cxxxiv - vi.

18. C.H.V. Sutherland *Roman Imperial Coinage* (London 1967) Vol. VI p. 8.

19 *A.E.* (1912) 155 'Julia Mamaea Aug. filio Juliae Maesae Aug. nepote'. and *C.I.L.* VIII 2564 'Mater castrorum et senatus'.

20. Herodian VI 1-2 Heliogabalus 'he possessed the trappings and name of emperor but the control of administration and imperial policy was in the hands of his womenfolk who tried to bring back a complete return to moderate and dignified government'.

21. Ulpian in *Cod. Just.* I. 17, 2, 21 '...ex auctoritate Augusta'

22. Tacitus *Annales* 12. 26. 1.

23. op. cit 15. 23. 103.

24. C.H.V. Sutherland *Roman Imperial Coinage* Vol. II (London 1968) Nos. 54-58 p. 122 '...he (Maximian) became equal in rank with Diocletian and his *frater*, but his authority was junior to that of Diocletian, for while Diocletian now assumed the style *Jovius* i.e. son of Jupiter, Maximian became *Herculius* and so remoter by descent from Jupiter. A.D. 286.

25. H.A. Grueber *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* Vol. VII pp. xxiii-cvii.

26. Sutherland and Carson *Roman Imperial Coinage* Vol. VII p. 45.

27. Theophanes *Chronographia* ed. C. de Boor (Hildesheim 1963) A.M. 6261. p. 444 22-25 (This text will in future be cited as Theophanes with page and line numbers in de Boor's edition)

28. J.B. Bury. *The History of the Later Roman Empire* (London 1889) Vol. 1. p. 22 notes 6-9.

29. See the complete stemma at Appendix I of this thesis

30. See page 25 of this thesis where the ceremony of Constantine VI's crowning is discussed in detail. His father went to great lengths to exploit the loyalties of the crowd and had undoubtedly taken steps to see that the circus factions were rehearsed.

31. The scope of this thesis only extends to A.D. 1056, the date of Theodora's death, but other women ruled both the whole Empire, e.g. Anna Dalassena, or the Latin sections of it during the Crusade time, e.g. the queens of Jerusalem. (For an account of the latter see Studies in Church History, Subsidia I ed. Baker (Oxford 1978). Queens of Jerusalem' . Bernard Hamilton, pp. 143-174)

32. Averil Cameron 'The Theotokos in Sixth Century Constantinople' *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. XXIX (Oxford 1978) pp.79-108 esp. p. 97 where she remarks 'Other concepts of Mary, especially her merciful intercession might be more immediately relevant'.

33. Jean Daniélou 'The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea' *Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London 1964) esp. pp. 294-6. Daniélou quotes Hegesippus cited by Eusebius in *Eccl. Hist.* 4. 22, 2-3 'They used to call the church a virgin; for she had not yet been corrupted by vain teachings'.

34. II Clement XIV 1-2 'The male is Christ and the female is the Church'.

35. The Aged Woman who was turned into a phallic tower later in the Vision has no antecedents, therefore, no family. Hermas *Visions* II 4. 1. See Daniélou pp. 294-296.

36. Migne *P.G.* LXXVII Col. 13 B and D.

37. The first hint of this can be seen on coins of the Theodosian dynasty. For a discussion of this phenomenon see A. Grabar *L'Empereur dans l'Art Byzantin* Variorum Reprints (London 1971) pp. 112-117.

38. See Peter Charanis ' Coronation and its Constitutional Significance in the Later Roman Empire' *Byzantion* XV 1940/1 pp. 49-66. Only if the previous emperor could not did the Patriarch crown the next one.

39. See note 24. It is essential to note that these coins have Jovi on them; not Jupiter but Jovius - not a god but the god's agent.

40. This was implied at first, then accepted by a grateful church, by the building of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantine's mausoleum. This contained 13 recesses containing sarcophagi; Constantine's opposite the entrance with six on either side for the 'other' Twelve Apostles.

41. Described by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine* LX. 10-16.

42. A. Alföldi 'On the Foundation of Constantinople' *Journal of Roman Studies* 37. 1947. pp. 10-16. Alföldi sees a strict parallelism in the coin types. Rome looks back to the past 'Constantinople, New Rome, though clad in the costume of the Ancient World, turns her face towards the future'. See especially p. 16.

43. Fergus Millar *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London 1977).p. 618

44. Steven Runciman *The Orthodox Church and the Secular State*. Sir Douglas Robb Lectures 1920 (Auckland 1971) where he sets out the process very clearly.

45. Both Empresses Eirene and Theodora summoned ecumenical church councils to re-establish ikon veneration, having appointed Patriarchs of their own choosing through a convocation of bishops which they had summoned. These matters are discussed fully in the appropriate chapters of this thesis.

46. Steven Runciman *The Byzantine Theocracy* (Cambridge 1977), especially pp. 10-18 for a full discussion of the Donatist conflict and its effect on the church-state relationship.

47. See note 9 above.

48. Not necessarily wife or daughter. Basil II crowned his nieces

Zoe and Theodora, making three Augustae with their mother Helena; he may have realised that either of the girls would have to carry on the dynasty by marrying; he himself was unmarried and his brother Constantine, their father, had no sons. These empresses are both discussed in this thesis.

49. Charles Diehl. *Imperatrices Byzantines* (Paris 1910) p. 12.

50. The phenomenon of bride shows has been explained by Warren T. Treadgold in 'The Brideshows of the Byzantine Emperors' *Byzantion* 49. (1979) pp. 395-413, also in his article 'The Marriage of the Emperor Theophilos' *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 16 (1975) pp. 325-341. It is evident that the girls could have been anybody, but were chosen by royal messengers, matching the candidates against a detailed set of measurements and, one must infer, other criteria, e.g. family connections and the right religious upbringing and outlook.

51. Athanasius *Hist. Aran.* 44.

52. Some indication of this can be gained from reading through the three volumes of P.R. Coleman Norton's edition of *The Roman State and the Christian Church* (London 1966). He quotes 652 edicts altogether which cover a wide variety of topics.

53. A.N. Sherwin White *Letters of Pliny* (Oxford 1966) p. 697.

54. ibid.

55. Eusebius *Life of Constantine* II 67-71

56. Oecumene οἰκουμένη No. 7 in Lampe's Patristic Greek Lexicon defines it as'the world as fallen into sin'.

57. *The Orthodox Church and the Secular State* pp. 13 and 24.

58. Theophanes A.M. 6295 p. 478 1, 10 and 17-18

59. Eudoxia was called the new Helena in a rare burst of enthusiasm by St. John Chrysostom as was Athenais-Eudokia; Eirene and her son Constantine were called the new Constantine and Helena in the Acta of the Ecumenical Council of 787.

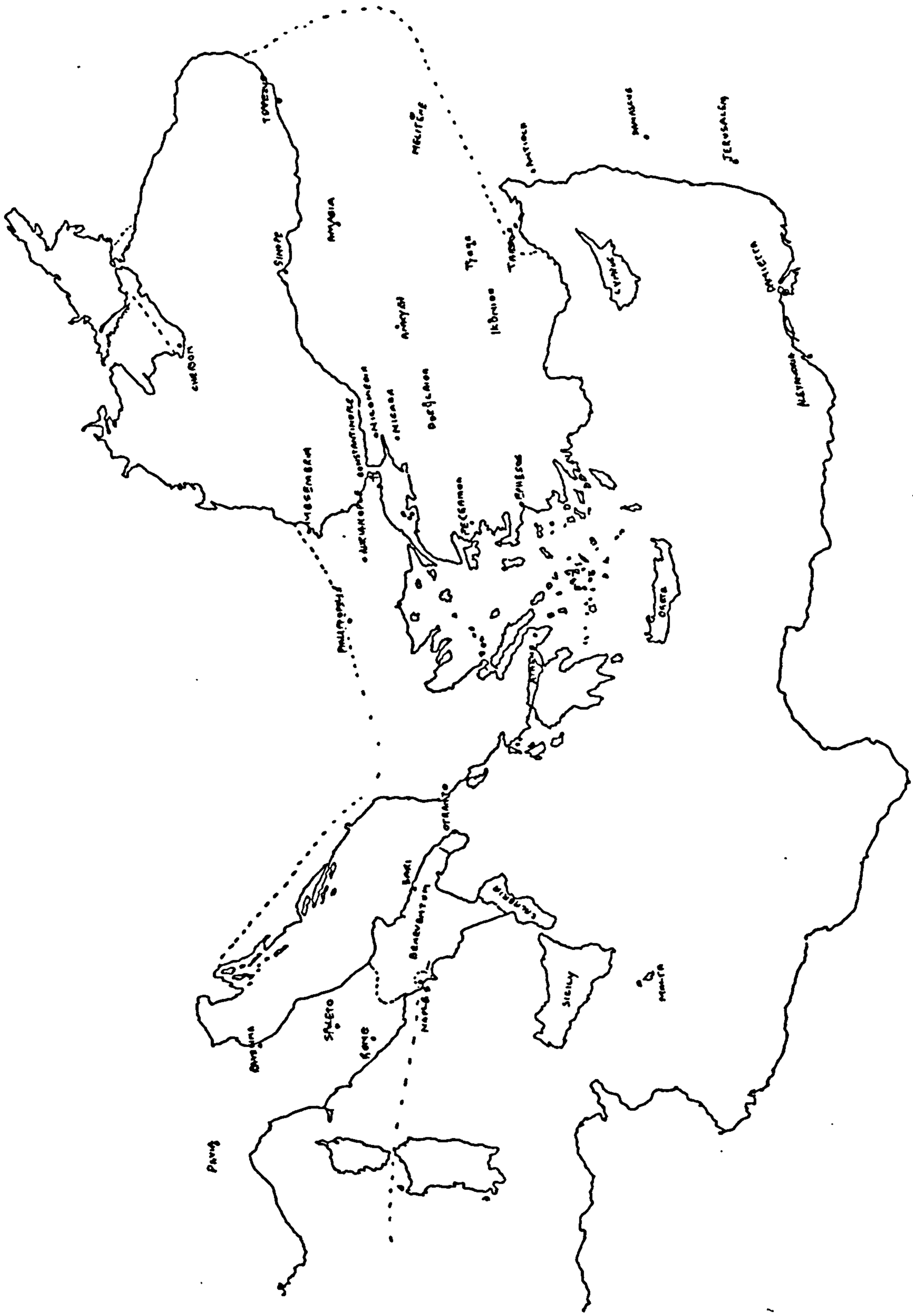
60. Kenneth G. Holum *Theodosian Empresses - Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (California 1982) p.1. He quotes Justa Grata Honoria, whose brother Valentinian III ' deprived (her) of the scepter (sic) of the empire' when she involved Attila in her aim of avenging the death of her paramour Eugenios. Holum quotes Priscus frg. 15 'men of the western court replied to Attila that she does not have any claim to the scepter for the rule of the Roman Empire belongs not to females but men'. Holum's discussion of this fragment in his book is limited to the observation that '...the men of the western court took too narrow a view of sovreignty. Any concept of sovreignty that ignores this fact, whether ancient or modern, fails to make sense both of the Roman monarchy and of the woman's function within it.'

61. These points are discussed fully in the section on Eirene.

62. Steven Runciman 'The Empress Irene' *Studies in Church History*, Subsidia I. Ed. Baker. (Oxford 1978) pp. 101-118, esp. p. 114

63. All these Empresses are discussed in detail in this thesis.

PLATE I


Tyre
Ptolemais
Jerusalem
Damascus
Tripoli
Cyprus
Tyana
Ikonium
Antioch
Cilicia
Tarsus
Cappadocia
Ancyra
Galatia
Amisus
Pontus
Sinope
Amaseia
Paphlagonia
Neocaesarea
Bithynia
Nicaea
Nicomedia
Chalcedon
Byzantium
Thessalonica
Philippi
Crete
Rhodes
Patmos
Ephesus
Smyrna
Sardis
Pergamum
Troas
Adramyttium
Lesbos
Thasos
Samothrace
Imbros
Lemnos
Athos
Thessaly
Macedonia
Dyrrachium
Apollonia
Epirus
Nicopolis
Actium
Corcyra
Sicily
Malta
Italy
Brundisium
Tarentum
Rhegium
Puteoli
Rome
Ostia
Corsica
Sardinia
Carthage
Utica
Hippo
Numidia
Mauretania
Tingis
Gades
Spain
Tarraco
Narbo
Gaul
Massilia
Arelate
Augustodunum
Lugdunum
Britain
Londinium
Eburacum
Germany
Rhine
Danube
Pannonia
Dacia
Moesia
Thrace
Byzantium
Ancyra
Tarsus
Antioch
Damascus
Jerusalem
Alexandria
Egypt
Nile
Memphis
Arabia
Red Sea
Persian Gulf
Euphrates
Babylon
Ctesiphon
Seleucia
Tigris
Nisibis
Hatra
Edessa
Carrhae
Palmyra
Syria
Cilicia
Cyprus
Rhodes
Crete
Africa
Carthage
Numidia
Mauretania
Spain
Gaul
Britain
Germany
Rhine
Danube
Dacia
Moesia
Thrace
Macedonia
Greece
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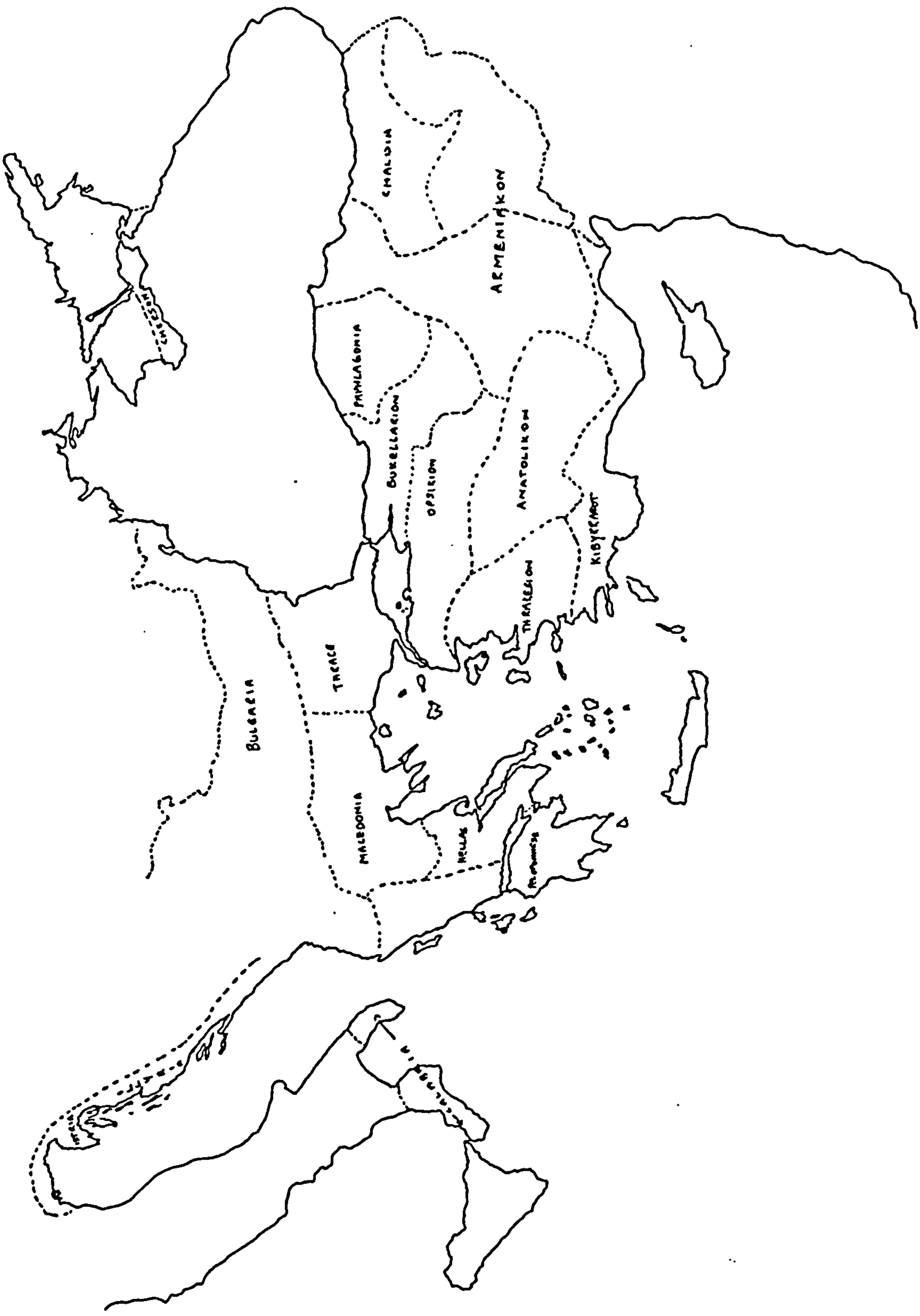
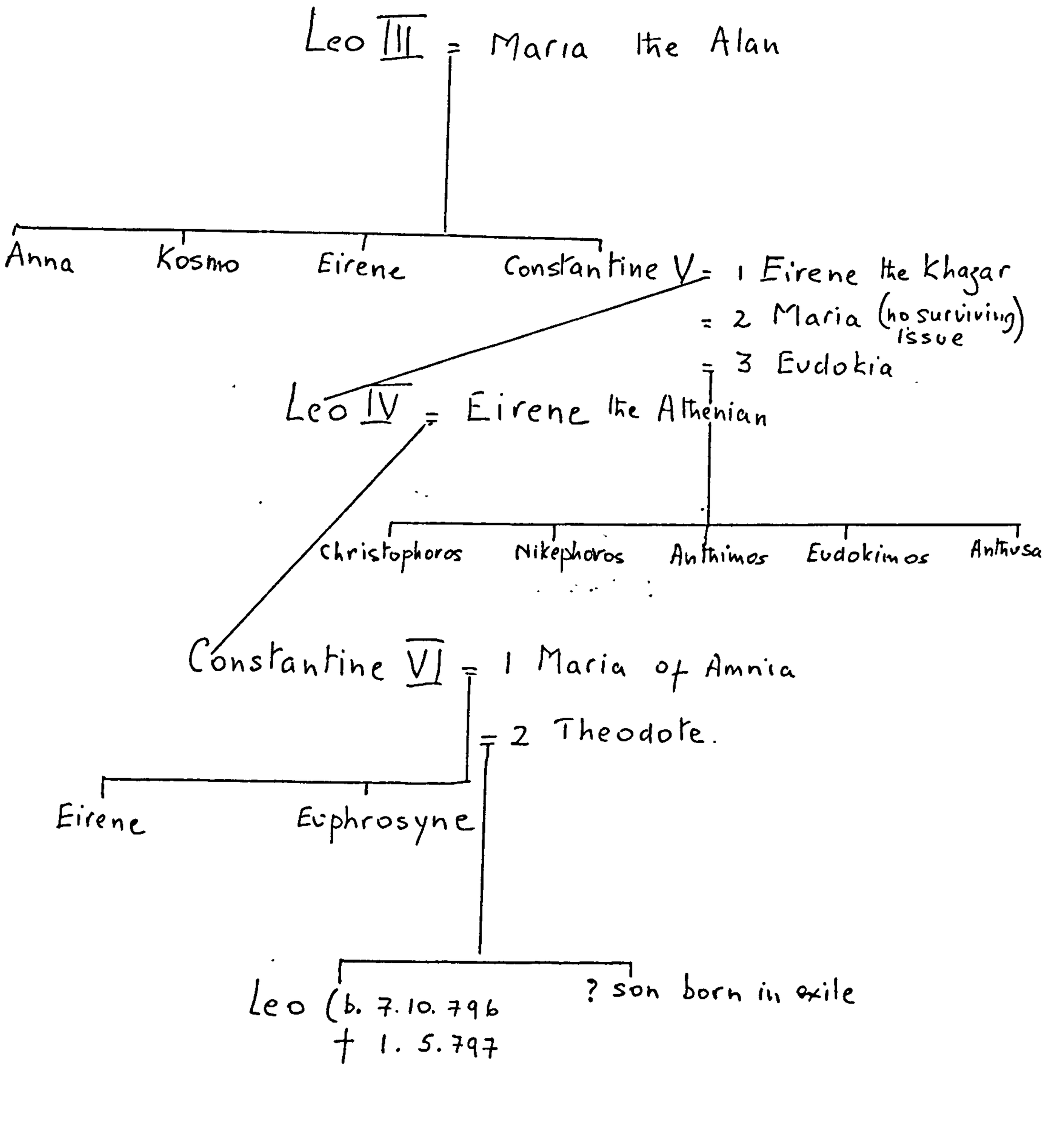
Rome
Ostia
Puteoli
Brundisium
Tarentum
Rhegium

PLATE II



MAP SHOWING THEME BOUNDARIES

PLATE III



EXTRACT FROM STEMMA - EIRENE

EIRENE, WIDOW OF LEO IV, RULED 780 - 802

The state of the Empire at 780 and the initial stages of the reign

It will be seen from the map on the previous page that the extent of the empire at 780 was considerable. Parts of Italy were still under Byzantine suzerainty and have been referred to as the second Magna Graecia where the population was increased by a large influx of refugees away from the iconoclastic anti-monastic policies of Leo III and, more particularly, Constantine V. Arab influence was menacing from North Africa and the larger islands round Italy were under increasing threat, nevertheless they were still governed by a man nominated by the Emperor in Constantinople. On the map the borders have been dotted in, both in the north with Bulgaria and in the south with the Arabs. In both cases there was a state of guerilla warfare existing and the precise boundary between Byzantium and her neighbours would be hard to draw.

Our knowledge of the creation of certain themes is limited by the texts[1]. For instance, we know that the Kibyrraeot theme was created by Leo III in response to the Arab pirate menace in 731[2]. The Anatolikon theme, out of which the Kibyrraeot theme was created was further limited by the creation of the Thrakesion theme in 740[3], and the Bukellarion theme is first mentioned in 751 carved out of the Opsikion theme. The map appended is, therefore, as accurate as the texts allow.

The population had been considerably depleted by the devastation of the plague in 747[4] and further by the earthquake of 763[5], particularly in the capital and its hinterland in Thrace. A building programme was inaugurated by Constantine V and 8,700 families were transferred from Pontus, Maritime Asia Minor, mainland Greece and the islands: one of the building projects was the re-erecting of the aqueduct of Valens[6] which had been destroyed by the Avars in Heraclius' time[7]. This transplantation of populations[8] resulted in a dislocation of customs and laws and further pointed to the need for a revision and re-codification of the Justiniac laws, as well as a codification of customary law relating to agriculture and sea law and in a language that could be understood by the majority, Greek not Latin. This had been started in the reign of Leo III and Constantine V jointly and was added

to variously as need arose by successive Isaurian rulers.[9] The Preamble claims that it is more humane and in accordance with Christian principles (than Justinian's code) and incorporates strictures on magistrates for accepting bribes, they were to be adequately paid by the exchequer, were not to be influenced in their judgements by rank. It rejects, therefore, the idea of one law for the rich and one for the poor. The Council in Trullo had enacted that marriage between Christian and Jew was forbidden. No distinction was made between orthodox and schismatic Christian in the Ecloga. This may be surmised as an effort to withdraw any bar to the marriage between couples of differing sects who might find themselves close neighbours as a result of the transfer of populations. Naturally, different traditions and practices as well as differences of belief arose in such a widespread empire and the humanitarian aspect of the Ecloga can be seen as an effort to reduce tensions this caused. The Rhodian Sea Code and the Farmers' Code, which are dated about the same period and are treated as appendices to the main work of the Ecloga, can also be seen as methods of dealing with difficulties caused by dislocation. These codes were written in Greek which was the common language by this time; not Latin in which the Justinian and Theodosian Codes were both written.

In a similar effort to impose imperial law and loyalty on the population, the soldiers' and sailors' code was subject to comparable uniting principles. The power of the theme armies and, therefore, the commanders, had been curtailed to some extent by the creation of new themes. The formation of an imperial force drawn from all the themes was a further step towards unification.

By the time of Leo IV's sole rule these re-organisations had been completed. The frontiers were quiet; only sporadic local incursions into Byzantine territory occurred. He took the opportunity provided by this relative quiet to increase the armed forces and to administer to them an oath of loyalty to himself and his son. He did this at a ceremony for crowning his son[10]. The oaths were both verbal and written and were taken by the army, senate and people alike. It will be useful to examine the ceremony in more detail as a number of features are involved.

Briefly, the sequence of the background and component events were as follows:-

1. The Emperor increased the forces manpower, theme by theme.
2. The theme governors arrive in the capital with large retinues to ask for Constantine to be made co-emperor.
3. The Emperor refuses.
4. He explains his fear of Constantine being killed if he succeeds to sole rule while still a minor; a usurper would then be put up.
5. Unanimous affirmations of loyalty.
6. Demonstrations in support of Constantine as co-emperor for a week - Palm Sunday to the Great Fifth[11] including protest marches in the Hippodrome.
7. Leo orders a public oath-taking ceremony on Good Friday.
8. Acclamations of loyalty made formally on 'the honoured and life-giving wood of the Cross[12]' by people, army, senate and citizens as well as 'internal affairs ministry and city engineers' department[13]'
9. All sign a statement that they would only accept Leo, Constantine and their progeny.
10. Holy Saturday - the Great Sabbath - the Emperor's youngest step-brother Anthimos is promoted to 'Nobilissimus' in the Tribunal of the Nineteen Couches.
11. Royal procession from the Nineteen Couches to the Great Assembly, consisting of the Emperor with his son, the two Caesars, Nikephoros and Christophoros, and the other three younger step-brothers, now all Nobilissimi, Niketas, Eudokimos and Anthimos.
12. The Emperor changes his clothes and ascends the pulpit along with Constantine and the Patriarch.
13. All the people present and deposit their sworn statements of loyalty to Leo and Constantine on the altar.
14. Solemn presentation of Constantine to the people by Leo - 'See brothers, I fulfil your request and present my son for emperor. See! Receive him from the Church and from the Hand of Christ.'[14]
15. Formal reply from the people - a shout - 'Answer us Son of God, that we do receive from your hand Lord Constantine as Emperor to guard him and to die for him.'[15]
16. Easter Sunday, at dawn, the Emperor with his son and the Patriarch arrive in the Hippodrome.
17. Portable altar brought in and placed so that everyone can see it.
18. The Patriarch offers a prayer.
19. The Emperor crowns his son.

20. Royal procession, the two Emperors, the two Caesars and the three Nobilissimi go into the Great Church.
21. Empress's procession follows the Emperor's but goes up to the chapel of the catechumens instead of into the main part of the Great Church.

Prior to this week-long demonstration, Leo had been engaged in a, so to speak, 'softening up' process. He had distributed largesse among the people, commented on by the chronographer as 'unthinking use of the money left to him by his father'[16]. Following the remarks made by Alan Cameron[17] concerning the wisdom of seeing the circus factions were suitably 'primed', one could read into this statement that Leo, far from 'unthinking' knew very well that donatives to the army may have been traditional on accession to sole power, but a judicious distribution of alms and gifts in the right quarters were equally essential. Leo had also made sure of the loyalty of the church dignitaries by appointing some abbots of monasteries to vacant bishoprics[18]. Constantine V had so alienated the supporters of the monks with his implacable hostility that there surely must have been a strong element of dissidence in the Empire. Those who had been exiled for their beliefs or who had exiled themselves must have formed cells of opposition by the time Leo IV was sole ruler, particularly in Italy and the islands. So long as the emperor was a successful general at the head of his army his policies were safe. Leo IV, on the other hand, was by no means the charismatic emperor-general successfully repelling the invaders. Leo IV's policy of promoting the abbots of monasteries to bishoprics must have gone some way towards placating the adherents of the monks without necessarily offending those who looked to him for a continuation of his father's policies. It seems not unreasonable to question whether Eirene's influence might have been felt here, but, of course, there is no textual evidence for such a suggestion and her support of the monks in her own reign does not appear in the beginning.

Dealing with the emperor-making ceremony stage by stage, a number of interesting ideas emerge which have a bearing on later events.

1 - 2. The arrival of the theme governors in the capital asking for Constantine to be made co-emperor was, according to Theophanes, a direct

result of the theme armies being enlarged[19]. The connection seems obscure, but one must conjecture that it existed or the text would not have been written in this way. The whole episode has an unmistakable air of being carefully stage-managed by Leo. Roman emperors had always known the value of publicity, particularly in the shape of a great, protracted spectacle in which all classes of the people were allotted their parts. The judicious use of money among the factions as well as gifts to members of the Senate and the bureaucracy dealing with the detailed administration of the city (hence, surely, the mention of the internal affairs ministry and the city engineers) would ensure loyal demonstrations. Were there to be any theme general or governor fancying his own ambitions for the throne, with the increased army at the back of him, then such demonstrations of loyalty to the Isaurian dynasty could well have persuaded him otherwise. Leo must have commanded the governors' presence in the capital and it seems sensible to assume some kind of suggestion was made to them that they should ask that Constantine should be made co-emperor.

3 - 4. Theophanes indicates, somewhat obliquely[20], that Leo was dissembling when he refused to crown Constantine at first. But this was 'open government' and the very real problem of a minor being vulnerable to usurpation was admitted.

5 - 6. The disbursements were successful and the lengthy, noisy, public demonstrations of loyalty must have been persuasive not only to the Emperor but also to any opposition. It is surely significant that the 'protest marches' were in the Hippodrome. This sounds like the Greens and the Blues factions whipping up demonstrations, or harking back to their antique antecedents, the claqueurs in the audience at a mime[21].

7. Maundy Thursday - The Great Fifth. Leo must have set out the order of the next ceremony and ordered the written oaths to be prepared.

8 - 9. Verbal and written ceremony. The acclamations may have been formal, but it sounds more like a solemn procession of all orders of citizens touching the cross in turn and swearing loyalty and then signing a document. Individual written oaths were also required, - see 13.

10. With the Emperor's youngest brother given the title of Nobilissimus' all the royal family had then been promoted to some dignity.

11. This was a very impressive procession of all the royal family, but demonstrated visually the relative ranks within the family. It should be remembered that the step-brothers were all the children of Constantine V's third wife. Constantine V had waited until 767 to crown his wife Augusta and promote the older of her sons, after the new Patriarch had been installed. One must assume that Patriarch Paul was not disposed to question the legality of this third marriage. Eirene forbade third marriages in 800[22] and Basil of Caesarea had spoken of third marriages as 'a fornication'[23].

12. The Emperor changed into the clothes appropriate to such a solemn occasion in the Metatorion, the Imperial robing room in Hagia Sophia. The Patriarch, one should note was present but did not appear to take any other part in the ceremony at this stage.

13. Individual sworn statements were deposited now - see 9 where the people signed what must have been a kind of petition. These statements here were probably a specific oath (witnessed?) of loyalty.

14 - 15. The mode of presentation is interesting here. The Patriarch being present in the pulpit gives force to the words 'Receive him from the Church'. The next words 'and from the Hand of Christ' conjure up a visual representation of the coins of the period where a hand is seen hovering over the bust of the emperor[24]. Later representations show a full length figure of Christ crowning the Emperor[25] and it is possible that there had been representations of previous emperors thus which were known to at least the older generation present. After some 50 years of iconoclasm it seems unlikely that these pictures were still extant, though the imagery of the emperor ruling at the behest of Christ and so closely identified with Him would have played a part in exalting the dynasty. Here one must certainly see the words as all part of the careful insistence on the charisma of the Isaurian dynasty as well as the idea of primogeniture.

16 - 19. The significance of the actual crowning ceremony, the

culmination of the whole piece of organisation, being at dawn on Easter Day must not be overlooked. It was, of course, a marvellous piece of stage-craft and the symbolism of the sun appearing on the Day of Resurrection while the new emperor was being crowned by the reigning emperor would have impressed all those present. This ceremony took place in the Hippodrome and Theophanes carefully noted that the portable altar was brought in after the arrival of the Emperor, his son and the Patriarch, and placed in a spot visible to all the crowd:'παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ ὁρῶντος'.

20 - 21. Two royal processions left the Hippodrome for Hagia Sophia: first the Co-Emperors followed by the two Caesars and the three nobilissimi then the procession of the Empress, who must have been present throughout the previous ceremony, and perhaps at all the previous ones as well. The chronographer was at pains to show the Empress's procession as very impressive as he mentions her sceptre bearers. The male part of the procession went to Hagia Sophia where one must presume that the liturgy for Easter Day was performed. The Chalke Steps were a separate entrance to Hagia Sophia and, of course, the Chapel of the Catechumens was not within the main part of the Church, though visible from the main church and from the Chapel much of the proceedings in the Church was visible. In fact, it seems likely that the Empress's procession may have gone into the gallery high above the body of the church, where certainly in later times the royal ladies were accommodated. In the Orthodox liturgy there is a pause just before the rite of the communion where the catechumens are told three times to leave. The unbaptised may not take part in that part of the liturgy and, no doubt, many large churches had a special chapel reserved for them.

Despite this week-long ceremony underlining the continuity of eldest son succeeding father, in the following month some conspirators sought to put the eldest Caesar, Nikephoros, on the throne[26]. This was the first of a dreary series of attempts to use the sons of Eudokia, Constantine V's third wife, as a front for the ambitions of dissident men. Leo recognised that the conspirators, not his brother, were to blame. He punished the plotters and exiled them to Cherson, now in Russia, having first explained events to the people in the Magnaura palace: 'open government' once again for the purpose of securing the

dynasty. Thus, when Eirene and Constantine came to rule, Constantine had been Co-Emperor for five years, had appeared on ceremonial occasions with his father[27] and it would appear that the charisma of the Isaurians was undiminished.

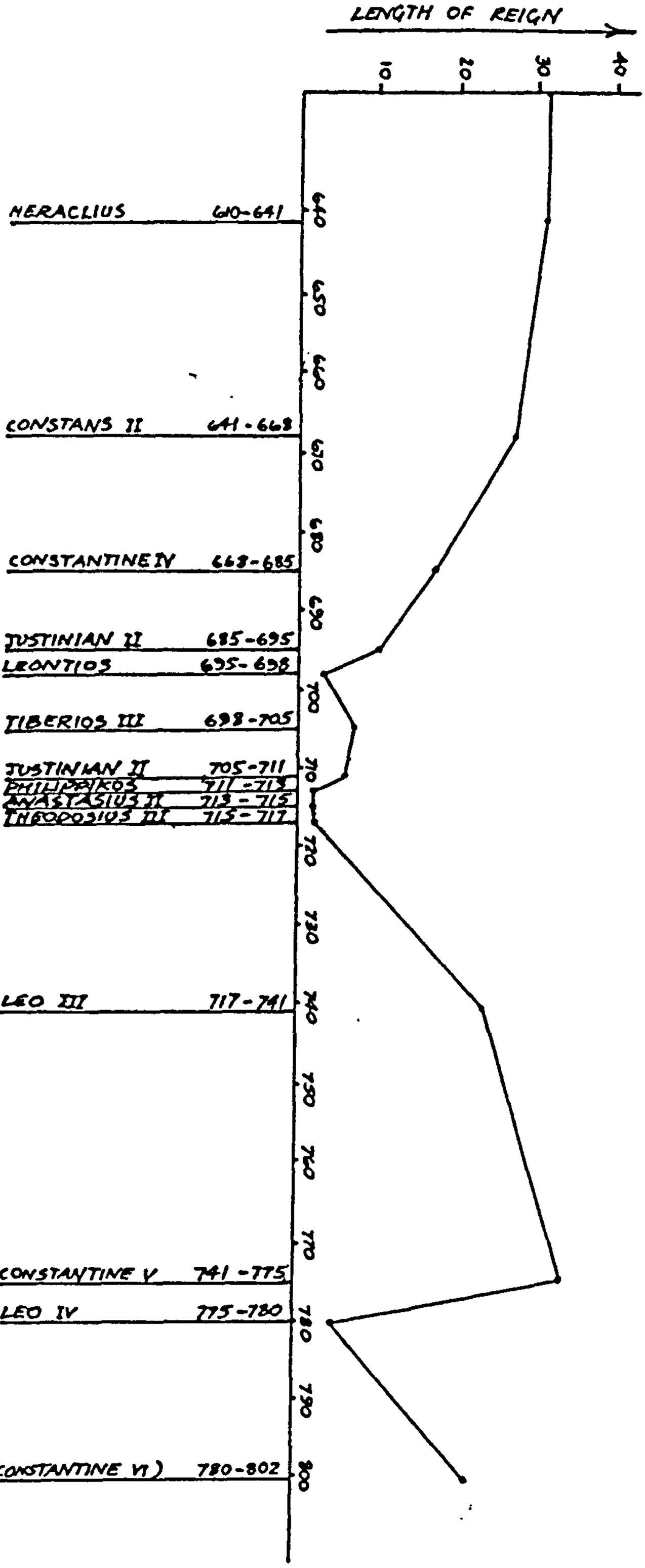
We have no evidence of Leo's intentions concerning a regency for his son should the boy succeed to sole rule while still a minor. He may, of course, have laid it down that his wife, an Augusta since immediately before her marriage,[28] should rule jointly with their son. However, there were a number of alternatives open to Eirene and it may be that some or all of them were discussed with Leo before his death. We have no evidence of Eirene's thoughts on the matter, we have only the result of the decision - the administration of an oath of loyalty to the troops towards Constantine and Eirene on their accession and this was only referred to by Theophanes as an example of how things were when the subject was discussed at a much later occasion[29].

What were the possibilities which might have been available to Eirene?

1. Act as sole Regent for her son until he was of age to rule by himself.
2. Form a Regency Council.
3. Re-marry.
4. Invite one of her brothers-in-law to become Emperor.
5. Turn her back on the whole problem and retire from public life.
6. Turn a quasi-regency into joint equal rule.

Examining these ideas it will be seen that there were some historical precedents for them, but that each scheme had disadvantages as well as advantages. Each, of course, would only appeal to different types of personality and would need different abilities and predilections to carry out.

1.i This had the advantage of reflecting the rights and duties of widows over their children, both male and female, instituted by Leo III and Constantine V in the Ecloga[30]. The fact that the child's inheritance was the Roman Empire made it an extreme example, but the legal fight for Eirene to guard her son's interest



GRAPH OF COMPARATIVE LENGTHS OF REIGNS - HERACLIUS TO EIRENE

in property and status was inalienable. It would be extinguished if she re-married and the rights would be invested in her husband.

1.ii The course of action also had the advantage of providing continuity in the public's mind. The dynasty was founded in 717 and, so far, had been successful in securing the frontiers and in providing a measure of peace and prosperity[31]. So far, with the Isaurians, the eldest sòn had succeeded his father. Leo III had crowned Constantine V, his fifteen month old son, co-emperor in 720[32]. Constantine V had crowned Leo IV, his eldest son in 750 when he was only a year old. Leo, in turn, had crowned his only son in 776 when he was only 5 years old in the impressive ceremony already discussed.

1.iii This form of rule would enable Eirene to train and influence her son, but at the same time he would be open to influence from officials of the court and the generals of the armed forces. If Eirene held strong views on any matter there could be conflict in which she might very well be the loser as she could hold no veto over decisions made by Constantine. The influence of the Patriarch should also be considered here. So far the Isaurian emperors had been firmly in control of Church affairs, but with a five year old boy nominally in charge, even with his mother as Regent, the balance of power could alter very quickly.

1.iv Once Constantine reached legal majority at the age of 16, Eirene would lose her status as Regent and would have to retire. Having been at the centre of affairs she might not have wished to retire from the world at the age of 33. Although she could risk the prospect that her son would allow her to remain in the womens' quarters in the palace, or perhaps another royal residence nearby, nevertheless, her future lay in her young son's hands and would continue to be so while they both lived. The historical parallels were not encouraging. Martina, widow of Heraclius wanted to act as Regent for her eldest son Heraclonas, but was told brusquely that she was not fit to rule - she could not receive foreign ambassadors or reply to them[33]. The real

objection may have been that she was Heraclius' niece and the marriage had been considered illegal, being within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity[34]. Her deposition, along with her son, was a violent one, her tongue was cut out and her son's nose was slit and they were both exiled.

On the other hand, the Merovingian [35] examples in a previous era, in the case of Brunhild who was Regent from 593 to 600 for Theudebert aged 10 of Austrasia and for Theoderic aged 9 of Burgundy, and in the case of Bathild, Regent for Clothar III and two younger brothers in 657-664, show that regencies could be very successful, but nevertheless, the situation imposed its own time limit and both queens had to retire at a time neither would have chosen. Although these examples are a hundred years or more earlier than Eirene's time of decision, both examples could have been known to her through the records used by Theophanes and the Patriarch Nikephoros.[36]

2.i Eirene could have formed a Regency Council or Leo could have nominated one. There were obvious candidates for such a council in the persons of the Patriarch Paul, Gregory the Logothete of the Course, and perhaps the eldest of the Caesars, Nikephoros.

2.ii So much power in the hands of men who by combining to oppose Eirene in any decision could effectively silence her, could work against her interest and, possibly, against her son's as well. She would have to dominate the Council; they would then have the semblance of power and status, but not the reality.

2.iii The Caesar would surely not have accepted this state of affairs for long and, as happened[37], Gregory the Logothete and Constantine the commander of the Imperial Guard, along with others, would have put him up as Emperor.

3.i Eirene could have re-married. The Ecloga puts the period of mourning for a widow as one year[38]., but ample precedent existed to waive this rule[39]. She would have to decide whether to

marry a member of the court or a foreigner. She was a young woman and might well have wished to have had more children and a husband to protect and cherish her.

3.ii There is no evidence that Eirene wished to marry again until Charles, King of the Franks, made his offer in 802. By then Eirene was sole ruler, had been seriously ill and the succession must have been a concern in her mind.

3.iii There was no obvious candidate for her to marry. The sources do not say whether Gregory or Constantine were married. Since Leo III had ascended the throne, power had been kept very deliberately in the Emperor's hands and the power of the civilian administrators as well as the generals' had been curtailed. Thus a powerful aristocracy had not yet arisen.[40]

3.iv Eirene would have had to relinquish her guardianship over her son so her source of power would be weakened. If she and her new husband had sons, they might have been preferred over Constantine. Her own position would have been no different from when her husband Leo was alive. Certainly she would not have been arbiter of her own and her son's future.

3.v She might have made an alliance with Charles. Though he was already married, he had shown that he had no objection to successive marriages and if it suited him he would put aside an 'inconvenient' alliance as was proved in the case of Desideria, daughter of Desiderius, whom he divorced after only a year of marriage[41]. This step would have been extremely hazardous in respect of Constantine; Charles' sons were all much older and any of them might have wished to succeed his father on the East Roman throne. Pippin was, in fact, given Romagna which included the Exarchate of Ravenna, once Byzantine territory.

3.vi More possible, but still a hazardous policy, Eirene might have allied herself to the Lombard royal house. Aladgisus, King of the Lombards had already taken refuge at the Byzantine court in 774[42], the year that Constantine V died, having been

beaten in battle at Verona by Charles. But marrying him, if he were not already married, (the sources are silent on this), might have declared her interest in regaining the Exarchate of Ravenna and part of Lombardy before she was ready to make the attempt.

3.vii A Bulgarian alliance was not possible. Her cousin was already married to the refugee ex-Khan Telerig, who had taken refuge at Constantinople[43] and relations between Byzantium and Bulgaria were far too hostile to hope for a successful alliance.

4.i Eirene could have set up one of her brothers-in-law as a puppet emperor while Constantine was in his minority. Two of them, Nikephoros and Christophoros, were already Caesars and while they remained unmarried posed little threat to Constantine's status.

4.ii This would be flying in the face of Leo's clear wishes set out in the ceremonial of crowning his son.

4.iii The problem of dealing with the puppet emperor once Constantine was of age to rule would have to be solved and possibly cause a situation close to civil war if there were two strong factions loyal to each man.

4.iv The only point in taking this course of action would be to provide a compliant adult male on the throne of the same dynasty. That very compliancy might have provided an opportunity for ambitious supporters to supplant Eirene and Constantine altogether. This course of action might prove more trouble than it was worth.

5.i Eirene could have retired at once either to a monastery or, perhaps back to her native Greece and thus have turned her back on the problem.

5.ii This decision would involve a prior decision as to whether or not to take Constantine with her. If not, she would have to see that he was in the charge of someone who would protect him. Conspirators had already attempted to usurp her husband and son[44]

and put one of the Caesars on the throne. It seems likely that this would happen again if Constantine was left on his own. It seems probable, also, that his life could then have been in danger.

5.iii He could accompany his mother to exile. This would be flying in the face of Leo's clear wish as in 4.ii. Their continued existence could have been an irresistible temptation for ambitious men to try and restore Constantine to the throne, but Eirene's own future could be in danger in this case.

6.i In the case of joint rule, any usurper would have to topple both Eirene and Constantine.

6 ii Eirene had been crowned Augusta by Constantine V before her marriage to Leo. As has been argued[45], this had the effect of adopting Eirene into the Isaurian dynasty and granted her residual ruling power. This had been exercised very effectively in the past, notably by Pulcheria, who had acted as Regent for Theodosius II while he was still a boy and, after his death, she had acted as the carrier of royal power when she contracted a nominal marriage with Marcian[46]. Ariadne was successively daughter, mother, wife and, when widowed, the legitimating agency of her second husband Anastasius' rule[47]. Sophia had acted as a quasi-regent and residuary holder of imperial power when her husband Justin was insane, even though Tiberius had been formally adopted by Justin and was legally ruling. Sophia, in a sense, represented the temporarily absent Justin.

6.iii Joint rule had the advantage of leaving the exact timing of Eirene's retirement open. If her son turned out to be as feeble as her brothers-in-law, she could postpone her departure until a suitable time did arise.

From the foregoing it can be seen that Eirene and, perhaps Leo before his death, could have seen the dangers involved in failing to grasp the reins of government and, indeed, she may have welcomed the opportunity to be mistress of her own destiny and to create the kind of conditions in which her son could rule in peace. She showed herself to

be a woman of energy and intelligence and proved to have some skill in diplomacy; Leo may have seen this. Perhaps she enjoyed power. There is certainly an indication of this later in her reign. She had a major achievement to her credit in 787 with the restoration of orthodoxy and ikon veneration and it is after this that some evidence for a liking for power can be seen. Theophanes records in 789, two years after the Council of Nicaea, that wicked men influenced by astrological prophecies, persuaded Eirene 'it is not ordained of God that your son should take possession of imperial power unless it is yours, given to you of God'[48]. He goes on to comment 'She, deluded like a woman, and also having a liking for power was fully confident that it was so and did not reason that the men themselves wished to manage affairs and used this as an excuse'[49]. The dating is somewhat curious as Theophanes goes on to conclude that 'therefore when the Emperor reached the age of twenty he saw that he had no power himself ...'[50]. By 789 Constantine would have been twenty seven. Theophanes may have been employing the method of 'casting back and casting forward' demonstrated in the case of Simeon the Logothete in Theophanes Continuatus by Romilly Jenkins and Warren Treadgold[51].

Another indication of Eirene's determination to rule might be seen in the use of the phrase: 'τούτῳ τῷ ἔτει κρατήσασα Εἰρήνη τὴν Βασιλείαν.[52]' followed by an account of the orders she gave for an embassy to go to the Arab leader Abimilech which happened in 800. It may be that Theophanes used the phrase deliberately to emphasize that Eirene was the real controller of the Empire in contrast to Charles who had just been crowned as Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III. The heading for the year A.M. 6290 (A.D. 800) is 'Ρωμαίων Βασίλισσα 'Ειρήνη πάλιν ἔτη Ε'[53] One may speculate whether this hides some declaration by Eirene that it was she who was ruler of the Roman people.

Historians have tended to give Eirene a bad press and seem agreed that she really wanted power for herself. Some of the notable comments are as follows: George Finlay[54] having balanced her gifts with her treatment of her son says:

> 'Strange to say, when the object of Irene's crimes was reached, she soon felt all the satiety of gratified ambition. She no longer took the interest she had previously taken in conducting

> the public business of the empire, and abandoned the exercise of her power to seven eunuchs ...'

J.B. Bury merely contents himself by calling the struggle of Eirene with her son 'unnatural and 'the tragedy which was determined by the unscrupulou ambition of Irene'[55]. Charles Diehl quotes three French writers who regard her with approval[56], but goes on to say:

> 'Je me confesse que, pour ma part, Irène m'apparaît beaucoup moins séduisante. Aprement ambitieuse - ses admirateurs notent en elle comme un trait dominant l'amour qu'elle eut du pouvoir (τὸ φίλαρχον) - toute sa vie elle fut conduite par une passion maîtresse, le désire de régner'.

Even less favourable is the comment of M.V. Anastos in the Cambridge Medieval History[57], who says:

> She was ambitious, strong-willed, and capable, and might have furthered the interests of the Empire had she not sacrificed all other considerations to her lust for power and passion for the restoration of the images'.

A more balanced view is taken by Steven Runciman[58] who says:

> 'She for her part clearly liked power, and doubtless the compliments that she received from the church as a result of her restoration of image-worship inclined her to believe that she was divinely ordained to exercise power'.

It can be seen from the texts quoted above that the comments about her liking for power and the possible indications that she did so, all came later in her reign, in fact, after the Council of Nicaea. One is perhaps persuaded to the view that initially she assumed power to save her own life and her child's, at least to live in the world, not in either a religious or secular exile; and that she subsequently continued in power either because she enjoyed it or perhaps because her son was not yet ready to exercise sole rule and there was still no alternative.

Having made her decision to rule jointly with her son, Eirene had to establish herself as fully in command. Therefore, we should next consider how this was achieved. Once again, there is no precise evidence as to how Eirene did so, but one sees that by June 781, a mere nine months after Leo died, she was able to send John the Sakellarios, a eunuch of her own household, to hold the frontier against the Arabs, which he did successfully.

Before this time, Eirene had to survive several trials of her strength and determination.

1. In October a conspiracy to put the eldest Caesar, Nikephoros, on the throne.[59]
2. In April, the traitorous action of a would-be usurper, Elpidios, governor of Sicily.[60]
3. In June, the Arab threat of invasion.

1.i The conspiracy to put Nikephoros on the throne was engineered by men in very senior positions who had been close to Leo's throne. The first mentioned was Gregory, Logothete of the Course, a man in charge of all the communications in the Empire, and therefore, in a position to hear first news from every quarter and, not least, in a position to disrupt supplies to the capital if he chose. Another conspirator was Constantine, in charge of the royal personal guard, and the personal attendants on Leo. Two others mentioned by Theophanes by name were Bardas, the general of the very powerful and fervently iconoclastic theme of Armeniakon (to prove a continual source of dissidence later), and Theophylaktos, admiral of the Dodecanese theme[61]. Theophanes says there were many others.

1.ii These men were the late Emperor's close companions and advisers. With the focus of the court shifted to the gynaeceum their power must have seemed curtailed. No wonder, then that they saw an opportunity to seize power and put the Caesar on the throne.

1.iii This raises two implications a) that the Empress's court were very well informed as the conspiracy was discovered before they could take action; and b) the child Emperor, Constantine VI had not taken over his father's court, but, one may assume, was still in the women's quarters under his mother's eye. Theophanes refers here to Constantine as 'παιδὶ'[62].

1.iv Although the conspirators were flogged and shaved, their lives were spared, they were not imprisoned but hustled off to exile in various places, not named in the text. It is notable throughout Eirene's reign that her punishments were relatively mild, certainly by the standards of the time. There is no record of her ordering the death of anyone.

1.v Her punishment of the would-be puppet emperor and his brothers was, by contrast, severe and public. They were made to take holy orders and at Christmas were made to distribute the traditional royal alms in Hagia Sophia. Not only did this action demonstrate the brothers' disgrace, place them in a suitably subservient position, but also the contrast with Eirene's own appearance in the church would have been inescapable. She appeared with the sacred ceremonial crown, normally kept in the church but which had been appropriated by her husband. She had beautified it by adding pearls and thus it was re-dedicated. It is evident that, although she had Constantine with her on this holy occasion, it was very much the Empress who was the chief personage. The symbolism of the Feast of the Nativity where the Mother of God is so closely identified with the centre of events was probably not lost on either Eirene or those round her, and must have made an impact on the poor receiving alms.

2.i Not unreasonably, Eirene promoted Elpidios to be general in charge of Sicily. He had already served there in a more junior capacity so she must have felt that a patrician with experience was the right man for the job. He went in February, but by April 15th - Theophanes quotes the actual date, Eirene received information that Elpidios favoured the cause of the Caesars. Two questions arise here, a) was Eirene mistaken about the loyalty of Elpidios from the start? b) Did Eirene see Elpidios as another of her husband's court who needed status and a responsible job but who would continue to serve the Isaurians?

2.iii It is evident that Eirene did not realise the extent of the Arab infiltration in Sicily this early in her reign. She must have thought that it was only the man Elpidios whom she had to deal with. He was strongly backed by North African Arabs and others in Sicily. Her method of persuasion, once the mission of Theophilos to bring him back had failed, was uncharacteristically violent. She shut up Elpidios' wife and children in the Praetorium prison, a notorious place, even flogging and shaving her first.

3.i Information must have reached Eirene by May at the latest that the

Asian Arabs were planning an invasion of Asia Minor for she was able to gather up a large army and send it across the Bosphoros in June. She sent a member of her own household, John the Sakellarios in charge of the force.

3.ii John was a eunuch so was precluded from any aspirations towards ruling himself. As a member of Eirene's household he could presumably be trusted to serve her loyally. As he was successful in the engagement, one must conclude that he was an able general and that they army had no objection to being led by a eunuch.

Although Eirene had made a bad miscalculation with Elpidios as well as underestimating the strength of the Arabs in Sicily, she had made a good firm start and had a resounding victory in Asia over the Arabs to her credit. She had established herself as a woman not to be trifled with, who would deal with any disloyalty promptly and firmly. The initial opposition had been crushed and rule from the gynaecaeum was seen to be decisive and, on balance, successful.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. See the chapter on Themes in J.B. Bury *History of the Later Roman Empire* (London 1889) Vol II pp. 339-351 and A, Lombard *Constantin V Empereur des Romains* (Paris 1902) pp. 89-91. A list occurs in Theophanes *Chronographia* ed. C. de Boor (Hildesheim 1963) Vol.I p. 451.

2. Theoph. p. 410. 7.
3. op. cit. p. 414 32-33
4. Patriarch Nicholas in Migne *Patrologiae Graecae* C. coll. 972
5. op. cit coll. 956-66
6. op. cit. coll. 973, and see Bury L.R.E. p. 457 and Theoph. p 440 19-24
7. Migne *P.G.* C. coll 988
8. op. cit. coll. 976. Such transportations of populations had been practised by successive emperors, including Leo III.

9. *Ecloga Privata Aucta* ex editione C.E. Zachariae A Lingenthal. Vol VI (Darmstadt 1962) reprint of 1931 edition - Editio Altera Lucis Scientia Aalen.

10. Theoph. p. 449ff.
11. Maundy Thursday in our calendar.
12. '...τὰ τίμια καὶ ζωποιὰ ξύλα ...' p. 449. 28
13. '...οἵ τε τῶν θεμάτων καὶ τῆς συγκλήτου καὶ τῶν ἔσω ταγμάτων καὶ τῶν πολιτῶν πάντων καὶ ἐργαστηριακῶν...' p. 449. 28-30
14 '...ἰδού, ἀδελφοί, τὴν αἴτησίν ὑμῶν πληρῶ καὶ δωροῦμαι ὑμῖν τὸν υἱόν μου εἰς βασιλέα. ἰδοὺ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλεσίας καὶ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτὸν παραλαμβάνετε'. p. 450. 8-10

15 '...ἀντιφώνησον ἡμας, υἱε τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι ἐκ τῆς χειρός σου παραλαμβάνομεν τὸν κῦριν Κωνσταντῖνον βασιλέα τοῦ φυλάττειν αὐτὸν καὶ ὑπεραποθνήσκειν αὐτοῦ.' p. 450. 11-13

16. Theoph. p. 499. 13

17. A.D. Cameron *Circus Factions* pp. 264-5: 'Their potential power only became actual when there was any question about who was to be

crowned ...But while it lasted, like the Antioch claque and for the same reason, they could expect to be courted and bribed by rival candidates'. Also see pp. 302-4 where Cameron comments on the use Constantine V made of the circus factions in the Hippodrome. Leo surely learned his lesson here as to how to exploit the publicity value of such a scenario.

18. Theoph. p. 449. 14. Janet Nelson 'Merovingian Queens' *Studies in Church History, Subsidia I* ed. Baker (Oxford 1978) pp. 53-55 sees the appointment by the reigning queen-regent of her own supporters to bishoprics as a necessary part of the power base.

19. Theoph. 449. 17. Theophanes uses the word ὅθεν - wherefore, on which account.

20. Theoph. 449. 19-20

21. See Robert Browning 'The Riot of 387 in Antioch' *J.R.S.* 42. 1952 pp. 13-20 where he discusses the role of the theatrical claques in the later Roman Empire and see A.D. Cameron op. cit. pp.237 & 245.

22. *Ecloga* p. 286 para. 17. and see note 18 saying this was Eirene's 'Novel'. But it supersedes Constantine V's Novel p. 235, para. 27 where it says 'Let everyone know clearly that it is as lawful to marry a third time as it is to marry a second time...' The translation is from Edwin Freshfield *A Manual of Later Roman Law. The Ecloga* (Cambridge 1928).

23. Canon 4.

24. W. Wroth *Coins* Plate XLVI . 3 and XLV. 20

25. Ivory carving of Constantine VII Porphyrogennitos in Moscow Museum of Fine Art, and Ivory carving of Romanus and Eudokia in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.

26. Theoph. p. 450. 23.

27. Theoph. p. 451. 26

28. op. cit. p 444. 22-23

29. op. cit. p. 466. 2-3. This refers to Eirene's attempt to interpose herself in the dynasty between her husband and her son, discussed fully in 'Home Affairs' section.

30. *Ecloga*. Cap. II. para. 6ff.

31. See the graph of comparative lengths of reign. Judith Herrin 'The Context of Iconoclastic Reform' in *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1975) pp. 15-20, esp. p. 15, has a shorter version of this graph from which mine is adapted.

32. Theoph. p. 401. 9-12 and p. 426. 26-29

33. See Zonaras iii p. 313 ed. Dindorf (Bonn 1838)

34. Constans' speech on his accession makes the objection to Martina on these grounds, *inter alia*.

35. See Janet Nelson art. cit. see note 18, especially pp. 43-4 concerning Brunhild and pp. 46-8 and 51-2 concerning Bathild.

36. Brunhild's grandson fled to Byzantium in the reign of Maurice and Anastasia. This would be recorded in State or Church papers which Eirene or her advisers could have consulted and probably known about.

37. In fact only forty days after Leo had died, Theoph. p. 454. 14-15.

38. *Ecloga*, see note 30.

39. Ariadne is the best example, she married Marcian in order to 'legitimate' a new emperor very shortly after her husband Zeno died.

40. An aristocracy needs a wealthy base, complete with retainers serving the families, and a court to survive. Before Leo III there had

been a period of near anarchy for 20 years with emperors coming and going. Once the Isaurians took command they saw to it that there were no openings for rich, powerful and leisured men. Plague, earthquakes and famine all played their part in seeing that conditions necessary for an aristocracy were slow to manifest themselves.

41. Einhard *The Life of Charlemagne* trans. L. Thorpe (London 1969)p.73.

42. Adalgisus fled in 774, see Theoph. p. 449. 1-3. In fact Eirene did try to restore Adalgisus later in her reign, see Theoph. p. 463 21ff.

43. Theoph. p. 451. 4-9. Unthinkable anyway as the Bulgars were all pagans. Telerig was baptised when he was married off to Eirene's cousin.

44. Theoph. p. 450. 23ff. but again and again - 40 days after Eirene's accession, see note 37; a pathetic abortive attempt in 791, see Theoph. p. 473. 11-18, after which they were exiled to Athens; and yet another put up by Slavs in Athens, see Theoph. p. 473/4 32-5.

45. see Chapter I p. 11.

46. Pulcheria's career is examined in detail by Kenneth Holum in *The Theodosian Empresses* London 1982.

47. see Chapter I p.16 Note 5.

48. Theoph. p. 464. 10-15

49. ibid. 15-17

50. ibid 17-119

51. Romilly Jenkins 'The Chronological Accuracy of the Logothete for the Years A.D. 867-913. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19. 1965 pp. 9-1-112 and Warren T. Treadgold 'The Chronicle of Simeon the Logothete *D.O.P.* 33. 1979 pp. 166-196.

52. Theoph. p. 473. 7. Also see Ioli Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 'Dating the Romanos Ivory' *D.O.P.* 31, 1977 pp. 309-310 says: 'The koine form 'basilissa' occurs along with 'augusta' and 'despoina' as a form of address. But basilis(sa) especially in its attic (basilis) form is applied only rarely as an official title. On coins, for example, it is used only by three empresses (Grierson DOC III 1. 181) Irene who also issued novels as 'basileus' issued coins as basilissa during her sole reign from 797-802 (Grierson DOC III 1. 347, pl. XV)... Since all of the women who used the title basilis(sa) at one point assumed the throne as sole rulers or as regents for sons in their minority, it would seem that this title was meant to imply a political position at least equal to, and more likely, of greater importance than the title 'augusta'.

53. Theoph. p. 473. 5

54. George Finlay, *History of Greece* Vol. II (Oxford ed. Tozer 1968) p. 85.

55. J.B. Bury *L.R.E.* p. 480

56. Charles Diehl *Imperatrices de Byzance* (Paris 1959) p. 62. He did become more vituperative on p. 65: 'Orgeuilleuse et passionée, elle fut violente, brutale, cruelle ...'

57. M.V. Anastos. *Cambridge Medieval History* Vol IV ed. Hussey (Cambridge 1966) p. 82.

58. Sir Steven Runciman, 'Some Notes on the Role of the Empress' *Eastern Churches Review* Vol. IV No. 2. pp. 119-124.

59. Theoph. p. 454. 14-15, see note 37.

60. ibid 25ff.

61. Theophylaktos was the son of Rhangabé. Another Rhangabé, perhaps a brother or even the son of Theophylaktos, Michael, married

Prokopia, daughter of Nikephoros, Eirene's finance minister and eventually her usurper. Michael succeeded to the throne on the death of his brother-in-law, Staurakios.

62. Theoph. p. 454. 24.

Eirene's relationship with foreign powers

Consideration of Eirene's foreign policy involves three main difficulties. First, she had four different countries to deal with. This was a time of fiercely individual and emergent states, each attempting to assert itself as a sovereign nation after a long period of Roman dominance or tribal obscurity and barbarism in the steppes of Asia. Each, of course, saw the Byzantine Empire as the representative of the Roman, as indeed it was, and saw its wealth and prestige, with its advanced civilization, as enormously covetable. In attempting to analyse the Byzantine relations with each country, cross alliances emerge which alter and their relative importance fluctuate from year to year. The kaleidoscopic nature of these alliances and their ephemerality make any analysis necessarily complicated.

Secondly, Eirene was deposed by her son for a short period; then reinstated, then she assumed sole rule. While acting as joint ruler she could formulate her own policy, but once her son was in power he took a different line. Eirene was naturally obliged to deal with the effects of her son's policy once she was again in power, but found herself in a position that she would not have chosen. This gives an appearance of a certain inconsistency, but it can be shown to be due to Constantine's strongly different policy.

Thirdly, any analysis must take into account the views of other countries involved. So far as the relationship between Byzantium and the Frankish kingdom is concerned, the sources are contemporary[1], accessible and somewhat fuller than the few Byzantine ones[2]. The Arabic sources are poor. Two writers cover this period, Ahmad ibn Yaya al-Baladuri writing in the late 880's and Abu-ja far Muhammed ibn-Jarir al-Tabari[3] (called by Gibbon the Livy of the Arabs) writing in the early 900's. Both used oral sources and the lectures of the school in Baghdad as well as the few fragmentary histories of earlier periods. Two Syriac sources exist, Michael the Syrian, edited and translated into French by J.B. Chabot and the Chronica Minora edited and translated into Latin by E.W. Brooks[4]. Michael is not a contemporary, in fact there is considerable evidence pointing to the use by both him and Theophanes of

the same source for their respective accounts of the early part of this period[5]. Theophanes writing in c. 813 may have had access to eye witness accounts for the later part of Eirene's reign. The Chronica Minora at this stage are merely a list of Caliphs and Patriarchs of Antioch and so have limited use. The problem of the Bulgarian sources is a simple one: There exists a list of rulers only. Otherwise the comments of the Frank and Greek writers are the only source for this period. The Primary Russian Chronicle does not extend as far back as this.

In order to establish some point of reference in the relations between Byzantium and the countries surrounding the Empire, I have listed the events as chronicled by Theophanes and have kept to his chronography in Years of the World[6], but referred to the date in our era where necessary. It should be remembered that the year changed in September for Theophanes (1st or 25th, scholars seem undecided as to which[7]). The Frankish chronicles refer to the year changing at 25th December and, though inaccurate at times, they use the counting of our era.

<u>Y.W. 6273</u>	1)	Elpidios sent to Sicily in April
A.D.780/1	2)	Asian passes fortified against the Arabs before June.
p. 454-5	2a)	Arabs sent a large force against Byzantines. Battle of Melon where John the Sakellarios was successful.
<u>Y.W. 6274</u>	1)	Embassy sent to the Franks for betrothal of Constantine to Charles' daughter Rotrud. Elissaeus the scribe left behind to teach her.
	2)	Expedition to Sicily against Elpidios and his supporters.
	2a)	After 'many wars' Elpidios and Duke Nikephoros fled to North African Arabs.
	3)	Mahdi's son Aaron (Haroun) set out with a huge force recruited from the Persian hinterland, Syrians and Mesopotamians. One wing beseiged Chrysopolis, (Scutari - modern Uskudar), another part of the force beseiged Nakoleia and the third part made war on Darenus in the Thrakesian theme.
	3a)	Eirene sent Antonios, a domestikos, who took Bare.
	3b)	Tatzates, general of the Bukellarion theme went over to the Arabs, gave them advice and they sued for peace.

4) Embassy from Eirene to negotiate peace. Staurakios and Peter the Patrician are sent but fail to observe the usual precautions and are taken prisoner. They negotiate an enormously expensive non aggression pact.

Y.W. 6275 A.D.782/3 p. 456-7

1) Mainland Greece treated as foreign country and a large force sent against the Slavs there, penetrating as far as the Peloponnese.

Y.W. 6276 A.D. 783/4 p. 457

1) Bulgar border so quiet that Eirene risks a Royal Progress right to the border, restores buildings in Philippopolis and refounds two towns in Thrace.

2) Mahdi's son Moses succeeds his father. He was more keen to consolidate the religious observances of the recently conquered people than to campaign.

Y.W. 6277 A.D.784/5 p. 460-1

1) Messengers to Antioch and Alexandria for representatives to be sent to the forthcoming ecumenical council arrive unmolested as the peace with the Arabs was unbroken.

Y.W.6279 A.D. 785/6 p. 462

1) Eirene uses a rumour of an Arab invasion to send off the household troops who had disrupted the previous year's ecumenical council. Once they had arrived at Malagina they are told to disband and other troops recruited from the themes take control of Malagina.

Y.W. 6281 A.D. 788/9 p. 463-4

1) Arabs attack in strength in September, a pitched battle at Copidnadon in the Anatolikon theme. Those killed include the commander of the Anatolikon theme, many soldiers of the Opsikion theme and some of the disbanded scholarii.

2) Negotiations with the Franks over the betrothal were broken off, Theophanes says that Eirene broke them off.

3) An army under the command of John the Sakellarios, Logothete of the army, was sent to Italy to replace Theodotos on the Lombard throne and to 'fend off Charles'. The Sicilian general, Theodore, brought reinforcements. The Byzantines were defeated, John captured and executed by the Franks.

Y.W. 6282 A.D. 789/90 p. 464-5

1) Arabs attack Cyprus (some Arab chroniclers say Crete, but this seems unlikely). Theophanes gives no result of the battle though the Arabs appeared to be at a

disadvantage. He records that the Admiral Theophilos of the Kibyrraeot theme was captured and the Arabs tried to persuade him to turn Moslem, he refused and was executed.

Y.W. 6283 1) In April Constantine makes an expedition against the
A.D. 790/1 Bulgars, a minor engagement at a stream called St. George
p. 467 took place, but both sides took fright and fled. The Bulgars commanded by their Khan, Cardamus.

Y.W. 6284 1) Constantine engaged on a short campaign of one month
A.D. 791/2 against the Arabs, he rode out from Amorion to Tarsus
p. 467-8 by the Cilician Gates, but the campaign was inconclusive.

2) In July Constantine re-fortified the Bulgarian border one fort specially mentioned, Castra Marcellorum. The Khan Cardamus took offence and made threatening gestures behind his lines but did not cross the border. Constantine advanced beyond the frontier and lost the battle with many men killed as well as booty lost to the Bulgarians.

Y.W. 6285 1) Civil war with Armeniakoi, eventually the Armenians who
A.D. 792/3 had helped Constantine against the theme armies who were
p. 469 disloyal went over to the Arabs who won a frontier fort as a result.

Y.W. 6286 1) The Arabs beseiged Thebasa and it surrendered. The
A.D. 793/4 commanders were allowed to go home unmolested.
p. 469

Y.W. 6287 1) The Arabs mounted an attack on Anosa, they were routed
A.D. 794/5 by Constantine and pushed back to the Euphrates.
p. 469

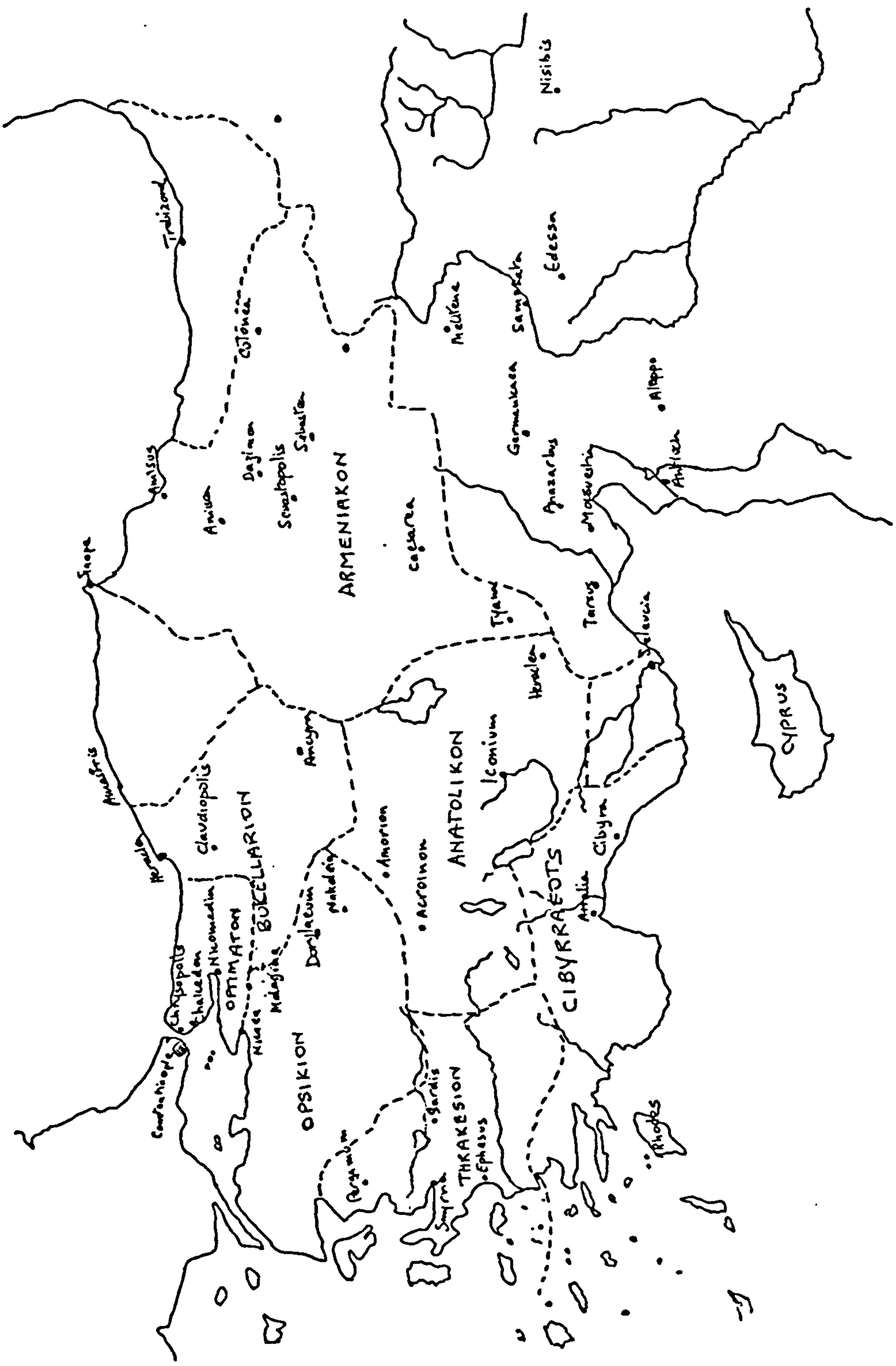
Y.W. 6288 1) A provocative message from Khan Cardamus to Constantine
A.D. 795/6 who rose to the bait, an inconclusive battle ensued
p. 470 and both armies retired.

2) The Arabs attempt to take Amorion but retreat, looting on the way back.

Y.W. 6289 1) Constantine crossed to Asia Minor with a large army to
A.D. 796/7 chase the Arabs beyond their border, when it looked as
p. 471 though he was about to be successful he was deflected by Staurakios and returned in ignominy.

2) Constantine deposed.

PLATE V



MAP OF ASIA MINOR

Y.W. 6290	1)	Eirene sued for peace with the Arabs but refused.
A.D. 797/8		
p. 473		
Y.W. 6291	1)	Two Arab attacks, both successfully achieved much loot,
A.D. 798/9		including the royal horses and carriage and the stable
p. 473-4		of Staurakios
	2)	The Arabs made a three pronged attack, to Lydia, to the Opsikion theme and to Malagine.
	3)	The Slavs in Athens attempt to put up Eirene's brothers-in-law as emperors despite their disabilities. The chief plotters blinded, but the brothers-in-law unmolested.
Y.W. 6292	1)	Charles crowned in Rome. Mentioned the following year
A.D. 800		by Theophanes.
Y.W. 6294	1)	An embassy from Charles to Constantinople asking to
A.D. 802		marry Eirene.
P.474		

The Arabs

It was Eirene's misfortune that she reigned at the time of the height of the power of the Abbasid dynasty. During the period A.D.750-760 there had been civil wars throughout the Arab country from Iraq to Syria and Spain where the Umayyad dynasty ruled.[8] The uprisings had come principally from the non-Arab depressed class of converts to Islam, the Abbasid dynasty tracing its ancestry to Berber and Iraqui-Persian forbears. Once the dust, or rather the blood, of the revolution had settled and the internal administration had been strengthened, the ruling house moved its capital from Damascus finally to Baghdad in A.D. 762. During the 760's al-Mansur set about restoring the ruined fortresses along the Byzantine border which commanded road intersections or entrances to narrow passes from Tarsus, Germanicaea, Samosata, Mopsuestia and Melitene. In 778 Leo IV organised a major campaign to test out all these defences which was successful. He re-settled the Syrian Jacobites, who had been a source of discontent, in Thrace. By A.D. 780 al-Mahdi was ruling, secure in his kingdom and ready to harry the Byzantines once again. He was anxious to train his second son Harun in the arts of war, but before he risked the youth in a campaign he tested the strength of his frontier in two invasions, one successful in Armenia at Semalous, but one unsuccessful in the Thrakesion theme.

We get the first note of activity in Eirene's reign in Theophanes in Y.W. 6273 (2). Eirene's spies must have been very efficient as she sent out an expedition to guard her own borders, and particularly the narrow passes, in June. The Arab attack came later but the extra guards on the passes proved a wise precaution as her Sakellarios John routed al-Mahdi's general Ceber and his large force at Melon.

The following year, A.D. 782, saw the major Arab offensive. Al-Mahdi sent out three huge forces, one under the command of his second son Harun, with recruits from as far east as the old Persian kingdom, as well as the Mesopotamian country where the capital was, and from Syria, immediately south of his objective. These forces made a three pronged attack, a tactic which was to be repeated with success in the future. One wing reached the outskirts of Chrysopolis and besieged the town. They were, of course, then within sight of Constantinople itself, just a short distance across the Bosphoros. Another wing struck westwards and invaded the Thrakesian theme; the third, laying siege to Nakoleia also rampaged in the Bukellarion theme. The siege of Chrysopolis was lifted and Eirene's general Antonios the domesticos took Bare (?Abarne - between Melitene and Amida). The minister in overall command was Staurakios, Eirene's chief adviser. He was a eunuch, hitherto a member of Eirene's court and had been made Logothete of the Course, but presumably not primarily a military man. Not unnaturally, he was resented by the tough and hardened field generals who were experienced in dealing with the Arabs. Tatzates, general of the Bukellarion theme went over to the Arabs. Theophanes, after he records this, says that he gave them his advice and they sued for peace.[9] Though the sentence is ambiguous, one must presume that he advised the Arabs to sue for peace. Once the truce was established, the seige of Nakoleia was lifted and Tatzates' wife and property could then have been restored to him; one must presume that she had no wish to live with the Arabs as he lost all. One part of Eirene's troops were still in Sicily engaged in a series of battles against Elpidios, see Y.W. 6273 (1) - who was busy in rallying Arab (Umayyad) support in the island against Eirene in favour of the Caesar Nikephoros. Theophanes says that the Sicilian campaign against Elpidios took some time as there were many wars and even though that campaign started in April, there might not have been time for these troops to sail back to Asia Minor to aid the forces engaged there.

Even so, the Byzantine army raised the siege of Chrysopolis, and took Bare and must have been on the verge of success if Tatzates resented the success of Staurakios so much. Were that not so the Arabs would hardly have accepted his advice to sue for peace. Eirene sent an embassy to negotiate peace with the Arabs consisting of the Commander in Chief, Staurakios and a Patrician called Peter, not normally the rank of person to be entrusted with such negotiations. They showed their inexperience. Theophanes remarks that they neglected to take the usual precautions of hostages and a safe conduct.[10] One has the impression both now and all through Eirene's reign, that Staurakios was a very capable man, but always over-confident of his abilities and, at times, impossibly over-bearing. Arriving at the Arab camp without the usual precautions for a safe return, they were taken prisoner, led in chains before the Arab commander and, with such shameful loss of face, forced to negotiate a tribute of 70,000 dinars to be paid in semi-annual instalments for three years, some of which was paid in kind.[11]

How far one can blame Eirene for the inexperience and foolishness of her ministers is hard to estimate. She had been astute enough to circumvent possible problems with her Sicilian campaign. Elpidios, together with his second in command, eventually fled to North Africa where they were welcomed by the Arabs. Elpidios was even given the purple boots and diadem of a Roman emperor by the Arabs. It seems that the problem was in the early part of her reign that it was difficult to find men of sufficient experience and prestige who could command and manage campaigns successfully.

For the next three years the peace negotiated so expensively held.[12] Moses succeeded his father as caliph of the Abbasid Arabs and he seemed inclined not to molest the Christians in his country nor to invade the Byzantine territory. There was sufficient peace within Arab territory for messages to be sent to the Patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria inviting them to the proposed ecumenical council. One may propose that the lesson of previous negotiations was learned and that Eirene asked for and received letters of safe conduct for her messengers to reach the Patriarchs.

In Y.W. 6278 Moses died and was succeeded by his brother Haroun who

had won his spurs against the Byzantines in Y.W. 6274. Theophanes records that his attitude was very different towards the Christians and he took up a very hostile stance which extended to the Byzantine realm as well. It is significant that neither the Patriarch of Antioch or Alexandria or Jerusalem were present at the ecumenical council, but were represented by John, Presbyter and Syncellos (writer) to the Patriarch of Antioch and by Thomas, abbot of the monastery of Arnenii in Alexandria.[13] It should also be noted that both the bishops of Ancyra and Amoria were present. This must presuppose at least a measure of quiet within Asia Minor.

In Y.W. 6279 (A.D. 786), Theophanes records Eirene's stratagem to get rid of the City-based iconoclastic soldiers who had disrupted the first attempt at holding the ecumenical council in Constantinople. She pretended that there were rumours of an Arab offensive at Malagina, perhaps there may have been a minor incursion, and she sent off these troops thither where they were disbanded. Other theme armies took control of Malagina from them.

In the following year, Y.W. 6280 (A.D. 787) Eirene and Constantine were preoccupied with the Council of Nicaea, and though there may have been local border skirmishes, no major campaign is recorded.

However, the year after, Y.W. 6281 (A.D. 788), the Arabs attacked in strength. Haroun personally fought at Copidnadon in the Anatolikon theme and it is recorded that Diogenes, the turmarch (Baronius translates as '*vir strenuus*') was killed and the archon of the Opsikion theme as well as many of his own troops. It is interesting to note that some of the disbanded soldiers, the scholarii, were also killed in this battle; one wonders if they were, after all, pressed into service in this emergency or whether they had managed to volunteer for service in a theme army.

The following year, Y.W. 6282 (A.D. 789), the Arabs tried a new venue. They sailed to Cyprus which had been re-conquered after Justinian II - Leo III had thwarted an attempt in A.D. 746 by the Arabs to take the island.[14] (Some Arab versions give the island as being Crete, but this is unlikely, Cyprus was an obvious target for them to gain a foothold whence they could mount a sea-borne offensive against the Anatolian

coast). The Kibyrraeot navy, nearest to the island, sailed out to defend the island having had plenty of warning. Owing to a sudden calm the Byzantine fleet had the Arab fleet at their mercy, but the foremost boat was captured and Theophilos, the commander, was tempted to turn to Islam. He refused and was put to death. No other account of the engagement seems to be recorded. Had the island been captured, I believe some account would have survived. However, the island had always held a very ambiguous position and was to continue to cause anxiety as to its loyalty in Byzantine hearts. It was used as a 'safe place'[15] during iconoclasm and as a place of banishment, but was also the base for Arab corsairs harrying trade vessels.

By the year Y.W. 6283 (A.D. 790) Constantine had deposed his mother and taken command of his Empire, but he waited until the following year to seek out the Arabs and establish the safety of the main highway to the Phoenician coast. This seems to have been a flag-waving exercise taking only a month but, nevertheless, reaching Tarsus from Amorion, establishing on the way that the vital pass through the Cilician Gates was safe for a Byzantine army.[16]

During Y.W. 6285 (A.D.792) Constantine was having trouble with the Armeniakon theme, but was helped by some wild Armenian tribesmen, whose stronghold was at Kamakon. Evidently Constantine's gratitude was insufficient and they took offence, going over to the Arabs who took their fort. The following year the only matter recorded was the Arab siege of Thebasa. The town surrendered and the commanders were allowed to go unmolested. Thebasa was an important crossroads town just north of Heraclae on the river Cydnus. However, Constantine took the offensive the next year, Y.W. 6287; when the Arabs mounted an attack on Anosa he was ready for them and pushed the troops back as far as the Euphrates, well inside Arab territory. It seems that this part of Asia Minor was by now very well organised to withstand Arab depredations, for, when they tried to annexe Amorion, they were forced to retreat, but looted on their way back.

Internal Byzantine politics this year made a nonsense of the campaign against the Arabs. Constantine had been flirting with iconoclasm, Eirene's ministers had seen the end of their power and so he was to be

discredited. Having crossed to Asia Minor with a large army[17] and well on the way to routing the Arabs, the lookouts who had knowledge of the Arab positions, bribed by Staurakios, gave Constantine false advice as to the enemy positions. The result of this was that Constantine returned to Constantinople in ignominy.

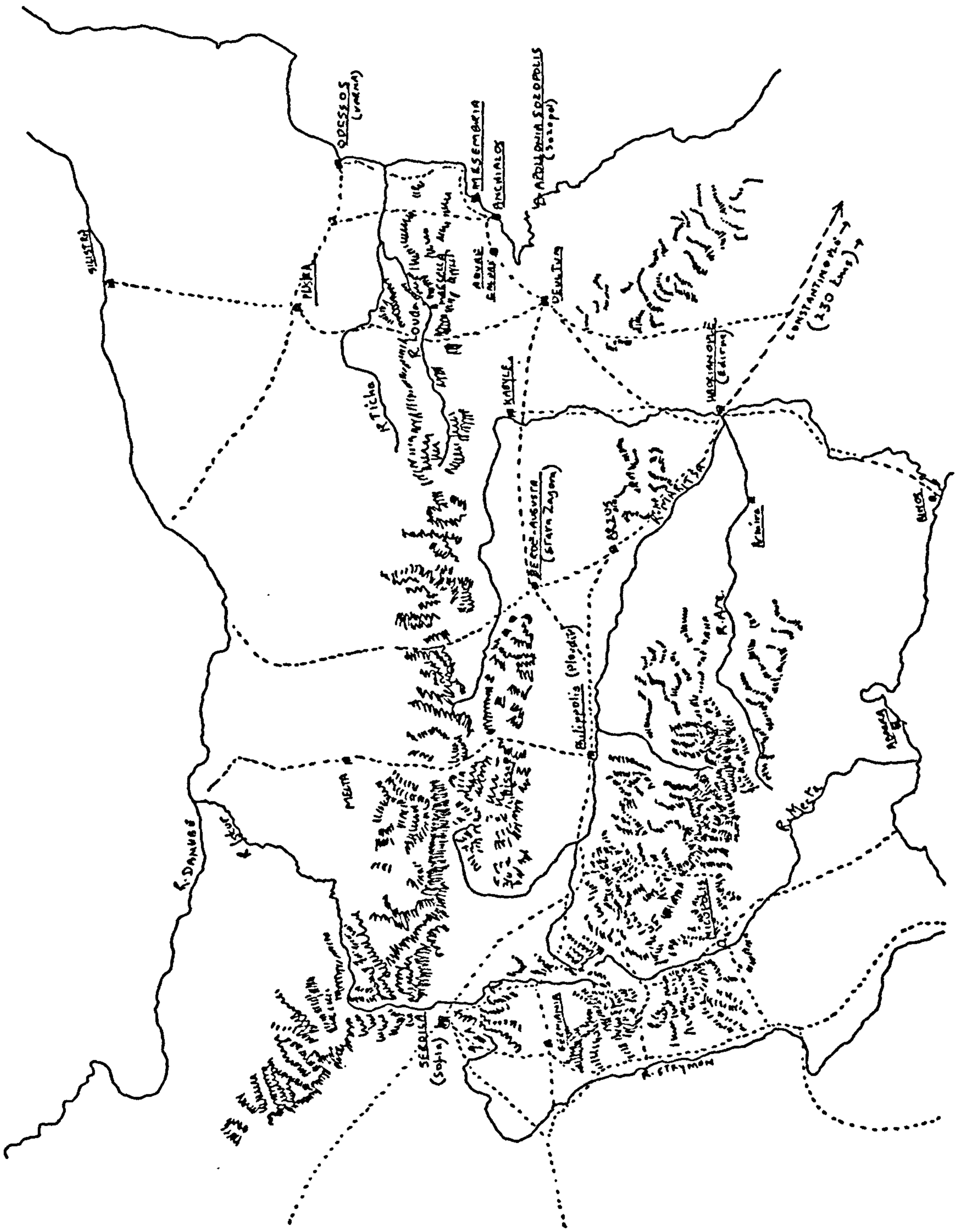
The following year Eirene had gained sole power and tried to sue for peace with the Arabs. They very properly saw that the internal struggles in the Empire were taking up more of Byzantine time than campaigning in Asia Minor, so refused the overtures of Eirene. Their intransigence paid off the following year when they made two attacks, the one on Malagina being successful in taking the royal horses as well as the contents of Staurakios' stable. This was a lightning commando attack, but successful beyond the Arabs' expectations. At the same time, they made a sortie as far as Lydia, coming away with loot or prisoners. A different group made a guerilla attack in the Opsikion theme, again taking prisoners and loot.[18]

This is the last we hear of Arab-Byzantine scuffles during Eirene's reign. In fact, the following year Staurakios fell from power and died, Aetios replacing him. Aetios held the command of both the Anatolikon and Opsikion themes, and may have been more successful in holding the Arabs off from this vulnerable part of the country.

It can be seen from the foregoing that, although the Arab attacks were frequent and in terms of nuisance and loot, successful, they were no more than probing sorties made three times a year. The attacks came in March, June and October and must have been anticipated by the local populace as well as the Byzantine armies. However, with such a long border to defend it is hardly surprising that some of the swift commando attacks got through. The Arabs exploited the long border and never confined their attacks to any one place, but the major attacks seemed to need an enormous army deployed in more than one area. Even though in military terms land gained was only temporary or minimal, in human or economic terms the loss must have been tremendous. With the prospect of troops quartering themselves wherever they went on the local population, whether the troops were Arab or Byzantine must have made little difference to the owners of fields trampled over by an army on

the move. At the same time as the Arab attacks were dealt with, Eirene also had to control her other frontiers. We have seen that she needed more troops from the Sicilian campaign against Elpidios, and this situation was repeated more than once, particularly when Constantine was quarrelling with Cardamus, Khan of Bulgaria. There were times when Eirene was poorly served by her generals who had the Byzantine failing of thinking more of their own careers than the safety of the Empire. Lack of experience, overweening pride and self interest make poor commanders, nevertheless, so far as the Arab incursions are concerned, there seems little evidence that there was any concerted effort at conquering Asia Minor as a whole. Eirene's overtures for peace after she had deposed her son were repulsed according to Theophanes, though a later Arab source implies that a treaty was negotiated and payments made.[19] Tabari tells of Nikephoros, Eirene's successor, repudiating the terms of the treaty and demanding the return of money already paid. A reasonable enough request if a treaty was made and not kept in 797/8 or the following year. It is, of course, possible that a treaty accounts for the silence of Theophanes with regard to the Arabs from 800 onwards until Nikephoros took power in 802/3. It would accord with Eirene's policy of buying off enemies. The change in policy coincides with Constantine rising to power and seeing in expeditions in Asia Minor a way of winning acclaim, proving his manhood and establishing himself as a true grandson of Constantine V. Indeed the image of the successful warrior may have extended itself to the issue of iconoclasm. Some parts of the army had continued their adherence to iconoclasm and these elements may have suggested to Constantine VI that his grandfather's success against the Arabs, and others too, was attributable to the repudiation of ikons. Leo V held this view in all seriousness. Eirene had no need to prove her prowess as a military commander and she must have weighed up the relative advantages of freedom from being overrun by armies in Asia Minor so that crops and livestock could be raised, with the disadvantage of having to raise enough cash to buy off the invaders. Some part of the cash transaction could be set off against the increased prosperity and, therefore, revenue-raising effects of better agriculture and increased opportunities for trade. Large sums would no longer be needed for ransoming prisoners. Haroun was building up his new capital of Baghdad which, according to Arab commentators, was reaching its zenith. Part

PLATE VI



MAP OF BULGARIA

of the tribute could have been made in kind with luxury artefacts and materials, even manuscripts from the ateliers of Constantinople. Eirene may also have seen that an offensive campaign against the Arabs, however successful one year, merely called forth a revenge campaign on their part the following year. The poet writing the panegyric on the capture of Amorion in 823 makes it clear that it was in revenge for the capture of a Muslim woman the previous year.[20]

In general, after the first encounter in 780, Eirene attempted to seek peace with the Arabs by negotiation and payment, though troops would be sent to relieve beseiged towns. She does not seem to have pursued a policy of aggression in Asia Minor at any time. Her policy in the West with the Abbasids was more ambivalent. The revolt of Elpidios had to be put down immediately, though she attempted to remove him by peaceful means in the first instance. Once Sicily was safely rid of Elpidios and his deputy Nikephoros, nothing further is heard of the island in Theophanes' chronicle. However, the Frankish sources indicate that further skirmishes did occur, with the Arabs seeking Frank help in the campaign against the Byzantines in the island. Troops from Sicily were sent to help the campaign to restore Theodotos to the Lombard throne in Y.W. 6281. It may be that it was then that the general Sissinios was captured , but it seems that the island must have been peaceful enough to spare troops for an expedition to mainland Italy.

Bulgaria

We first hear of Eirene's relations with the Bulgars in Y.W.6276(1) when she made an expedition in May 784 right to the border, four years after coming to power. Theophanes remarks that the country was so peaceful that it was possible to take a huge entourage, including an organ and other musical instruments.[21] Eirene restored the ruined cities, renaming one of them Eirenopolis, going from Philippopolis across to the coast at Anchialos. One may guess that as this was the last town she visited, she may have returned by sea. This must have been a well organised publicity campaign, designed to instil confidence in the new regime in the hearts of the Thracians and possibly fear in the hearts of the Bulgars.

The next entry is not until Y.W. 6283 (A.D.791) when Constantine took the initiative and made a small foray across the border in the Spring. Neither side came to grips with the other. There had been another border skirmish two years earlier when Philetos and a contingent of Thracian soldiers had been all but wiped out by a sudden Bulgar attack, presumably in a disputed border area. It may be that Constantine saw his campaign as partly revenge for this incident and partly an effort to repeat his eponymous grandfather's victories. He tried again the next year in the summer, going as far as Marcella which was one of the forts built by his grandfather which had broken the original pact that dated back to Theodosius III. Constantine refurbished the fort, camping outside it. Once again, he had bad advice, this time from an astrologer, Pancratios, and engaged with the Khan Cardamus from a weak position. He was heavily defeated and fled, leaving all his horses, money and other possessions for the Bulgars to seize as booty. This was a major disaster for Constantine as many distinguished generals were killed as a result of his impetuosity (θερμοπνοήσας) including the redoutable old soldier Michael Lachanodrakon, who had entered into Constantine V's iconoclastic policy so wholeheartedly.

Encouraged by his success, the Khan Cardamus sent a message to Constantine in Y.W. 6288 (A.D.795) demanding tribute or threatening to devastate Thrace and besiege Constantinople. Constantine, putting horse manure in a blanket, sent a cheeky message with it to the effect that as the Khan was an old man he should not bother to toil all the way to Constantinople, but that Constantine would meet him at Marcella. In fact, both armies skulked about in wild country for seventeen days, neither engaging in a pitched battle and both retired with the issue undecided.

This is the last record of either Eirene's or Constantine's dealings with the Bulgars. Whether she concluded a non-aggression pact with the Khan after deposing her son, or whether the Khan was more occupied with internal affairs is not recorded. It may be significant that it took him two years to reply to the re-fortification of Marcella and his own victory there. It may be that the Khan saw the size of the army that the Byzantines could mount and decided not to risk any further engagements and accept the fortresses as a fact of life.

PLATE VII



MAP OF ITALY

Italy

On her accession Eirene had to deal with no less than four rulers in Italy. These were the Pope, Charles the Great, Arichis, Duke of Beneventum and Spoleto, together with his wife Adelperga (daughter of Desiderius, King of the Lombards) and their two sons, Grimoald and Romuald, and Desiderius the Lombard King. So far as Eirene was concerned, the latter was represented by Theodotos, son of Desiderius (called Adelgis in the Royal Frankish Annals) who had taken refuge at the Byzantine Court in A.D. 774 (Y.W.6267) after Charles defeated his father at Verona in 773/74.[22] All these men were avidly pursuing their own policies of land aggrandisement in the peninsular.

The Pope, Hadrian I and his successor, Leo III, was determined to increase his land holdings and recover those districts which the Byzantine Emperor, Leo III the Isaurian, Eirene's grandfather-in-law, had placed under the aegis of the Orthodox Patriarch at Constantinople.[23] The Pope was equally determined to acquire what he could of the Lombard lands by continually pestering Charles to help in this respect.

The Lombard King, Desiderius, in the north and the Dukes of Beneventum in the south were both equally determined, not only not to allow the Pope to rule their territories, but also to consolidate their own boundaries at the Pope's expense.

Charles, King of the Franks, was partly prosecuting a 'holy war' on the Pope's behalf - he saw himself as the champion of Christian poeple winning victories 'over the enemies of its holy name'.[24] He was also increasing his own boundaries and influence, thus also providing a rich inheritance for his sons.

Sicily, albeit prone to Arab influence through the agency of the Abbasid Abdellah, son of Ibn Mauge, ruler of Mauretania,[25] was ruled by a strategos directly appointed by the Emperor in Constantinople. Calabria was also ruled by another strategos appointed by the Emperor. Both these districts kept up a close liaison with the capital, providing much of its much needed grain, wine and olive supplies. Naples and the surrounding area, while pursuing a fairly independent policy of her own,

was nominally loyal to the Emperor at Constantinople. All these areas had been used as a 'safe refuge' in times of iconoclastic persecution.

In the north, the Exarchate of Ravenna had been lost, first to the Lombards and then, after Desiderius' defeat, to the Franks. However, the Patriarch Sergios, succeeded by Leo, ruled the district much as an Exarch and was in continual conflict with the Pope, but in communion with the Patriarch in Constantinople. By A.D. 777, however, the Pope's influence was increased through the intervention of Charles on the death of the Patriarch Leo.

A minor complication was the border between the Byzantines and the Avars. While the Bulgarians were constantly harassed on their eastern Avar border, they were unable to extend their boundaries southward into Byzantine territory. The Franks, however, were constantly menaced on their further northeastern border by the Avars, in the district that had been called Pannonia in Roman times. Charles conducted several campaigns against the Avars, finally defeating them in 788.[26] This defeat left the Bulgarians free to turn their whole attention to the Byzantine Empire and it was only thanks to the rivalries of the boyars, probably fomented by factions among the northern Greek Slavs, with the Khan that prevented an immediate onslaught like the one that toppled Eirene's successor Nikephoros and his son Staurakios from the throne of Byzantium in 811.

The first we hear of Eirene and the Franks is her embassy in Y.W. 6274 (A.D.781/2) to Charles to arrange a betrothal between Constantine, then aged 12, and Charles' daughter Rotrud, referred to as Eurythro by the Greeks. The embassy was successful and Elissaeus described as '...τὸν εὐνοῦχον καὶ νοτάριον...' was left behind to teach the lady court etiquette as well as Greek, written and spoken.[27] It is significant that this embassy occurred in the year that a full-scale expedition was mounted against the disloyal Elpidios and his supporters in Sicily. Eirene must have seen that any weakness in the south of Italy left her very vulnerable in the west. An alliance with the most influential and militarily the strongest power must have been seen as essential. The scribe, Elissaeus, fimly attached to Rotrud could have been a vital source of information for Eirene. Einhard comments that Charles always liked to travel with his family and liked to have

his daughters near him[28], and one may infer that Elissaeus was as well placed as anyone whom Eirene could place to give her advance warning of any hostile move on Charles' part.

The next contact the Byzantine Empire had with the factions in Italy was in Y.W. 6287/8 (A.D.785/6) when Eirene asked the Pope Hadrian for representatives to attend an ecumenical council to be held in Constantinople the following year[29]. At the same time, Tarasios sent the usual letter on his election to the Patriarchate in Constantinople. The Pope agreed to send delegates to the council and accepted Tarasios' letter of election, while at the same time complaining at Tarasios' qualifications for the post, his use of the title 'ecumenical'[30] and , in his letter to Eirene, demanded the return of the lands that Leo III had taken from his jurisdiction[31]. As the first ecumenical council that Eirene held was a failure, it had to be re-convened in 787[32], but it was held in Nicaea, not in Constantinople, except for the final session. The Pope's delegates attended and took back a copy of the Horos to Rome with them. Although the return to Orthodoxy secured the Pope's approval, Charles did not approve. His disapproval was set out in extraordinarily vehement terms in the Libri Carolinii, amongst which his strictures on women could hardly have endeared him to Eirene:

> 'The frailty of the (female) sex and the mutability of a (woman's) heart does not permit woman to place herself in supreme authority in matters of faith and rank. She is compelled ... to submit to the authority of the male.'[33]

While the councils on image veneration were occupying the attention of Eirene and Constantine, other events in Italy showed how frail the balance of power was there. The rivalry between the two branches of Lombard royalty had been resolved. Arichis, Duke of Benevento and Spoleto had married Adelberga, daughter of the now vanquished King Desiderius. Adleberga's brother, Adelgis/Theodotos was at the Byzantine court, probably agitating to return to Italy to seize part of his father's land. But Arichis and his son Romuald died in the summer of 787, while his other son, Grimoald was still a hostage with Charles. While Arichis' widow Adelberga was sending petitions to Charles for Grimoald's return in order to fend off Pope Hadrian's rapacious intentions, Adlagis/Theodotos seized his advantage[34]. Arichis had been pro-Byzantine, growing his hair and beard and aping Byzantine clothes,

hoping for a Byzantine princess for his son Romuald.[35] Adelgis/Theodotos could well have seen his advantage in taking over the Dukedom of Benevento as he may have felt he was a natural successor in the absence of Grimoald. Charles, after vacillating between the Pope's demands and Adelberga's requests still moved too fast for Adelgis. Grimoald was back with his mother in 788 and firmly under Charles' influence at Beneventum. Another of Charles' adherents, Hildebrand, had been made Duke of Spoleto and Hildebrand's successor, Winigis, accompanied Grimoald with a detachment of Franks to ensure the Lombards' loyalty.[36]

At about Easter 787 an embassy came from Eirene to Charles at Capua to finalise arrangements for the marriage between Constantine and Rotrud. Two different accounts exist. The Frankish ones indicate that Charles refused the embassy from Constantine.[37] The entry from Theophanes puts the affair in a slightly different light:

> 'Breaking off the treaty with the Franks, Eirene sent off Theophanes the protospatharios and brought a girl from the Armeniakon called Maria from Amnia and married her to Constantine the Emperor her son'.[38]

In this instance the Chronicler has either misunderstood the records or somewhere there has been a deliberate 'reconstruction' of events designed to save Eirene's pride. He goes on to add a little further:

> 'Eirene sent John the Sakellarios and Logothete of the Army to Lombardy together with Theodotos the former King of Great Lombardy to see if she could fend off Carolus perhaps and seduce some people away from him. So they arrived with Theodore the Patrician and Strategos of Sicily. In the clash of battle the same John was defeated by the Franks and put to death horribly'.[39]

It is entirely in character for Charles to refuse to part with his daughter. He did the same to Offa of Mercia[40] who wanted one of Charles' daughters for his son and we also have the comment of Einhard that Charles liked to have his daughters with him. It is entirely out of character for Eirene to provoke war or to try a vengeful course of action. It has been seen both with the Bulgarians and with the Arabs that she either conducted a defensive action or, preferably, negotiated a peace treaty. It was Constantine who attacked both countries and it seems

not impossible that it could have been he who was behind this ill-fated, unwise expedition. Adalgis/Theodotos was at the Byzantine court and may have had plenty of opportunity to converse with Constantine. Elissaeus, teaching Rotrud to read and write Greek may well have got his pupil to write her exercises in the form of letters to Constantine, thus some kind of relationship may have grown up to account for Constantine's distress and unwillingness to marry Maria.[41] What would be more natural in the reactions of that impetuous and hot-headed young man, then aged twenty, than to be drawn into Lombard plans to take over the Duchy of Benevento and salve his wounded vanity, not by a direct attack on Charles, but by supporting the Lombard claimant to Benevento and independence?

Both the Royal Frankish Annals and the Annals said to be by Einhard say that the invasion in Beneventum was by the Greeks.[42] Einhard goes so far as to say that it was on account of Constantine being denied the King's daughter that he instructed Theodore, Governor of Sicily, with his other commanders to lay waste the territory of the Beneventans.

Of course, one cannot rule out the premise that Eirene took the initiative to send back her Lombard guest to protect his sister Adelberga from either the demands of the Pope or the hegemony of Charles, as well as protecting the interests of the Neapolitan area. It should also be remembered that Calabria and Sicily provided the grain, oil and wine for Constantinople when the markets of Asia Minor were ravaged by Arab incursions. Any threat to this part of Italy had to be fended off by whatever means lay to hand and the aspirations of the Lombard exile may have seemed a reasonable way of achieving this without directly challenging Charles. With communications being slow, it may well not have been known that Grimoald had two Frank generals at his back ensuring loyalty to Charles.

One hears no more of Adalgis/Theodotos; whether he lived at Grimoald's court or in Naples or in Calabria or returned to Constantinople is not recorded. He may have made his way to the north of Italy in an effort to join his father, if he was still alive, or to attempt to regain some part of the lost Lombard territory there. Evidence of building at this time, north of Milan, still exists both in the frescoes at Castelseprio and in the tiny Byzantine church of St. Peter Mistail, Alvaschein

in Switzerland, both dated to the immediately post-iconoclastic period.[43] No further action was taken by Charles, at least against the Byzantines, after this affray. In fact the next record of any contact between the two countries is when Constantine was deposed by Eirene.[44] The Royal Frankish Annals record an embassy from Eirene assuring Charles of peace.[45] No record of this is noted by Theophanes. The History becomes somewhat complicated here and it is essential to read the two sets of records together, making due allowance for the speed of travel of an official embassy (though a less high ranking messenger, untrammelled by a cumbersome entourage, could travel far more quickly). Another difficulty should also be noted in that it must have been a problem actually to find Charles once he had embarked on a campaign; during the summer campaigns he must rarely have been static enough to receive formal ambassadors. Another problem of reconciling the two sets of annals is that the Byzantine year changed in September and the Frankish year at 25th December; often no month is mentioned by either annalist, nor place where the embassies took place.

Below is a list of events in parallel dates which may help towards an understanding of subsequent negotiations.

	CHARLES	EIRENE
787		Nicene Council[46]
790	Palace at Worms burned down[47]	
794	Council of Frankfurt[48]	
	Libri Carolinii[49]	
	New palace at Aachen[50]	
795	Pope Hadrian died	
	Pope Leo elected	
796		Son born to Constantine - October[51]
797	Niketas, strategos of Sicily sent Theoktistos to Aachen with a letter; received with ceremony.[53]	Constantine's son died - May[52]
	Pope Leo deposed, reinstated by Charles	Constantine deposed by Eirene - August.[54]
		Attempt to usurp by Eirene's brothers-in-law, exiled to Athens.[55]
		Staurakios and Aetios turn against each other and vie for power.[56]
798	Formal delegation from C'ple with a letter from Eirene -	Attempts to sue for peace with Arabs fail, but efforts renewed.[57]

	CHARLES	EIRENE
798	assuring him of peace after the blinding of Constantine. The brother of the Patriarch Tarasios, Sissinios, captured in Italian war is returned with the embassy.[58] Greek embassy offering Charles the crown - Cologne record.[59] Pippin goes on campaign against the Beneventans[60]	
799	Michael strategos of Sicily sends Daniel to Charles, possibly at Paderborn.[61]	Slavs in Athens put forward brothers-in-law for throne - March.[62] Eirene ill to the point of death - May[63]
800	Liutberga, Charles' 5th wife died at Tours in June[64] Campaign against Beneventans intensified - August[66] Trial of Pope Leo III - November Pope Leo crowns Charles 25 December.[67]	Staurakios' rebellion - February - failed.[65]
801		Theophanes records Charles decided to invade Sicily, then changed his mind and decided to send ambassadors to Eirene the following year. Charles crowned by Pope.[68]
802	Eirene sent Leo the spathar to ratify peace, Charles sent Jesse of Amiens & Count Helguard back with the Greeks.[69]	801/2 Representatives of Charles and Pope Leo arrive to arrange marriage between Eirene and Charles. Eirene would have agreed but dissuaded by Aetios.[70]
803	Charles' embassy returned with Bishop Michael, Abbot Peter and Kallistos Candidatos with letter from Nikephoros announcing his accession[72]	802/3 Eirene deposed October 802, exiled to Prinkipo November, Charles' embassy still in the City, Eirene exiled to Lesbos, Died August 803.[71]

By 794 Charles' self confidence had reached a great peak. His new palace at Aachen was modelled on the Byzantine complex at Constantinople, but the church reflected his concept of rigid strata in society, unlike the Byzantine ideal.[73] He felt confident enough to put his name to the Libri Carolinii which must have been intended to assert his own views in distinction from those resulting from the Council of Nicaea, representing the orthodox church which, of course, had the Pope's sanction and warm approval. It is quite evident that this confidence affected both the Byzantines in the heartland of the Empire and also that Empire's outposts which were nearer geographically to Charles. Sicily and Calabria were bound to be greatly affected by events in Rome and its environs and, not least, in the Duchy of Beneventum.

In order to make any sense of the various delegations to Charles from 'the Greeks' one must suggest two distinct sets of negotiations, one official emanating from Constantinople, carrying purple-inked chrysobulls, sealed with the sovereign's personal seal and personally signed. The other, a private mission, travelling rapidly with perhaps only one messenger and a tiny group of attendants.

There are only two embassies from Eirene, both recorded by the Royal Frankish Annals, one in 798 and the other in 802. Each of these mention the ranks of the messengers and each returned with someone else sent by Charles, in the first case an ex-prisoner of war, a Greek, and in the second a bishop and a count, Franks. The other embassies only mention one messenger with no rank, and the ones of 797 and 799 both came from the strategos of Sicily. The third is the Cologne notice dated to 798 where 'the Greeks' offer Charles the crown, the offer being connected with the war against the Saxons. Possibly this entry is the same as the 799 message which reached Charles '*in eadem expeditione*' perhaps at Paderborn where he was conducting an onslaught against the Saxons. A possible fourth is recorded in the Northumbrian Annals for 800[74] but which W. Ohnesorge thinks has 'slipped' from 799.[75]

J.B. Bury in an article written in 1895[76] believed that Eirene was secretly negotiating with Charles over some years to join both east and west by their marriage. Theophanes gives some credence to this in his notice of the embassy from Charles in 802, but he associates it with a

decision to invade Sicily in the previous year, changing his mind later to a marriage alliance instead. In fact, Bury does not adduce all the embassies mentioned above but presumes there must have been more than the one of 798. He makes no mention of this theory in his *History of the Later Roman Empire* and he may have thought this far too speculative for so solid a book. It is an attractive theory but fails on two counts. Eirene would have been Charles' sixth wife. He was married successively to Himiltrude, Desiderata, whom he divorced, Hildegard, Fastrada and then Liutberga who died at Tours in June 800. Eirene had been a widow for twenty years. Her father-in-law, Constantine V had married three times, but his third marriage had been frowned upon and he had waited until after a series of victories before making his wife an Augusta. Eirene herself had made a law forbidding third marriages in 800. It is, therefore, unlikely that she would have initiated such a liaison.

The second possible reason for rejecting this interesting idea is the theory of sovereignty advanced by Eirene in her abdication speech to Nikephoros. It is plain that she was unwilling to take any positive action herself to influence events. She was prepared to accept what she believed The Lord should design. From whatever quarter a new ruler should appear and however unlikely, she would 'reverence as Emperor' having committed herself to God 'through whom Emperors rule Empires and dynasts control the land[77]'.

The fact that Eirene would have accepted Charles in spite of his having previous wives, his strictures on women, as well as the misunderstanding contained in the Libri Carolinii's theology is undeniable, but is in accord with her belief that it may have been God's will. She could still have drawn out the betrothal negotiations until she saw that the arrangement was acceptable to the Empire and that a successor to Charles was also acceptable to the Empire. Who that successor could have been is a more debatable point as none of Charles' descendants were capable of even ruling the western empire on his own.

To return to the Sicilian embassies, it is tempting, but inconclusive to speculate about what was going on. There may have been an Arab connection at which we cannot guess. The 797 messenger, Theoktistos from Niketas in Sicily, arrived at Aachen at the same time as an Arab

delegation. Elpidios, whom Niketas replaced, took refuge with the Mauretanian Arabs and reappeared again in the records as advising Haroun not to provoke Nikephoros, Eirene's successor, as he was a good general from a warrior family.[78] One could perhaps conclude that there may have been a strongly Arabic element in Sicily, but whether an Abbasid or Umayyad it is not possible to tell.

The first embassy in 797 may have been on Constantine's behalf announcing news of his son born October 796. We know that Theoktistos saw Charles at Aachen but no reference is given as to date. The Raoyla Frankish Annals say that Theoktistos was carrying a letter from the Emperor. There just might also have been time for a messenger to relay the news that the baby Leo had died in May or even that Constantine had been deposed in August. The speed of travel in the summer may have been far quicker than one might expect, nevertheless, to reach Charles in Aachen before winter rains and Alpine snows made the journey impossible would have needed a very determined and probably lucky messenger.

Were this embassy to have been Constantine's announcement of a son, the delegation from Constantinople in 798 makes good sense in announcing Constantine's deposition, that Eirene was sole ruler and that she intended to live up to her name. As Charles was engaged with his son Pippin on a campaign to ravage Beneventum, Eirene may also have wished to protect the Neapolitan interests as well as the Calabrian and Sicilian; Charles was coming too near for comfort.

The 799 embassy from Michael of Sicily might have been an effort at fending off Charles from ravaging Beneventum. It may also have been a more private message to say that Eirene was ill to the point of death in May. The timing of this message is, of course, more doubtful. The messenger, Daniel, saw Charles possibly at Paderborn, at all events at some time during his campaign against the Saxons and this campaign was conducted from Paderborn. Whether there could have been time for the news to reach Sicily from Constantinople and for Daniel to ride post haste to Charles seems unlikely, but just possible. The other possible interpretation of these events is that Michael was prepared to secede away from the Byzantine Empire and go over to Charles. He may have thought that he could get more advantageous terms if he

voluntarily made overtures to Charles and may have seen that his interests lay in the west rather than in the east. He may also have thought that protection from Charles against possible Arab incursions was a better option than relying on help from Constantinople. If he thought this, much later events were to prove the Arab menace a real danger and he might have been right to ask for Frank help at this juncture.

Except for the incident of Adalgis trying to take over the Duchy of Beneventum, with Sicilian help, the relationship of Eirene with Charles was one of either conciliation or indiffernece. I do not believe that Eirene willingly provoked a confrontation with Charles after the betrothal between Rotrud and Constantine was broken off; it was against her policy with other neighbouring states and was against her previous and subsequent policy with him.

NOTES TO EIRENE'S FOREIGN POLICY

1. The Frankish sources I have used are *Annales Regni Francorum* ed. B.H. Pertz and F. Kurtz (Hanover 1895) which also contain *Annales Qui Dicuntur Einhardi*, hereinafter referred to as *R.F.A.* and *A.Q.D.E.* respectively. Other sources will be quoted in the notes where appropriate.

2. The Byzantine source for this period is chiefly Theophanes' *Chronographia.*

3. E.W. Brooks 'Byzantines and Arabs in the time of the Early Abbasids' *English Historical Review* XV Oct. 1900 pp. 728-797. I have also consulted Philip K Hitti *The History of the Arabs* 10th ed. (London 1970).

4. Michael the Syrian *Chronographie* ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot (Paris 1902) 4 vols. and *Chronica Minora* ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks, (London 1897).

5. E.W. Brooks 'The Sources of Theophanes and the Syrian Chroniclers' *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* XV 1900 pp. 578-587. But also see C. Mango *Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?* (Beograd 1978) who suggests that it was written by a *syncellos* working in the Patriarchate in Constantinople in the time of Tarasios.

6. Page numbers in de Boor's edition of Theophanes are quoted under the dates for ease of reference.

7. H. Turtledove's translation of Theophanes (Philadelphia 1982) works on 1st September and Lombard in his book on Constantine V assumes 25th September.

8. One survivor of the ruling Umayyad house had escaped, with a servant, from the massacre by the Abbasids and had eventually rallied support from the Berbers in North Africa as well as other disaffected elements in Spain. The ruling dynasty in the Western Arab world would, therefore, be still a member of the Umayyad dynasty. For a fuller account of the Western Arab affairs see Hitti pp. 285-6 on

the extermination of the Umayyad house and pp. 505-11 on Umayyads in Spain and pp. 602-9 for Sicilian affairs.

9. Theoph. p. 456: καὶ δοὺς αὐτοῖς βουλὴν ἠτήσαντο εἰρήνη.

10. ibid. '...οὐκ ἠκριβολογήσαντο λόγον λαβετν καὶ τέκνα τῶν πρωτευόντων,...'

11. See. Brooks 'Byzantines and Arabs' '. 738-9. al Tabari mentions 30.000 lbs. of goats' wool, Kitab Al Uyun mentions silk garments as well as swords and horses which were sold.

12. ibid. note 98, there may have been a small raid by Mahomet, son of Abraham, but the date may perhaps be wrong.

13. Mansi XII, col. 991ff. and 993 gives a list of those attending the first council.

14. see Brooks 'Byzantines and Arabs p. 740, esp. note 111.

15. Hélène Ahrweiler 'The Geography of the Iconoclastic World' in *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1975) pp. 21-27 esp. p. 24, where she proposes that there were a number of refuges around the Empire where it was safe for an iconophile to go, notably southern Italy and Cherson.

16. It was through this pass that the Arab armies had to go in order to reach the hinterland. Amorion was a prize to which the Arabs constantly aspired and it was captured in 838 in the reign of Theophilos and a celebratory poem was written by one of the most accomplished Arab poets, Abu Tammam (see *Arab Poetry* ed. and trans, A.J. Arberry, (Cambridge 1965) pp. 50-63). Amorion commanded both the north and south crossroads, whence armies could advance on the Bosphoros coast, as well as east-west and south-west roads.

17. Theophanes specially mentions 'light armed troops' (p. 471. 22 καὶ ἐκλογὴν μονοζώνων στρατιωτῶν ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων θεμάτων χιλιάδας ϗ') It seems that Constantine may have learned a lesson from the success of the lightning strikes that the Arab swift columns were able to

make, and with so much shorter lines of communication they could very well have been successful. Both theme troops, that is Opsikion and Anatolikon were used, but reinforcements from the other themes would have been summoned.

18. Presumably the value of the loot outweighed the amount Eirene was prepared to pay. There may also have been an element in the Arab command which saw the value of using these commando raids both as a training exercise and as a means of keeping volatile and possibly dissident factions in the Arabic empire occupied. The ransoming of prisoners provided a welcome source of revenue and those captives not ransomed provided a useful source of slave labour.

19. See Brooks 'Byzantines and Arabs' pp. 742-3: 'And in this year the ruler of the Romans broke the peace made between his predecessor and the Moslems, and refused what their previous king had undertaken to pay. And the reason of this was that peace had been made between the Moslems and the ruler of the Romans (and their ruler at that time was Rina and we have recorded above the reason of the peace made between the Moslems and her):'

20. Abu Tamman, see note 16 above, page 58 in Arberry, note on verse 46 makes this clear.

21. Theoph. p. 457. ' ἐξῆλθεν ἡ βασίλισσα Εἰρήνη σὺν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτῆς καὶ δυνάμεως πολλῆς ἐπὶ τὴν Θρᾴκην ἐπιφερομένη ὄργανα καὶ μουσικά...' Constantine V had settled the Jacobite Syrians and some Armenians in this territory, they were Monophysite and Eirene may have been estimating what support or hostility her iconophile policies would receive. Meanwhile, her son may have been re-living in imagination the battles his grandfather engaged in so successfully in this area.

22. Theoph. p. 449. 1-3.

23. Sicily, Calabria, which included Bruttium - i.e. toe and heel of Italy- and Illyricum which became overrun by Slavs later.

24. Letter of Charles to Pope Leo III, A.D. 796 written on the Pope's election: 'It is for us, in accordance with the help of divine goodness, outwardly to defend by force of arms the Holy Church of Christ in all places from the incursions of pagans and the ravages of infidels, and inwardly to fortify her with our confession of the Catholic faith. It is for you, most Holy Father, raising your hands to God with Moses, to aid our armies, to the end that with you as intercessor and with God as guide and given our Christian people may in all places have the victory over the enemies of its holy name ...' quoted from Loyn and Percival eds. *Documents of Medieval History* (London 1975) p. 118. Original in M.G.H. *Epistolae Karolini Aevi* Vol II No. 97, p. 137-8.

25. *R.F.A.*p. 100 or *A.Q.D.E.*p. 101

26. *R.F.A.* p. 82

27. Theoph. p. 455. 19-25: '...πρὸς τὸ διδάξι αὐτην τά τε τῶν Γραικῶν γράμματα καὶ τὴν γλῶσσα, καὶ παιδεῦσαι αὐτὴν τὰ ἤθη τῆς 'Ρωμαίων βασιλείας.'

28. *Life of Charles the Great* Book III trans. Lewis Thorpe (London 1969) paragraph 19, pp. 74-5.

29. Mansi XII cols. 984-6

30. This complaint arose again in the time of Patriarch Cerularios - see Chapter on Zoe and Theodora

31. The Pope tried this on with Charles, too, with as little success.

32. The Imperial guard, presumably inherited from Leo IV or even Constantine V objected and caused an affray in Hagia Sophia so the council was abandoned, but re-convened after Eirene had replaced the guard with men more amenable to her needs.

33. M.G.H. Concilia II. pp. 81-82

34. M.G.H. Epistles III p. 618, note. 2.

Romuald died 21.7.787 and Arigisus (Arichis) died 26.8.787, the note cites Chron. Salernitanum SS. III 483.

35. This is argued persuasively by Paul Speck *Kaiser Konstantin VI* (Munich 1978) p. 170.

36. *R.F.A.* p. 82.

37. *A.D.Q.E.* p. 75 implies this, the notice is not in *R.F.A.*

38. Theoph. p. 463. 21-24

39. Theoph. p. 464. 2-8. An interesting later comment is contained in the *De Administrando Imperio* ed, and trans. G. Moravisc and R. Jenkins (London 1956) pp. 119ff. where Constantine VII says that Governor Narses of Benevento and Capua had expended money on the army that was for tax and so wrote to Constantinople expecting further money from the Empress. He goes on to say that when she heard this the Empress Eirene flew into a rage and sent him a spindle and distaff and wrote to him 'Take these your proper instruments, for we have judged it fit that you should spin, rather than as a man at arms you should defend and guide and do battle for the Romans'. Constantine goes on to record that Narses sent a terse reply back and also promptly invited the Lombards to settle in his area. But this story, which may well throw light on the way Eirene's reputation had come down 100 years, may be based on another incident reported in Paul the Deacon's History of the Lombards at ii 5. where Narses, exarch of Ravenna, had a similar exchange with the Empress Sophia, he invited the Lombards to invade as a result of being sent a distaff by Sophia. This accords with what we know of Sophia's temperament, cf. Averil Cameron 'The Empress Sophia' *Byzantion* XLV (Brussels 1975) pp. 5-21.

40. A.D. 777. cf. *Carolingian Chronicles* trans. B.W. Scholz (Michigan 1970) and note 1 p. 185 - A.D. 778.

41. Theoph. p. 463. 24. This is discussed fully in the section dealing with home affairs.

42. *R.F.A.*p. 82 *A.D.Q.E.* p. 83, the latter says: 'Interea Constantinus imperator propter negatam sibi regis filiam iratus Theodorum patricium Siciliaę praefectum cum aliis ducibus suis fines Beneventanorum vastare iussit.'

43. see Meyer Schapiro *Late Antique, Early Christian and Mediaeval Art.* (London 1980) pp. 67-142, especially pp. 128 and 130. St. Peter Mistail has been dated by a Swedish scholar to 788 although the guide book is understandably less definite, but the earliest building is dated to Carolingian times. I am indebted to Mr. Edward Mace, travel editor of The Observer, for the information about the 788 date, though he did not give a name.

44. In August 797. cf. Theoph. p. 472.

45. *R.F.A.*p .104 . *A.Q.D.E.* p. 105

46. Mansi Vol XIII

47. *A.Q.D.E.* reports this on p. 87 and see notes 6 and 7 on that page. It is not reported in the *R.F.A.*

48. *R.F.A.* p. 94 and *A.Q.D.E.* p. 95

49. See Note 30. Although credited to Charles, these letters were written by Alcuin who strongly disapproved of Eirene.

50. *R.F.A.* p. 96

51. Theoph. p. 471. 9-11

52. ibid. 28-29

53. Theoph. p. 472. 15-18

54. *R.F.A.*p. 100 and *A.Q.D.E.* p. 101. Both entries couple this embassy with that of Abdella, son of 'Saracen' Ibn Mauge, King of Mauretania.

55. Theoph. p. 473. 11-18

56. ibid. 18-22

57. ibid 24-32

58. *R.F.A.*p.104 and *A.Q.D.E.* p. 105. *R.F.A.* says that the ambassadors were Michael, a patrician, once of Frigiae and Theophilus, presbyter, but Einhard adds that Michael's surname was Ganglianos and that Theophilus was from Blachernae. Bury believes that Frigiae means the reference to Michael being strategos of the Anatolic theme - Phrygia,(cf. note 3 pp. 27-8 of his article 'Charles the Great and Irene' *Hermathena* Vol VIII 1893); that is both senior men.

59. See H. Löwe 'Ein Kölner Notiz sum Kaisertum Karls des Grossen' *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 1949 xiv pp 7sqq. Löwe quotes the record on page 7 : 'Sunt enim anni ab initio mundi secundum veritatem Herreorum ut transtulit Hieronimus usque ad istum annum XXXI regni Karoli regis - ipse est annus, quando hospites (am Rande in gleichzeitiger Schrift: obsides) accepit de Saxonia tertiam partem populi et quando missi venerunt de Grecia ut traderent ei imperium - anni VD CCCCXCVIII, Secundum vero LXX anni VICCLXVIII, Anni ab incarnatione Domini DCCXCVIII. Cui vero sic non placet, suadet et legat et melius numerat.'

60. *R.F.A.* p. 102. Pippin had been sent into Italy in 797 and in 801 the *R.F.A.* (p. 114) say that Charles again sent an expedition under his son Pippin against the Beneventans, so one must conclude that Pippin was campaigning this year in Italy as well.

61. *R.F.A.*p. 108 and *A.Q.D.E.* p. 109. The *R.F.A.* says 'In eadem expeditione ...' referring back to the previous paragraph (p.106) 'Domnus rex ad Saxoniam profectus Renum ad Lippeam transivit et in loco, qui vocatur Padrabrunno positis castris.'

62. Theoph.p.473. 32-33 and p.474 1-4.

63. ibid 11-13

64. *R.F.A.* p. 110

65. Theoph. p. 474 14-18 and 22-30 and p. 475 1-9

66. see note 60.

67. *R.F.A.* p. 112 and *A.Q.D.E.* p. 113, under both A.D. 800 and 801 - Christmas Day seems to have been the beginning of the new year.

68. Theoph. p. 475 11-15

69. *R.F.A.* p. 117. (The *A.Q.D.E.* stop at A.D. 801)

70. Theoph. p. 475. 27 and 32.

71. Theoph. p. 478 26-29 and p. 480 6-9

72. *R.F.A.* p. 118.

73. It was in two tiers with the altar of Christ on the upper tier placed over the altar of Mary. The King's seat was on the upper tier, but facing the altar, at the other end of the church, unlike the Byzantine emperor who had a seat in the sanctuary along with the priests. The common people, servants of the court and lesser courtiers were congregated on the lower tier at Aachen and the King with his family were on the upper tier. The Byzantine church had a separate gallery for the catechumens and in Hagia Sophia there was a place reserved for the royal ladies in the gallery, otherwise no distinction was made among the congregation.

74. M.G.H. SS 13, p. 156. 'Eo quoque tempore legati Graecorum, cum magnis muneribus a Constantinoplei directi, ad eum veniebant, rogantes ut illorum susciperet regnum et imperium'. *Annales Nordhumbrai Scriptorum* Kirchengesischte. Recorded for the year 800.

75. See W. Ohnesorge 'Orthodoxus Imperator' *Jahrbuch d. Ges. f. Niedersächs K i G* 48 (1950).

76. Bury, see note 58 'Charles and Irene' pp. 17-36.

77. Theoph. p. 478. 16-17 '... τῷ θεῷ καὶ τηνικαῦτα τὰ κατ' ἐμαυτὴν ἀποδοῦσα, δι' οὗ βασιλεῖς βασιλεύουσι καὶ δυνάσται κρατοῦσι γῆς.

78. See Hitti *History* p. 299, but Brooks ' Byzantines and Arabs' p.741 where Tabari only states Elpidios was with Solomon on his winter campaign in 794/5.

Eirene's management of home affairs

For source material in this section Theophanes' *Chronographia* gives a near contemporary account of the major events year by year, written from the point of view of an iconophile monk. The *Life of St. Philaretos* written in exile under Leo V by the Saint's son Niketas[1] also an iconophile monk, throws light on the condition in Paphlagonia in eastern Asia Minor and gives an account of the search for a bride for Constantine VI. It does not, however, mention Constantine's divorce from Niketas' sister, Maria, nor her relegation to a convent. The letters of St. Theodore of Studion[2] throw an interesting light on the removal of the *commercia* tax late in Eirene's reign and other letters of his show the monks' dislike of Constantine's divorce and increasing intransigence towards any form of compromise in this matter and St. Theodore's total committal to the centrality in the church's life of the veneration of ikons. In the previous section the foreign sources provided a useful cross reference and modifying point of view. Unfortunately, little seemed to be known of Byzantine domestic affairs by the Arabs or Syrians and the Frankish sources contain few comments, their concern being with Western Europe. One has, therefore, to be aware of the iconodule bias of the Greek writers and the possibility that some events have been suppressed or their reporting modified.

In this section topics have been treated separately, but in order to make the chronology easier to understand, the method of listing events adopted in the previous section has been followed and referred to in this section by the numbers in the chronology.

It must be emphasised that this study is concerned with women in power. It is not an attempt to write the definitive history of Eirene's reign, or of any of the succeeding Empresses, but it is an attempt to estimate whether or not power exercised by a woman ruler is different from that exercised by a man, and, if possible, to examine what effect the exercising of that power by a female had on the ruler and the ruled. In order to see the extent and effect of that power some coherent account of the history of the reign must be essayed. With such poor source material inferences have to be drawn, conjectures made, even conclusions tentatively adumbrated with few facts to substantiate them. Nevertheless,

this 25-year-old widow, thrust into a position of total power over a territory which embraced the whole of 4 modern states and parts of 4 more,[3] remained as its effective head for 22 years, during which time little or no change in the boundaries occurred, the succession was achieved peacefully and this in spite of the deposition of the crowned ruler, no major civil war upset the equilibrium, even though a major change of policy in the reinstatement of ikon veneration was made. The reinstatement of ikon veneration, viewed from this distance of time, seems a major change in policy, the actual impact of the *Horos* of the Council of Nicaea of A.D. 787 may not have been as great at the time.[4]

Such results must indicate ability of a rare kind and, one must presume, charisma inspiring intense devotion among the majority. St. Paul mentions charismatic authority several times in his epistles. He sees it as the gift of grace, having five leading characteristics; 1) God confers charismatic authority not through human mediation (as by ordination) but directly (Gal. 1. 1-2) 2) Since God has conferred this authority it is men's duty to defer to it; thus charisma demands and elicits free obedience (Philem. 8). 3) This means that individuals by recognising it, verify charismatic authority (I.Cor. 92, II Cor. 32.2, Philip. 41 and Thess. 2.19). 4) Charisma mediates God's words; thus Paul claimed to speak by the same spirit that inspired the prophets and gave to his opinions the same importance as the Jewish traditional words of the Lord, see particularly II Cor. 4-13 and I Cor. 7. 5). Charismatic authority, by its very nature belongs to individuals only.[5] Byzantine rulers were the Vice Regents of God and by their very office were charismatics. They were also the guardians of all regulation and tradition in that all legislation emanated from the ruler and tradition was visibly and symbolically bound up with the protocol of the court and the patriarchal processions in and around Constantinople in which the ruler took a leading and priestly part. However, although Constantine VI had been crowned as lawful co-ruler by his father, establishing the acceptance of his mother as co-ruler with him required a special effort on Eirene's part, both symbolically and practically and needed a degree of personal determination, coupled with an ability to inspire affection and confidence from those close to her and from the army and people throughout the Empire.

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It can be argued that Eirene was a mere figurehead, swayed this way and that by her ministers. Theophanes suggests as much, but this cannot be the whole truth. No minister, however able, could have ruled the Byzantine Empire without the validation of the Vice Regent of God and that rested in the people's belief that the power was properly invested in Eirene as co-emperor and continued to be so when she was sole emperor. Without that validation the temptation for rival factions to vie with each other for power would have proved too great to resist and could have engendered civil war or the seizing of power by the head of the strongest faction. We can see that the latter happened at the end of Eirene's sole reign when it is quite clear that she had lost the will to govern. In his book on Constantine VI[6] Paul Speck believes that Eirene and Constantine were surrounded by 'placemen' who were not interested in wielding power themselves, he believes that these were unsure of their personal following, had not the capital to buy support and saw the advantages in making policy without being held responsible for it. To some extent Constantine V was responsible for the very fluid conditions at court where no firmly based aristocracy had emerged. He had seen to it that this did not happen. That reign was notable for the Emperor being in sole charge of the army and all campaigns conducted by him in person; when he was at home he saw to it that no one family became too powerful, either by wielding too much influence at court or acquiring it in the provinces by the possession of enough land and possessions sufficient to raise a private army. Even Prokopios, the City Prefect, was flogged and removed from office because he allowed some public sympathy for the Podopagouros brothers when they were executed for complicity in a supposed plot[7].

This study will seek to identify some of the factors which were at work to achieve the success that attended Eirene's reign and note whether or not the rule could be perceived as specifically feminine in character, either by contemporaries or at the present time. Although some estimation of Eirene's foreign policy has already been made, the heart of her rule was in home affairs. The important aspects of her rule were her relationships with her ministers, army commanders and the foreign elements within the territory of the Empire; her efforts to co-operate with her son once he had grown to maturity; her liaison with the church over ikon veneration; and lastly, her views on the succession.

As in the previous section (see p.48) below is a brief list of events.

1. Year of the World 6261 A.D. 768 Theophanes p. 444	1)	Eirene from Athens to Hieria, escorted to the City in a fleet of schooners and landing craft, dressed overall with silk flags. The foremost men of the City and their wives met and escorted her.
	2)	3rd September, the betrothal at Pharos, the Patriarch in attendance.
	3)	17th December, crowned Augusta, then married in the Church of St. Stephen in Daphne.
2. Y.W. 6262 A.D. 769 p. 444/5	1)	14th January Constantine born to Eirene and Leo, still in the lifetime of Constantine V.
3. Y.W. 6268 A.D. 775 p. 449/451	1)	Leo IV on the throne. 'For a time he appeared pious and a friend of the Mother of God and the monks ... hence he promoted metropolitans for the most important dioceses from among the abbots'.
	2)	Request from the strategoi of themes for Constantine aged 5 to be made co-emperor
	3)	Eirene mentioned at the Easter Sunday ceremony as present in the Hippodrome, then going to Hagia Sophia by a different route and arrived in the catechumens' chapel.
	4)	May - first plot to put forward Nikephoros the Caesar, Leo's eldest step brother, as emperor. Nothing done about him, the crowd wanted both Caesars exiled, but only the conspirators were exiled.
4. Y.W. 6269 A.D.776 p. 451	1)	Telerig of Bulgaria baptised and married to Eirene's cousin, having fled from Bulgaria to Constantinople.
5. Y.W. 6270 A.D. 778 p. 451/2	1)	Celebration of Arab defeat at Maioumas festival at the Sophianae with Leo and Constantine appearing together.
6. Y.W. 6271	1)	Tactics of Leo described that year '...not to fight in

6271 cont'd. A.D. 779 p. 452

open warfare but make the forts secure and bring people in to defend them ... prevent enemy ravaging becoming too widespread and to set fire to pasture for animals and any usable reserves that could be found ahead of the enemy'. It was successful that time.

7.Y.W. 6272 A.D. 780 pp. 452-3

1) 6th February, Niketas the Slav Patriarch died. Two weeks later Paul the Cypriot, the *syncellos*, was elected patriarch 'despite all his deprecations because of the prevailing heresy'.

2) The following week, i.e. middle week of Lent, the ikon worshippers were arrested from among the royal household - '...all were revealed as very reputable monks'.

3) 8th September, Leo IV died, having ruled 5 years less 6 days.

8. Y.W. 6273 A.D. 780 pp. 454-5

1) 8th September, Feast of the Birth of the Virgin, Eirene and Constantine's accession.

2) 18th October, the plot to set up Nikephoros Caesar as emperor. The following were exiled: Gregorios, Logothete of the Post. Bardas, Strategos of Armeniakoi. Constantine, Spathar of the Vicarios, Domestic of Excubitors. Theophylaktos, son of Rhangabe Drungary of Dodecanese.

3) December, all the brothers-in-law become priests, made to administer the Christmas alms.

4) Imperial procession of Eirene and Constantine, Eirene bringing the crown that Leo had taken, further decorated with pearls.

A.D. 781

5) Eirene promoted Elpidios to take charge in Sicily.

6) April 15th, Eirene hears that Elpidios had also been involved in the October plot. Theophilos, spathar, sent to get him back. Sicilians would not release him. Eirene flogged and shaved his wife and imprisoned her with their sons in the Praetorium.

7) Success of John the Sakellarios against the Arabs, renewed activity in founding monasteries.

9. Y.W. 6274

1) Eirene sent off Constaen, sakellarios, and Mamalos,

9. cont'd.
A.D. 781
pp. 455-6

primikerios, to Charles, King of the Franks to negotiate the betrothal of Constantine to Rotrud. They left behind the eunuch scribe Elisseos to teach her Greek.

.A.D.782

2) Staurakios, patrician and Logothete of the Course, incurred the enmity of Tatzates, strategos of the Bukellarion theme who deserted to the Arabs.

3) Staurakios, Peter the Magister Officiorum and Antonios, domestikos, sent as negotiators with the Arabs, they were forced to agree to very unfavourable terms.

10. Y.W. 6275
A.D.782/3
pp. 456-7

1) The peace with the Arabs gave Eirene some freedom of action so she sent Staurakios through Thrace to Salonika and Greece against the Slav settlers. 'He subdued them all and made them subject to the Kingdom.'

2) He went as far as the Peloponnese, too, and brought many prisoners and much booty back to the Roman Kingdom.

11. Y.W. 6276
A.D. 784
pp. 457-8

1) January, for his exploits Staurakios was awarded a triumph in the Hippodrome.

2) May, Eirene and Constantine made a perigrination round Thrace; Berrhoea was rebuilt and renamed Eirenopolis, they reached as far as Philippopolis 'unmolested' (ἀπαθείας) and returned via the coast, founding Anchialos on the way - the whole expedition peaceful.

3) 31st August, Paul the Patriarch, fearing he was dying, retired to the monastery of St. Florus and became a monk. Eirene was very upset about this, went to the monastery, taking Constantine with her and asked why he should have taken this course. Paul said that he could not agree to the Church being in schism any longer and feared to die as Patriarch of a schismatic church.

4) Eirene sent the patricians and leading members of the Senate to hear this. Paul told them there should be an ecumenical council to correct the matter. He had feared their anger if he spoke out before. The whole

matter was now openly discussed in the City. Paul's death was a great blow to Eirene, both she and the government had a great deal of faith in him.

12. Y.W.6277 A.D.784 pp. 458-61

1) Eirene addressed an assembly of all the people in the Magnaura about the need for a new Patriarch.

2) Tarasios acclaimed unanimously by the assembled people.

3) Eirene agreed with the choice but told the crowd that he could not obey and said that he should explain why.

4) Tarasios reported as making a long speech disclaiming his ability on the grounds that he was a layman and could not make such a leap into holiness without due consideration. He also described the Church as divided and in schism, separated from the Eastern and Western Christians, estranged and anathematised by each. The cure was an ecumenical council and if orthodoxy was restored then he could acquiesce to becoming Patriarch.

5) This plan was agreed by all.

6) Tarasios further insisted that the council should hold another enquiry into the custom of ikon veneration.

7) 25th December, Tarasios was made Patriarch and he sent his letter of appointment and his statement of faith to Pope Hadrian.

A.D.785

8) Eirene also sent a message to the Pope asking him to send representatives to the ecumenical council.

9) Both Empress and Patriarch sent messages to the Sees of Antioch and Alexandria asking for representatives at the forthcoming council.

13. Y.W.6278 A.D. 785 pp. 461-2

1) The rulers (οἱ βασιλεῖς) sent letters to all the bishops asking for their attendance at the ecumenical council.

A.D.786

2) August 27th; first meeting of the ecumenical council in the Church of the Holy Apostles. While these issues were being debated both the rulers watched from a special enclosure.

3) The council was interrupted suddenly by the Imperial guards with drawn swords, threatening the bishops and Patriarch.

4) Eirene ordered her own attendants to expel the troops, but they could not do so.

5) The orthodox took refuge in the Sanctuary while the dissenting bishops left the church with the troops in triumph. No one was hurt, the troops returned to barracks, but the synod was broken up.

14. Y.W.6279
A.D. 786
p. 462

1) A few days later - September - Eirene started to organise the dismissal of the Imperial guards, who had been recruited and trained by Constantine V, and to replace them with others who would be loyal to her.

a) she sent Staurakios into Thrace to persuade the thematic detachments from Asia Minor who were there, to occupy Constantinople.

b) she moved the whole court, including the Imperial guards to Malagina, pretending the Arabs were about to break the treaty and invade.

c) having got them there, Eirene told the Imperial guards they were no longer needed and to lay down their weapons.

d) she sent the troops' families back to their own villages.

2) In May she reconvened the ecumenical council, but at Nicaea instead of the capital. It took all summer for the bishops and abbots to assemble there.

15. Y.W. 6280
A.D.787
pp. 462-3

1) October 11th, the council reconvened at Hagia Sophia in Nicaea.

2) November, the final meeting took place in the Magnaura in Constantinople attended by both rulers. The tome was read out in public, signed by both Constantine and Eirene and three dissenting bishops were anathematised.

3) Theophanes gives a hint that there were still objectors: 'The church of God made peace, even if His enemy did not cease sowing his tares among His own workers' (αὐ:καὶ ὁ ἐχθρὸς τὰ ἑαυτοῦ ζιζάνια ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις ἐργάταις σπείρειν οὐ παύεται).

16. Y.W.6281
p.463-4

1) Eirene broke off the betrothal treaty with the Franks.

Y.W.6281 cont'd.2) Eirene sent off Theophanes, the protospatharios, and
A.D.788 brought Maria from Amnia in the Armeniakon theme to
pp. 463-4 marry Constantine.

3) Constantine was very unwilling as he had formed an attachment to Rotrud, daughter of Charles King of the Franks.

A D 789 4) Constantine and Maria were married in November.

5) Philetos, strategos of Thrace ambushed at an unspecified place on the Strymon river by a party of Bulgars.

6) Eirene sent John her finance minister, Theodotos (Adalgisus) son of the former King of Great Lombardy, together with the strategos, Theodore, of Sicily 'to see if she could fend off Carolus and seduce some people away from him' (πρὸς τὸ εἰ δυνηθείν ἀμύνασθαι τὸν Κάρουλον, καὶ ἀποσπάσαι τινὰς ἐξ ἀυτοῦ). They were defeated.

17. Y.W. 6282 1) Astrological prophecies claimed to say that Constantine
A.D. 790 could not take possession of the Imperial power unless
p. 464-5 it first belonged to Eirene by Divine law.

2) Eirene was persuaded by this 'deceived like a woman and having a liking for power...' (αὐτὴ δὲ ὡς γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα, ἔχουσα δὲ καὶ τὸ φίλαρχον,...)

3) Constantine, irked at his lack of power, jealous and resentful at Staurakios' closeness to his mother, plotted with his few close friends, Peter the Magister, Theodore Camoulanios and Damian, both patricians, and John Pikridios, his tutor. They planned to exile Staurakios to Sicily and then Constantine would rule with Eirene.

4) An earthquake struck Constantinople so the court went across the Golden Horn to St. Mamas (Galata). The plot was discovered by Staurakios who complained to Eirene.

5) Eirene punished the conspirators mentioned in 3) above by a period of house arrest, though Damien was sent to Appollonios; she also thrashed and shaved the heads of other members of Constantine's household, including

his tutor, the protospatharios John Pikridios, intending to exile them to Sicily.

6) She boxed Constantine's ears, railed at him and even put him under house arrest for a few days.

7) She administered an oath to the army '...so long as you live we will not accept the authority of your son'. (ἕως οὗ ζῇς, οὐ καταδεξόμεθα τὸν υἱόν σου κρατῆσαι.)

18. Y.W. 6283 A.D.791 pp.465-7

1) The oath-taking continued in September, but when the officials administering the oath arrived at the Armeniakon theme they ran into trouble. The soldiers insisted on keeping to the original oath which they had sworn 'in the first place', that is jointly with Constantine in the first place then Eirene. (οὐ βασιλευόμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ υἱοῦ σου ἐν τῇ ζωῇ σου, οὐδὲ προτάσσομεν τὸ ὄνομα Εἰρήνης πρὸ Κωνσταντίνου, ἀλλὰ Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Εἰρήνης, ὡς ἐξ ἀρχῆς παρελάβομεν).

2) Eirene sent Alexios Musele, a spathar and drungary of the Vigilia to persuade them into taking the new oath.

3) The theme soldiers turned the tables on Eirene and, imprisoning their strategos, Nikephoros, substituted Alexios Musele and proclaimed Constantine as sole ruler.

4) The other themes heard of this, removed their strategoi and proclaimed Constantine.

5) Comment from Theophanes about swearing conflicting oaths constituting perjury, both these last oaths conflicting with the original ones written and oral sworn fifteen years before.

A.D. 792

6) In October the people from the themes gathered at Atroa demanding the presence of the Emperor (?still under house arrest).

7) Eirene bowed to this pressure and let Constantine out (text ambiguous here). Constantine then sent John Pikridios and Michael Lachanodrakon to the Armeniakoi to administer a new oath - not to accept Eirene as Emperor (...μὴ δέξασθαι Εἰρήνην τὴν αὐτοῦ μητέρα εἰς βασιλέα.)

8) Alexios confirmed as their strategos.

9) December, Constantine returned to Constantinople, he

flogged and shaved Staurakios and exiled him to the Armeniakon theme 'to reassure them' (πρὸς πληροφορίαν αὐτῶν) as well as exiling Aetios, the protospathar and all the eunuchs of Eirene's household.

10) Constantine settled Eirene in her palace of Eleutherios, where she had hidden most of her wealth, giving her a guarantee of immunity from harm.

11) Also in December there was a great fire in the City, burning the Patriarch's reception rooms and library, the Quaestorium and the houses as far as the Milion.

19. Y.W. 6284 A.D.792 pp. 467-8

1) January 15th (the day after Constantine's birthday) encouraged/summoned by his mother, Constantine restored her to joint power and she was acclaimed with him 'as it had been in the beginning, Constantine and Eirene (...καὶ συνευφημίζεται σὺν αὐτῷ ὡς ἐξ ἀρχῆς, Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Εἰρήνης).

2) Constantine summoned Alexios Musele to be with him at court and promoted him to patrician rank.

3) The Armeniakoi refused to reinstate Eirene in their loyalties, demanding to have Alexios Musele back as their strategos.

4) Constantine, being therefore suspicious of Alexios' intentions, fermented by rumours that Alexios was planning to usurp, imprisoned him in the Praetorium and flogged him.

5) By July, Constantine was so confident of his power that he campaigned against the Bulgarians in Thrace. Several major supporters in Constantine's entourage and many other court officials, as well as the whole commissariat, were lost in the campaign.

6) In August a plot by the tagmata to replace Constantine by his uncle the Caesar Nikephoros was discovered. Constantine's punishment was unnecessarily severe, he not only blinded Nikephoros, but also cut out the tongues of the rest of the brothers. This took place at the palace of St. Mamas.

7) Eirene and Staurakios warned Constantine against Alexios Musele; Constantine blinded him too.

20. Y.W.6285 1) The Armeniakoi heard of Alexios' blinding and rebelled.
A.D. 792 2) Constantine sent Constantine Ardaser and Chrysocheres,
pp. 468-9 strategos of the Bukellarion theme, to command an army drawn from the other themes to overpower the Armeniakoi, but by November the Armeniakoi had captured and blinded both men amidst much slaughter on both sides.
3) Lightning struck the Imperial embroidery workshops at Christmas.
A.D.793 4) At Easter the Emperor himself took the field against the Armeniakoi.
5) At the end of May Constantine was successful, but only with the help of some Armenians.
6) Two turmarchs and the bishop of Sinope were killed and a thousand men were exiled to the islands with 'Armenian plotter' tattooed on their foreheads.

21. Y.W. 6287 1) Constantine forced his wife, Maria, to become a nun
A.D. 794 and tonsured her in January.
pp. 469- 2) In May Constantine gave the tax on the market at
70 Ephesos - a hundred pounds in gold - to the shrine of St. John the Theologian, the patron saint of that city.
3) In August Constantine crowned as Augusta his mother's lady-in-waiting, Theodote, and became betrothed to her.

22. Y.W. 6288 1) Constantine married Theodote at St. Mamas, probably
A.D.794 in September.
A.D. 795 2) May 4th, a very severe earthquake in Constantinople,
pp. 470-1 there had been a serious one in Crete the previous month.
3) Plato, Abbot of Saccoudion and his nephew Theodore of Studion broke from communion with the Patriarch Tarasios on account of the Emperor's marriage. They objected to Tarasios' part in a)receiving the Emperor at communion after his marriage, b) allowing his catechist to tonsure Maria and c) allowing the abbot Joseph of the Catharoi to perform the marriage ceremony.
4) Constantine ordered Bardanios, domestic of the scholae and John, Count of the Opsikion theme to fetch Plato

and his nephew Theodore and the rest of the monks.

5) Constantine imprisoned Plato, beat the others and exiled them to Thessalonika.

6) Eirene took the monks' part in opposition to her son.

23. Y.W. 6289 A.D.796 pp. 471-3

1) Leaving Theodote behind in the City, Constantine and Eirene and all the court went to Prusa in September to take the hot baths.

2) 7th October a son called Leo was born to Constantine and Theodote.

3) Constantine went hurriedly to Constantinople, leaving his mother and all the court still in Prusa.

4) Eirene took this opportunity to sound out the Imperial guard and estimate the strength of support for her own sole rule.

A.D. 797

5) March, an unsuccessful campaign against the Arabs, owing to Staurakios' hostility to Constantine.
May 1st, Constantine's son Leo died.

6) 17th July, Constantine on his way from the horse races to the palace of St. Mamas when some members of the Imperial guard set off to seize him. Constantine realised his danger and boarded a warship and sailed instead to Pylai, planning to escape to the Anatolikon theme. He was unknowingly accompanied by some of his mother's adherents, who were nervous lest their 'cover should be blown'.

7) Theodote joined him at Triton.

8) Meanwhile Eirene was escorted by those members of the Imperial guard who were her supporters from her palace at Eleutherios to the Great Palace where she found the people were gathered in support of Constantine.

9) Greatly alarmed she contemplated sending some bishops to Constantine to negotiate her own safety and retirement 'into a quiet corner' (...καὶ καθίσαι εἰς γωνίαν)

10) But instead she sent a privy word to her spies in Constantine's camp 'If you do not turn him from his course and hand him over to me I shall tell the Emperor of our conversations'. (...εἰ μὴ ποιήσητέ

τινα τρόπον καὶ παραδώσητε αὐτόν, τοὺς λόγους, οὓς ἔχετε μετ'ἐμοῦ, μηνῦσαι ἔχω τῷ βασιλεῖ).

11) These spies, afraid for their own lives, overpowered Constantine, put him aboard his warship and on 15th August arrived in Constantinople.

12) They imprisoned him in the Purple Chamber where he had been born and blinded him.

13) This deed coincided with an unusual clouding over of the sun (not an eclipse) which lasted 17 days, ascribed to the blinding of the Emperor.

14) Thus Eirene assumed sole power.

24. Y.W.6290 A.D.797 p. 473

1) Eirene's first act as sole ruler was to try to negotiate peace with the Arabs who were devastating Cappadocia and Galatia, two churchmen were sent but the embassy failed.

2) The following month of October some rebels made a plan for Eirene's brothers-in-law to be released from the monastery of Therapeia, flee to Hagia Sophia for sanctuary and thence one would be proclaimed as Emperor. The plan miscarried and Aetios exiled them to Athens.

3) The two eunuchs, Aetios and Staurakios, admitted their rivalry, each wanting a relative to succeed Eirene on her death.

25. Y.W.6291 A.D.798 pp. 473-4

1) In March another effort to choose one of Eirene's brothers-in-law as Emperor. This time it was the theme troops of Hellas backing the Slav chief Akameros who made the bid.

2) Eirene's Greek relations, Constantine Serantopechos and his son, the spathar Theophylaktos, were charged with breaking up the conspiracy. The conspirators were blinded.

3) Eirene staged a triumphal procession at Easter.

4) In May Eirene fell ill and feared she was near death.

5) This gave renewed vigour to the eunuchs' rivalry, each gathering support from the other courtiers.

6) Eirene warned Staurakios at the palace of the Hiereion that she knew he was planning another rebellion, but

he procured his aquittal at the *silention* (σιλέντιον).

26. Y.W.6292 A.D.799 pp. 474 5

1) February, Staurakios planned another rebellion and had bribed some of the Imperial guard as well as the Excubitores.

2) Eirene convened a civil investigation in Justinian's triklinios, kept the military away from Staurakios, but allowed him to go free, he had severe lung haemorrhage which was near fatal.

3) June - he had rallied enough to devise a rebellion in Cappadocia against Aetios but died on 3rd June, 2 days before it was put into effect. The rebellion was crushed.

27. Y.W. 6293 A.D.799/800 p. 475

1) December - Charles, King of the Franks was crowned by Pope Leo III. He was planning to invade Sicily but changed his mind hoping to marry Eirene instead.

2) March - Eirene remitted the City taxes and reduced the customs dues at Abydos and Hieron.

28. Y.W.6294 A.D.800-1 p. 475

1) Aetios, now chief of Eirene's eunuchs, appointed his brother, Leo, strategos of Thrace and Macedonia combined. He had made himself chief of the Anatolikon and Opsikion themes.

2) The senior officers of these theme armies planned and started a rebellion against Eirene.

3) Charles' ambassadors arrived in Constantinople to arrange the marriage between Charles and Eirene. She would have agreed but for Aetios' objections.

29.Y.W. 6295 A.D. 802 pp. 476-480

1) Nikephoros, Eirene's finance minister, succeeded in becoming Emperor. His supporters were the Triphylloi brothers, Niketas, domestic of the scholae, Sissinios, Leo Serantopechos, Gregory Mousoulakios, the Quaestor Theoktistos and Peter a patrician.

2) Nikephoros surrounded the palace (now referred to as a monastery) of Eleutherios where Eirene was, but at dawn, after he had been proclaimed throughout the City, he imprisoned her in the Great Palace while he was crowned in Hagia Sophia.

3) Nikephoros persuaded Eirene the next day to tell him where the Imperial treasure was hidden on condition she continued to live in peace at Eleutherios. She accepted him as Emperor and told him where the treasure was hidden. Nikephoros exiled her to the Princes Island of Prinkipo to a monastery which she had founded.

4) Charles' envoys were still in the City and observed all that was going on.

5) Fearing a plot to reinstate Eirene, Nikephoros exiled Eirene to Lesbos in November.

A.D. 803 6) August 9th, Eirene died at Lesbos and her body was taken to lie in the monastery she had built on Prinkipo.

Commentary

Eirene succeeded to the position of absolute power as joint ruler with her son Constantine. It seems evident from what Theophanes says in Y.W. 6283[8] that when Leo IV crowned his son co-Emperor (3.2) he may have included some provision in the signed depositions laid on the altar on Easter Saturday - Holy Sabbath - or he may have added something verbally at the actual crowning on Easter Sunday, to the effect that at his death Eirene was to rule jointly with Constantine, possibly intending this to be during the boy's minority only. Eirene was present at the crowning, both in the hippodrome and at the liturgy afterwards in Hagia Sophia, though there she watched from the place of the catechumens, not in the body of the church (3.3). Theophanes refers back to this event in Y.W. 6283 (18.1). The context is that the Armeniakon theme soldiers would not agree to swear 'we will not be ruled by your son in your life-time' nor would they put her name before her son's, but would only agree to 'Constantine and then Eirene' as they had it in the beginning[9], meaning that the names were in that order both on the documents that were deposited on the altar and were in that order in the verbal oaths. Theophanes comments 10 lines later that fifteen years before these men had sworn a fearful oath, made written agreements and put them away on the Holy Altar[10]. Both in the previous year's chronicle Y.W. 6282 and the next Y.W. 6283, Theophanes says that Constantine was twenty years old[11]. Fifteen years before, of course, takes him back to being five years old, the inference being that it was at that age that his father

crowned him co-Emperor. Theophanes records that Constantine was born in Y.W. 6262 'on January 14th of the same 9th indiction a son was born to the Emperor Leo and Eirene. He was named Constantine as his grandfather Constantine was still alive'[12] (2.1). Theophanes also says in Y.W. 6273 'Because Eirene's son was only ten years old they wanted to summon the Caesar Nikephoros and make him emperor'[13]. It is evident, therefore, that Theophanes is being explicit and ac curate about the age of Constantine and the fact of joint rule and that its institution dated from Leo's reign. Eirene was joint ruler, not merely a regent and thus the use of the masculine plural οὶ βασιλεῖς, so often commented on by scholars, was justified and a neat way of expressing an awkward legal situation. Theophanes also heads the Y.W. 6273 with the lengths of reigns and year of reign of the various rulers, secular and ecclesiastical, he refers to Constantine as Roman Emperor Constantine with his mother ten years; year[14] I. The Life of St. Philaretos also implies the same thing, at page 134/5 the editors translate 'En ce temps-là, L'Augusta Irène, amie du Christ, régnait avec son fils, l'Empereur Constantin' [15].

Eirene's first move was not recorded by Theophanes. She must have appeared to the public at least twice on Leo's death. Once to the crowd in the Hippodrome at the news of his death to announce the accession of herself and Constantine, and once at Leo's funeral, both times with Constantine. The dramatic impact of the appearance of this young widow and ten year old son in the Kathisma of the Hippodrome presenting the new Emperor to the people must have been immense. Leo's death took place on the birthday of the Virgin Mary[16] (8.1), known better to the Byzantines as the Theotokos, patroness of the City. The people were being presented with their Emperor, the Vice Regent of God; what they may have seen symbolically was a living ikon - Eirene as the earthly counterpart of the Mother of God indicating her small son to the crowd - The Hodegetria.[17] Whatever Eirene's intentions at the time, whether she intended to nourish the people's suppressed hunger and longing for these symbols of intercession and the expression of divine power, or whether she was merely getting through the formalities of a change of ruler as best she could, or even if she was simply exploiting the defenceless charm of an innocent ten year old and his widowed mother as Theophanes suggests,[18] Eirene succeeded in establishing herself and her son in the hearts and loyalty of the people.

One should not lose sight of the fact that Eirene had the key to the royal personal treasury, which at some stage was transferred to the palace of the Eleutherios which she built for her personal occupation. At the beginning of her husband Leo's reign Theophanes records that 'he made unthinking use of money[19] (3. 1-2) which meant he had been buying support in some form or other. It can be conjectured that in such a weak position Eirene would hardly have neglected to make suitable payments both to the Colours for her acclamation in the Hippodrome and to the army. Whether her donatives to her husband's senior court officers proved inadequate and was the cause of their disaffection, is a matter beyond conjecture, but is a possibility. The dividing line between giving too much and thus making a possible rival wealthy enough to buy support for himself, and giving too little, creating disaffection, is a thin one, and Eirene's experience may have been limited in this respect. However, the first plot against the two rulers was not hatched until forty days after the accession and was revealed before it could get under way.

Little is known about royal funerals at this time[20] but a solemn procession with the bier, followed by widow and child, cannot be far from the truth and, once again, the dignity and innocent charm of the little orphan and his mother must have moved the hearts of the crowd. On both occasions of the funeral and appearance in the Hippodrome, mother and child were identified as a unity. Constantine had presided with his father at the May Day celebration of the victory over the Arabs in A.D. 778, that is Y.W. 6270[21], but this was at the Sophianai, which was probably on the Asiatic side of the Bosphoros[22]. Nevertheless, he must have been seen by a very large number of the citizens of Constantinople as well as the theme soldiers, and as a tot of seven he must have cut an endearing figure on that occasion. It also gave him the opportunity of being identified as co-Emperor with his father, as two years had passed since the impressive ceremony when he was made co-emperor. Now Eirene was identified with him as co-Emperor.

The next public occasion, and the first recorded by Theophanes, where the two rulers appeared in public was at Christmas, the first after their accession. Eirene had rendered all her brothers-in-law harmless to pretensions to the throne (as she thought) by making them priests. She made them distribute the royal alms to the poor

at Christmas in Hagia Sophia (8.3), but making sure that the contrast was vivid in people's minds, she went in royal procession with her son to the Great Church (8.4). At the same time she brought back the crown, to which she had added pearls: this had been appropriated by her late husband and popularly believed to have been the cause of his death.

Although the first two joint appearances are conjectural, there can be very little doubt that they happened. Leo IV had been so concerned about the succession that he had orchestrated the week-long series of events at Easter leading up to the crowning of his only son. Two years later, he had seized the opportunity presented by a major victory against the Arabs, won by his local generals, to preside at their triumph with his son at his side, a long ordeal for a child of seven. Leo's widow, Eirene, was deeply influenced by her husband, as will be shown below, and she could not have been slow to see the advantages of public appearances designed to bolster an image of confident and holy power visited on the dynastic and constitutionally legal rulers. The appearances of the new rulers in the Kathisma of the Hippodrome to be acclaimed by the Colours was an act that had a long tradition and was of considerable practical importance in cementing loyalty. Eirene would never have neglected it and her subsequent use of public appearances as will be shown, proves that she was alive to this adjunct to ruling.

Eirene's next concern for her son was to secure for him a suitable bride, although he was only eleven years old. A betrothal was arranged with Rotrud, daughter of Charles, King of the Franks, her name translated into Greek as Erythro (9.1). No immediate marriage was contemplated as the scribe Elissaeos, a eunuch, was left behind, after the embassy had concluded the negotiations, to teach her court etiquette and to read and write and, presumably, speak Greek. By some means Constantine's imagination was caught by the move and he was later recorded as being bitterly upset at the failure of the final arrangements for the marriage [23] (16.3) As conjectured previously, one may guess that Rotrud could have written letters to Constantine as part of her Greek writing exercises and if this had happened, no doubt Constantine could have replied. Thus some kind of rapport could have been established.

It is also in this year, Y.W. 6274, that we first hear of Staurakios who had become Eirene's chief adviser and confidant (9.2 &3) perhaps in succession to Gregory, Logothete of the Course who was one of the 40th day plotters. Moreover, it was because of Staurakios' over-bearing use of this power that we hear of him at this time; Tatzates, general of the Bukellarion theme went over to the Arabs on account of his dislike of the eunuch.

It should be noted that there was never a breath of scandal connected with Eirene's name, she must have made it quite plain that she wished to remain a widow and virtuous. Eirene remained close to her son until his marriage. It may be that in this way she felt she could keep the memory of her husband alive, it may be that she was a possessive mother who compensated for the loss of her husband's affection by demanding affection, or at least honour and respect from her son. Although widows had the right to administer their childrens' affairs under the laws of Leo III[24], this right only endured until the childrens' majority. Being an empress allowed Eirene to step out of the normal rules for women in her time, but, nevertheless, she still needed a valid reason for continuing in power once Constantine was old enough or obviously mature enough to rule on his own. The relation-ship of joint rulers remained stable until Constantine married and was capable of producing an heir; then Eirene's role as guardian of the Vice Regent of God, the earthly counterpart of the Theotokos and the guardian of the dynasty would no longer be needed and abdication the only course open to her. As an adjunct to her role as the earthly Theotokos she needed to see that only eunuchs and her son were close to her.

Thus, Eirene's senior administrators were eunuchs. No doubt at this stage of her reign she was choosing people from her own entourage whom she knew and felt she could trust. The 40th day plot involved two major figures in the domestic court of her late husband, they were Gregory the Logothete of the Course and Constantine, head of the royal personal bodyguard and Byzantine equivalent of gentleman of the wardrobe. Also mentioned in the plot were two commanders of the armed services, Bardas, general of the Armeniakon theme, the troops of this theme were to prove awkward customers throughout the reign, and

Theophylaktos Rhangabe, drungarios of the Dodecanese. Thus, so soon in her reign Eirene had to replace some very important office-holders. It must, therefore, be regarded as a signal that this eligible and personable young widow had no intention of remarrying, she would continue to promote eunuchs as far as possible to positions of power close to her, thus avoiding any possibility of ambitious men hoping to marry into the dynasty and, in this way, usurping Constantine's rights and, of course, her own. It also seems to reflect her confidence and determination and, possibly, also the esteem in which the Isaurian dynasty was held, that she could contemplate carrying on with the joint rule. Without this esteem it would have been more difficult for Eirene, even as joint ruler with her son, to have continued in power. It was, of course, convenient for ambitious men to have a pliant figurehead, but this implies that such ambition is content to be disguised and, in a sense, unrecognised, but it rarely stays that way. We shall see here that even the chief eunuchs, both Staurakios and the later appointed Aetios, each aspired to greater recognition. However, at this stage of her reign Eirene was firmly in command.

In Y.W. 6276 - May A.D. 784 (11.2) Eirene and Constantine went on a royal progress through Thrace. The previous year (10.1) Staurakios had swept through southern Thrace, presumably using the Via Egnatia, to the district of Thessalonika and then Greece (Hellas) where he was engaged in subduing the Slav element in the population. Encouraged by his success and by the peace with the Arabs still holding, Eirene and Constantine retraced Constantine V's steps during his campaigns against the Bulgars. The countryside had been devastated, not only by the fighting between the Bulgars and the Byzantines, but also by earthquakes, drought and plague. Some attempt had been made to resettle the area both by Constantine V and by Leo IV and the Bulgars seemed to have had their own troubles during Leo's reign as Telerig, their Khan, had taken refuge at Leo's court in Y.W. 6269, A.D. 776, and had been married to a relative of Eirene (4.1) Thus, the border had remained quiet since Constantine V's death, but no royal foot had ventured in the country since his time. The two monarchs, with an impressive retinue, went as far as Philippopolis, modern Plovdiv. Again Eirene and Constantine presented a united front and they took steps to repair the ravages of the previous decade. Constantine was

fourteen years old by then and to some extent this may have been a 'training trip' for him. He also may have been reminded of his grandfather's victories which had made the trip possible. Nevertheless, Berrhoea in northern Thrace was rebuilt, but it should be noted, was renamed Eirenopolis.[25]

From the tone of this entry in Theophanes' account it seems as though Eirene took all the initiative, ordering the rebuilding and renaming of Berrhoea; she also undertook the rebuilding of Anchialos on the coast; all sounding as though it was very much a personal decision as the sentence is governed by ἡ βασιλίσσα and each verb is singular[26].

The same year, at the end of August, Patriarch Paul retired to the monastery of St. Florus and became a monk. Theophanes records this action being taken without the knowledge of Eirene (11.3). When she heard about it she went to the monastery, taking her son with her. Theophanes gives a graphic account , quoting the purported words of Paul, the Empress and leading members of the Senate[27]. Although Constantine was clearly present throughout, he is not mentioned, apart from the nod in his direction at line 18 (αυτὸν σὺν τῷ υἱῷ) in the rest of this account. In fact it was Eirene (ἥδε) who summoned the patricians and Senáte leaders to hear what Paul had to say. After his death he was deeply mourned by the State and the monarchy (ἡ τε πολιτεία καὶ ἡ βασιλεία) (11.4) , 'for they had great faith in him'. So far the reins appeared to be firmly in Eirene's hands.

Shortly after Paul's death Eirene made the first move to elect his successor (12.1). Theophanes' account of the conversations between the Empress and the crowd in the Magnaura is instructive not only from the point of view of the orchestration of support for Tarasios, paving the way for the ecumenical council, but also for the use of personal pronouns[28]. First it was the Empress (ἡ βασιλίσσα Εἰρήνη) only who summoned the crowd to the Magnaura, no mention of her son, and it was she who addressed them as ἀδελφοὶ. However, throughout her speech she is made to use the first person plural. There are three possible reasons for this use. It could be the royal 'we'[29]. She could be indicating that she and the assembled people were at one in their

agreement. She could also be speaking for her son and herself. None of these explanations is mutually exclusive and it would be normal Byzantine practice for the ambiguity to be deliberate. However,(12.4) Tarasios' reply makes it quite clear that he is referring to both rulers, he uses the plural throughout his long speech whenever he is referring to them. Presumably, therefore, Constantine was present with Eirene in the Magnaura, but it seems from the way the account was written that Eirene was the leader in these proceedings. At the institution of the Patriarch on Christmas Day, some two or three months after the Magnaura assembly, letters were sent to the Pope, the usual ones from Tarasios announcing his accession with a statement of faith, but also a letter, according to Theophanes from Eirene asking for delegates to be sent to the proposed ecumenical council[30]. He also says that the Empress and the Patriarch sent similar letters to Antioch and Alexandria (12.9). Constantine was not mentioned, neither is he included by implication in a plural. Constantine was about to have his fifteenth birthday on January 14th and one would have expected him to have taken a major part in these proceedings. Perhaps he did and Theophanes, always keen to put Eirene in a good light as the one responsible for the restoration of ikon veneration, may have enhanced her role. As a matter of protocol Constantine would have been present at the altar when Tarasios was consecrated as Patriarch in his capacity as priest-king and Eirene would only have been looking on from the balcony of the Great Church. Even though she must have inaugurated a much more prominent part for the Augusta in church services, she could not have taken the major part in any of the proceedings that one might be led to believe from Theophanes' accounts[31]. It must also be remembered that Constantine later showed his sympathy with the iconoclasts and militarily imitated his grandfather Constantine V, so at this time he may have been less enthusiastic about the matter but unable to put a brake on events. This also applies to Eirene, as Patriarch Paul's deathbed repentance and Tarasios' insistence on an ecumenical council left very little room for manoeuvre. Unless Constantine had been very sure of his following, it would have been difficult to do anything but agree to another ecumenical council. Whatever Constantine's views on the matter at this time, there is no evidence that he was not still prepared to follow his mother's policies and was as devoted to her as she was to him.

Bearing in mind that Constantine would probably have been sitting with the bishops at the first meeting of the Council in the Church of the Holy Apostles[32] it seems odd that it was Eirene who tried to restore order when the palace guards invaded the church in order to stop the proceedings (13.4). There is no mention of Constantine at all being present and it was Eirene's attendants who tried to intervene, albeit without success. Again there is no mention of Constantine over the re-organisation of the palace guards after this incident (14.1) and it was Eirene sending Staurakios to Thrace for new troops to replace the old palace guard and her stratagem that got rid of them, along with their families (14.1-3). The whole management of the reinstatement of ikon veneration bears the stamp of Eirene herself, with Constantine playing a minimal part, perhaps carried along by his mother's self-assurance and evident commitment to the success of the council. Once the final session of the reconvened council was back again in Constantinople after its deliberations in Nicaea (15.1), both the rulers ordered the crowd to assemble in the Magnaura and Theophanes very correctly states that the Emperor with his mother signed the statement.(15.2). This is literally true as the *Horos* was signed by Constantine and Eirene in that order [33].

In Y.W. 6281, A.D. 788/9, Theophanes records that Eirene broke off the marriage negotiations with Charles (16.1) and implies that the arrangements to fetch Maria of Amnia were made at the same time (16.2). It is evident from the Frankish sources[34] that this was not so, Charles was unwilling to allow his daughter to go abroad and, therefore, other arrangements had to be made, all of which must have taken place after the embassy had returned empty handed from Capua. The Life of St. Philaretos[35] describes the search for a suitable bride and the resultant bride show arrangements must all have taken time. This is the first sign of any rift recorded between mother and son. Constantine's disappointment at the non-appearance of his Frankish bride and consequent dislike of Maria sounds so like the reaction of an over-spoiled adolescent. The very fact that Eirene arranged a bride show sounds more like an indulgent mother trying to arrange a special treat for her boy and one which gave him the maximum opportunity of being involved in the actual choice for himself. Although Paul Speck[36] refuses to believe in the existence of a bride show, a good case could

be made out for such bizarre method of choosing a wife for the Emperor. One can only conjecture what may have happened. The Life of St. Philaretos, while giving a rounded and resonant portrait of Theosobo, St. Philaretos' wife, and giving a vivid account of life in Pontos and of their family dynamics, merely lapses into a conventional happy ever after comment on Constantine and Maria's marriage. It is far more concerned with the subsequent life of Maria's grandfather, the Saint himself, than to give any account of the royal marriage, and the very brevity with which the Life dismisses the marriagesof Maria and her sisters may be a tactful gloss over the divorces that overtook both Maria, and Euanthia who married the Lombard Grimoald. It is only from the comments of Theophanes that we know that Constantine was 'quite distressed and unwilling'[37] to marry Maria and that the marriage may have been unhappy from the start (16.3). Knowing that Constantine was so disappointed not to have Rotrud as a bride, Eirene arranged a bride show to give him both an element of choice and to make an unusual and festive occasion of it. We learn from the Life that the envoys carried a strict set of rules in their search for suitable girls. Not only had they to conform to certain measurements as to body, even to shoe sizes[38], but also, by implication, had to be well born, of parents who held a prominent position in the community and, naturally, the girls had to be both beautiful and pious. As the choice was made after the Council of Nicaea, one mustpresume that the families were orthodox, though the Life makes no mention whatever of ikon veneration.

It can be argued, therefore, that one is seeing a fond mother doing her best to allieviate her son's disappointment in the most dramatic and amusing way she can devise. It is possible to catch just an echo of an indulged, immature young man throwing a tantrum at being thwarted and seeing himself as a pawn in the world of adult and powerful rulers. Yet a similar situation had occurred when Constantine's father was married. Constantine V's negotiations with the Franks for a bride from their country for Leo had come to nothing and he was forced to find a provincial girl for his son[39]. The marriage between Leo and Eirene had been successful enough and this repetition of affairs in the next generation had, no doubt, been pointed out to Constantine.

Nevertheless, the rift between mother and son seems to start here.

Theophanes records that Constantine, aged twenty, was strong and competent, but a mere cipher, all power being concentrated in the hands of Eirene's favourite, the Logothete, Staurakios (17.3). It must have been galling enough for Constantine to admit this to his friends, but for his wife to see it too, must have been doubly upsetting. Yet, if Constantine was so competent, why did he still have a tutor? (βαγύλος αὐτός)[40], unless John Pikridios, who had the rank of spathar, was simply now a part of the court - a gentleman in waiting and no longer still the tutor, but a friend.

Constantine's plot to seize some power for himself was simply limited to banishing Staurakios, exiling him to Sicily. The intention, stated categorically by Theophanes, was for Constantine to hold power with his mother[41]. The rift was created by Staurakios, anxious for his own position, persuading Eirene that she could interpose herself into the succession before her son. She had become used to her son merely accompanying her, one might almost say 'tagging along behind' her, but, so far as we are told, having no views on matters except for showing a rare rage at being denied the Frankish Rotrud. It seems as though the female dominated, eunuch administered court may have had a retarding effect on Constantine. Now he was married and expected to beget an heir to continue the dynasty, he must have realised how ignominious his position was. Maria had merely exchanged one dominating woman, her grandmother, for another, Eirene. But in her old home there was a man at the head of the household and her grandfather had kept the reins of the household very firmly in his hands and, even if eccentric, got his own way in spite of his wife's protestations and occasional sarcasms. Not least, he was revered by his own family and his neighbours. What a contrast Maria must have seen in her husband. Is it not possible that she tried to persuade Constantine to assert himself? There is a hint that she may have been a more forceful personality than the bare record allows in Theophanes' account. She was concerned to join her daughter Euphrosyne at the court of Michael II (*c.* 823). All we have is Theodore of Studion's answer[42] to her query (unless it was an unsolicited letter) as to whether she should abandon the convent and join her daughter at court. Theodore writes of an unjust divorce 'torn away at the same time from power' . He advised that she should stay at home while the Augusta holds the imperial palace. This passage in the letter

could be taken to imply that Euphrosyne was in a position to influence her husband Michael just as Maria had used her influence while she had power. This is, of course, conjecture and one must allow for the use of rhetorical language as well as Theodore's bias against the divorce which caused him much suffering later.

Owing to the earthquake that occurred on Feburary 9th (17.4) the Empress and Constantine went over to St. Mamas and it seems to be here that Staurakios learned of Constantine's plans to exile him to Sicily. Theophanes' phrase was that he set the Augusta in motion against her son (συνκινεῖ τὴν Αὐγῦστα κατὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ) but the results of his persuasion were a little different from what he may have hoped. Eirene reacted like an outraged mother blaming her little boy's bad companions for leading him astray (17.5) reserving the main force of her anger for the Emperor's men (τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοῦ βασιλέως) whom she exiled to Sicily except for Peter the Magister and Theodore Kamoulianos, whom she merely put under house arrest and Damianos the patrician whom she exiled to Apollonias. She treated her son like a naughty child, slapping his face and keeping him indoors for a day or so.(17.6) (τύψασα δὲ καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πολλὰ λοιδορήσασα ἀπρόϊτον ἐποίησεν ἐπὶ ἡμέρας τινάς). The whole episode seems to have been played down by Eirene at first: however for some reason, perhaps persuaded by Staurakios, she must have had second thoughts, for shortly after came the issue of making the army retake their oath of allegiance (17.7)

Theophanes says that the army began to take a new oath 'As long as you live, we will not agree to your son's ruling' (Ἕως σὺ ζῇς οὐ καταδεξόμεθα τὸν υἱόν σου κρατῆσαι) which they seemed to have agreed to do as 'they did not dare to oppose the whole body' (περὶ τούτου τὸ σύνολον)[43]. While this does not really indicate a new state of affairs, both remained co-Emperors, it does show that Eirene was not disposed to retire gracefully and allow her son to rule on his own. Constantine had every intention that they should reign together but he wished to enjoy equal power of decision, with no place for his mother's favourites, even though eunuchs. His objections may also have been that the court had too many eunuchs and wished it to be a more masculine place in future with himself in charge. The comment Theophanes makes (18.1) in the next year, Y.W. 6283, does show that by now there was a further rider added.

The Armeniakoi refused to swear 'We will not be ruled by your son in your lifetime' but also refused to agree to put Eirene's name before Constantine's, they would only agree to put Constantine's name before Eirene's - as they had it from the beginning. This implies that Eirene was demoting Constantine and interposing herself into the succession, ignoring Constantine's wish for them to continue to rule together, though without Staurakios.

Here was a sudden change in policy the explanation for which needs an extra dimension to Theophanes' comment that Eirene had acquired a passion for power[45]. The latter, no doubt, was true, for Eirene was at that time notably successful and she was presumably unwilling to see the peace that she had so painstakingly built up disturbed. Both sets of religious extremists were quiet, the iconophiles were delighted with the restoration of ikons, but there is no evidence of their persecuting the iconoclasts. One may presume a certain measure of religious tolerance in the absence of evidence to the contrary. For instance, the Paulicians, some of whom were transferred by Leo IV to Thrace,[47] were still spoken of in 1714 and in 1982[48]; they had evidently flourished in their new homes. Sporadic skirmishes with the Arabs were contained without major loss of land, even the unsuccessful venture into Beneventan territory had no ill effects and it may be supposed that it had been followed by closer links through the marriage of Euanthia, sister of the Augusta Maria, to Grimoald, Duke of Beneventum[49].

This extra dimension must be found in the relationship between mother and son. It is evident that this was a very close one. Seizing each opportunity, the mother made a public appearance, taking her son along with her. She was the pious mother, a single parent, protecting her young son with only the protection of eunuchs for herself. She presented a secular picture of the Virgin Mary with her Son and Joseph in the guise of her eunuch adviser. While this picture was preserved they could safely rule together. But once this picture was gone, the spell was shattered, and the reality of a grown-up son, with a mind of his own, made it abundantly clear that her role was reduced. Not only symbolically, but in reality, her baby was no longer in need of his mother. Her nurturing role was over and at best she had only

the convent in front of her. Eirene was about thirty six or seven years old at this time, with ten years' experience of ruling. She was at the height of her power but facing the onset of middle age, the menopause and a decline in physical and mental activity.

It is hard to judge at this distance of time how quickly women matured physically, but the normal age for marriage was fourteen and Michael Psellos regarded the Empress Zoe as well on into middle age at forty[50]. One may, perhaps, conclude from this that the mid-to late thirties were getting uncomfortably close to middle age, if not already there. Though the phenomenon of middle age is now seen as special to-day , to be written about and given consideration generally, together with discussions both in medical circles and in the popular press, it may, therefore, be thought of as a modern idea, nevertheless, such a phenomenon has physical reality and affected women in various ways throughout history, as it does now, assuming they were able to survive at all to that stage. Childbearing for the married and poor nutrition for the unmarried religious, as well as the hazards of contaminated water, whether by lead or infection, and recurrent bouts of plague, all contrived to lower the age at which females died, even in peacetime conditions. Whether one believes that the concern over this time of life is a modern cultural one or not, the physiological facts cannot be denied and once this time has been reached the results of hormonal changes add another dimension and another burden to a woman who already had more responsibility than any modern ruler.

With this in mind, it is not unreasonable to see that Eirene needed her son emotionally as well as politically. While he still had a child-like dependence on her she could maintain her hold over him by gifts, rewards and amusements. Viewed in this light the arrangement for a bride show was an amusement to make up for the disappointment of Charles refusing to allow Rotrud to marry Constantine. The royal progress round Thrace with the musical instruments was the amusement side of the serious business of rebuilding the ruined towns; Eirene saw to the latter - Berrhoea was renamed in her honour. At the ugly and frightening scene in the Church of the Holy Apostles, where the royal guards threatened the bishops and Patriarch, it was Eirene who took the initiative and ordered her men to intervene, Constantine was, in

a sense, being protected from having to take part in the violence.

Nevertheless, Constantine must have been maturing and showing some signs that he was no longer so dependent. Theophanes says that he was strong and competent (ῥωμαλέου τε ὄντος καὶ ἱκανοῦ πάνυ). He had graduated from a paedagogos to a bagelos and it must have been obvious that he was ready to take command for such a comment to have been made. However, it was only against the prestige of the eunuch Staurakios that his dislike was directed. It can be conjectured that by this time Maria's first child had been born. Constantine naturally had his own quarters in the Great Palace and, from the reference to those exiled or put under house arrest, he had his own court. No doubt, these courtiers, not eunuchs so far as it is known, had their own ambitions and may have resented Staurakios and the other eunuchs of Eirene's court. Staurakios in his early career at court had upset Tatzates sufficiently for him to go over to the Arabs and lose his family. After the successful campaign in Greece the eunuch had been rewarded with a public triumph and so his arrogance may have increased.

Returning to the series of events, Eirene was taken aback by the refusal of the Armeniakoi to accept her sole rule instead of the joint one as hitherto, so she sent Alexios Musele to persuade them (18.2). Alexios was drungarios of the vigilia (or arithmos, an alternative name) and was responsible for the safety of the Imperial camp when the court was on the move and had the special role of conveying Imperial orders[51]. Thus, sending Alexios was a direct command from the Empress, and she must have expected immediate capitulation.

She must have been doubly surprised by the result of this miscalculation. The Armeniakoi, instead of meekly accepting Eirene as sole ruler until she died and only then to have Constantine, deposed their strategos, Nikephoros, and imprisoned him, setting up Alexios Musele, Eirene's messenger, as their strategos instead. (18.3) They then insisted on proclaiming Constantine as sole ruler. This was a far-reaching move which could have been the first in a series designed to unseat Constantine and secure the throne for Alexios himself. How was it that Eirene had so misread the whole situation? She was wrong in supposing that Alexios was personally unambitious and loyal to her

rather than to her son; she was wrong in not making allowances for the volatility of the theme armies.

One reason why Eirene was so out of touch with the Asian themes could be the policy of non-aggression that she pursued. The army in Asia Minor was obliged to play a merely passive, or at best, a defensive role in the continual incursions by the Arabs. When warning of Arab harrassment was sufficient, the country folk could take refuge in the fortified towns, but Arab guerrilla tactics were in the nature of lightning raids, carrying off prisoners and booty, the latter in the shape of livestock and produce[52]. Without Imperial sanction and, of course, the finance to go with it, the theme armies could not go on the offensive against these raiding parties. The drungarios of the vigilia had, amongst his other duties, special responsibilities for prisoners of war and Alexios must have realised more acutely than any other official how the Asian themes were suffering in this way. To what extent Eirene was told about this and to what extent she was able to relieve the problem of ransoming prisoners, compensating farmers for lost stock and remitting taxes we do not know. However, it seems evident from the way the army was to support Constantine in his Asian campaigns, that they were only too delighted to be employed in their business of protecting the themes by more aggressive tactics.

With regard to her miscalculation over Alexios' loyalty, Eirene had, as she thought, reorganised the tagmata after the fiasco of the first meeting of the ecumenical council to ensure the safe passage of the council's deliberations on orthodoxy. But the loyalty of the new soldiers comprising the Imperial guard may have been more probably based upon their adherence to orthodoxy of church doctrine rather than personal loyalty to Eirene herself, or even the Isaurian dynasty. One of the problems of being a female ruler was that she could not ensure the loyalty of the army by personally riding at its head and commanding action against the enemy or disaffected subjects. She was obliged to rely on a network of spies, whom she hoped were sufficiently rewarded, and by deputies. Her other resource was the sheer force of her personality. Within the Byzantine theory of the Hand of God directly blessing the ruler, giving Divine sanction, if the power and validity of that sanction were removed, the charismatic influence was liable to sudden erosion.

At this time in her reign Eirene was undoubtedly over confident. Theophanes comments that she was gullible like a woman[53] (17.2), but that is misplaced comment. Any ruler is obliged to trust others to some extent, but wiser ones limit the power of their advisers. Bury[54] notes that the Domestici Excubitorum were demoted from the rank of Comes to mere Spathars by Leo III in order to make the royal guards more dependent on himself, although he comments that Constantine V raised one Domestic to the rank of Patrician. Alexios Musele was not a patrician, he was merely a spathar and was in command of only one of the four tagmata. Surely Eirene was merely acting as any ruler might in trusting an officer to carry out his normal duties. What was at fault was her internal information system, not her gender. Indeed, Alexios may not have had any intention of disloyalty at that stage, but have been forced into the position by the troops themselves. Constantine had at first confirmed Alexios as the Armeniakon strategos (18.8) and then recalled him to court, promoting him to patrician the following year (19.2). It is only at that stage that rumours began to circulate about his ambitions.

Matters had now gone too far. The thematic troops (18.6) assembled at Atroa (possibly Otroea, fifteen miles west of Malagina on the direct road from Prusa to Malagina). They insisted that Constantine was the sole Emperor[55] while both mother and son were apparently still in Constantinople. Eirene failed to take command of the situation and was unable to dismiss them, but she had to allow Constantine out of his house arrest[56]. Hearing that they had confirmed him as sole Emperor, renouncing Eirene, Constantine made a far reaching decision (18.7). He could have insisted that the original oath of alleigance should be re-taken and the *status quo* of joint rule restored. He did not. He sent Michael Lachanodrakon to take the troops a new oath of alleigance - to Constantine only. With Michael, Constantine sent John Pikridios, his tutor, who, presumably, had not actually been exiled to Sicily yet. Michael Lachanodrakon was strategos of the Thrakesian theme and had been a fervent follower of Constantine V's iconoclastic policies. It may be that he was the nearest general to Atroa on whom Constantine knew he could rely and so the most convenient person to appoint. But it is also possible to see this as an indication that Constantine was intending to follow in his grandfather's footsteps. Whether this was an indication that the young

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Emperor was tacitly indicating that he was planning to reverse all aspects of his mother's policies at this stage one cannot know. He demonstrated in the following year that he intended to follow an aggressive foreign policy when he inaugurated the Bulgarian campaign (19.5), but his flirtation with iconoclasm, if it existed at all, came much later: this is discussed fully below. Alexios was confirmed as strategos (18.8) of the Armeniakoi, probably by Constantine in person: - Theophanes records that he did not return to Constantinople until December, the troubles having started in October. Once in the capital Constantine set about removing his mother's eunuchs (19.9). He sent Staurakios into exile to the Armeniakon theme as an indication that the eunuch was no longer in charge. Theophanes describes this as 'to reassure them' a nice piece of irony and an astute move by Constantine.[57] Constantine also exiled Aetios, mentioned for the first time in the *Chronography* and described as Eirene's bosom friend (τὸν ευνοῦχον,... καὶ ἐπισῆθιον αὐτῆς) as well as the other eunuchs of Eirene's court.

Eirene had built the palace of Eleutherios for her own occupation and it seems evident from later comments that she was happy here and lived in this palace in preference to elsewhere in the Great Palace complex. She had also used this palace as her personal treasury and continued to do so until the end of her reign. Constantine 'settled' his mother in this palace (18.10), assuring her she would not be harmed.[58] It seems reasonable to conclude that Constantine intended to remain on good terms with his mother. He might even have wanted to consult her and he might have wanted to retain access to her treasury, the exact whereabouts of which was known only to Eirene[59].

It seems as though Constantine had achieved the transition from joint to his single rule by December and had settled the dust arising from his mother's abortive attempt to interpose herself in the succession. It should be emphasised at this stage that Eirene did not appear to have any plans to depose Constantine. She was postponing the time that he should rule until after her death (17.1). In fact, if the Chronographer is to be trusted, the phrase ...τὸν υἱόν σου κρατῆσαι ...[60] could be construed to imply that, though Constantine would continue to rule with his mother, her decision, particularly with regard to the army, was final.

Constantine embarked on his Bulgarian campaign in April, but not until September did he attempt a campaign against the Arabs. Neither of these were successful and by January, Eirene and her friends found it was timely to take matters into their own hands again. It sounds as though Eirene was holding some kind of court in the Eleutherios palace as Theophanes says the Emperor was 'summoned by his mother and many of the men in power'[61], though the word παρακληθεὶς can also mean 'exhorted'. This could give the impression that Constantine was felt to have his hands full with his campaigning and needed some able administration at home. It also gives the impression that he still kept in touch with his mother. Whether constrained by events, needing access to her money, or whether from old habit and affection (or even after an access of emotion on Eirene's part remembering his birth (19.1)) Constantine proclaimed his mother and there was a general acclamation of joint rule - Constantine and Eirene as it had been in the beginning. Only a year after her deposition, Eirene was back in power again and, it seems, by general consent.

At about this time, or perhaps a little before, Constantine had promoted Alexios Musele to the rank of patrician so that he could be at Constantine's court (19.2). Theodore Kamoulianos was made strategos of the Armeniakon theme in his place. Once again, this theme objected to Eiréne and refused to take the new oath of alleigance to both rulers, even though the order of their names was, this time, the original one of Constantine and then Eirene (19.3). Pursuing their independence, the Armeniakon troops demanded Alexios back as their general. Rumours began to circulate and Constantine, taking no chances in case Alexios might be considering a bid for power, imprisoned him in the Praetorium, having first had him flogged.(19.4)

We do not know about events between January and July, or where the balance of power lay. It may be that Eirene dealt with home affairs while Constantine planned and perhaps trained the army for a new campaign. In July, Constantine embarked on a campaign of some magnitude in Thrace against the Bulgars, taking Michael Lachanodrakon with him as well as two generals, the patrician Bardas and his protospatharios, Stephen Kameas (19.5). The headstrong young Emperor dashed into battle, losing not only many soldiers, but also these senior commanders as well as all

his baggage train. This disaster persuaded the Imperial guard that they should put up the Caesar Nikephoros, Constantine's uncle, as Emperor (19.6). Constantine's reaction was immediate and severe. He blinded the Caesar Nikephoros and cut out the tongues of all the other sons of Constantine V. Warned by his mother and the eunuch Staurakios that the troops would not be put off and would rescue Alexios Musele from the Praetorium and elect him Emperor, Constantine blinded him too (19.7).

There are two interesting points arising from this series of events. First, Constantine and Eirene were apparently on easy terms with each other, or at the very least, were in touch with each other[62]. It seems possible that Eirene had stayed on in her palace of Eleutherios, but it is evident that Staurakios had been released from his exile in the Armeniakon theme, it may have been his information culled from local sources that led him to warn Constantine about Alexios Musele. Here, it appears as though Eirene and Staurakios were acting together in order to save Constantine and to preserve him as co-ruler. It may be that this information, if it came originally from Staurakios still in exile in the Armeniakon theme, was sufficient to persuade Constantine to restore him to his mother's court in the Eleutherios palace[63].

Secondly, the other point which arises from this period is the ambiguous attitude of the Imperial guard. The old Imperial guard, recruited by Constantine V was, naturally, iconoclastic and their opposition to the restoration of orthodoxy erupted into overt hostility at the first meeting of the ecumenical council. These soldiers had been recruited from Asia Minor and, as we have seen at (14.1a) were returned to their villages along with their families by swift and clever action by Eirene. Through Staurakios she had recruited a fresh set of troops for the Imperial guard from Thrace who were orthodox and loyal to Eirene. They had taken the oath not to accept Constantine's authority in Eirene's lifetime, but the commander of one of the three regiments comprising the guard, Alexios Musele, had been sent to sort out the problems of the Armeniakoi's objections. However, when the theme soldiers were gathered at Atroa demanding Constantine as sole ruler, Eirene, fearing the onset of the army (τοῦ λαοῦ specifically, not τὰ ταγμάτα) was unable to dismiss them and had to give in. What role did the Imperial guard play then? Were they less than keen to

carry out the Empress's wishes, did they support Alexios Musele who had been elected strategos of the dissident theme, or was it merely that the comparatively few numbers of the Imperial guard were no match for the united front of all the Asian themes? The last is the most plausible reason, but all or any of the others may have been contributory factors in Eirene's failure to impose her will on all the Asian troops. But now, after Constantine's military failures, the Imperial guard took matters into their own hands and attempted to put forward Nikephoros instead of Constantine - but apparently not instead of Constantine and Eirene. Theophanes may not have been entirely explicit about this, assuming that his source knew the exact intentions of the Imperial guard. A possible explanation could be that the guard saw the need for a male figurehead, though retaining their loyalty and confidence in Eirene's rule. The charismatic memory of Constantine V would be kept alive if his eldest surviving son was ruler, but this man would be amenable to expert advice from his generals, in fact a useful figurehead, not given to impetuous action.

It is also possible that Eirene or Staurakios may even have been behind this move. Nikephoros might have been an acceptable co-ruler if Constantine had lost the confidence of the army. If Eirene engineered this she could dictate her own terms to Nikephoros and remain in charge while reaping the benefit of having a compliant male co-ruler. She had already asserted her authority over her brothers-in-law after the 40th day plot, so there was little risk of him taking an active part against her. The situation at the 40th day was, of course, entirely different. Then Eirene had been concerned to stay in power with her son as co-ruler, Constantine was only ten and posed no threat to Eirene's authority. But now he was in his twenties, married, probably already a father, and capable of deposing his mother and, now, liable to bring her downfall about if he were deposed. The fact that Eirene had so firmly indicated her opposition to Nikephoros reigning earlier in her reign in such different circumstances would not have deterred her from using him at this stage. While adhering to certain principles, Eirene was always ready to adopt a flexible attitude and use what means lay to hand to achieve her object.

The case was different with Alexios Musele. At whatever stage his

adherence to the Armeniakon cause was formed, his loyalty to Eirene was in question. If the Imperial guard put him up as Emperor in place of Constantine, he could be expected to depose Eirene. No ties allied him to Eirene, he had accepted the Armeniakon troops' preference for Constantine as sole Emperor, had been promoted for his loyalty by Constantine during the period of Eirene's deposition, and so could hardly expect to share power with the representative of what would have become the previous and discredited dynasty.

Theophanes makes no mention of any punishments dealt out to the dissenting Imperial guard, though there must have been some[64]. It is perhaps significant that Constantine used only theme troops to deal with the still obdurate Armeniakon troops.(20.1) His protospatharios, Stephen Kameas, who had been killed in the disastrous Bulgarian campaign, had been replaced by Constantine Ardaser, so he was sent to help Chrysocheres, successor to the deserter Tatzates, general of the Bukellarion theme, to deal firmly with the Armeniakoi (20.2). Constantine now had a real civil war on his hands with the rebels getting the upper hand.

This dissension of the Armeniakon theme had lasted three years, the first signs being recorded at Y.W.6283 (18.1). It seems to have been rumbling on during this period, only surfacing at moments of provocation, but no attempt had apparently been made to get to the root of the trouble or steps taken to solve whatever those problems were. If one looks at the map, the original Armeniakon theme extended from east of Trebizond to Sinope on the Black Sea coast and the southern boundary extended to just a little west of Tyana, giving the longest frontier with the Arabs of any other theme. We do not know the date that this theme was divided but the mention of the Armenians[65] seems to indicate that Chaldia and Colonea were not yet in existence. It may be concluded, therefore, that apart from the economically poor and inhospitable nature of the country, densely wooded, steep sided valleys and craggy mountain tops, giving birth to the headwaters of the Euphrates, the country was also subject to Arab invasions. It was the furthest part of the Empire in Asia Minor and, as the studies of the poem of Digenes Akritas have shown[66] there was a certain amount of intermarriage between Christian and Arab. It is not surprising, therefore, that with such economic and social pressures the people might be ambivalent about

the politics of Constantinople. A vivid account of the rigours of the climate and the risks involved with the brigands can be seen in the letters of St. John Chrysostom when he was exiled to this district[67]. While it is recognised that four hundred years must have made some difference and Byzantine rule should have had some civilising effect, nevertheless the terrain was the same and the Armenian element was still concerned with self interest to the exclusion of patriotism[68].

Constantine's emissaries (20.2) with their army failed to force the Armeniakoi to step into line, and with the capture and blinding of both, as well as the slaughter the war was causing on both sides, it had become obvious that stronger action in the spring would be needed. Eirene must have been horrified at the course of events which her action in interposing herself into the succession had produced. She had badly miscalculated the strength of her support and now she was powerless to mend the trouble. It may be assumed that all she could do was to advise her son to mend matters with as little rancour as possible, if she was able to advise Constantine at all.

Constantine himself took the field (20.4) but only with the help of Armenian allies (20.5) was he able to overcome the opposition. Theophanes distinguishes carefully between the Armeniakoi in the theme generally and the Armenians[69]. His punishment was surprisingly mild but salutary (20.6). Perhaps learning from his mother's acute appreciation of the value of publicity, he paraded a thousand of the rebels with a tatoo on their foreheads reading 'Armenian plotter' (Αρμενιακος ἐπιβουλος) through the City and then exiled them to Sicily and the other islands. Either Constantine had learned not to be so hot headed or his mother's pacific counsels were being heeded. He could not afford to alienate too many people and in any event still had to administer the district. The sequestrations of property were a reasonable punishment for the rebels, but that property still needed to be worked. After two disastrous fires in the capital (20.3 and 18.11) a great deal of rebuilding must have been needed and the income from the sequestered estates could have provided a much needed boost for this rebuilding. He may also have alienated a good many people at his excessively severe handling of his uncles (19.6) and realised, possibly reminded by his mother, that he needed co-operation rather than antagonism.

The year following the defeat of the rebels seems to have been quiet except for the surrender of a border fort, Thebasa, to the Arabs which seems to have been arranged peacefully[70]. Theophanes records nothing except this event. In fact, events were moving, as might be expected. Constantine must have been in close touch with his mother and, at the same time, paying court to one of her ladies-in-waiting, Theodote. Eirene must have felt her lack of power and her dwindling influence over her son. It may be conjectured that the Augusta Maria might have been taunting Constantine with his inept handling of the Armeniakon theme, where she had her home originally, which resulted in a civil war and the consequent impoverishment of a district already at risk from unfriendly neighbours. Alternatively, Maria could have been exerting her influence on Constantine to take a more positive stance in his dealings with his mother. So far, from what little we know, Maria had only one child, a daughter Eirene, though it is possible that by now she also had another daughter Euphrosyne[71]. Constantine must have wanted a son desperately, both to secure the succession and to cement his own position as one capable of sustaining the Isaurian dynasty. It could also be argued that Maria may even have become influenced by the idea of a celibate marriage. By this time it is possible that her father had died, her mother had founded her own convent and her brother retired to his monastery. This is, of course, the wildest conjecture, but such a way of marriage was practised by Theophanes the chronographer, amongst others.

It seems also probable that Constantine had formed some kind of liaison with Theodote by now and Maria may have felt jealous. It is possible that she could have complained to Eirene about such scandalous behaviour among Eirene's own ladies-in-waiting[72]. Eirene, always wanting to indulge her son when he was younger, may have hoped that this relationship with Theodote would reconcile him to a distasteful marriage and even form a convenient link and avenue of influence between herself and her son.

Whatever the reason behind the events, Constantine did persuade Maria to become a nun (21.1). It is also plain that in some way Eirene was behind this. Although Theophanes says that Constantine hated Maria because of the plotting of his mother, he also recorded earlier[73] that Constantine was distressed and unwilling to marry Maria

after his betrothal to Frankish Rotrud was broken off.

One cannot easily set aside Theophanes' comment that Eirene was still aiming to rule (Τούτῳ τῷ ἔτει μισήσας ὁ βασιλεὺς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα Μαρίαν ὑποβολῇ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ μητρὸς ἐφιεμένης τῆς ἀρχῆς πρὸς τὸ καταγνωσθῆναι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ πάντων, ἐξεβιάσατο αὐτὴν τοῦ γενέσθαι μονάστριαν,) It is not clear whether she wanted sole rule as she had attempted to achieve earlier, or whether she wanted a far greater proportion of joint rule. In either case, discrediting Constantine would very likely help to attain that end. If Constantine reverted to being a playboy, enjoying the favours of a lady of the bedchamber, he was doubly in Eirene's power again. She could assume the grand matriarchal role again, keeping her son as the eternal juvenile with perhaps only a ritual role to play publicly[74]. She could also have the advantage of using Theodote as her spy in Constantine's household, or at least her go-between. I do not believe it was any part of Eirene's plan at that time that Constantine should marry Theodote. To have her as his mistress or concubine was entirely satisfactory. To marry her in defiance of church law while his wife (though out of the world in a religious sense) was still alive was to bring the Isaurian dynasty into disrepute, risking bringing them both down together. However, fortified by success against the Arabs at Anousan and by an enormous gift to St. John the Evangelist at Ephesos in May[75], Constantine was emboldened to crown Theodote Augusta and to become betrothed to her in August (21.2/3). Once more there were two Augustae.

Persuading Maria to enter a convent with the concomitant problem of persuading the Patriarch to tonsure her was one thing, but a pronouncement of divorce and subsequent crowning in marriage was quite another. The Patriarch Tarasios owed his position to Eirene. He was a moderate man, a conciliator, who had managed to steer a careful course between the fanatics on both sides of the iconoclast controversy. Here, he was faced with a conflict of loyalty between his duty towards his Emperor and possible deposition if he refused to co-operate, and his duty and possible feeling of obligation towards his Empress, the latter strengthened by the uncomfortable knowledge that, though divorce was legal, according to the Ecloga of Leo III, a remarriage while Maria was still alive was most certainly not legal. One should, however, note

here that the Western rulers had no scruples whatever about successive marriages, whether the previous wife was discarded, divorced or dead.[76]

Once again, Constantine was showing himself the headstrong young man. While under his mother's influence he could only exhibit anger at being frustrated and in turn be treated to mollifying rewards, like a baby being given a toy for distraction from some forbidden course of action. Now the 'toy' of a well-born[77] and personable young woman attached to his mother's court was not enough. It can be construed as a measure of Constantine's need to free himself from his mother's influence that he insisted on both creating Theodote an Augusta and marrying her in his own palace of St. Mamas (22.1). Theophanes' comment that the festivities went on for forty days[78] is toned down by the Tenth Century Cedrenus to a mere four.[79] Cedrenus gives a hint of the Patriarch's dilemma when he says that Constantine threatened him 'if this does not happen I shall open the shrines of idols'[80]. He records that the Patriarch, in a panic, finally agreed to the marriage but prophesied that Constantine would not end his life peacefully. Was this a real threat to take ikon veneration back to pagan idol worship - a cheap jibe calculated to alarm a fence-sitter? One wonders what was Cedrenus' source for this story - court gossip recorded in a diary is a possibility.

It must be significant that the marriage took place at Constantine's palace at St. Mamas, well away from either the Great Palace or his mother's palace of Eleutherios. This appeared to set up two obviously separate factions and clearly Eirene needed to be at pains to mend the break, or if the breach was not to be mended, then she needed to gather up all the support and co-operation from whatever quarter she could.

Constantine's marriage caused a schism in the church that well outlasted his reign. The new Augusta's family, her uncle Theodore, Abbot of St. John Studion and his uncle Plato, Abbot of Saccudion were shocked at the tonsuring of the Augusta Maria, and at Theodote's marriage while Maria was still alive, to such an extent that they refused to acknowledge the Patriarch Tarasios. They blamed him for allowing the Abbot Joseph to conduct the ceremony of marriage and they also objected to the Patriarch receiving Constantine at communion after his marriage. Constantine reacted sharply by imprisoning Plato in the Chapel of the

Archangel in Constantinople and sending Theodore and his monks into exile, closing the very large monastery of St. John Studion. Theophanes records that Eirene defended the monks but gives no details of how she did so (22.3). It seems peverse that, on the one hand Eirene is credited with urging Constantine to persuade Maria into a monastery,and on the other hand taking the monks' part against her son's marriage. If Maria was a threat to Eirene, having learned to emulate her grandmother Theosobo, both in piety and force of character, her relegation to a monastery would be appropriate. If this was the situation, re-marriage for Constantine was certainly no part of Eirene's plans. Though hitherto giving no support to the extrenists, Eirene did so now, their condemnation of the marriage coincided with hers but for entirely different reasons. On the other hand, she must have been aware of Constantine's threat to Tarasios and sympathetic to his dilemma. Yet, uncharacteristically, she took the extremists' part and risked alienating herself from Tarasios.

One must, however, look behind the simple statememt that Eirene took the monks' part and suggest what may have happened. Theophanes may have been referring to the imprisonment of Plato and the exile of the Abbot Theodore and the disbandment of the Studite monks - that Eirene objected to the actual punishments. Her objections may have been only to this rather heavy-handed treatment of the more extreme element of the iconophile faction in the Empire. Tarasios had steered a tactful line between the extremists of both parties in the councils leading to the restoration of orthodoxy and there had been no persecution of erstwhile iconoclasts. It seems probable that at least the first, and possibly other efforts at putting forward the sons of Constantine V may have been iconoclast-inspired, but each time Eirene was moderate in her measures against them. This over-severe handling of an over-reaction on the part of the monks could only lead to a division in the church and push the monks into a position of utter intransigence. Eirene may have seen this and attempted to play down the results of what certainly amounted to implied criticism of the Emperor. Constantine, though morally in the wrong, had the right as Emperor to rule as he chose. As a matter of tactics it was unstatesmanlike to antagonise a volatile and a much respected section of the community. The monastery of St. John had stood in Constantinople since A.D. 463 where the monks kept a perpetual liturgy. It was greatly to Eirene's credit that there had been no fervent iconophile reaction once the Council of Nicaea had published its

Horos, but she may have seen that Constantine's punishment of Plato and Theodore could inflame such a reaction and provoke an answering reaction from those still in favour of Constantine V's ideals. Although unusual in taking the extremists' part in a controversy, the above argument shows Eirene's diplomatic skill and moderation, and reinforces the picture of an astute and experienced ruler attempting to modify her son's mistakes, adopting the all-wise mother role. Theophanes implied that Eirene supported the monks in order to bring disgrace on Constantine. While it may have been part of her instinctive reaction to belittle her son's judgement in order to reduce him to dependent status again, it was surely no part of her plan to take an extremist stance in any way, but rather to calm a tense atmosphere.

Only a year after their marriage Theodote bore the much wished-for son, called Leo (23.2). Eirene and Constantine were both taking the hot baths at Prusa with the whole court in attendance, leaving the pregnant Theodote behind in Constantinople (23.1). One must assume that the relationship between mother and son had mended sufficiently for Constantine to invite Eirene to go to Prusa with him;(Theophanes' version)[81]. On receiving the news, most naturally Constantine hurried back to the City to see the child(23.3). Here Eirene could see the end of her dominion over Constantine, not only had he a separate establishment, was in command of the army, but also had a son to succeed him. Now Eirene would really have to retire to Eleutherios and take a back seat. However, Constantine made a great mistake. Instead of taking everyone back to the City with him for a public rejoicing, he rushed off leaving his mother and all the court, including the Imperial guard behind at Prusa. His infantile sense of security in relation to his mother wholly clouded his judgement, otherwise how could he have left potentially hostile elements with her? His haste may indicate that the baby was frail (he only lived seven months) but to go off so impetuously without taking due precautions was foolish. He must have expected his mother to take some steps to try to strengthen her own position.

Eirene still cherished her ambition to rule alone before Constantine succeeded her after her death. She knew she had to have a firm base in

the capital for sole power and the key to this was the Imperial guard. It may be that the scandal of the royal marriage had not entirely died down and Eirene's support of the exiled Studite monks would have assisted in securing support among the orthodox and ultra religious minded people. This is an instance where gender may have affected the way in which power was sought. She seized her opportunity (23.4). Had Eirene been a man it might have been open to her to seek support from one or other of the theme armies and offered a military challenge to Constantine. The comparatively small numbers of the Imperial guard were only proof against opposition within the City itself; but this was the heart of the Empire and so long as Eirene felt in control of the City she could rely to some extent on the slow communications and the relative indifference felt by the provincial administration to the central government, so long as they had a reasonably free hand.[82]

Eirene could only rely on bribes either of money or promised position once she came to power. She needed to 'buy' her army and Senate, just as her husband had done to secure Constantine's succession. Prestige from money or rank was an attractive inducement to the ambitious. It seems evident from Eirene's use of these inducements that she had lost much of her own prestige and personal following, perhaps through being out of the public eye while Constantine had taken the initiative. She certainly realised that she would have to build up her following so, not content with personally interviewing the senior officers, she saw to it that her own courtiers were involved in persuading the other ranks in the guard to favour her cause. She was admit enough to see that it was essential to weave a firm network of reciprocal obligation right through the ranks of both court and army. She also appeared to realise that the time was not yet ripe for her; Constantine would have to be further discredited by what means she could find, not least by infiltrating his own household with her own adherents.

From the account of the campaign against the Arabs that Constantine mounted in March (23.5), it appears that he was quite unaware of either his mother's plans or of Staurakios' hostility. It may be that he needed an experienced administrator to organise his troops recruited from all themes, in which case Staurakios had the necessary expertise.

These troops were probably highly mobile cavalry, suitable for giving chase to the guerrilla bands of Arabs who had been harrassing the countryside. On the other hand, it could be argued that Constantine did indeed know of his mothers's plans and that he correctly reasoned that a success in the field would strengthen his power. He may have thought it better to have Staurakios under his eye rather than plotting with his mother at home. Constantine was no match for the crafty Staurakios, and retired home without achieving a notable success against the Arabs, but certainly establishing his leadership of the army.

A further blow to Constantine's prestige was the death of his son on 1st May (23.5). Constantine can only just have arrived back from his campaign when this happened. Theophanes remarks that he mourned the child bitterly; he must have felt that things were going very wrong for him. Eirene, on the other hand, while perhaps grieving for her son's loss and for the risk to the eventual succession, must have seen that her cause was furthered now. Even so, the first attempt to oust him from power was not made until July 17th (23.6). The Emperor had attended the races at the Hippodrome and after they were finished he was crossing the Golden Horn to his palace at St. Mamas, when some of the Imperial guard made an attempt to seize him. Although the text does not make the sequence of events clear, it may be understood that instead of taking the royal ferry across the Horn, Constantine boarded a warship and crossed the Bosphoros and landed at Pylai, having eluded his would-be captors. A message to Theodote at St. Mamas must have been sent for she joined him and together they went as far as Triton (23.7) intending to travel to the Anatolikon theme, probably Amorion[84], whence Leo III came, and a favourable base or refuge for him.

For some reason Constantine tarried in the north instead of making his way to the Anatolikon theme; in fact he was there for almost a month, from July 17th to August 15th before Eirene's spies finally seized him while he was at prayer at dawn on August 15th. Perhaps he stayed in the district near to Malagina, even near Pylai, organising the support of the army in order to confront his mother. A confrontation was needed as she had removed from the Eleutherios palace and taken up a commanding position in the Great Palace with the help of those members of the Imperial guard whom she had bribed at Prusa the previous October (23.8).

Eirene's spies knew that once Constantine was in command of the army they were defeated, their presence as his mother's adherents in Constantine's entourage was not so far known to him. It seems that in spite of their presence, Constantine was successfully rallying the army round him, for Eirene learned from her spies that this was so and became justly alarmed. She must have doubted her ability to withstand a confrontation and so she fell back on her old skill of negotiation. Her method was a two pronged approach, both designed to achieve a direct contact between the two of them. First, she planned to send bishops as envoys to negotiate her retirement 'into a corner' (23.9), a similar arrangement that Constantine had made for her after his acclamation at Atroa (18.10). Secondly, she threatened her spies that unless they concocted some means of getting Constantine handed over to her she would tell him that they were plotting against him on her behalf (28.10). One needs to assume that Eirene would have represented herself in this case as loyal to Constantine and only concerned that his household should not set mother against son, otherwise the full extent of her plotting would be revealed and she could expect little consideration from him.

This last attempt to bring Constantine to heel as a wilful puppy was a grave miscalculation. The spies had been placed in an impossible position, either way they would lose their lives. If they failed to bring Constantine back to Eirene she would reveal their plots and he would take action against them. If they managed to bring him back and he succeeded Eirene on her death, or before, he would take action against them. The spies had no reason to believe that Eirene would succeed in her attempt to gain the support of enough of the Senate and people in Constantinople to withstand the probability of the theme armies rallying to Constantine's support. Eirene had overplayed her hand and had failed to take account of the position in which she had placed her spies.

Constantine was brought back to the Great Palace where Eirene was already in residence (23.11). By a significant stroke of symbolism, he was taken to the Purple Chamber, the lying-in room where Eirene had given birth to him (23.12). Nothing could have indicated Eirene's intentions more clearly. Constantine was her baby, she was the one who had given him life, he was thus her junior, without her he could

never have been Emperor. She had suffered to give him birth and he should accord her a fit reward; while she was alive she should rule. It seems a reasonable conjecture that there was a time lag between Constantine arriving in Constantinople, being imprisoned in the Purple Chamber and the ninth hour when he was blinded[85]. It may be that this passage in Theophanes is an echo of Luke 23. 44-45

> And it was about the sixth hour and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.
>
> And the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

In spite of his admiration for Eirene, Theophanes goes as far as he can by saying that the sun's rays were obscured for seventeen days, (that is to the end of the year) on account of the blinding of the Emperor. The parallel is offered immediately with an account of the near blinding of Pope Leo III 'they were unable to quench his light for ever as the men who blinded him were charitable and had mercy.' Nevertheless, Theophanes goes on to explain that Charles took vengeance on the Pope's enemies, but the result of that vengeance was that Rome had been under the power of the Franks ever since, especially since the Pope crowned Charles as King of the Romans to repay him.

Some kind of negotiations between Constantine and Eirene are most likely to have taken place. Perhaps Constantine was obdurate and insisted that he was the rightful crowned Emperor, commanding the loyalty of the army and, therefore, should not accord his mother precedence. Eirene may have been equally firm. In the circumstances, Eirene's advisers would have no other way open to them but to blind Constantine. If he died in their attempt to blind him, the charge of murder might be avoided with Eirene's help, but the result would be satisfactory to the ambitious eunuchs who surrounded her, Constantine was out of the way.

In whatever way one may speculate that it was not Eirene herself, but her advisers who carried out this appalling act on their own initiative, nevertheless, she did not repudiate the deed. Viewed from this distance in time, it seems a monstrous thing for a mother to blind her son. There was no precedent for a mother to blind her son in order to seize power for herself for there was no precedent in Roman history for

such a joint rule as we see in this instance.[86] The revulsion felt now at such an act of violence by a mother against her son may possibly need to be tempered with an appreciation of how mutilation was viewed at the time. Some inkling of how mutilation was regarded may be found in the Moslem fundamentalism practised now by some foreign powers. Although practices of mutilation seem like primitive barbarism to Western eyes, more accustomed to attempts to treat causes of offences against the law, symbolic retribution is, all the same, just understandable, particularly to those well versed in the Old Testament[87]. Leo III the founder of Constantine and Eirene's dynasty revised the Roman-derived law and specifically directed it to be made more humane and substituted mutilations for the death penalty, the culprit being regarded as a sinner who was given the chance to repent in this world before being judged in the next. Tradition had long established that blinding/ castration was a bar to ruling and this tradition was only broken when the Empire was in decline caused by the Crusades.[88]

One should consider this extraordinary phenomenon on two levels, as the Byzantines themselves would have done. There was the human practical level, one of solving a question of the relative power of different groups and their various aims. There was also the symbolic level, the consideration of human behaviour when it crosses the boundaries between normality and abnormality, between the prerogatives of gods and men, as the classical writers saw it.

There is, perhaps, a feeling or atmosphere of Greek tragedy about the way Theophanes records events leading up to the blinding; the use of the conventions of Greek mythology might have been the best way in which to convey the events. It may be the view that Eirene belongs to the tradition of Greek women who, after years of subjection, rebel in a ruthless and savage way that gives this impression that Theophanes is recording the tragic events of a Greek myth. Christopher Hill, writing about the time of the English revolution, particularly about the founders of the sects such as Muggletonians, Anabaptists, Diggers, Ranters and Quakers says 'In time of revolution men think aggressive thoughts and these can be recognised by others as valid, as divinely inspired'[89]. Eirene was part of a revolution that had been fermenting since Constantine V had finally established himself. He turned the

world upsidedown in his efforts to rid the Empire of the worst excesses of superstition and in his attempts to even out wealth and opportunity. He took wealth from the monks, secularised the monasteries and reduced the price of corn for the poor. By releasing land and manpower he opened the opportunities for poor men to rise from poverty. By breaking the power of the blinkered doctors of the church his father had begun the process and released learning from its straightjacket. Eirene, therefore, inherited a much freer community, particularly in Constantinople, and being a revolution herself as a joint ruler, could institute her own revolution in the open Christological discussions which culminated in the restoration of orthodoxy. Her female reign was her own version of aggression, but once she had escaped from her straightjacket of feminine subjection, she could not accept its imposition again and, given her powerful and passionate character, it was unlikely that she would.

The mounting frustration of seeing what had been her prerogatives taken away by her once dependent son was too much to bear, the high water mark of her aggressive thoughts was reached at the point where she had the choice of her life or her son's. The blinding was the final aggression and, as Hill points out in a different context, recognised by others as valid and divinely inspired.

The theme of blindness as punishment, whether self inflicted or not, recurs time and again in the Greek myths and as pointed out by R.G.A. Buxton in his article 'Blindness and Limits'[90] it is the result of mortals overstepping the bounds and usurping the prerogatives of the gods. The role of the powerful implacable woman is also a popular one in the myths. In the *Odyssey* Agammemnon warns Odysseus against scheming women and adds '...ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι πιστὰ γυναιξίν...'[91]. Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* includes the wilfully murdering Deianeira, unlike the Sophoclean version, and Bacchylides' *Ode V* reminds us of her mother Althaia who caused her son Meleagros' death[92]. Medea in Euripides' play is able not only to murder her rival Glauke and, incidentally, Creon as well, but most monstrous, her two sons. Clytemnestra murdered her husband and his mistress and would have murdered Orestes had not Elektra sent him away; according to the Sophoclean version she threatened her daughter with incarceration in a cave - indirect murder.

If Eirene wanted to rule alone, whether only by interposing herself before Constantine, who would then succeed on her death, or whether she wished to rule alone and decide the succession in some other way, she obviously had to negate Constantine's influence during her lifetime. If she continued to plan on the former strategy, it would have had to have been achieved with Constantine's agreement. Without this there was no way in which she could have imprisoned him or kept him in the background while she reigned, yet still able to re-emerge into court life and reign successfully after her death. While alive and in effective control of all his faculties, and with a wife capable of producing a son, Constantine would constitute a threat to her safety. If dissidents could still produce Eirene's brothers-in-law, mutilated though they were, as pretenders to the throne, how much more would they prefer to promote Constantine's interests.

By the time Eirene ordered her spies to bring Constantine to her she had really manoeuvred herself into a corner. Having considered a safe conduct for herself she seems to have rejected this course of action as Theophanes only says that she considered to send bishops to negotiate her retirement. This may have been more in the nature of a back door escape in case her proposed face to face negotiations broke down. It may, alternatively, have been a cover up in convincing style for the plot to bring Constantine back to the capital to face his mother. With the reality of the situation of Constantine rallying support across the Bosphoros facing Eirene, her skill as an experienced negotiator may have led her to put about this plan which would allay any fears her son might have entertained concerning his mother's possible bid for power. He may have suspected much, but until the bid to kidnap him on his way from the Hippodrome to St. Mamas, he had no reason to believe that his mother was anything but well disposed towards him. Even then, there need have been no reason to connect his mother with this attempt to dethrone him, he may have seen the hand of Staurakios behind it.

For the plan to negotiate a safe conduct and retire into a corner to have been well enough known for Theophanes, or his source, to record it, there must have been discussions between Eirene, the bishops, the Patriarch and her eunuchs, even Nikephoros, her eventual usurper might have been involved. This plan would not have suited the eunuchs at all.

They had everything to gain by keeping Eirene in power. Not only could they influence current decisions by advising Eirene and, being her instruments in carrying those decisions into effect, they could also, and did, have a hand in the selection of the ruler to succeed Eirene. As long as Eirene was titular head of the Roman Empire, the eunuch advisers could wield an enormous amount of power as they chose, without the concomitant responsibility.

The key to this situation was the relationship between Eirene and her eunuchs. Since Constantine had been sole ruler, the relationship between Eirene and her chief eunuchs had altered. Before her bid for sole power she had quite plainly been in control and kept the initiative herself. Constantine had broken that relationship by banishing both Staurakios and Aetios and, of course, Eirene's power. Both Eirene and her eunuchs had seen that by combining together they just might be able to undermine Constantine and wrest power for themselves. In these circumstances, Eirene and her eunuchs needed to present a united front for each needed the other. These three interdependent characters needed to maintain a suitable balance of power between themselves in order to succeed, not only in bringing Eirene to sole power, but in keeping her there long enough to secure the succession.

We must be constantly aware of the personal and absolute nature of Imperial power. It is very difficult now to appreciate the blind obedience which the office of Emperor commanded, the awe and fear that the Vice Regent of God inspired in his subjects. Court ceremonial reinforced this and the solemn processions, the change of clothes for different parts of the ritual that protocol demanded, all helped to create an atmosphere of sanctity round the Emperor. This applied far more to an Emperor than to an Empress. She could not officiate in the Sanctuary as royal priest, whence the mystical element of royal power was exhibited and reinforced. The Empress Pulcheria[93] had tried to achieve this ultimate sign of power and had been repulsed. In this way Eirene was much dependent on keeping her Patriarch favourably disposed towards her and was dependent on sheer force of personality as well as wealth to control her immediate guards and inner court. She was also dependent on keeping her eunuch advisers in a suitably subservient position which demanded a mixture of trying to limit their

spheres of power with another limit on their access to the means of bribes. Eirene succeeded in doing neither. The chain of events which led to this situation had started at Prusa in October of this year (Y.W. 6289, A.D. 796). She had bribed some of the Imperial guard herself, but persuaded others through her men. This also meant that her men needed some kind of reward; throughout the year Eirene would have had to have kept up the pressure until July when the kidnap attempt took place. Each time Constantine looked as though he were to have some success, this had to be nullified and, presumably, rewarded by Eirene.

The Patriarch's attitude was as ambivalent as the Imperial guard. He had, at the very least, connived at Constantine's wish to put his wife Maria and their children into a convent and gave permission to the abbot Joseph to perform the marriage ceremony between Constantine and Theodote. Theophanes claims that the tonsuring of Maria and the liaison between Constantine and Theodote had the blessing of Eirene. I have already suggested that an actual marriage between Constantine and Theodote was no part of Eirene's plan and Tarasios' support of Constantine in this instance was a clear indication of who was in charge and where the power lay. I would like to suggest that Tarasios' part in the final negotiations, or at least a clue to his attitude towards Eirene, is his part in the garbled version Michael the Syrian gives of the abdication of Eirene:

> 'Alors les Romains voulurent faire régner sur eux Nicephoros, le Logothète, cappadocien. Quand Irène apprit cela, elle ordonna de lui crever les yeux. Aetius le cacha. Il voulut régner lui-même, et demanda à Irène de lui donner la couronne: comme elle ne la lui donna pas, il en fut irrité. Elle-même fit connaitre au patrice Nicetas le dessein de Aetius. Nicetas et le patriarche tinrent conseil avec le Sénat, et tous furent d'avis de faire régner Nicephoros' [94]

At the vital time of negotiation with Constantine in the Purple Chamber, Eirene was in the Palace with those of the Imperial guard who were loyal to her and, one must presume, her two eunuchs. Each eunuch had his own ambitions which, to some extent, must have been encouraged by Eirene throughout the preceding nine months. Each occasion of loyalty or special service to her would have been warmly

congratulated and perhaps rewarded. The final culmination was the actual handing over of Constantine himself, perforce in circumstances of utmost secrecy and drama, seizing him at dawn while vulnerably at prayer, hustling him onto his warship and sailing with all haste for the capital, spiriting him into the Great Palace and into the Purple Chamber. Eirene's debt to her spies was incalculable, they had achieved a remarkable victory for her by putting Constantine so unequivocally in her power and would expect to be suitably rewarded.

How it was that Constantine could have been thus seized is difficult to understand. It seems possible that his mother's spies may have been among his bodyguard. It is hard to imagine that Constantine would have been unaccompanied, even at prayer. We do not know if he was praying in a church in Pylai or Triton that was at a distance from his apartments. If he was, he would surely have been escorted by his bodyguard and they would have been armed. It can be inferred from the mosaic of Justinian and Bishop Maximian at S. Vitale in Ravenna that armed men with spears and shields were close to the Emperor, even in church, though practice by the time of Constantine may have changed. But if he were at prayer in the sanctuary, where as priest-king he was permitted, his bodyguard would not be there, but if they seized him there forcibly they risked committing sacrilege, too high a price even for desperate men. If his bodyguard were all adherents of Eirene they could have prevented his escape two months before on the way from the Hippodrome to St. Mamas. Those two months that Constantine spent on the Asiatic shore rallying support from the theme armies could also have provided an opportunity for the adherents of Eirene to recruit others. However, it took the threat of exposure from Eirene to galvanise them into action. It can be suggested that, with the support growing from the theme armies for Constantine, the spies of Eirene were in two minds as to whether they should change sides or not. We have already seen that loyalties were to whomever was actually wielding power at the time 'placemen' as Paul Speck called them - opportunists.

We do not know how they succeeded in spiriting Constantine away from his place of prayer, convincing the crew of his warship that he should be conveyed across the Bosphoros and then gaining the Great Palace without raising any alarm. It can only be conjectured that he

went willingly, perhaps in response to some message from his mother. Theophanes says nothing about those members of Constantine's court left behind at Pylai or Triton and nothing of those at the Palace of St. Mamas, though the members of that household may have joined him at Pylai. Had Theodote tried to rally support to pursue his abductors or had those contingents of the army favourable to Constantine tried to cross the Bosphoros to go to his defence? We know nothing of these negotiations, but the fear that they were possible must naturally have concentrated Eirene's mind and been present in Staurakios' mind as well; he had been with the Asiatic troops only in May where it was so obvious that Constantine had the troops' affection that the failure of the expedition was only achieved by bribery. Time was obviously not on the side of Eirene and her eunuchs. Their success in making Constantine abdicate must necessarily be immediate and overwhelming in order to convince the army that Eirene was once more in power. If Eirene succeeded in talking Constantine round to her way, the eunuchs would be to some extent in eclipse, depending on what compromise was reached. If they acted quickly they could secure power absolutely. Constantine may have tried to play for time, convinced that he would be rescued by his adherents at Pylai. He must have been aware that, whatever his mother was prepared to negotiate with him, her eunuchs and the men who had kidnapped him would destroy his power if they could. If they did not, they knew that he would destroy them.

Thus, Constantine was a helpless prisoner in the room which saw his birth - as helpless as a baby - not in the least like an Emperor, the Vice Regent of God and an object of veneration and awe. He must have seemed an object of contempt to the eunuchs, determined to wield power themselves. They had no mercy but attempted his murder through blinding. Once the deed was done, one wonders how they broke the news to Eirene. On the other hand, it is possible that Eirene did order his blinding, adding that she cared not how it was done. On the balance of probabilities it is more likely that the eunuchs took matters into their own hands and presented Eirene with a *fait accompli*. Her passion for power is not in doubt, but up to this time she had consistently both tried to rule with moderation, avoiding conflicts of any kind if possible, and she had tried only to interpose herself into the succession in accordance with the astrologers' prophecy in

Y.W. 6282 (A.D.790). It was only at this late stage that she must have seen that matters had gone too far. Her playboy son had grown up and could not regress into childhood, it was too late. Always a realist, Eirene accepted the fact that her spies had been placed into an intolerable position, with their own lives at stake and that her eunuchs with these spies, held the balance of power. She, therefore, accepted the situation and accepted responsibility for the blinding, facing the world boldly. Later commentators assume her responsibility. Michael Glykas remarks[95] that she was overcome with remorse and in order to 'wash herself clean of the hatred' emptied the City's treasuries of money and paid off all debts. On the other hand, Cedrenus says that Eirene had resolved Constantine should be blinded, remarking that this was the inscrutable judgement of God as he had blinded his uncles five years ago to the day.[96]

From now on Eirene was to a great extent in the hands of her eunuchs, particularly Staurakios and Aetios. She could not rely on the Asiatic theme armies and there was trouble immediately with the Arabs. It is a measure of her lack of trusted and experienced adminstrators that she had to send two churchmen to negotiate with Abu Malik - unsuccessfully (24.1). She was troubled by yet another effort to put one of her brothers-in-law on the throne (24.2); Theophanes merely refers to 'some rebels' (τινες νεωτεριστα) but Aetios, appearing to fall in with the rebel plot, led the brothers to Hagia Sophia for them to ask the crowd for asylum. Had they done so the rebels would have proclaimed one of the brothers as Emperor, but the crowd would not risk such a course, thus Aetios sent the brothers into exile in Athens. Although Eirene must have known of the plot, she is not mentioned here. Athens was her birthplace and, as was proved later, she had relatives on whom she could rely to keep an eye on them. Theophanes says, almost as a comment on this incident, that the two patrician eunuchs were by now open enemies (24.3), each having ambitions to secure the throne for their respective relatives after Eirene's death.

Not only were the Arabs successful in raiding Asia Minor and collecting prisoners and booty, but also the Slavs in Greece (25.1)

joined with the Hellas theme troops in a bid to support the exiled brothers-in-law. Eirene seemed to have hostile factions at either end of the Empire. The Greek/Slav rebellion was quickly and successfully put down by her own relatives, Constantine and Theophylaktos Serantopechos, father and son (25.2). The conspirators were blinded, but Theophanes makes no mention of the brothers-in-law. However, Cedrenus says that the local people put them to death[97]. But in fact we do hear of them again in Michael I's reign, all blind.

This conspiracy took place in March and shortly after, at Easter, Eirene took the opportunity of a grand procession from the Church of the Holy Apostles, where all the previous Emperors had their tombs, to stage a great public spectacle. She was borne in a golden chariot, drawn by four white horses, attended by four patricians and she distributed the consular largesse (ῥίψασα ὑπατείαν ἀφθόνως). Her choice of attendants was astute. Bardanes Tourkos, strategos of the Thrakesian theme in Asia Minor[98] , Sissinios, strategos of the Thracian theme[99] and Niketas, the domestic of the scholae[100] as well as Constantine Boilas, of whom we have not heard before, but might have been the commander of the excubitores, another part of the Imperial guard. The presence of the two strategoi from either side of the Bosphoros must have proclaimed Eirene's confidence that she commanded the loyalty of the vital areas either side of the Bosphoros and the other two, if Boilas was an excubitor, showed the crowd that she commanded the loyalty of the Imperial guard. Theophanes says the hypateia was abundant. Once more, Eirene had stage managed a valuable public display of confidence coupled with generosity over the consular largesse. It was now a familiar method of Eirene's to bolster up confidence in her position; she had inaugurated this at her first Christmas of her reign, generosity in embellishing the Imperial crown with pearls, a solemn procession to the Great Church and further generosity through her brothers-in-law, then in monks' clothes, distributing the traditional donative to the poor. Though this was peculiarly Eirene's style, it had long tradition throughout earlier times, even back as far as the Principate. There was nothing intrinsically feminine about it. Eirene's husband, Leo IV, had shown her now to manipulate a public spectacle, and thus stifling possible opposition, with his arrangements for crowning Constantine. That occasion was during Easter celebrations

and so was this one of Eirene's. Western Christianity places a different emphasis on the significance of Easter, dwelling far more on the sacrifice of life for the world's sin. The Orthodox emphasis is far more on the glory of the Resurrection and the joy at the release from the burden of sin; Easter, not Christmas, is the Orthodox chief festival, and it is then that important celebrations can most suitably take place.

From now on, for the next three years, Eirene seemed to have lost control of affairs. In May she must have become ill (25.4), Theophanes expresses it that she believed she was near death, though we do not know what prompted this belief. Whatever the cause may have been, it must have been of short duration as she was evidently well enough to deal vigorously with the quarrelling eunuchs (25.5). It is at this time that the two rival parties emerge, each persuading the various units of the Imperial guard to favour them. Aetios joined with Niketas, the domestic of the scholae, who had been one of Eirene's carriage attendants at Easter. Together, they tried to oust Staurakios, Eirene's favourite since the start of her reign. Staurakios' delusions of grandeur, already seen to give offence when Tatzates deserted to the Arabs, must have exceeded all bounds as it appeared he cherished ambitions to rule as Emperor himself after Eirene's death. While it may have been tolerated for a woman to rule, as it obviously was by the majority at this time, the prospect of a eunuch on the throne was going too far.

Eirene had to curb his pretensions publicly twice. First, at the palace of the Hierion, the other side of the Bosphoros where her own initiation into the royal circle had taken place[101]. Secondly, in the following February at a silentium in the triklinios of Justinian (25.6). During the first occasion Eirene accused Staurakios of plotting a rebellion. She assured him that he would fail and would bring about his own destruction. This time he was able to defend himself and pointed to the alliance of Aetios and Niketas as being responsible for the calumny. The second occasion was in February A.D. 800 (26.1/2). Staurakios turned his attention to fomenting a rebellion in the City, having bribed the scholarii and excubitores. With the plot discovered, Staurakios was kept away from the soldiers

and an account of his attempt was published. The strain proved too much for him and he had a tubercular haemorrhage which left him only a few months to live. Even so, he still persisted in planning a further revolt, specifically against Aetios in Cappadocia, but died two days before the news of the revolt arrived in the City. One may legitimately infer that Staurakios' enmity was directed at Aetios, not Eirene. She had made no public plans for the succession, she had suffered some attack which made her fear imminent death, so her chief advisers were manoeuvering into position where Eirene's successor would be an obvious choice and civil war averted. It must be admitted, therefore, that she was still in control sufficiently to avoid the prospect of deposition, though the factions may have thought her end sufficiently near for this to be unnecessary.

Staurakios' rebellion in Cappadocia was crushed and the conspirators exiled (26.3). We have no record of exemplary parades of manacled rebels in the Hippodrome and no executions, perhaps it can be inferred that the rebellion was a local and tame affair. However, it gave Aetios the excuse to take command himself of the Anatolikon and Opsikion themes; Cappadocia lay within the former theme. Had Eirene been wholly in command of events, she would have seen the danger in her closest adviser having such a command, but nevertheless, it seemed prudent to have a loyal servant able to command and probably subjugate a considerable stretch of land in Asia Minor. The precedent had been established by her appointment of Staurakios as commander in chief at the beginning of her reign. As Constantine had hoped to recruit his support from the Anatolikon theme, Eirene may have thought that Aetios in command here and in the Opsikion theme, commanding a sensitive part of the Bosphoros, was preferable to the risk of this power proving too great a temptation for an attempted usurpation. In fact, if one looks at Eirene's abdication speech, it is evident that she was aware of the quarrels and negotiations over the succession and consciously left the outcome to God[102].

The following year, Y.W. 6293, must have seen some kind of unrest in Sicily, but nothing of this is recorded by Theophanes, (this has been discussed in the previous section). The Pope's expression of gratitude to Charles by crowning him for supporting his reinstatement

to the papal throne is dismissed by Theophanes in a few words. However, the Chronographer anticipates events by adding that Charles intended to marry Eirene, the inference is clearly that Charles now had sufficient prestige to attempt to unite East and West.

In another bid to gain support Eirene remitted the taxes both in the City and the two main ports, Abydos being the main slave market (27.2). The letter of Theodore of Studion[103] is evidence both how hardly the taxes were lying on the shoulders of the people and how the remission of these taxes was appreciated. Even allowing for the very overblown style, it is still evident that, whatever the fisc may have thought, the remission of taxes at this stage of Eirene's reign was a very popular move and must have earned her much valuable support and popularity.

Nevertheless, in spite of this popularity, Eirene still allowed her chief eunuch, Aetios, to increase his power (28.1); Theophanes even refers to him as co-ruler[104]. Having secured the generalship of the two Asiatic themes referred to above, he promoted his brother Leo, whom he intended to advance to the throne, to take charge of the two European themes nearest the City, Thrace and Macedonia. Thus, both sides of the Bosphoros were secure at the most vital point, that of the narrow straits of the Dardanelles. One result of this overt bid for power was the rebellion of senior officers of the theme troops (29.2), though which troops Theophanes does not tell us. However, he does say that they rebelled against the Empress, not specifically against Aetios, as was the case with Staurakios' rebellion, though the efficient cause may well have been the pride and ambition of Aetios. There is no mention of the results of this rebellion and one can only assume that the leaders were either bought off or exiled. By now Sicily could have been so full of dissidents that it might well have been ungovernable; small wonder that Charles felt he should invade the island.[105]

Aetios' ambitions received a setback at this stage. Charles' ambassadors, backed by emissaries from the Pope, arrived at Constantinople to negotiate a marriage contract with Eirene and 'unite East and West[106] (28.3).

This was a blow to Aetios who had to use all his powers of persuasion with Eirene in order to prevent her from entering into negotiations with Charles. These negotiations between the ambassadors of Charles and the Pope and Eirene and Aetios took place over some three months. Theophanes mentions them as the last item in the chronography for Y.W. 6294, a cross reference with the Royal Frankish Annals confirms this[107]. They must have arrived in Constantinople, therefore, towards the end of August or the beginning of September. Not until the last day of October did Nikephoros, Eirene's finance minister, stage his bid for power, and Theophanes specifically says that the ambassadors were still in the City after Eirene was banished to Lesbos towards the end of November.

Aetios had already headed a group of office holders against the eunuch Staurakios, amongst which was Niketas, the domestic of the scholae. Now, Nikephoros had to organise his own faction, bearing in mind that Aetios and his brother Leo had four theme armies under them (29.1). His choice was interesting in that he recruited Niketas, the domestic of the scholae and his brother Sissinios, both surnamed Triphyllios. These two had driven the Empress's chariot four years before at the Easter parade[108]. The others he chose from the ranks of patricians, one being Theoktistos who was quaestor, surely a wise choice from among the City administrators, and another Leo Serantopechos, perhaps a relative of Eirene. The patrician Gregory, son of Mousolakios must be the same man or the son of Gregory Mousolakios mentioned at Y.W. 6270[109] as strategos of the Opsikion theme. Whether it was the same man or his son, the fact that the Opsikion theme had Aetios as its supreme general would have displaced the seniority and power of its strategos and probably be enough to upset Gregory. Nikephoros may have been a civilian administrator, but he evidently knew enough about the organisation and feelings of the army to recruit his aides wisely. Also in Nikephoros' party was Leo the sakellarios of Sinope[110] referred to as Leo Cloka by Cedrenus[111], not a surprising aide as both were finance officers.

The manner in which the usurpation took place suggests that all the people in Constantinople had been expecting Eirene to announce her successor at any time and that the choice of Aetios' brother would

have been unpopular. Partly from his partisan standpoint of favouring Eirene, but probably recording the general feeling of the common people Theophanes gives much play to how incredulous they were at Eirene's supposed choice of Nikephoros as her successor. As finance minister he would have been unpopular as recipient of the taxes that bore so heavily on the people and as a civilian would not have had the glory of a successful general.

Nikephoros' proclamation throughout the City took place during the night and immediately after dawn. Eirene was in her palace (now referred to as a monastery for the first time) of Eleutherios which Nikephoros had surrounded with guards(29.2). Once the City had been aroused with the news of Nikephoros' proclamation, Eirene was taken to the Great Palace under guard. Nikephoros was crowned, presumably by the Patriarch. One wonders why Nikephoros did not make Eirene crown him herself. She was the reigning sovereign and had the right to name and crown her successor as she was the reigning 'king' - βασιλεύς. Only in the event of a pretender to the throne usurping the rightful holder did the Patriarch crown him. That was, of course, the actual situation, but Nikephoros might have attempted to give verification of his story to the Chalke guards that Eirene had named him.[112]

'Presented with a *fait accompli*, Eirene accepted it with dignity. Nikephoros must have been doubtful of Eirene's acceptance of his elevation, perhaps the reason why he did not risk approaching her before the crowning, because he represented the affair as one where he had been elected against his will by the people who had no love for her. 'He bore witness that they imitated Judas in every respect'[113]. He even went so far as to show that he was still wearing black sandals instead of the purple ones that were traditionally reserved for emperors only.

Theophanes reports Eirene's acceptance of Nikephoros' elevation in direct speech and what she is reported to have said sounds genuine. In brief, she first attributed her rise from being an orphan to occupying the throne to God. Her downfall was caused through her sins. Nikephoros' rise was through God. She knew very well that he was plotting to become Emperor and she could have had him executed without any difficulty, but she preferred to believe in his innocence.

She now gave back to God the power to rule which was once hers and gave Nikephoros due reverence as Emperor as God had chosen him. She now wished to be allowed to live in the monastery of Eleutherios. Nikephoros bargained with her that she could do so providing she revealed the whereabouts of the royal treasury (23.3). Although Eirene did reveal the whereabouts of the reserves, Nikephoros banished her to her monastery on the island of Prinkipo, instead of the Eleutherios palace.

Theophanes reminds us that Charles' legates were still in the City (29.4) and had, of course, been observing all these events. It cannot be imagined that these men would simply accept this state of affairs. While Eirene was still in her palace of Eleutherios she could have been in touch with Charles' men. It seems probable that she would have returned there from her imprisonment in the Great Palace while her treasure was being taken and, very likely counted or itemised by Nikephoros. She would not have disclosed its whereabouts unless she was safely installed there and Nikephoros seen to have kept his part of the bargain. It may be that messages were sent to Eirene and on account of this she was exiled to her monastery on Prinkipo. However, the Princes Islands, of which Prinkipo forms a part, are only an hour's sailing away from Constantinople, and from here it would have been quite simple for those so disposed to bring Eirene back in triumph to the City. Michael the Syrian[114] preserves a very curious version of Eirene's exile. Having said that Nikephoros commenced to reign holding the Empress Eirene and the eunuch Aetios in great honour, Michael then adds that Eirene and Aetios plotted to have Nikephoros put to death by some monks. Their project was discovered and Eirene was exiled to Athens where she died as a nun. It may be that this garbled account contains the germ of truth in that Eirene and Aetios may indeed have attempted some come-back. Just as likely, perhaps, would Eirene and Charles' ambassadors have attempted something, though it is hard to see that Aetios would have fallen in with this alliance. That there was some attempt to rally support for Eirene seems implied in the hasty way she was taken away from Prinkipo to Lesbos (29.5) probably by Theodosios Salibaras[115] who is mentioned by Theophanes later at Y.W. 6303 as having ill-treated and distressed Eirene. Evidently Nikephoros was nervous of Eirene's return, as Theophanes says he grew fearful that some should remember her benefactions and summon her to rule once more.[116]

Theophanes records that Eirene died on August 9th of the same year Y.W. 6295, that is A.D. 803, at Lesbos and her body was moved back to her monastery on Prinkipo. Philip Grierson[117] says this is confirmed by the *Necrologium* but that Version L of the *Catalogus Sepulchorum* places her sepulchre in the Mausoleum of Justinian. He believes that when the tomb of Constantine V was removed by Theodora and Michael III they may have replaced the body of Eirene as she was

> '...the Empress responsible for the restoration of images in 787 for honourable burial in the Imperial Mausoleum'.

This act may possibly account for the very curious Life of Eirene[118] which is a near copy of Theophanes' text with the addition at the end of an account of the blessings the monastery has received from the presence of her body and a plea that her body should remain with the nuns.

The fact that Eirene accepted Nikephoros' elevation and wished to spend her retirement as a nun was in accordance with comparatively recent history. Theodosios III did so when Leo III was proclaimed and was allowed to live in peace as a monk. It might be seen as a sign of feminine weakness, but was obviously in accordance with her stated views on Byzantine sovreignty set out above in her abdication speech. Although this attitude expressed the essentials of traditional Byzantine thought on the subject, few previous emperors were, in fact, content to leave the choice of successor to God alone. Whether Eirene's attitude was part of her celebrated piety or whether she was suffering from a menopausal depression and unable or unwilling to make such a major decision is impossible to determine. With the example of Theodosios III in such recent history, however, one cannot describe this attitude as essentially a feminine one.

Later historians indulge in the *topos* of Eirene eking out a meagre living by spinning at Mytilene[119] which seems to be an effort by male historians to put her finally and firmly in her place, an essentially feminine one.

NOTES TO EIRENE AND HOME AFFAIRS

1. 'La Vie de S. Philarète' ed. and trans. M-H Fourmy et M. Leroy, *Byzantion* IX(Brussels 1934). pp. 85-170

2. 'Letters of S. Theodore of Studion' Migne, *P.G.* 99 letter No.7 coll. 929-934

3. Modern Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Jugoslavia, parts of Italy including all Sicily, parts of Romania and Russia.

4. This is discussed fully in the section dealing with Eirene's relationship with the Church.

5. Charisma in early Christian writing was specifically the gift of Grace, bestowed on a particular person. See Max Weber *On Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago 1968) esp. pp. 46-65.

6. Paul Speck *Kaiser Konstantin VI* (Munich 1978) esp. pp. 63-72.

7. Theoph. p. 438. 2-17

8. The whole passage is in Theoph. p. 466 1-25 and p. 467 17-20.

9. Theoph. p. 466. 1-3

10. ibid. 11-14

11. Theoph. p. 464. 17-18 and p. 466. 19-20.

12. Theoph. 445. 12-14

13. Theoph. p. 454. 13-15

14. ibid. 1-5 Ῥωμαίων βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντῖνος σὺν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ ἔτη ι΄. α΄

15. Vie S. Philarète pp. 134/5. and see Michael the Syrian p. 2.

'En l'an 1092 Léon mourut, et son fils Constantinus commenca à régner. Comme c'était un enfant de 12 ans, sa mère Irène gouvernait, et était proclamée avec lui.

16. The celebration of this feast is said to date from about the end of the seventh century. See H. Graef *'Mary' A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (London 1963) particularly p. 142 and pp. 150-3

17. See the Appendix on Ikons.

18. Theoph. p. 454 8-9 '... ὡς ἄν θαυμαστωθῇ ὁ θεος καὶ ἐν τούτῳ διὰ γυναικὸς χήρας καὶ παιδὸς ὀρφανοῦ ...'

19. Theoph. 449 11-14. Theophanes mentions in this passage that the money was for '... τὸν λαὸν καὶ τοὺς ἐν τῇ πόλει ...' the latter is occasionally used for the circus factions as well as the ordinary citizens - clearly here a prelude to the demand for his son Constantine to be made co-Emperor.

20. There is an extensive description of a funeral of Saint Macrina; see *Vie de Sainte Macrine* ed. and trans. Pierre Maraval, Sources Chrètiennes 178 (Paris 1971).

21. Theoph. p. 451 25-27.

22. See Averil Cameron 'Notes on the Sophiae, the Sophianae, and the Harbour of Sophia. *Byzantion* XXXVII (Brussels 1968) pp. 11-20

23. Theoph. p. 463 24-25

24. see Ecloga para. 6, p. 13.

25. Theoph. p. 457. 6-11

26. Particularly line 11 '...ὑπέστρεψεν ἐν... 'κατῆλθε' in line 10 is singular.

27. Theoph. p. 457 20 ff.

28. Theoph. p. 458 11-20

29. The use of the 1st person plural when an Emperor is addressing the crowd is attested as late as the famous series of questions and answers between the Colours and Justinian via the Mandator, see Theoph. Y.W. 6024 p. 181

30. This letter appears in Mansi XII col. 984-6

31. The Emperor as priest-king was allowed in the Sanctuary, but the normal place for women was in the chapel of the catechumens, but the centre of the gallery was traditionally reserved for royal ladies in Hagia Sophia.

32. There is an illustration of Constantine sitting among the bishops in the Menologion of Basil II, Rome Biblioteca Vaticana (Cod.Gr. 1613 f. 108), Eirene does not appear anywhere in this illustration. The illustration is reproduced by H.W. Haussig *A History of Byzantine Civilization* (London 1971) trans. J.M. Hussey.

33. see Mansi XIII Col. 491-496

34. A.Q.D.E. p. 75 A.D. 786. Charles sent the legates packing, though note 4 suggests 788 as another possible date.

35. Vie S. Philarète pp. 135/5-144/5

36. Paul Speck *Kaiser Konstant VI* pp. 207ff.

37. Theoph. p. 463 24-25 '...πολλὰ λυπουμένου αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ θέλοντος...'

38. Vie S. Philarete p. 141 lines 9-12 '...εὐθέως καταμετροῦσι τὸ μέτρον τὸ βασιλικὸν τὴν ἡλικίαν τῆς πρώτης καὶ εὗρον καθῶς ἔχρῃζον. θεασάμενοι καὶ τὸ λαυρᾶτον ηὗραν καὶ τοῦτο ὅμοιον,ὁμοίως καὶ τὸ τζαγκίον καταμετρήσαντες τοῦ ποδός, εὗρον ἰσόμετρου.'

39. R.F.A. pp. 14/15 A.D. 757 amongst other things he sent an organ.

40. This term was a transliteration of the Latin *baiulus/bajulus* a letter carrier originally becomes a court tutor with administrative duties in western kingdoms. See D.A. Bulloch 'The career of Abbot Waldo' *E.H.R.* 77 October 1962 pp. 628-631 esp. p. 629.

41. Theoph. p. 464 25. '...καὶ κρατῆσαι αὐτον τὸ βασίλειον μετὰ τῆς ἰδίας μητρός.' This is omitted in the Migne edition.

42. Migne *P.G.* 99 letter 181. coll 1560

43. The word τὸ σύνολον seems to indicate a general consensus, but may perhaps refer to the placemen in the Senate who were content to form a 'silent majority' with the ascendant faction, but were equally happy to acquiesce with any other faction should that one appear to hold the balance of power.

44. Theoph. p. 466 1-3.

45. Theoph. p. 464 15-16

46. See 6 in chronology. Eirene was following Leo's tactics which had set the foundation for a much needed period of peace after the campaigns of his father. Neither Leo, presumably for health reasons, nor Eirene were able to command the troops personally, so both were obliged to make a virtue of necessity. Thus all the more unacceptable, perhaps, for Eirene if she suspected that her son wished to try his strength at the head of the army.

47. Theoph. p. 451/2. 27-2

48. See Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's journey to the Sublime Porte in *The Admirable Lady Mary* Lewis Gibbs (London 1964). Also cf. *Sobornost* 6:1 1984. obituary of Bishop Popov, p. 52, esp. note 8.

49. This marriage is mentioned in Vie S. Philarète pp. 142/3 lines 20-5. The King of the Lombards is called Argousis but was in fact Grimoald. See the translators' commentary p. 106-7, and M.G.H.III. p. 201, though here the name Euanthia has been somewhat clumsily transliterated into Wantia.

50. See M. Psellus *14 Byzantine Rulers* trans. E.R.A.Sewter (London 1966) p. 65.

51 See J.B. Bury 'The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century' *Proceedings of the British Academy, Supplemental Papers I* (London 1911) p. 60.

52. See note 46 above and the chronology at No. 6.

53. Theoph. p. 464. 15

54. Bury 'Imperial Administrative System' p. 57

55 de Boor notes a var. lect. here quoting Anastasius' *Bibliotheka* 'principem et imperatorem laudarunt et acclamerunt'. p. 466. note 7

56. This is a particularly ambiguous piece of text and could either mean that Eirene tried to dismiss the army or that she allowed Constantine out of his house arrest. Theoph. 466 20-21 'φοβηθεῖσα δὲ Εἰρήνη τὸ ὅρμημα τοῦ λαοῦ ἀπέλυσεν αὐτόν.' The Latin text in Migne gives ' Quare exercitus impetum Irene formidans filium tandem dimisit.'

57. Theoph. p. 466. 28

58. Theoph. p. 467. 1-4

59. Even after her abdication Eirene's usurping successor Nikephoros, who had been her finance minister, did not know the exact whereabouts of her personal treasure.

60. Theoph. p. 465. 10-11

61. '... παρακληθεὶς ὁ βασιλευς ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας μητρὸς καὶ πολλῶν τῶν ἐν τέλει ἀναλογορεύει αὐτὴν πάλιν,'

62. There must have been frequent meetings, how else could Constantine have been able to meet and then form an attachment to Theodote, his mother's lady-in-waiting?

63. It seems possible that Eirene was still living in Eleutherios and Constantine at St. Mamas at this time. The sons of Constantine V were mutilitated at St. Mamas, he was on his way to St. Mamas when he had to escape from his mother's conspirators (23.6). There had been a disastrous fire caused by an earthquake in December 6283 (19.1)

which destroyed part of the Patriarch's apartments including his library, the quaestorium and all the buildings as far as the Milion; the Imperial embroidery workshops next to the goldsmithy was ravaged by lightning at Christmas 6285 (20.3). It could be that part of the Great Palace was turned over to the use of the Patriarch and the quaestorium officials, as well as providing other space for the silk embroiderers and goldsmiths. Even in the vastness of the Great Palace it might have felt overcrowded, Constantine may have wished for more privacy, felt safer and preferred the higher ground of St. Mamas.

64. It is also possible that Eirene may have intervened and shielded most of the guard, as she shielded the monks later, from Constantine's anger. If they were indeed loyal to her personally she would have every reason to persuade Constantine into making an example of one ringleader and sparing the rest.

65. Constantine only overcame the Armeniakoi in the end with the help of the Armenians who then promptly surrendered a border fort to the Arabs as Constantine was insufficiently grateful.

66. see John Mavrogordato *Digenes Akrites* (Oxford 1956) pp. xiv, xxxi, xxxii and lxiv and see genealogy of Digenes on p. 254.

67. see John Chrysostom *'Lettres à Olympias'* lettre XVII, pp. 206-15 Sources Chrétiennes (Paris 1971). and lettre XII esp. p. 185.

68. The Armenians have continued to suffer at the hands of all their neighbours and the current protest movement only calls attention to the continued hostility they encounter on all sides. See W.M. Ramsay *Impressions of Turkey* (London 1897) pp. 190-219 for a contemporary account of the Turkish massacres.

69. Theoph. p. 469. 8

70. It has not proved possible to identify this fort.

71. There is a letter written to Eirene and Euphrosyne implying that

Eirene was the older of the two, this is discussed fully in the chapter on Euphrosyne.

72. Two later instances may be compared, Theophano, first wife of Leo VI, already depressed by the death of her daughter and apparently unable to have more children, complained of Leo's callous behaviour to her confessor, St. Euthymios; the Macedonian Empress Zoe's third husband Constantine IX Monomachos had a mistress, Sclerina, on account of whom Psellus remarks that Zoe was too old to harbour resentment, though he plainly sees Constantine's open infatuation as a scandal that Zoe ought to resent.

73. Y.W. 6281 Theoph. p. 463. 24-26

74. One is reminded of Queen Victoria and her eldest son Edward, Prince of Wales whose position while his mother was alive was similar.

75. Theoph. p. 469/70. 30-1. Theodore of Studion refers to the Theologian in his letter to Plato on the subject of Constantine's marriage, cf. Migne *P.G.* 99. col. 905.

76. Charlemagne, their direct contemporary, was by then married for a fourth time. His first wife Himiltrude was put away at his mother's insistence in order that he could marry Desiderata, daughter of the Lombard King. She, in turn, was divorced and sent back when her father was exiled. Charles married three more times after this, though each of these three ladies pre-deceased him.

77. Theodote was the niece of Theodore of Studion.

78. Theoph. p. 470. 5-7

79. Migne *P.G.* 121 coll. 908C

80. ibid. 'Εἰ μὴ τοῦτο γένηται τοὺς ναοὺς τῶν εἰδώλων ἀνοίγω'. Did he really mean to reject Christianity outright and reinstate pagan worship, or is this a veiled threat of iconoclasm?

81. Theoph. p. 471.8 '...ἐξῆλθεν ὁ βασιλευς συν τῇ μητρί αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ Προύσῃ θερμίσας.'

82. This comment ceases to be valid once the great border families are in the ascendant, but at this time they were only just emerging.

83. Theoph. p. 486. 23-26

84. See Note 16 in the section on foreign policy - Amorion was a strategically important town.

85. R.G.A. Buxton 'Blindness and Limits: Sophocles and the Logic of Myth'. *J.H.S.* Vol. C. 1980 pp. 22-37 esp. p. 26-27. 'Any attempt to infringe, or call into question, or render ambiguous the boundary between gods and men is potentially dangerous, as it puts in jeopardy one of the most fundamental category-distinctions in terms of which Greek culture is organised. A large number of Greek myths explore such dangerous situations, and a significant number of them involve blindness or blinding.'

Also see George Devereux who sees blinding as symbolic castration cf. 'The Self Blinding of Oidipous in Sophocles' *Oidipous Tyrannos*' *J.H.S.* XCIII (1973) pp. 36-49 and *Dreams in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 1976) p. 34/5 where he says 'Psycho-analytically, Freud's equating Oidipous' self-blinding with self-castration is conclusively validated by the fact that whereas in one tradition (Hom. *Il. 9* 453ff) the 'incestuous Phoinix is cursed with sterility ("castration"), in another version he is blinded E (Phoinix) fr. 816N^2; Apollod. 3.13.8; etc. Bryas is blinded by the girl he had raped (Paus. 2.20.2) etc.'

86. But there are instances of women rulers in Hellenistic times who murdered their way to supreme power. See Grace Harriet Macurdy *Hellenistic Queens - a Study of Woman-Power in Macedonian, Seleucid Syria and Ptolemaic Egypt* (Oxford 1932)

87. Exodus 21. 23-25 or Deut. 19.21 'And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Also see Deut. 21. 18-21 concerning a rebellious son who shall be stoned to death.

88. Isaac II ruled 1203 -1204 , he had been deposed and blinded, but recalled in desperation after his brother was deposed.

89. Christopher Hill *The World Turned Upside Down* (London 1975 ed.) p. 368.

90. see note 85

91. *Od.* 11. 432-4 and 456

92. I am greatly obliged to Mrs. J. March for these references which form part of her Ph.D. thesis. U.C.L. 1985.

93. She had tried to enter the sanctuary when Nestorius was Patriarch on the grounds that she was the mystic counterpart of the Virgin on earth, Nestorius was shocked to the core and was very firm about refusing her entry. Cf. Holum '*Theodosian Empresses*' p. 153

94. *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* ed. and trans. J.B. Chabot Vol. III (Paris 1899). pp.12

95. M. *P.G.* 158. Colls. 529-32

96. M. *P.G.* 121 coll. 900

97. ibid.

98. Only eight months after Eirene was deposed he made a bid for the throne.

99. Possibly he could be the same man released by Charles in A.D. 798 who was the brother of Patriarch Tarasios.

100. First in order of preference above all military commanders, except that of the Anatolikon theme. cf. Bury *Administration* pp. 50-51

101. Theoph. p. 444

102. Theoph. p. 478

103. M. *P.G.* 99.colls. 929-933

104. Theoph. p. 475

105. ibid. Recorded by Theophanes under Y.W. 6293

106. Theoph. p. 475. 27-30

107. *R.F.A.* p. 118

108. Theoph. p. 474

109. Theoph. p. 451

110. see Bury *Administration* p. 85. He must have been the chief financial officer for the Armeniakon theme.

111. M. *P.G.* 121. Coll. 912

112. Theoph. p. 476. The guards were persuaded that Eirene had named Nikephoros because Aetios was going to force her to proclaim his brother Leo.

113. Theoph. p. 477. 24-26

114. p. 12-13 'Il commença à régner en l'an 1114. Il tenait en grand honneur l'impératrice Irène et l'eunuque Aetius. Or, ceux-ci se disposèrent à le faire massacrer par quelques moines. Leur projet ayant été dévoilé, Irène fut envoyée en exil à Athènes, où elle mourut religieuse.'

115. Theoph. p. 491 where he met his end at the hands of the Krum of Bulgaria.

116. Theoph. p. 479 4-10

117. 'Tombs and Obits' p. 33

118. Warren T. Treadgold has edited and translated this 'Life' and kindly sent me a copy, in advance of publication.

119. George Finlay *History of the Byzantine Empire from 716 to 1057* p. 80 in Everyman edition London (1935). He states this as a fact, but gives no reference!

Eirene's economic policy

There is very little evidence about Eirene's economic policy in the available texts. A fulsome letter of thanks is extant from St.Theodore of Studion[1] for the remission of taxes that occurred in 801 and there is Theophanes' lengthy account of the new arragements made by Nikephoros (but not till 810) for taxing, and reorganising the judiciary and reducing the rich and powerful who had risen during Leo IV's reign and that of Eirene [2]. It is possible from these to begin to reconstruct some idea of Eirene's policies and we are further helped by stray comments in the Life of S. Philaretos and by some Arab texts[3]. Also there is what we can glean from Theophanes' account of Eirene's reign. Some little evidence from archaeology is extant in that there are churches where construction can be dated to this period and some references to artistic activity which presuppose patrons wealthy enough to afford to pay craftsmen. Coin hoards are of limited use as evidence, but do give some indications of trends[4]. Some idea about conditions on the land can be formed from 'The Farmers' Law'[5] and from the comments in the Life of S . Philaretos where it can be seen that very large tracts of land were owned by one family at the same time as tiny smallholdings by peasant farmers, all, nevertheless, subject to a hearth tax and a property tax. It is also evident from both these texts that farmers were not tied to the land; the Russian concept of serfdom had no place at this time in the Byzantine Empire, though, of course, slavery existed. Even at his lowest financial ebb S . Philaretos had two slaves. The Farmers' Law also indicates that impoverished landowners could allow others to work the land while retaining nominal control, which is again borne out by what happened to S. Philaretos.

Leo III and Constantine V had, by a fierce system of taxation,[6] amassed a considerable fortune, most of which must have been hidden away somewhere in the Great Palace. This provided a reservoir of money and valuables, use of which enabled both Leo IV and Eirene to further their designs[7]. Although Constantine V died on campaign, the troops were withdrawn from Thrace and no further campaigns were mounted there until Constantine VI ventured forth in 791. The money inherited from Constantine V was, therefore, not used in further warfare by Leo IV

except for his brief sortie against the Arabs in 777/8. This was a successful effort and, through the booty and prisoners taken, might well have paid for itself. The other campaigns in Asia Minor were merely defensive and of a somewhat minor nature, although the fortress of Semalous was eventually taken on terms in September 779. The Arab sources refer to this campaign[8] providing a convenient exchange and ransom of prisoners captured in previous campaigns by each side.

During Leo's brief reign he had few other major expenses. His father had imported craftsmen to repair the aqueduct of Valens and other buildings, particularly in Thrace and Leo had settled the Paulicians from Syria there. It may, therefore, be inferred that with this new blood the land was once again being cultivated, flocks and herds being built up and so producing wealth for the Empire. Leo's major expense was increasing the numbers of the Imperial guard and creating a secure base to ensure the succession by promoting and rewarding those whom he thought would be loyal to him. No doubt the arrangements for his son's crowning included substantial elements of financial rewards, both to the factions and to the army, one might also infer gifts of land or other property to those members of the Senate whose loyalty needed reward. It seems possible that some of the wealthy and powerful people whom Nikephoros wished to reduce may have had their fortunes founded at this time[9]. It is expenditure of this kind that may lie behind Theophanes' remark that at the start of his reign Leo began to make use of his father's money.[10]

Thus, at the start of their joint reign, Constantine and Eirene inherited not only the remainder of Constantine V's fortune, but also a peaceful country which was steadily regaining its prosperity and, as a result, in a position to contribute to the State finances. It should be remembered that there was still a distinction between the personal fortune of the Emperor and the State's own finances, though this distinction might become blurred from time to time when the need arose[11]. Eirene removed this remaining treasure of Constantine from the Great Palace to her own palace of the Eleutherios when she had built it, perhaps some of it was even used to pay for this building, undoubtedly some of it was used at a later stage of her reign to bribe her spies in Constantine's court and to persuade some of the officers of the army to support her cause against her son.[12]

Although it is reasonable to suppose that Eirene's joint reign started off with a considerable reserve of money, there seems evidence albeit slender, that taxation continued to bring in substantial sums. In 795 Constantine donated the tax on the trade fair at Ephesos to St. John which amounted to 100 lbs. of gold[13]. The letter of St. Theodore of Studion rejoicing over the remission of taxes mentions specifically a death duty payable by soldiers' widows as well as various trades and professions, all of whom had to pay a tax on their goods or services. That these were payable in currency seems evident from the story Theophanes tells about a candlemaker who paid Nikephoros 100 lbs in gold for tax[14], though St. Theodore quotes the fisherman who has had the luck to land three fish no longer has to hand over one as tax, an indication perhaps that taxes were also paid in kind. The Farmers' Law indicates that payments between farmers or landlord and tenant were also paid in kind and it could be inferred that some taxes might also be paid thus[15].

Although we cannot tell how prosperous the country was from the issue of coins[16], Eirene took the trouble to issue at least three different designs on her coins[17]. Of course, this was a useful and necessary means of publicity, but both gold, silver and bronze coins were issued by her even though to judge by the number of her husband's coins surviving[18] there was a fair amount of currency still circulating. Though the last ten years of her reign when natural disasters as well as Arab incursions must have been a considerable drain on the Imperial treasury, Eirene was able to issue coin in all three metals during her sole reign. It may be that some of these issues were commemmorative ones, either for a special occasion such as the thanksgiving for her recovery from a severe illness in 799, or the special Easter consular donative of the same year. Were the surviving coins to be special issues, there may have been comparatively few of them and the special nature of the issue could even account for the accident of their survival; they would be particularly treasured by the recipients and possibly hoarded. The fact that Eirene was succeeded by her finance minister Nikephoros makes the earlier part of his reign particularly interesting for the light it can shed on Eirene's policy. It is usual for historians to say that his imposition of taxes and the Treasury acting as a loan company indicate that Eirene ran the State out of money.

This cannot be so as Nikephoros' imposition of new taxes and re-imposition of those remitted by Eirene in March 801 did not occur until 810, with a further increase on the tax paid by religious houses the following year[19]. Those taxes were needed to recoup not only the 1,100 lbs of gold captured by the Bulgars in 808-9, but also the military paychest of the Armeniakoi of 1,300 lbs gold (or 93,600 nomismata) lost in 811. However, Treadgold[20] suggests that tax evasion occurred on a large scale in Eirene's later reign on the part of the rich, the bureaucracy, as well as the churches and monasteries. Possibly Nikephoros merely made sure that the taxes were paid in full. Even so, these new taxes were also needed for the campaigns which Nikephoros continued to wage against the Bulgars and which culminated in his death and subsequent death of his son, as well as the payment of tribute exacted by the Arabs of 30,000 nomismata.

It may be helpful here to consider for what purposes Eirene needed large sums of money. These purposes can be divided into two, those continuing expenses which may have varied from year to year but nevertheless needed a certain basic sum set aside, for example, defending the borders or the civil administration; the other expenses were of a limited nature and were not likely to be recurring, for example, the repair of buildings destroyed by fire, earthquake or the ravages of war, or the occasional exchange of diplomatic gifts.

Defence

There was a certain continuing expense in the upkeep of a permanent army. While Leo III had seen the advantage of keeping the army in sections administered by theme generals and to some extent keeping the numbers down, only recruiting when necessary, the campaigns waged by Constantine V must have seen a rise in the numbers. Leo IV increased the number of the Imperial guard, recruiting from the themes, so Eirene inherited a substantial commitment to army pay. Treadgold gives estimates for army pay in the time of Theodora[21] and estimates back from this time to the reign of Eirene. This is the purest guesswork, as he admits, and may be more misleading than helpful, but it is a rough guide. Apart from the continuing need for money for army pay, there was also the upkeep of border forts creating a need for money. Whether the upkeep of forts fell on the local people entirely or on the State,

the walls needed repair, the provisions in case of siege had to be bought and the supply of defensive weapons had to be maintained. Local taxation may have supplied these needs, but there seem to be indications that the State, even the Imperial treasury, provided money and craftsmen for the repair of the forts. There is specific mention of the repair of border forts in Thrace twice, first time when Constantine and Eirene were on a rebuilding 'royal progress'[22] and the second[23] was when Constantine was on campaign during his sole reign in 792.

Defence can also be achieved by diplomatic means and Eirene was alive to the advantages of this early in her reign. The betrothal negotiated between Constantine and Rotrud, Charlemagne's daughter, must have been sealed with suitable gifts. Constantine V sent an organ to Pippin when he was negotiating for one of Pippin's daughters for Leo; Eirene, Leo's widow would hardly have sent inferior gifts, though there are no records of what was sent either in the Frankish sources or the Greek ones. Silk embroidery, a royal monopoly still at this time[24] was highly prized in the west and in 768 Constantine V used 2,500 silk robes to ransom the prisoners captured by Slav pirates. One may guess perhaps that robes suitable for court wear were given to Rotrud as part of the negotiations[25]. As Elissaeus the scribe was left behind to teach Rotrud Greek, he may have had with him some manuscripts to present to Charles as well as suitable exercises for teaching the language. Charles was always keen to acquire treasure, useful in rewarding loyal subjects rather than gifts of land[26] and it may be that gold was included in the gifts. Whatever form the gifts took, the value would have been commensurate with the dignity of Constantine VI, the ruler of the Byzantine Empire.

Buying off one's enemies took more than one form and Eirene was forced to pay tribute to the Arabs in 782. E.W. Brooks[27] estimates that she was obliged to pay 70,000 nomismata in December and June each year for three successive years. It appears, however, from the Arab sources that this tribute was paid partly in kind, one source[28] mentioning gold, silver and goods, and another gold and silk garments, and possibly in a later year, 30,000 lbs. of goats' wool as well as Arab currency and Byzantine gold.

It is claimed by Ostrogorsky[29] that tribute was paid to the Bulgars by Constantine VI in 792 after his defeat and ignominious retreat. He says in note 4:

> 'In spite of Runciman *Bulgarian Empire* 49, it is clear from Theophanes 6288 (=795/6) that Constantine VI paid tribute to the Bulgars as Bury *E.R.E.* 339 so rightly states, to all appearances the obligation to pay tribute dated from the defeat of 792'

Theophanes makes no mention of any tribute agreement in 792, but as the Bulgars had captured the court and the entire Imperial retinue as well as the baggage train, money and horses, it may well be that Constantine negotiated ransom arrangements. The reference to Y.W. 6288 by no means makes it clear that Constantine had paid tribute up to that time, the inference more reasonably is that Constantine called the Khan's bluff in demanding either tribute or the invasion and devastation of Thrace, and indeed, he proved that Khan Kardamos could not carry out his threat.

It seems plain that when the Emperor rode at the head of his army he carried the payroll with him, but if there was an engagement or a series of engagements such as there must have been around all the borders then the army pay may have been a different matter. A sidelight on what may have happened is shed by Constantine VII Porphyrogennitos in *De Administrando Imperio*[30] where he tells the story about the patrician Narses, sent to be strategos of Beneventum and Pavia. He had spent the tribute collected for the treasury on the army, sending a letter of explanation, he said 'I expect rather, that money should be sent to me from your side, since I have exhausted all the revenues incoming from here upon the fighting that has broken out, but, on the contrary it is you who are demanding revenues from here'. The Empress's reply was to send him a spindle and distaff saying 'Take these, your proper instruments; for we have judged it fit that you should spin, rather than that as a man at arms you should defend and guide and do battle for the Romans'. One takes leave to doubt the truth of the details, illuminating though they might be as to Eirene's temperament, but the proportion of responsibility between the treasury and the local armies may always have been a matter of negotiation depending on the severity of the situation on any particular border.

It is only fair to point out that during Constantine's sole reign, including the time when he reinstated his mother but was effectively in control of the Empire, he inaugurated several campaigns against both Bulgars and Arabs. From the point of view of keeping the threat of invasion and devastation at bay he was successful, but his actual engagements with the Bulgars ended in both sides retreating or in disaster, even so, the Bulgars were not able to interfere in a major way with the peaceful life of the Thracians. Although his engagements with the Arabs were slightly more successful than those with the Bulgars the Arab lightning raids into Asia Minor continued and must have disrupted agriculture and trade to a considerable extent at certain times. However, as has been pointed out above, Ephesos produced 100 lbs. of gold in tax at one trade fair[31]. Eirene's expenditure on aggressive campaigns should be distinguished from Constantine's, as has been pointed out in the previous section on foreign policy. She preferred to negotiate where possible. This is not to say that the net result of a warlike policy set against a negotiating policy was necessarily more or less expensive. It is doubtful if the citizens of any village found the depredations of a Byzantine army quartered on them, or even passing through, any less inpoverishing than the Arab raids, though they would not be carted off into slavery by the former. The taxes exacted to pay for tribute or diplomatic gifts may have been no different from those exacted to pay for the army or navy.

Civil Administration

Treadgold[32] lists the chief officers in the administration of Theodora and estimates their pay which comes to a total of 50,000 nomismata per year. How far the list is true of Eirene's administration is uncertain, the only officers of high rank mentioned by Theophanes for this period are the quaestor, whose house was burned down in 790, the Logothete of the Course, Staurakios, who doubled as commander in chief of the army; the Magister Peter who accompanied Staurakios and Antonios, the Domestic of the scholae on the ill fated embassy to the Arabs in 782. People holding other ranks are mentioned but it is impossible to know whether there are several of any particular rank at that time or whether one succeeded another. It must be remembered that five rulers separated the two women rulers, although less than thirty years, and that in the

previous reign there was a prolonged and extensive civil war between Michael II and Thomas the Slav which devastated large tracts of productive land on both sides of the Bosphoros. Assumptions based on Theodora's reign related back to Eirene's are, therefore, not at all reliable, but Treadgold proposes 400,000 nomismata for civil service pay in Eirene's reign[33]. What does seem to be indicated is that the number of patricians and high ranking members of the court increased in Eirene's reign, in the early part of her reign to secure her position and that of her ten year old son, then by each of them to secure his or her following during the period of Constantine's sole rule and Eirene's subsequent vying for power.

It has been noted above that the judges had to be paid an annual salary to ensure their freedom from bribery. This had been instituted by Leo III and therefore, must have been a well-established expense in the exchequer. The only alteration in the legal administration traceable to Eirene was the reduction in the number of witnesses needed for an oath[34]. One may presume that this helped the poor as their expenses should have been thus reduced in any legal transaction. The quaestor's department may have suffered considerable harm as a result of the fire in 790 which may have had to be made good. Theophanes mentions the quaestor's house, which may not have included any official quarters.

There must also have been the problem of the upkeep of the roads and the *mansii* . There had been an efficient road system in the great days of the Roman Empire, but barbarian invasions and earthquakes had disrupted what remained of this system. It is not known how far the Roman roads continued to exist in Eirene's time, but it is evident that both in Asia Minor, in Thrace, Macedonia and Greece considerable armies could move about. However, this must imply that they were kept in good repair, at least as far as the great military highways were concerned.

All these expenses mentioned above were continuing drains on the exchequer and needed to be included in each year's budget.

Non Recurring Expenses

Other expenses were of a more fluctuating nature. Ransoming

prisoners was no doubt a feature of recurrent expenditure but the extent to which the Imperial treasury was involved is not known. Wealthy families could negotiate their own terms with captors, but if villages were taken captive wholesale, as happened in Asia Minor, depopulation and resultant impoverishment of the land could become a serious problem for the government. Constantine V, as we have seen above, ransomed all those captured by Slav pirates and, according to Arab sources[35] captives were exchanged and ransomed throughout the reign of Constantine and Eirene jointly as well as in their sole reigns.

The rebuilding of cities, whether destroyed by barbarian invasions or natural causes were non-recurring expenses but essential to the better functioning of the Empire. Berrhoea and Anchialos were both rebuilt during the joint reign in 783 and it is probable that Philippopolis was refurbished. We know that churches were built in Thessalonika and may infer that those bishoprics whose clergy were represented at the Ecumenical council from Thrace and Greece had Imperial assistance for building their places of worship. This must have been thought a reasonable investment, one method of bringing about peace which, in its turn, allowed the population to increase and produce wealth for the Empire.

Personal expenditure by the Imperial family was inflated from time to time by gifts to the poor, annually at Easter and Christmas, by Eirene's palace of Eleutherios, by the celebration for the birth of Constantine's son Leo and later for the baby's funeral, though we hear of neither from Theophanes but must have occurred. We hear of a silver statue and other valuable objects made for Eirene's recovery from serious illness[36]: the re-establishment of the sanctuary of St. Euphemia[37] to house her re-discovered relics was also a non-recurring expense. Although none of these items on their own were considerable compared with the army or civil service payroll, or the Arab tribute, added together they did amount to a large sum.

This has been a brief survey of the major areas of expenditure between 780 and 802, other more minor or occasional items, sending and receiving embassies, policing and dealing with dissidents by exile or imprisonment, administering the racing at the Hippodrome, servicing the

public baths, were undoubtedly included in the estimates of the civil service, but there is no way that the proportion of these expenses can be estimated.

Revenue raised to meet these expenses came from both direct and indirect taxation. Town fairs, as we have seen, produced revenue. On the other hand, individuals paid a hearth tax, death duties and taxes on goods and services. Border towns and ports all paid import duties on goods coming into the Empire and trades also paid a tax on goods leaving the Empire. So far as the army was concerned, we know that a cavalry man was expected to provide his own mount[38] from the Life of S. Philaretos, where Mousolios, a cavalryman quartered near the saint, had the misfortune to lose his horse by an attack of colic but was given another by the Saint. Perhaps it might be inferred that a man provided his own weapons and armour from the same source.

Treadgold estimates that during the whole period income and expenditure equalled each other and ran at approximately 1,8 million nomismata yearly[39]. As has already been pointed out, this estimate is based on the estimated figures for Theodora's reign, themselves based on approximations.

From what little that can be seen, it could appear that Eirene attempted to keep expenditure as low as she decently could, while keeping the taxation system as her husband had left it. Her remission of taxes in 801 was ascribed by Michael Glykas to remorse for blinding her son;[40] it may well have been a bid to gain popularity when she feared her power was failing. On the other hand, it may have been a shrewd move to stimulate trade, the customs dues at Abydos, the main centre for the slave trading, were remitted for instance[41]. Whereas Eirene was content to spend Imperial money on tribute, Constantine spent it on waging war, but whether these were similar amounts one cannot tell. Nevertheless, they do show some difference that can be ascribed to gender. In this way, but only in this way, can one distinguish a feminine against a masculine policy.

In fact, speaking of policy, this in itself is a misnomer. We can glean no evidence of anything that can be described as a definite, thought-

out policy. There may have been one, but the sources do not describe it, we are painfully short of facts and figures. If Treadgold is right in saying that there had been large-scale evasion of taxes, which Nikephoros saw were collected in full once he was in power, this might be seen as further evidence that Eirene lost heart towards the end of her reign. She was no longer the determined and decisive woman she had been, but left much of the direction of policies to her ministers and supporters. Nevertheless, Nikephoros was her finance minister and, had the Empire needed the taxes, surely he was in a position to see that they were collected? The explanation might possibly be seen in the system of tax farming. John W. Nesbitt[42] suggests that on the evidence of double name seals - two different names on obverse and reverse and a succession of place names with indiction numbers - a system of tax farming is indicated, warehouses being allocated on a basis of auction bids. Within this system there was a strict limitation of tenure in office and an annual shuffle of personnel. It may be that these tax farmers were people who were prepared to support Eirene and so they were not over scrupulous about either collecting or paying over the amounts prescribed. It seems likely that part of her defence of the monks against her son's heavy-handedness was the remission of taxes on monasteries and churches, politically expedient at the time, but difficult to reimpose.

Neither of these reasons for discriminating in favour of certain sections of tax paying population can be ascribed to anything but currying favour in specific directions. It is not a matter of feminine rule as against masculine rule. While it is evident that the writers were not concerned about it, that very fact may argue that there was very little new about the economic policy. The situation may largely have remained stable from Constantine V to the ascent of Nikephoros to the throne, with the exception noted by Theophanes and St. Theodore of Studion of the 801 remission. If both Leo and Eirene allowed the economic policy of Constantine V to remain in force, keeping the bases of the taxes the same, encouraging productiveness in Thrace and Macedonia, then this policy can hardly be distinguished as proper to male or female rule.

NOTES TO EIRENE AND THE ECONOMY

1. M. *P.G.* 99 colls. 929-934, letter 7

2. Theoph. pp. 486-7

3. E.W. Brooks 'Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids' *J.H.S.* Vol. XV no. LX esp. pp. 734-45

4. D.M. Metcalf 'How Extensive was the Issue of Folles during the years 775-820?' *Byzantion* XXXVII (1967) pp. 270-310

5. Walter Ashburner 'The Farmers' Law' *J.H.S.* XXX (1910) pp. 85-108 (text 97-108) and *J.H.S.* XXXII (1912) pp. 68-95 translation.

6. By secularising the monasteries or taxing them; also by 740 the new taxes instituted by Leo III, the *dikateron* and the Italian taxes formerly paid to the Pope were in full swing.

7. Some idea of the extent of Constantine's treasure can be gained from the 50,000 lbs. gold he left to his sons by Eudokia.

8. Brooks art. cit. A H 163 Ibn Wadhih p. 736

9. Theoph. p. 487. 'Sixth, men who suddenly acquired wealth were examined by the generals and money was demanded of them as if they had discovered treasure. Also Theoph. p.479 'But as events showed, the tyrant's aim was not to give the poor justice, but through his court to dishonour and capture all the men in power and transfer control of all affairs.'

10. Theoph. p. 449

11. Theophanes implies that Nikephoros diverted the State money to his own treasury, see Theoph. p. 487 on the taxes levied on religious houses: 'The greater part of their wealth was carried off to the Imperial treasury'.

12 Theoph. p. 471 'she piled up gifts and promises so that she could oust her son and rule alone herself'.

13. Warren T. Treadgold 'The Byzantine State Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries' *East European Monographs* (New York 1982). Table XI - 1 lb. gold = 72 nomismata (until the eleventh century) and 1 lh gold = 6 lbs silver. Treadgold in note 13 p. 22 quotes a variety of estimates of what yearly total of nomismata could represent a living wage. They range from Ostrogorski in 1932 - 17-26 nom. yearly; Jenkins (1967) 16; or Jones who estimates 2-5 yearly for food alone in 'early Byzantine times'.

14. Theoph. pp. 487-488. This candlemaker is evidently no backyard tallow chandler, he is obviously a merchant who has risen to wealth and position which is why Nikephoros chose to humble him. Theophanes uses him as an example and quoted hurling building owners from the first to the third class so that Nikephoros could inherit.

15. Ashburner art. cit. (XXXII) p. 88 12-17 and p. 89. 19. 'If a farmer who runs away from his own field pays every year the extraordinary taxes to the public treasury let those who gather in the grapes and occupy the field be mulcted twofold'.

16. Metcalf art. cit. p. 269 points out that some scholars see a decline in the seventh to ninth centuries, but the arguments resting on numismatic evidence are open to the criticism that the series of coins were selective and more representative of the curators' interests.

17. Wroth p. 397 shows type I, Constantine and Eirene facing on the obverse with the three predecessors on reverse; p. 398 shows type 2 Constantine on <u>obverse</u> and Eirene on <u>reverse</u>; a miliareson on p. 398 shows an inscription on obverse and a cross potent on reverse; p. 400 shows a solidus with Eirene's bust on both sides.

18. Metcalf art. cit. p. 307 says 'The Four Busts' folles of Leo IV were called in and restruck (probably) by Nikephoros I but the renewal of the coinage may not have been complete'. '...the best

guess that can be made is that, at any given moment in the period 775-820 the total of Constantinopolitan folles in circulation was within the range of 10 to 50 millions ...virtually all the coins were struck at the one mint in the capital...their circulation was not very extensive geographically'.

19. However, Treadgold op. cit. p. 83 suggests that tax evasion had been on a large scale by the rich; Nikephoros merely made sure that the taxes were collected in full.

20. see p. 83

21. see p. 116, Table VII

22. Theoph. p. 457

23. Theoph. p. 467

24. see R.S. Lopez 'Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire' *Speculum* XX (1945) pp. 1ff.

25. It was also part of the tribute paid to the Arabs according to one source - see Brooks art. cit. p. 739 Kitab al'Uyun.

26. see'Muhammed and Charlemagne. A Revision' *Speculum* XVIII (1943) No.1 January p. 31, note 3.

27. Brooks art. cit. p. 738

28. Brooks art. cit. pp. 737-8 quoting Al Tabari

29. D. Ostrogorsky *The History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford 1968) trans. J. Hussey. p. 182

30. Constantine Porphyrogennitus *De Administrando Imperio* ed. Gy.Moravcsik trans. R.J.H. Jenkins, Budapest 1949) p. 114. 14-30

31. Treadgold op. cit. p. 120 estimates that 1 lb. gold = 72 nom. until

the eleventh century. On this estimate 100 lbs. gold = 7200 nom. which was slightly more than a tenth of the tribute Eirene had to pay to the Arabs.

32. Treadgold op. cit. p. 49 'despite all the imprecisions involved, an estimate of 500,000 nom. a year for the pay of all non-military government employees would probably be correct within a margin of 100,000 nom. either way'.

33. Treadgold op. cit. p. 83 'Taking into account both the smaller tax revenue and the earlier stage of growth of the beaurocracy, the rough estimate of 500,000 nom. for the pay of civil servants under Theodora might be lowered to a rounded estimate of 400,000 under Eirene'.

34. *Ecloga* pp. 266-269

35. Brooks art. cit. see pp. 734. A H Ibn Wadhih; and p. 740 A H 169; p. 742 A H 187 Al Tabari

36. Cyril Mango *Art of Byzantine Empire. Documents and Sources* (Englewood Cliffs N.J. 1972) pp. 156-7

37. Theophanes mentions this at the stage when Constantine V threw the chest containing the relics of St. Euphemia into the sea - Y.W. 6258 Theoph. pp. 349-40.

38. Life of S. Philaretos p. 127, 3-26

39. Treadgold op. cit. see Table X, p. 119

40. M. *P.G.* 158 Colls. 529-32 'Overcome with remorse over what she had done and wishing to wash herself clean of the hatred, emptied the City's treasury of money and paid off debts'.

41 Bury *E.R.E.* p. 217 VII but also see note 3 on that page.

42. John W. Nesbitt. 'Double Names on Early Byzantine Lead Seals'.

Dumbarton Oaks Papers 31 (1977) pp. 111-121. P. 115/6 note 20 says: 'A feature of seals dating from the 6th and early 7th centuries is that the reverse is blank. The obverse carries a bust of the reigning emperor. Below are the name and titles of the *kommerkiarios* to whom the seal belonged. Similar seals are found dating from the later 7th and 8th centuries. All bear on the reverse the imprint of burlap, indicating that these seals certainly were attached to sacks of merchandise. It is difficult to believe that such seals served merely to attest the inspection of merchandise. A more likely explanation, it seems to me, is that their principal function was to mark the payment of imposts.'

Eirene's relationship with the Church

Of prime importance to any ruler in Byzantium was the relationship between ruler and patriarch. The Patriarch of Constantinople was, by this time, the most important member of the Christian church for all day to day dealings; the Pope was regarded more in the light of a one man court of appeal, but by now the relationship between the two parts of the Christian church was far less close and even more distinctive. Since Constantine I there had been a continual exertion of pressure between State, represented by the ruler and Church represented by the Patriarch, as to which should be in the ascendant. As has been pointed out in Chapter I the see-saw between Church and State rocked continually up and down, to some extent dependent on the personalities of ruler and patriarch and the extent to which personal beliefs transcended politics, that is, the extent to which either party insisted on imposing their beliefs or prejudices on the other and the extent to which those beliefs coincided with those of the general populace. Leo III, the founder of the Isaurian dynasty to which Eirene and Constantine belonged, had been quite clear in his mind as to who was in the ascendant, 'I am priest and king' he wrote to the Pope and his clear lead was followed by his son Constantine V. Thus, Leo IV and his wife Eirene inherited a firmly established and recognised balance of power in the royal favour. Leo, in fact, inherited his father's Patriarch, Niketas the Slav, appointed by Constantine on 16th November, 767[1] after the exile and disgrace of Patriarch Constantine; it was Niketas who married Leo to Eirene in 770 and officiated at the crowning of Constantine VI in 776. At this last ceremony he must have given his approval, perhaps tacitly, to Eirene being named as co-ruler with the then five year old Constantine VI in the event of Leo's death. Leo called the tune and the Patriarch made the appropriate actions. Although the chief point of contact between ruler and church was the patriarch, we see very clearly from the actions of Constantine V and from Eirene, that the monks formed their own individual and often overtly independent element of the orthodox church[2]. As Peter Brown has pointed out[3] the monks were often more closely in touch with the poorer members of the community, whether in town or country, than the priests. After Constantine V had suppressed so many monasteries and forbidden the establishment of new ones, there must have been a large number of ex-monks and nuns who were disaffected

and provided a reservoir of hostility to the government, irrespective of the question of ikon veneration. Constantine V was more concerned with production of crops and reproduction of people when destroying monasteries, the question of ikon veneration, though it may have been important in some closures, was not the main point of the operation. Once Leo IV had allowed exiles to return and had tacitly allowed some monasteries to be refounded, any monastic opposition to the rulers was easier to organise; if one abbot gained a reputation for special holiness, he was in a position to rally support among other houses and could become a powerful voice for them in dealing with the emperor. Moreover, their influence was felt all over the Empire. Those who had chosen exile after the suppressions had gone to parts of the realm where the emperor's edicts were harder to put into force[4]. They cannot have remained silent about their arrival in any locality and, one must presume, would only stay where they were welcome, enhancing and strengthening the religious life of those with whom they stayed. Any ruler disregarded the monks at his peril. Monks had their fingers on the pulse of the poorer elements in the population and maintained contacts with the common people at all corners of the Empire.

Maintaining a firm grip on the power of the patriarch as well as maintaining friendly relations with the monks was a necessary pre-occupation of successive rulers throughout the life of the Byzantine Empire. The views and aims of the monks did not necessarily coincide with those of the higher clergy, nor did the latter's views always coincide with their patriarch. It will be seen that Eirene had to keep a balance among these conflicting forces, not helped to any extent by the complaisant Patriarch Tarasios, who bent whichever way the wind blew. He was an academic theologian, happy to discuss the niceties of ikon veneration with other clerics but unprepared to leave the peace of his study for the clash of Imperial politics. There were three domestic crises in which Tarasios might have played a major role, but in which he only exerted his influence in one. These were church orthodoxy with the veneration of ikons, the tangled matrimonial affairs of Constantine and the question of Eirene's sole rule with the related problem of the succession. The first of these was the only one in which he played a major part, perforce, and in this one sees the hand of Eirene firmly manoeuvring the initial stages: first his actual appointment to the

Patriarchate and then arrangements for the two venues for the ecumenical councils and the security of the second after the debâcle of the first.

The issue of ikon veneration and Eirene's part in resolving the problem must necessarily be discussed, but it should not be assumed that her public and private views coincided. The Patriarch Paul had brought the matter into the open in a way that could not be ignored or conveniently postponed. Eirene's problem was to reconcile the political considerations of allowing the publicity and increasing support for ikon veneration to be given full rein with what seem to be her personal views. It must be remembered that Eirene came from Athens at the age of sixteen to marry. She disembarked at the palace of the Hieria, the venue of Constantine V's icnonclastic council, and it was three days later that she was taken across the Bosphoros to Constantinople. She might have taken an oath or given some undertaking that she would adhere to the council's edicts in this palace[5]. Her betrothal took place three months before the wedding, during which time she, no doubt, was instructed in court etiquette, but also must naturally have come under the influence of her future father in law, Constantine V. An impressionable sixteen year old at the court of Constantine V could not help but absorb the general tone. There is no reason to suppose, therefore, that Eirene was anything but iconoclastic as was her husband. Had she been so keen to restore the ikons themselves, she would have seen to it that the gifts she made to the churches after the 787 Council were ikons, that the churches she built had ikonic decoration and even the coinage might have reflected the liberation of worship. The records are admittedly sparse, but they do not show that these things happened. It is assumed that she replaced the image of Christ over the Chalke Gate, it was there for Leo V to pull down again, but there is no record of when it was restored in the first place. It may have been seen as an act of penance on behalf of the Isaurian dynasty for Eirene to replace the image and an astute means of identifying herself with the women of the city who had protested at its destruction in the first place. Replacing the image was a public act of piety and recognition of the will of the church and people.

The church of St. Eirene in Constantinople, rebuilt by Constantine V after the earthquake of 740, still contains the mosaic cross in the apse which was evidently never replaced. One might have expected Eirene to

have replaced it with a figure of the Virgin. In the church of St. Sophia at Salonika, built by Eirene, the apse had a gold cross originally, though it has now been replaced with a Virgin seated holding the Child Who has His arms outstretched[6]. References to the gifts made to the churches by Constantine and Eirene include 'rich veils and curtains, a crown, liturgical vessels and mosaic panels with portraits of the two imperial donors making their offerings ...' Robin Cormack mentions the production and display of portrait ikons being produced at the monastery of St. John Studios, there being twenty four such ikons around A.D. 800. While she may have supported the Studite monks and encouraged their return from exile, the fact that they were producing ikons does not necessarily mean that Eirene shared their wish to venerate them. The only extant piece of evidence we have here that Eirene publicly acknowledged the use of ikons comes from a lead seal in the British Library collection which shows her with Constantine jointly holding a banner with a device on it which may be a saint[7]. This is the only royal seal of Eirene and Constantine in the British Library collection, of course, there may be others in the, as yet uncatalogued, collections in America, there are none in the Schlumberger catalogue for those in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

At no time, so far as the surviving coins show, did Eirene consider putting an ikon on the reverse of her coins. At the start of their joint reign, she and her son were on the obverse and their three predecessors on the reverse, a clear indication of dynastic succession[8]. Another solidus shows a still beardless Constantine on the obverse and Eirene on the reverse[9]. A silver coin shows a cross potent on three steps on obverse and both rulers' names on the reverse[10], this design was used during both Constantine V's reign and the brief one of Artavasdos when he usurped Constantine V . Interestingly, a follis (No. 9 in Wroth) shows Eirene on the <u>obverse</u> and Constantine's bust over a bar resting on the M on the <u>reverse</u>. Once Eirene ruled alone, the extant coins show on a solidus her bust on both obverse and reverse[11] and on the follis her bust is on the obverse and the reverse has only the M, but with three crosses on the left of the M and three 'N's on the right. Wroth comments in a footnote[12] that this is unlikely to be a date but agrees with Paul Lambros (cf. *Rev. Num.* 1859 p. 210) that it may represent Χριστὲ Νίκα/Χριστὸς Νικᾷ. One is at liberty to argue

here that the use of the cross accords with iconoclastic practice but more particularly with Isaurian coin types, Eirene was certainly a dynast first and foremost.

No mention of the argument about ikons is made by the monk Niketas in the Life of St. Philaretos. It has always been assumed that the Empress Maria, and later her daughter Euphrosyne were iconophile, but these assumptions rest on slender evidence. The Empress Maria was in correspondence with Theodore of Studion as to whether she should join her daughter in the palace when Euphrosyne married Michael II[13]. If she was a correspondent of the Abbot it does not make her an iconophile. Theodore took her part in the divorce, even to breaking communion with the Patriarch over it, though his objections were rather to Constantine's remarriage than to the divorce and tonsuring Maria. In Euphrosyne's case the fact that two candidates in the bride show she organised for her stepson, Theophilos, were iconophile, the nun Kassia and the successful candidate Theodora, does not make her necessarily iconophile, we do not know who the other candidates were. As will be discussed more fully later, Theodora was a reluctant restorer of ikons, she bowed to pressure from members of her family and the regency council, who seemed to have been actuated by political motives, not purely pious ones. Euphrosyne's husband, Michael II refused to take any part in the ikon argument insisting that the status quo be maintained and no further discussion be allowed.

To deal with Eirene's relationship with the church chronologically, we see that at the start of her reign jointly with Constantine, the Patriarch Paul was head of the church. He had been appointed by Leo IV after the death of the Patriarch Niketas in February 780. This appointment was in the last year of Leo's reign. It seems possible that before his appointment the Patriarch had entertained some genuine hesitations about the orthodoxy of the prohibition of ikon veneration. He mentions this to Eirene after his abdication[14] at which point his earlier hesitations had become a conviction that his church was out of step with all the other patriarchates. Bury sees the sudden flurry of exiles and imprisonments of Easter 780 on account of importing ikons into the palace, as the result of the iconoclastic influence of Paul[15]. This may be so, but it can also be seen as an indication that the

relaxation of pressure under Leo against the monks and others whom Constantine V had exiled had not to be abused. Leo was not going to be hustled into overtly reversing his father's policies and risk upsetting the delicate balance of toleration he had achieved, which could only survive if it was not explicit. To have ikons brought into the palace for veneration by officials of the bedchamber was to imply royal approval and might well have risked a revolt against the throne by the palace guards. It may have been at that time that the Patriarch removed the figurative ikons in the Patriarchal apartments[16]. Leo died only just over five months after this affair and Eirene was dependent on the goodwill of the Patriarch to support her. Neither Empress nor Patriarch was in a sufficiently strong position to upset the delicate balance that had been achieved by Leo, even if Eirene had wanted to. Here, as in other aspects of ruling, she followed her husband's lead.

Eirene's first contact with the Patriarch on September 8th, 780 would be to accept his condolences at Leo's death, his allegiance to the new rulers and to discuss the part she and her son would play at Leo's funeral. What sympathy, comfort and support the Patriarch was able to offer we do not know, but we see that Eirene had formed a close bond with him from her distress that Theophanes records at his imminent death only three years later[17]. She was a young widow of only twenty-four at her husband's death and may well have needed a father figure to whom she could turn. The Patriarch owed his position to Leo and could be relied upon to support the widow and son; at least he could have no pretensions to the throne for himself. It may have been at this very early stage in their relationship that Eirene and the Patriarch came to an understanding which resulted in the prohibition against new monasteries being relaxed and the taxes on monastic land remitted. This seems to be behind Theophanes' remark 'The pious began to speak freely, the word of God began to increase, those who wished to be saved began to be delivered and every good thing began to be manifest'[18]. This understanding is hinted at in Paul's reported words after he had abdicated; speaking to Eirene he said, 'You should be used to the fact that I did not willingly sit on the throne of holiness, as the church had been ruled tyrannically'[19].

The first public occasion recorded by Theophanes of Eirene's

joint reign was her solemn procession to Hagia Sophia at Christmas when the ceremonial crown was returned. Eirene must have been in touch with Patriarch Paul over the arrangements for the further embellishment with pearls and the reception in the Great Church of this crown. She must also have negotiated with him at the same time for the reception into the priesthood of her brothers-in-law and for them to distribute the royal alms. This must indicate that sovereign and Patriarch were working amicably together and that Eirene had the support of the clergy. The meek mother and child, coupled with the spectacle of the brothers-in-law giving the royal alms, presented a picture of Christian forbearance and clemency as well as generosity and a proper appreciation of the role of the Church as guardian and receptacle of the symbol of power, the ceremonial crown.

The curious story of the Thracian coffin being dug up occurs in the first year of their reign and is mentioned with regard to the relaxation of iconoclasm[20]. The coffin contained a plaque with an inscription 'Christ was certainly born of the Virgin Mary and I believe in Him. Sun look on me again in the reign of the Emperors Constantine and Eirene'. Cyril Mango[21] has proved that this was a forgery initiated by some iconophile elements and that this forged plaque was still to be seen in Hagia Sophia in 1544 and by 1587 was in the Sultan's treasury. There is, however, nothing to connect Eirene herself with this elaborate trick at this stage of her joint reign and considering the probable source of this story for Theophanes[22] it may very likely have come from the office of the Patriarchate.

The first problem that Eirene had to face in her relationship with the church came when Patriarch Paul quietly took himself off to the monastery of St. Florus to die. It is evident that she had no prior warning that this move was imminent and was evidently distressed that she was going to have to face not only the fact of his death and, therefore, his replacement, but also the fact that she was no longer going to have his support. It must have been a further and unnerving blow to learn of his reasons for abdicating from the Patriarchate and entering the monastery. Theophanes gives a graphic account of the scene and a purported verbatim report of the conversations between Eirene and Paul[23]. As mentioned above, Eirene was very upset at

Paul's embracing the monastic life and then of his imminent death. He was obviously a gentle, moderate and tactful man, Theophanes calls him 'a worshipful man, more than usually compassionate, and deserved total respect. The State and the Empress had had a great deal of faith in him'[24]. It may be that he influenced Eirene to be moderate in her dealings both with foreigners and subjects alike and had he lived until Constantine attained his majority he might have influenced Eirene to abdicate power to her son gracefully.

Whether Paul instructed Eirene to summon the known iconoclast members of the Senate to St. Florus, or whether Eirene, in a fright at his statement that the church was in schism and had been anathematised, realised she would have to persuade them, we do not know. Paul was uncompromising in his words to the Senators, there had to be an ecumenical council and unless the wrong was put right no one would be saved, he had refrained from proclaiming the truth while Patriarch for fear of their anger, but now had to speak out.[25]

Far from merely consulting the bishops and then inviting their candidate to assume office, Eirene felt her way very carefully. Having summoned everyone to the Magnaura palace, she made it quite plain that she had had total confidence in Patriarch Paul, but now they needed to find '...a man who can be our shepherd and can make the Church of God lean on his instructive words'[26]. This sounds very like an echo of her own reliance on Paul's advice. The ground must have been prepared very thoroughly as Eirene admitted she had agreed with their unanimous decision to appoint Tarasios. Perhaps the factions had been apprised already of the outcome of the discussions between Eirene and the bishops, perhaps acting on Paul's advice. Paul could possibly have named Tarasios as a suitable candidate, though as a layman - civil servant and one-time soldier, it seems an unlikely choice. However, Tarasios was called a brilliant man, implying that he was very learned[27] and this was exactly what was needed for marshalling the theological arguments against the deliberations of Constantine V's council which had approved the icnonoclast theories. Tarasios had evidently been sounded earlier by Eirene, but had demurred, now he had to explain publicly his unwillingness to become Patriarch.

This was the kind of publicity that was needed to explore the reactions of the majority to having the schism aired by an ecumenical council. Nowhere in the reported speech of Tarasios does the issue of veneration of ikons appear until the people agreed to the holding of an ecumenical council which Tarasios had made a precondition to his acceptance of the Patriarchal throne. Once this question of a council had been agreed then Tarasios brought the matter into the open and fastened the action of overthrowing ikons firmly on to the Emperor Leo III. He brought matters further into focus by pointing out that since the ikons were overturned by the Imperial hand, the previous synod had merely gone along with the Imperial action: now another council was needed to go into the matter more freely, ramming home his point by adding 'speaking apostolically, God's truth cannot be fettered'.[28]

Throughout his long speech Tarasios persistently referred to 'our faithful rulers', 'our rulers who are pious and absolutely orthodox', 'our rulers, the champions of orthodoxy'[29] and he even began his speech by referring to Eirene and Constantine as 'our faithful rulers are the guardians of the blameless faith of us Christians'[30]. One cannot help wondering what Tarasios was implying. Was he saying that Eirene and Constantine were already convinced by Paul that the church had been in schism in not permitting the veneration of ikons and that they themselves were now doing so in advance of any council's deliberations? Was he saying that they were no longer anathametised, were no longer in schism but had returned to piety and orthodoxy? Tarasios made much of the horrors of being anathematised, but the only way in which these could be overcome was for the Pope and the other Patriarchs to remove the anathematizations themselves[31]. For Tarasios to have said this in the royal presence must have meant that whatever the new ecumenical council might decide, the pious and orthodox rulers had preempted its decision just as Leo III had done for Constantine V's council.

One is at liberty to say here that Theophanes is writing from the point of view of an iconophile monk who lost no opportunity to give Eirene the credit for the restoration of ikons and that he was writing from hindsight in the time of Leo V, another arch-iconoclast. It could be viewed as a Thucydidean interpolation into the dull business of a chronography, the heightening of two linked events, the death of

Paul and the elevation of Tarasios, that were especially moving to Theophanes. A similar heightening can be seen in his reportage of Eirene's abdication.

Before Eirene's part in the ecumenical councils is considered, it should be noticed here that shemay have taken the opportunity afforded by Staurakios' campaign in Thessalonika, Hellas and the Peloponnese to reinforce his pacification of the Slavs by sending clergy in his train. The subsequent royal progress through Thrace to Philippopolis and refounding of Berhoea and Anchialos afforded another opportunity to encourage the refounding of monasteries and the organisation of parish clergy. That this happened to some extent is borneout by the evidence of archaeology. Robin Cormack[32] points out that she built S. Sophia in Salonika and S. Sophia in Vize in Thrace, as well as several monastery churches in Bithynia at this time. As mentioned above, at S. Sophia there are still monograms of Constantine and Eirene to be seen in the mosaics on the south sanctuary vault. The church at Salonika is particularly fine and as Cormack points out it must have been designed to impress the Slavonic settlers. While it is not always possible to identify the exact whereabouts of the monasteries or the sees of the abbots and bishops attending the ecumenical councils, there are a significant number coming from these area. Unfortunately, there is no detailed record of those who attended Constantine V's council so comparisons cannot be made[33].

Eirene must have believed that the public airing Tarasios gave to the need for an ecumenical council, coupled with the influence of Patriarch Paul on the iconoclastic senators and patricians,to whom he spoke on his deathbed, was sufficient to ensure a peaceful meeting. The first meeting took place in the Church of the Holy Apostles, the royal mausoleum, with the Emperor and Empress in attendance, surrounded by members of their court and the Imperial guard. This first meeting was broken up in disarray by the members of the Imperial guard who, according to the Life of Tarasios[34] were still those who had been recruited and indoctrinated by Constantine V. Theophanes' version is even more dramatic and the first session broke up with Eirene and her entourage powerless to prevent the affray.

Now she was publicly committed to holding an ecumenical council, even to having the Papal envoys in the City, Eirene was obliged to go on. Those elements of the Imperial guard who had shown their hand so dramatically were, of course, a threat to Eirene and Constantine themselves, so long as it was plain that the issue of ikon veneration was to be debated publicly. Eirene sent Staurakios off to Thrace on a recruiting campaign, where some of the Asiatic troops were stationed, so that she could replace the Imperial guard when she was ready. This proved successful so the entire court with the Imperial guard moved off to Malagina, ostensibly to campaign against the Arabs. The Asiatic troops recruited by Staurakios occupied Malagina in strength, it was the main army barracks of Asia Minor, and Eirene discharged the Imperial guard saying that she had no need of them, sending them back to their villages with their families. All this took place in September, immediately after the first council dispersed on 27th August. By May she was ready to reconvene the council. This time she chose Nicaea for the venue, the scene of previous ecumenical councils. Theophanes says that the representatives of the Alexandrian, Jerusalem and Antioch Patriarchs were still in Constantinople as were the representatives of the Pope. The previous council had broken up at the end of August and there would have been time for the Italians to have returned home before the autumn storms and for the 'easterners' to have reached their homes before any further Arab campaigns were mounted. It would have been problematical if they could have returned to Constantinople in safety, even assuming that the messages inviting them to return arrived safely. If she was going to press ahead with the council at all she would have had to act swiftly and use all the methods of persuasion she could to ensure that those emissaries stayed on for a re-convened council.
It may be that here Tarasios exerted his influence. He was the natural host to the representatives of the Pope and the eastern Patriarchs; he was a very well read man and must have welcomed an opportunity to discuss church affairs with them, even perhaps the provision of church decoration once the council had overturned the decision of the Hieria council of 756.

By October all were assembled, the first session starting on October 11th and the final reading of the *Horos* took place in the Magnaura in Constantinople in the presence of Constantine and Eirene who both signed it.

It is now that one would expect an account from some source of a great resurgence in ikon painting and church decoration. The literary sources give no such hint, the archaeological record is sparse. So few artefacts that can be reliably dated survive from this period that it is very difficult to estimate what did actually happen. So far as Eirene is concerned, there are records of gifts to churches of various articles mentioned above, but no ikons and no order for new figural decoration in either the new churches or to refurbish the old ones. As has been pointed out, the church of St. Eirene in Constantinople still keeps its plain cross in the apse. So much has helped to ruin this church, including its use as an arsenal until recently by the Turks, that it is rash to draw conclusions as to what decoration existed after 787. Of course, the rest of the population could now restore those ikons that may have been hidden or redecorate as they wished and could afford to do so. It may be objected that artists were either dispersed or out of practice and lacked the models for figural work and, indeed, it must have taken time for such expertise to be reorganised[35]. It would have been natural however, for the royal family to be served first with what talent that could be mustered.

There is no mention of a restraining hand from Tarasios or any of the clergy or monks during the early struggles for power between mother and son. This is not to say that it did not happen; the Patriarch may possibly have tried to put a brake on Eirene's ambition and failed, in which case, his efforts were naturally suppressed by the chronographer. It might be wondered why Constantine did not try to enlist the Patriarch's help in his efforts to rule, but after seventy years of Isaurian ascendancy over the Patriarchate, this may not have occurred to Constantine. From what one sees of Tarasios in Nikephoros' and Staurakios' reigns[36], he seems to have acquiesced in their measures, even the renewed taxation of the church and religious houses which Eirene had removed.

The relationship between Eirene, Tarasios and the houses of St. John Studios and Sakkoudion seems to be much more complicated. The background to events is that in Y.W. 6287 (A.D.794/5) Constantine persuaded Tarasios to agree to the Augusta Maria entering a monastery. Theophanes says that Tarasios ordered his catechist to tonsure Maria[37]

although she may not have been entirely willing. It was in May of that year that Constantine gave the tax on Ephesos market to their patron saint, St. John, Theophanes commenting that Constantine 'felt his burden lightened'[38] by the gift. It might be conjectured that this was by way of a thank offering for his freedom from Maria so that he could betroth himself to Theodote once he returned to the City in August. Theophanes says that Tarasios urged the abbot Joseph to marry Constantine to Theodote[39], but another version has it that Constantine threatened Tarasios that 'he would open up the temples' (εἰ μὴ τοῦτο γένηται, τοὺς ναοὺς τῶν εἰδώλων ἀνοίγω...)[40] if he did not agree to the marriage, which puts a different construction on the affair. Was this a threat to reinstate iconoclasm? If it was, then Tarasios must have been mollified by the return of the relics of St. Euphemia and the reinstatement of her shrine which took place at this time. The reference to this is found much earlier in Theophanes' work, in fact at Y.W.6258[41] where the account of Constantine V removing the relics is found. The reinstatement of the relics from Lesbos to Constantinople is recorded as having taken place 'during the reign of Constantine and Eirene in the 4th indiction' no special credit is given to either and the matter is not mentioned in the year Y.W. 6288, the year after his threat, (or in Y.W. 6273, the first year of their joint reign in the 4th indiction). It may be that the major undertaking involved in restoring the shrine and its environs, fetching the relics themselves back from Lesbos needed royal money behind it, but the Patriarch could have ordered it as part of the general restoration of ikon and relic veneration. Two other alternatives are possible, either Constantine ordered the return and reinstatement of the relics as an act of thanksgiving for his marriage, an act designed to reassure the Patriarch after the threat to restore iconoclasm. This might account for Constantine being received at communion in spite of his marriage while Maria was still alive - one of Theodore of Studion's complaints against Tarasios. The other alternative is that Eirene was responsible. Eirene may have seen that an overt act of iconophile devotion exactly at this time would distance herself from her son in a truly dramatic way and align her more certainly with the fervently iconophile monks, not with the all too easily persuaded Patriarch[42]. That the support Eirene gave the Studion and Sakkoudion monks at this point needs an explanation is certain.[43] The monks broke off communion with the main body of the

church and pursued an extremist course on account of the second marriage, or rather on account of the Patriarch admitting Constantine to communion while living in sin. Eirene had so far consistently been averse to any extremist views, but as has been pointed out above[44] Constantine's actions against those monks was a violent one and one calculated to engender considerable hostile feeling towards the throne and to polarise once more dissension in the church. To shield the monks from Constantine's wrath was, by implication, to counsel Constantine to cool his anger and as a result, may have appeared to add royal approbation to the monks' opposition to Constantine. If, as suggested above[45], Eirene really meant Theodote to be Constantine's playmate, his concubine, and that it was no part of her intentions that he should actually marry this lady-in-waiting, then her defence of the monks, in contrast to the Patriarch's failure to stop the marriage, becomes easier to understand.

It is clear that, notwithstanding Eirene's defence of the unfortunate monks, she retained a relationship of trust with the church and its dignitaries. Though she installed herself in the Great Palace with those Imperial guards loyal to her while Constantine was rallying army support in Asia Minor in July 797, she seriously considered using the good offices of some bishops to negotiate her retirement. Theophanes does not mention who these bishops were, whether they had their sees in Asia Minor or on the European side of the Bosphoros. She made what appears to be a very curious choice in the ambassadors she sent to negotiate a peace with the Arabs who had been devastating Cappadocia and Galatia. She sent Dorotheus, Abbot of Chrysopolis and Constantine, chartophylax of Hagia Sophia.

This was the first move that Eirene made after deposing her son in such a terrible way. She was in a difficult position at this time. Those Imperial guards who had escorted her into the Great Palace were needed to protect her, particularly the senior officers on whom she could rely to keep the soldiers from mutiny. Constantine had been rallying support in Asia Minor among the thematic troops. Notoriously volatile in their loyalties, even to accepting bribes from the Arabs[46] it was no wonder that Eirene felt she could not use any member of the theme army to negotiate. Until she saw more clearly what the reactions of the themes would be to a woman ruler, and a sole ruler at that, having

deposed the legitimate ruler who had been popular with the Asian army, she must have seen that a negotiated peace was essential and that the negotiations needed to be conducted by a representative of the Imperial government who could be seen to be neutral in relation to the army and either Eirene or Constantine. As an added advantage, two churchmen were more likely to be accorded a safe conduct through both Byzantine military lines and Arab encampments than a clattering military deputation or an imposing self-important civil servant with a retinue of followers. Staurakios and Peter the Patrician had been notably unsuccessful in their dealings with the Arabs previously. A humble deputation of two churchmen, one a monk and the other an official of the Great Church and Patriarchate, might have succeeded. Nevertheless, they were unsuccessful and the following year the Arabs plundered their way as far as Malagina, taking prisoners as well as horses and other loot both from there, Lydia and from the Opsikion theme. The churchmen cannot have offered the equivalent of all this moneymaking plunder.

By next year Eirene was sure enough of her standing with the Thrakesian theme to include their strategos, Bardanes, in her solemn Easter procession. Eirene was still at that time taking the emperor's role so far as the prescribed Patriarchal-Royal processions were concerned.[47] However, this one was turned into a remarkable public spectacle after the liturgy in Holy Apostles with Eirene riding in a golden chariot distributing the consular donatives. Two years later, in 801, again at Easter, Eirene remitted the taxes in the City and at Abydos and Hieria amongst these remissions she included the church, earning herself fulsome thanks from Theodore, Abbot of Studion[48]. By this time, the monks had been recalled from their exile by Eirene, though they were still not accepting the authority of the Patriarch.

Eirene was deposed in October the following year and Nikephoros was crowned in the presence of a great crowd of citizens in Hagia Sophia by the Patriarch. Theophanes comments '...because of what had been done everyone was upset and unable to stand the crowner, the man who was crowned or those who rejoiced with them.' (ἐδυσχέραινον ἐπαρώμενοι τὸν στέφοντα καὶ τὸν στεφόμενον καὶ τοὺς τούτοις συγχαίροντας). (p. 476. 25-26). It may be that Tarasios was persuaded that Eirene had named Nikephoros as her successor[49] in the same way as the Chalke

guards had been tricked[50] or the story in Michael the Syrian[51] may preserve something of the Patriarch's part in deposing Eirene and elevating Nikephoros. Nevertheless, there was enough historical precedent which should have made him wonder why Eirene did not proclaim him herself and crown him. Eirene seems to have lost her original energy and initiative by now; she had shown herself willing to negotiate with Charles, who might prove to be as masterful with the Patriarch as he had with the Pope, even to insisting that the Patriarch crown him. The author of the Libri Carolini with its iconoclastic views would hardly endear himself to Tarasios and certainly not as his sovereign overlord. Not only was Eirene willing to negotiate with, or even marry Charles, but it is possible that in the eyes of the Patriarch that she was still less than enthusiastic in her support of ikon veneration. Tarasios may, therefore, have felt that Nikephoros was a wise choice at that time and he may even have been a party to the plot as Michael the Syrian suggests.

During the first part of Eirene's reign one can detect a certain feminine aspect in her relationship with the church. The years of Paul's Patriarchate, when Eirene was establishing herself and Constantine, were for her learning years. The first procession at Christmas appears to exploit her femininity and her evident distress at Paul's retirement and then his death sounds a more womanly reaction than one would expect of a masculine ruler. However, from then on, Eirene ruled as any man would have done. Her relationship with both Patriarch and monks seemed no different from what it would have been had she been a man. One might question the wisdom of sending two churchmen to negotiate with the Arabs. A masculine ruler would, in any case, have been more likely to have commanded more respect from the army, but not necessarily so, but in the circumstances might have chosen differently. A less determined woman or man might have been persuaded to postpone calling the second ecumenical council after the disaster of the first. Here, perhaps, it might be argued that Eirene's respect for and dependence on the Patriarchate in Paul's time had carried her on; her habit of listening to Paul was not easily broken and she may have felt that she had to keep faith with her promise to him on his deathbed. After this, though, she behaved towards the church as any ruler might. She created bishops in the pagan Slav territory and built churches there.

The Christianisation of pagan tribes was part of the Byzantine ethos, emperors had taken this course before and would again. One sees, in fact, little, if anything, of the traditional feminine subservience and awe-struck attitude towards the church from Eirene, only actions dictated by political necessity and in accordance with her recognised style of ruling - negotiation and monetary rewards.

NOTES TO EIRENE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH

1. Theoph. p. 453 (Y.W. 6271 A.D. 779)

2. This applies right through Byzantine history but is also noticeable now; Mount Athos and its monks enjoy a unique political status which has been jealously guarded. While owing allegiance to the Orthodox Patriarch at Istanbul, they are a self governing community of a fiercely independent colour.

3. 'The Rise of the Holy Man' *J.R.S.* 61 (1971) and '*The Making of Late Antiquity*' (Harvard 1978).

4. Helene Ahrweiler. 'The Geography of Iconoclasm' *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1975).

5. A hint of this is given in Cedrenus' story of Eirene's involvement in the expulsion of the personal servants who had imported ikons into the palace, Leo accused Eirene of being implicated and reminded her of her promise to his father over ikon veneration. See M. *P.G.* 121 coll. 900.

6. A full account of art during iconoclasm is given with ample references by Robin Cormack in his paper' Art During the Age of Iconoclasm'in *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1975) pp. 35-44, the reference to the gifts made to churches is quoted from p. 37. See also Ernst Kitzinger 'The Cult of Images before Iconoclasm' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954) pp. 83-150.

7. W. de Gray Birch *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* Vol. V (London 1898) no. 17448 (xliv.4). It shows Constantine and Eirene on the obverse and 2 personages with an umbrella palm between them. The left hand figure has a cruciferous nimbus and there are traces of a wing in the right hand field.

8. Wroth. Plate XLVI No. 5, text p. 398

9. ibid. No. 6.

10. ibid. No. 7.

11. Plate XLVI No. 10.

12. p. 400

13. M. *P.G.* 90. colls. 1560-1. I have argued in the chapter on Euphrosyne that it may have been a gratuitous letter.

14. Theoph. p. 453. Theophanes mentions this as well at Y.W. 6271 saying that he was under strong duress because of the prevailing heresy when recording Paul's appointment to the Patriarchy.

15. Bury *E.R.E.* Vol. 11 p. 477

16. R. Cormack and E.J.W. Hawkins 'The Mosaics of S. Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms above the Southwest Vestibule and Ramp' *D.O.P.*31. (1977) for an account of these with illustrations. pp. 175-251.

17. She took her son with her to St. Florus and shouted at Paul (καταβοῦσα) 'Why have you done this?'. Anastasios' translation gives *'ac querulus vocibus'*. She must have been really upset.

18. Theoph. p. 455. 8-12

19. Theoph. p. 457. 20-22

20. This story is told by Theophanes, Cedrenus, Michael Glykas and Michael the Syrian, all in strikingly similar words.

21. C. Mango 'A Forged Inscription of the Year 781' *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta* VIII/I (Belgrade 1963). The fact that all the monkish chroniclers have the story pat lends colour to Mango's idea that the story was put about by the Patriarchate. It also accords with Mango's theory that George the Synkellos of the Patriarchate wrote the rough draft of Theophanes' history, the latter merely editing it.

23. Theoph. pp. 457-8

24. Theoph. p. 458. 4.

25. Theoph. p. 457. 24-26 and 28-30

26. Theoph. 458. 15-16

27. The *Vita Tarasii* mentions, amongst other evidences of learning that he taught his biographer, Ignatius of Nicaea, ancient prosody, that is Homer and later Attic writers.

28. Theoph. p. 460. 22-3 ἀλλ' ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ οὗ δέδεται, αποστολικῶς εἰπεῖν.

29. Theoph. p. 459. 4-5 and 33; p. 460. 7-8

30. Theoph. p. 458. 21-22

31. Lombard in his book *Constantin V, Empereur des Romains* p. 78 says that the three patriarchs Theodore of Jerusalem, Kosmas of Alexandria and Theodore of Antioch sent violent letters to Constantine V 'où ils traitaient d' apostat et d'hérésiarque' and quotes Theophanes Y.W. 6248. p. 430 and *Vie d'Etienne* 1118.

32. see note 6 page 40.

33. Those that can be positively identified are 17 bishops.

34. *Vita Tarasii* ed. Heikel 404 (by Ignatios the Deacon) (Helsingfors 1891)

35. There seems to be some evidence that Byzantine artists had been at work in Carolingian workshops and returned to Constantinople with new skills. This was brilliantly demonstrated by David Buckton, Assistant Keeper, Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum in a paper delivered to the annual Byzantine Symposium held at Oxford March 1984.

36. Tarasios died in A.D. 806

37. Theoph. p. 470

38. Theoph. p. 470 ' ἐκούφισε πρὸς θεραπείαν τοῦ ἁγίου αποστόλου καὶ εὐαγγελιστοῦ 'Ιωάννου.

39. ibid. lines 25-28

40. Cedrenus M. *P.G.* 121 coll. 908C.

41. Theoph. p. 440

42. It might account for Constantine being received at communion in spite of his re-marriage while Maria was still alive. However, the *Vita Tarasii* gives a long account of Tarasios' efforts at dissuading Constantine from re-marrying, but he connived at it in the end.

43. Theoph. p. 471. 4-5

44. see the section on Eirene and Home affairs, p. 121

45. see page 120 of the above section.

46. Both Tatzates and Michael Lachanodrakon had done so in the past.

47. see R. Janin 'Les Processions Religieuses a Byzance' *Revue des Études Byzantines* Vol. XXXIV (1966) pp. 69-88. Janin says that not only were the processions formed from the clergy and the faithful but in certain cases the Imperial court accompanied them, requiring a personage to be chief of the procession (Πρῶτος τῆς πρεσβείας) whose seals have survived. Janin lists, day by day, the processions that occurred throughout the year.

48. M. *P.G.* 99. Coll. 929-933

49. It is noteworthy that Theophanes records that Eirene swore to Nikephoros on the precious life-giving wood (ἡ δὲ ὤμοσεν αὐτῷ εἰς τὰ τίμια καὶ ζωοποιὰ ξύλα,...) that she had not hidden any of her treasure. Had she been such a convinced iconophile would she not have used an ikon? Perhaps this implies that she swore on a *relic* of the True Cross.

50. Theophanes says that they were told that Eirene had sent a message to the effect that Nikephoros was to be elevated to the throne instead of Aetios' brother Leo.

51. p. 12. 'Alors les Romains voulurent faire régner sur eux Nicephorus, le Logothète, cappadocien. Quand Irène apprit cela, elle ordonna de lui faire crever les yeux. Aetius le cacha. Il voulut regner lui-même, et demanda à Irène de lui donner la couronne: comme elle ne la lui donna pas, il en fut irrite. Elle-même fit connaître au patrice Nicetas le dessein d'Aetius. Nicetas et le patriarch tinrent conseil avec le Sénat, et tous furent d'avis de faire régner Nicephorus.'

Eirene's relationship with Constantine

It is clear from the account of the varying degrees of affection and co-operation between Eirene and Constantine that different and sometimes conflicting influences were at work. The psychological influences of Constantine's youth were undoubtedly one cause for the conflicts which arose and an attempt to construct them follows.

At birth he would have been in the womens' quarters, nurtured by a wet-nurse, attended by other women of Eirene's household and protected from the outside world by her eunuchs. That is not to say that he would not have seen something of his father. Constantine V is recorded as having been a devoted family man and Leo IV probably followed his father in taking notice of his small son. The palace already had Constantine V's two youngest children, Eudokimos and Anthusa, though it is possible that they might not even have been born when Constantine was born to Eirene[1].

We have already seen that Constantine appeared on two great occasions in public with his father, first when he was six years old, at Easter when he was crowned co-Emperor; then two years later at the May Day celebration of the victory against the Arabs. Both these occasions were ones where Constantine was expected to act as an adult and, especially during the first occasion, where the ceremonial lasted over Easter week, he had to endure stiff ceremonial robes for long hours and to remember details of each move he had to make in the liturgies in which he was one of the main actors.

Here was a sudden transition from the relative obscurity of life in the womens' quarters to the glare of the crowd and intricate system of formalities of the crowning. Of course, he must have been coached in his part of the ritual and had no doubt seen his father take part in the liturgy at Hagia Sophia as well as the frequent patriarchal processions that took place throughout the year. Even so, Constantine's first taste of such public ceremonial will have been dramatic and had a special place in his memory; he was now a person of great consequence.

Constantine was ten years old when his father died and, until his

marriage at the age of eighteen, he was at his mother's side on public occasions. Each public appearance recorded by Theophanes mentions Eirene, accompanied by her son; clearly it was Eirene who took the initiative each time. It was, therefore, Eirene who had taken the place of Constantine's father in this context. Eirene was the 'masculine' ruler, she held the power to tap all the resources for a successful life, yet she was the junior co-ruler, just as Constantine had been the junior co-ruler with his father. In Constantine's eyes, not only had his mother achieved a role reversal in the matter of gender behaviour, she had also achieved a reversal in actual power.

Three questions arise from this situation; how did Constantine learn to rule? What processes of identification with an acceptable prototype led to his own development as an independent identity? What identity was he striving for?

Roger Burton and John Whiting[2] in their paper on 'The Absent Father and Cross-Sex Identity' pose a status-envy hypothesis. They state:

> 'The process of identification consists of the covert practice of the role of an envied state. Identification consists of learning a role by rehearsal in fantasy or in play rather than by actual performance and this rehearsal is motivated by envy of the incumbent of a privileged status.'

They introduce a notion of a resource and explain it as:

> '...anything material or non material which somebody wants and over which someone else may have control.'

Not only are these natural things, food, water, warmth etc. but they are also love, power, success, among others. Burton and Whiting then re-state their hypothesis:

> 'If there is a status that has privileged access to a desired resource, the incumbent or occupant of such a status will be envied by anyone whose status does not permit him the control of and right to use the resource.'

They then draw the conclusion from this that:

> 'Status envy is, then, a motivational component of status disability and such motivation leads to learning by identification.'

While extreme caution must be exercised in using a modern thesis, applicable to western contemporary society, nevertheless, to some extent any learning is based on imitating an admired model and perhaps developing further some admired traits. Hero-worship has been known since Homer[3].

If one accepts Burton and Whiting's thesis, then Constantine was able to progress normally from babyhood in the womens' quarters through glimpses of a more adult world into the remote and rarefied world of a Byzantine emperor by the time he was eight. If the strains and pressures of lengthy public ceremonies were very much greater than a normal five to eight year old would suffer, it was a training that was necessary if Constantine was to succeed his father on the throne[4]. At least, at that stage, Constantine had his father with whom to identify and, as has been shown, at the crowning, the comfort of his mother's presence.

His problems began at his father's death. Clearly he cannot have finished learning all he needed; and clearly his personality would develop and change at puberty. Eirene managed these matters adroitly. As has been pointed out, she arranged a series of treats for Constantine, indulging him and rewarding him. Perhaps in an effort to counteract the feminine, eunuch-dominated court, she arranged for John Pikridios to be Constantine's tutor[5]. That he was not a eunuch one can only presume from an argument of silence. Normally Theophanes mentions that a courtier is a eunuch but fails to say so each time John Pikridios is mentioned. However, Constantine's nearest model for a Byzantine emperor was an Empress, legally his junior co-Emperor. The other models of whom he can only have heard travellers' tales were Charlemagne or the Arab rulers Al Mahdi, his first son Musa and then the vigorous but fervently anti-Christian Harun. Once betrothed to Rotrud, no doubt Constantine had some opportunity to hear about Charles' campaigns and, even more perhaps, to hear about his fondness for family life and his attachment to his children. Although Charles was, to some extent, a menace to Byzantine autocracy, particularly his influence over both the Lombard kingdom and the western Slavs, nevertheless, even though a rival power, his successes must have been the envy of Constantine; the fact that Charles had trained his sons in the arts of war and sent them into conquered territory may have caused Constantine to wish he could have these opportunities too. Certainly, an alliance with Charles, once he

was married to Rotrud might have been Constantine's dream.

We may have a clue to Constantine's answer to this dilemma. Eirene's publicity trip through Thrace may have reminded Constantine of his late grandfather's exploits against the Bulgars and there would have been people both in the royal entourage as well as the dignitaries in the towns and countryside who remembered Constantine V and had cause to be grateful to him for ensuring peace in that country. Eirene recruited the new Imperial guard from Thrace so there would have been members of the army close to Constantine who could have told him about his grandfather's campaigns. If this theory is true, it is no surprise that Constantine's first campaign on assuming sole power was in Thrace. Not content with one, he mounted a major campaign the following year accompanied by Michael Lachanodrakon. That hardened old campaigner had been an ardent follower of Constantine V, he had raised a considerable amount of revenue for Constantine V by sequestering the assets of all the monasteries in the Bukellarion theme and had cleared the theme of all religious, earning himself warm approval from the Emperor.

It can, therefore, be argued that Constantine perhaps conceived of the idea of his eponymous grandfather as his model during the Thrace journey with his mother; that he acted out his idea of what a Constantinian campaign should be when he came to power, taking little notice of the experienced advice he was offered. In this instance he was not being hot-headed so much as acting a dream. While on the 'progress' with his mother, Constantine V must have seemed to have been a total antithesis to Eirene in the young Emperor's mind. Once the idea of emulating his grandfather had taken hold, he could indulge in a private fantasy in a world quite remote from his mother's peaceful rebuilding mission.

It should be pointed out that in any society people have roles to play that are expected of them by others as well as roles they perceive for themselves. Gender-defined roles normally cross both categories. In Byzantine society mothers nurtured children, stayed at home, span wool, wove and made clothes and furnishings. However, if they were widowed they had sole control of their children and the family wealth in whatever form it might have taken. Nevertheless, if they had recourse to the

courts they were expected to plead through a male third party. Thus, women were expected to play a gender-defined role and could only step out of that role in closely controlled circumstances. It may be argued that the aristocracy in general, and royalty in particular, can make their own rules, but so far Eirene had only stepped out of her role as Augusta in the closely controlled circumstances as junior co-Emperor, by acting in the capacity of regent for a son in his minority. The older Constantine grew, the greater grew the discrepancy between the role he perceived for himself as senior Emperor and the role perceived for him by Eirene. Yet the citizens of the Empire expected Constantine to play the role of senior Emperor once he reached maturity and there were, no doubt, enough adherents of the style of ruling of Constantine V who hoped for a more vigorous ruler than Leo IV had been or that Eirene was at the time. But Constantine had no readily available model except for the increasingly inappropriate one of a female usurping a male role surrounded by eunuchs, the third sex, wielding power without personal responsibility.

Constantine was in a state of dependence on his mother until he was forced into the reality of ruling alone by the surprise concerted demand of the theme troops at Atroa. His bid to remove the eunuch advisers had failed ignominiously through his strong attachment to his mother. It was at this stage that the conflict between two incompatible models became apparent. He had attempted to introduce what he saw as a more normal state of affairs without taking account of his mother's perception of himself. Her actions made this abundantly plain[6]. It was made plain not only to Constantine but also to the rest of the Empire. Eirene's dream of the eternal mother and child had as little reality as her son's dream of putting the clock back to Constantine V's time. Constantine ruled alone or with his son Leo, not with any female.

What one sees for the remainder of their joint reign is a series of tugs at the strings of habit and affection. Constantine made a series of attempts to free himself from these strings and each time Eirene tried to pull him back to being the dependent'child'; each had become so enmeshed with the other, so dependent that some joint conclusion would have been the only satisfactory answer. But the more Constantine became independent, the harder Eirene tried to undermine this independence.

Each overplayed their hand and the final estrangement led to the blinding and deposition[7].

The three questions posed earlier can be conjecturally answered now. Constantine learned to rule first by being alongside his father on ritual and special public occasions, next by being alongside his mother on all important occasions. Lastly, initially privately and later publicly, he learned by emulating his grandfather whose views and style were totally out of favour with those in power.

The second question as to what processes of identification led to his own development is more difficult to answer. His mother was the only prototype available to him. The eunuchs, though wielding great power did not, in fact, rule and, above all, they were eunuchs. The foreign rulers were too remote to make reasonable models. The nearest one was Theodotos (Arichis) the exiled Lombard king, but Charles had conquered his kingdom and the bid to regain a foothold in Beneventum had failed. It seems perfectly possible, however, that both Theodotos and Telerigos, the exiled chief of the Bulgars, may have played a part in awakening Constantine to his true position.

Thirdly, Constantine' search for an appropriate model for ruling must necessarily have been conditioned by his picture of his own identity as a ruler. He saw clearly that petitioners were afraid of approaching him and that everything was channelled through Staurakios to his mother. Only the previous year to this realisation Theodotos had failed to regain a foothold in Italy so Constantine needed a successful, strong and above all a masculine identity. However, he was still devoted to his mother and saw no reason to oust her in any way. The conflict between seeing himself as a strong, manly, successful warrior and the dutiful,affectionate spoiled son of a commanding mother was never resolved. His mother was locked into her need to keep him a child which caused and reinforced Constantine's inability to become a decisive, confident man. His self-confidence was never equal to the strain of ruling alone.

The relationship was further exacerbated by Constantine's second marriage. Putting away his wife, Maria, and his two daughters, while reducing the number of females in his immediate circle and asserting his right to determine his own domestic life, only earned him the noisy

disapproval of the monks, led by the monks of St. John Studion. His over-reaction against the monks impelled Eirene to try to protect them and modify Constantine's understandable fury. Once again her peacemaking 'feminine' role was in conflict with Constantine's aggressive 'manly' reaction to being criticised by those who had turned their backs on sexuality. Had his son Leo, by Theodote, lived, Constantine's credibility as the Emperor, protector of his people and successful progenitor of future emperors, might have been enhanced and his self-confidence increased enough to withstand Eirene's need to keep him as a dependent child. Her resultant position in that case as Dowager Empress would have needed the ruthlessness and power base of Catherine the Great of Russia to enable her to regain personal rule. As it was, the baby Leo died aged five months, Constantine failed to gather enough support, and Eirene was able to exploit her ascendancy over her son - but not over her eunuchs.

NOTES TO EIRENE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CONSTANTINE

1. Y.W. 6260 Constantine crowned Eudokia Augusta on April 1st and the next day made his two sons by her, Christopher and Nikephoros Caesars. He made Niketas, their last brother nobilissimus at the same time. Constantine VI was born in Y.W. 6262. In Y.W. 6268 when Leo IV crowned Constantine co-Emperor, he raised Eudokimos to be a nobilissimus and we are told in the same passage that while still alive Leo's father had appointed Anthimos.

2. Roger Burton and John Whiting. 'The Absent Father and Cross-Sex Identity *Merril Palmer Quarterly* 2. (Behaviour and Development) (New York 1961) pp. 85-95, esp. pp. 81, 86 and 87.

3. What else was Athene in her role of Mentor doing for Telemachos but showing him two 'model' heroes when she sent him off to Nestor and then Menelaos?

4. It was popularly supposed that our Queen and her sister took their lessons standing up to accustom them to the long hours of standing they would experience later in public life. The comment came from their governess, Miss Crawford.

5. Sadly, in all sources these tutors are somewhat shadowy figures - yet they wielded such power. Constantine VI's tutor, John Pikridios was one of the conspirators who helped Constantine try for sole power the first time and was made a patrician and recalled from exile by Constantine when he did succeed. Michael III's tutor, unnamed, may have been the go-between, and more, in Bardas' successful overthrow of Theoktistos, Theodora's powerful adviser. Constantine VII's tutor, Theodoros, put the final touch to Romanos Lekapenos' plans to depose Zoe by opening the gates of the City to him and prompting, perhaps forcing, Constantine to tell his mother that he would transfer power to the Patriarch and the Magister Stephen. All were totally and sometimes blindly devoted to their charges and all were ruthlessly ambitious for their charges.

6. First, she slapped his face in public, then she confined him to

his quarters. Ultimately she accepted responsibility for blinding him, a symbolic emasculation, as well as a deposition.

7. I have argued elsewhere in this chapter that it was no part of Eirene's intentions that the blinding should have taken place.

Conclusion - Eirene and feminine rule

Although the following points have already been raised in the previous sections and have been commented on, it will be helpful to gather them together in an appraisal of whether her reign was recognisably feminine. She was unique in the history of the Roman Empire in that her husband made her co-ruler with their son. Such an innovation was approved by the three main elements of the Byzantine commonwealth, the army, the church and the people and placed her within the Isaurian dynasty in its own way just as Augustus assimilated Livia and her descendants into the ruling family in his own way. With Augustus in mind, it is possible to see the Isaurian innovation as a logical next step.

While content to reign as junior co-Emperor, Eirene had the confidence of the church and people, but from time to time elements of the army tried to re-establish the masculine line by putting forward those pathetic sons of Constantine V who appeared to have no will of their own, figureheads, not rulers. Each time, however, Eirene dealt firmly and successfully with the attempts to unseat her. Primogeniture had been established by Leo III and to this she was firmly committed. The problem arose when Constantine VI saw that, although he was senior Emperor and his mother his junior co-ruler, he had no real power, no say in any decisions and no contact with petitioners. This latter mattered, just as it had from the Principate onwards; rule was personal and it was this personal element in the Byzantine autocracy that kept the priest-king concept alive in the minds of the people. It was at this stage, in 789/90 (Y.W. 6282) when the Emperor was twenty, that Eirene was persuaded that she should reverse the order of precedence and make herself senior Emperor with her son as her junior; that he should inherit the throne as sole Emperor only after her death. It is important to note that she was persuaded by 'astrologers', taking the counsel away from the common rule of everyday into a mystic realm. As Constantine only had daughters at that time, if they were born then, there was no question of his appointing a junior co-Emperor. Eirene was

thus prolonging the dynasty; she believed that through God dynasts ruled the world, as she reminded Nikephoros in her abdication speech. One of the few comments that Theophanes permits himself occurs when the astrologers persuaded Eirene to take power; he ascribes her credulity to 'being a woman' when these men suggested that God gave her the State and, therefore, she should be regarded as the successor to her husband and rule before her son.

One can perhaps see her fortunes as ruler rising to a high point until A.D. 790 (Y.W. 6283) when the army, except for the Armeniakon troops, had agreed to her ruling before her son. She suffered a dramatic decline at that time, eventually being made to keep quiet in her palace of Eleutherios. Her fortunes rose again to another high point when she took over sole rule after her son was blinded and deposed, reaching their greatest peak at Easter 799. But after May of that year, when she was seriously ill, she seemed to lose her touch and, though she was obviously still in charge, she appeared to take no steps to settle the succession.

From the more detailed analyses of Eirene's reign already seen it is possible now to draw some conclusions as to whether there was anything recognisably feminine about it. Within the reign itself there is the period of Constantine's sole rule which affords its own comparison in styles of ruling. But here is, perhaps, a trap for the unwary. The relationship between mother and son was a complex one and the factors at work here were not necessarily male/female, but rather the mother/son influenced by the son/father/grandfather relationships. Nevertheless, that situation was also an example of different attitudes towards female or male rule.

The only outstanding difference that we can see is what resulted from Eirene's inability to lead the army herself; although some male rulers had not led their armies in person, including Leo IV, it was through choice not sexual disability. She was obliged to appoint a trusted commander in chief to ride at the head of the army and either join battle with the enemy in person or negotiate directly. This meant giving very specific instructions as to what she intended in any

situation and being totally confident in the loyalty of her commander. It also resulted in the power of the commander being dangerously enhanced. Decisions taken in the field, dictated by the circumstances in which the army found itself, were not necessarily the ones that the ruler would have taken and may have been influenced by personal gain whether for glory, prestige or self-advancement or even for booty. Any of the latter may have worked against the advantage or the general instructions of the ruler. We see an example of this happening at the ill-fated expedition to Beneventum where Eirene's instructions to fend off Charles' influence and detach the people from him to her sphere of influence turned into a pitched battle which the Byzantine troops lost. In 782, both Elpidios from Sicily and Tatzates of the Bukellari deserted to the Arabs for their own personal gain, even at the cost of losing their families. Loyalties were remarkably volatile throughout the history of Byzantium, but there was more chance of maintaining the army's loyalty in all the sections if the Emperor was visibly in charge. Eirene suffered from the doubts of her commanders as to her capacity to reign effectively from the first. Each plot to put forward the brothers-in-law contained some element of either the Imperial guard or one of the theme armies. For instance, the objections to the first of the ecumenical councils came from the Imperial guard, with the connivance of some of the bishops. When Eirene tried to interpose herself in the succession, the chief objections came from the army, starting with the Armeniakoi, but spreading very quickly indeed to the other Asian themes.

It is a criticism by Theophanes that Eirene was too much under the influence of her advisers and this he ascribes to being a woman. There is no doubt that she trusted her eunuch Staurakios in the early part of her reign, right up to the time that Constantine seized power for himself. It was that very closeness to his mother that Constantine resented in Staurakios. How much Staurakios carried out the policies formulated by Eirene and how much she assented to his suggestions it is difficult to tell. Staurakios was Logothete of the Course and as such had the task of maintaining communications all over the Empire; he was, therefore, the recipient of information from all quarters. Naturally, this placed him in a unique position to advise Eirene. Constantine's own administration must have been obliged to replace the

exiled Staurakios and the Emperor was equally dependent on such information being relayed to him. How can one tell whether Constantine was just as dependent as his mother on his Logothete of the Course? It might be thought that Constantine's dependence could have been the greater while he was on campaign.

Even though Theophanes makes this criticism, it can be seen that Eirene made up her own mind over the things she felt particularly concerned about. She was obviously in charge in the first year of her reign when Constantine was only ten. She acted swiftly and decisively apparently on her own initiative. But in 782, after Staurakios was appointed Logothete of the Course in succession to Gregory who had been exiled for his part in the Fortieth day plot, it became evident that the eunuch was already wielding great power. Even so, Eirene seemed still to be taking the principal role in decisions. It may be that, until the death of the Patriarch Paul, there was another and more influential source of advice for Eirene, but by the very nature of his office, more likely to be discreet and less likely to offend the generals. Throughout the period of the ecumenical councils, that is, Christmas 784 when Tarasios was elected Patriarch, to Novemver 787, Eirene appears to be in command of affairs. It is only when Staurakios discovered Constantine's plot to exile him that his hold over Eirene became so strong. Each was, after this time,dependent on the other and it is possible that in an attempt to free herself from this dependence that Eirene appointed Aetios as another adviser. Unfortunately, the rivalry between her eunuchs led to Staurakios' plan to seize power before Eirene's death. Although she had been seriously ill, she dealt personally and publicly with him in May 799. She listened to Aetios' objections to the proposal of marriage from Charles, but his arguments may have been as much in her interests as his. This will be discussed fully below. She preferred to allow Nikephoros to plot on unhindered, believing he would be loyal while she was alive. But for the advent of the Frankish embassy this might have been the case.

It is not necessarily a quality of female rule to heed the advice of senior officials. Any ruler needs information coupled with an evlauation of the situation affected by the information. If his own

decision coincides with his servant's advice they may both have come to the best conclusion in the circumstances. Previous rulers have relied on their advisers to a great extent. Arcadios was first under the influence of his eunuch Eutropios and then of the Goth general, Gainas, seeming to have little will of his own, but probably the most important influence in his reign was that of his wife Eudoxia[1]. His son, Theodosios II relied on his sister Pulcheria to a marked extent. Holum[2] believes that the campaign against the Persians was instigated by Pulcheria to enhance her own prestige and power as well as the dynasty. Leo I [3]sought advice from St. Daniel, the Stylite saint, a holy man on his pillar, not even a member of his court, but in touch with the needs of the people. Other examples could be quoted both before Eirene's reign and after. None of these rulers, weak or indolent though both Arcadios and Theodosios may have been, was called feminine.

Theophanes' comments, first that God trusted the rule to a widow woman and an orphan so that He could work a miracle[4] and secondly, that it was owing to Eirene being a woman that she was deceived by the astrologers, sounds now like pure male prejudice, but undoubtedly reflected the view of contemporary society. He was a monk who had abandoned his marriage, persuading his wife to become a nun,[5] so he may have had a particularly narrow view of a woman's place in the world. Yet he was a fervent admirer of Eirene as the one responsible for the restoration of ikon veneration. The second comment may, perhaps, not have been his. It may have been the judgement of George the monk, synkellos to the Patriarch, if Mango[6] is right in believing that he wrote the most part of the work ascribed to Theophanes, in which case the judgement may reflect the views of the strongly conservative church. If he saw Eirene as gullible as well as power-hungry, his judgement at that particular time may have been right, but apart from discounting Nikephoros' plotting, she showed few signs of being gullible. Her gender made no difference to affairs until it came to a decision about the succession.

Her illness will have reminded her that some provision for the succession had to be made. She had certain choices open to her. She could re-marry. Ariadne had taken Anastasios as her husband at the suggestion of the Senate and before then, Pulcheria had contracted a

nominal marriage to Marcian and she had crowned him herself.[7] These were good, if ancient precedents. She could have married off either of Constantine's daughters by Maria, his legal wife. A suitable husband could have ensured the succession of the Isaurians with the continuity through the female side. This method of ensuring the succession was to be employed by Constantine VIII and will be discussed in the chapter on Zoe and Theodora at the end of this thesis. There was an ancient precedent for this in Ariadne's case where her father had taken her young son as co-Emperor, passing over her husband, Zeno. Constantine may have had another son in exile after his deposition, had he been born before Eirene was deposed, she could have adopted him and named him as her successor. All these methods of dealing with the problem involved perpetuating the Isaurian dynasty. It seems a reasonable assumption that during the first part of her reign, up to the time that she made her bid for reversing the order of seniority, Eirene had no intention of removing Constantine from the succession. Theophanes specifies the oath administered to the army as both 'as long as you live we will not agree to your son's ruling' and 'we will not be ruled by your son in your lifetime'. Once she had died, Constantine would be the sole ruler in succession to his mother; this is surely the implication that should be inferred from these two versions of the oath and that the dynasty should go on.

This attitude changed once Constantine was deposed. Whether Eirene felt that the Isaurian dynasty should die out, or at least be prevented from ruling, one cannot be sure, but no record of any of these alternatives being explored survives. Eirene had remained a widow for seventeen years and it seems unlikely that she would change her marital status unless an outstanding candidate presented himself. Euphrosyne and her sister , Eirene, were both in a convent, though whether they had taken vows yet as nuns one does not know. It might have been difficult to have either absolved from those vows, had they taken them, though Tarasios might have been happy to do so, but the effect on the Studite monks and their sympathisers would have been disastrous for the Empress. When Euphrosyne was absolved from her vows and married Michael II, St. Theodore of Studion was quick enough to condemn her and counsel her own mother not to join her in the palace.[8]

Any of these methods of choosing a successor necessarily implies that Eirene consciously faced the prospect of not ruling herself. She had to face the fact of her own death, deliberately look Death in the eyes and see beyond her life as ruler. This, in itself takes some courage, but the added implications were far more frightening. Unless she was not only firmly in command all the time and, moreover, had a bodyguard and a spy system wholly trustworthy and loyal, she was liable to be dethroned by her nominated successor, not necessarily at a time when she would have chosen to retire.[9] The same considerations apply to this time in her life that applied at the beginning when her husband died - she had to stay on the throne. Now she had fewer advantages. She was middle-aged, had suffered one serious illness, her style of government was well known and not necessarily popular everywhere, and she had no young and vital son at her side. She had, in fact, no popular appeal. This is not to say that she was not a much-loved ruler in certain quarters. Those who were grateful for a measure of religious tolerance, and this must have included iconoclasts as well as iconophiles as no record exists of any persecution of iconoclast adherents, must have been grateful to her. Those now enjoying a more settled and civilised life in Thrace, Macedonia and Greece were probably happy to see Eirene on the throne. Her relaxation of taxes in 801 when the problem of the succession was pressing was an astute move to enhance her popularity when she needed time to solve this problem.

Eirene knew that her two chief eunuchs, Staurakios and Aetios were each plotting to gain the throne for themselves. In the case of Staurakios it was indeed for himself, reasoning that if a woman could hold power then so could a eunuch, an equally unheard of phenomenon and just as much without precedent in the Roman Empire. In the case of Aetios it was power for his brother Leo. It had become plain that neither were content to wait for Eirene's death, though one eunuch had to eliminate the other first, neither would be content to wait. Staurakios raised a rebellion twice, terminally ill though he was. Aetios with his brother Leo had seized control of the theme armies between them, though whether all the Asiatics would have rallied to Aetios' command is doubtful - Theophanes says as much as he mentions that the senior officers carried out a rebellion against the Empress .

It is also evident from her abdication speech that Eirene was aware that others were plotting as well. She told Nikephoros that she knew he was involved with others, presumably the Triphylloi brothers chief among them as Niketas was domestic of the Scholae. She chose to ignore the reports about Nikephoros, preferring to trust his oath of loyalty.

In the midst of all these plots Eirene received Charles' ambassadors. Theophanes noted that the Frankish king had considered invading Sicily the previous year, that is in 801 after his crowning at Christmas 800, but changed his mind, deciding to marry Eirene instead. Bury[10] proposed the theory that Eirene had been negotiating this alliance for some time. Possibly so, it is an attractive theory and persuasively argued and it has been discussed in the section on home affairs in this thesis. This was the outstanding candidate for whom Eirene could have risked altering her whole life and style of government. The advantages were considerable. With the protection of Charles she was in far less danger from a would-be usurper. His reputation and that of his troops might have given both Arabs and Bulgars pause for thought and ensured peace along the frontiers for at least a few years. The issue of ikon veneration would have to be resolved and Charles' misapprehensions straightened out. At least in Constantinople there might have been found a scribe with enough Latin to be able to translate the *Horos* of the 787 Council accurately. The question of who should succeed both monarchs would have been far more difficult to solve, but at least it could have been negotiated by Eirene from a stronger position. Charles' own sons Charles, Pepin and Lewis were still alive in 802. Any of them could have been given the eastern part of the empire to rule, even though the west had already been divided up between them. From Eirene's point of view the match had distinct advantages. With such a rich dowry as her empire she could negotiate such terms as she wished, the real problem for her would be to persuade the empire that uniting east and west was desirable. Such a union was plainly not to the advantage of Aetios, who believed his brother was already in a strong position to take power. This alliance between Charles and Eirene might not have been to the advantage of Nikephoros. If he thought his plans to usurp Eirene were far enough advanced and that he could command the support of the Imperial guard, there would be no point in supporting the match. On

the other hand, if it were to take place his power would have been greatly enhanced at the expense of Aetios and his brother. The lure of supreme power over the east proved too great and with the element of surprise, coupled with bold action, he succeeded.

Eirene's abdication speech seems to indicate an uncharacteristic fatalism. '...since I believe nothing comes to pass without Him I yield to the Lord the means of your advancement ...' and later'...to God through Whom Emperors reign and dynasts rule the world I give back what was once mine. Now I give you reverence as Emperor as you are pious and have been chosen by Him...'. Naturally as a good Byzantine she believed nothing could come to pass without Him and that being so, Nikephoros must have been chosen by Him. She had little alternative at that stage as Nikephoros had already been acclaimed by the crowd, had the Imperial guard at his back and, presumably, the church's approval as Tarasios had crowned him. Would she even have crowned him herself as she had a right to do?[11] She was making the best of a bad situation and by the dignity and gracious acceptance, indeed endorsement, of the *fait accompli* she hoped to secure a comfortable retirement for herself.

The match with Charles and Eirene, uniting the Frank Empire with the Eastern Roman Empire could have been possible at an earlier time, Easter 799 would have been a suitable time in Eirene's reign, but now matters had been left too late. The intense rivalry between the eunuchs and their over-reaching pretensions had set up an atmosphere of intrigue, allies being sought and bought by all parties. Although the marriage could have been possible, the distance between Aachen and Constantinople would have made the practical issues of joint government insoluble. Charles kept his Frankish kingdom united by keeping on the move for nine months of the year. He spent Christmas to Easter usually at Aachen and then went off campaigning wherever it appeared necessary. His northern boundaries were continually menaced by the Saxons and Danes: the Arabs in Spain were a constant source of anxiety in the west. The unity of the two empires was a chimera, a monster born out of desperation by acquisitive ambition. Eirene could see no viable alternative and Charles wanted his spurious title, given him by the Pope, legalised and the gold and land in Eirene's empire would provide awards for his Frank

followers. Some of these arguments may have been used by Aetios to persuade Eirene against the marriage. She then took the only possible course open to her. She left the matter in God's hands.

Her sex had made her vulnerable to the consequences of failing to provide a successor. The existence of this problem may have occurred to her during the brief time that Constantine was imprisoned in the Purple Chamber and it was a cogent reason for coming to some kind of compromise with her son. That she was overtaken by the precipitate action of her spies seems the more likely when this problem of the succession is considered. Regents have the problem of agreeing the best time to hand over power with the associated problem of how to occupy themselves once power has been handed over. But this applies equally to male and female regents alike and will be discussed in later chapters relating to the other female rulers in this study. A regency is, by its very nature, a finite phenomenon with a known and accepted end to it; it is merely a bridging device. A reigning monarch is another matter altogether, the continuity of rule can only be known and accepted if there is a co-ruler or ruler designate. There are only two alternatives if there is no co-ruler to succeed, either a usurper must succeed or the female closest to the monarch must marry or designate a suitable candidate. This had happened previously as noticed above and it will be shown later that it proved both the saving and undoing of the females who, however temporarily, held sole power. Eirene chose not to take this way out of the problem until too late. She could only wait on God.

NOTES TO EIRENE - CONCLUSION

1. See my article 'The Trier Procession Ivory - A New Interpretation' *Byzantion* LIV. 2. (Brussels 1984) pp. 602-614.

2. K. Holum 'Pulcheria's Crusade' *G.R.B.S.* 18. 1977 pp. 153ff.

3. E. Dawes and N.H. Baynes *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford 1977 ed.) esp. p. 45. The Emperor Zeno also consulted the same saint, cf. p. 48.

4. He implies that Eirene was the medium through which the Will of God was made manifest, an allusion to the words of the Virgin at the Incarnation 'Be it unto me according to Thy Word.'

5. *Vita S. Theophanes* ed. C. de Boor. Hildesheim (1963) pp. 3-9.

6. C. Mango. *Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?* (Beograd 1978)

7. Two previous Augustae created Emperors by crowning them. Constantia, Constantine's daughter created Vetranio Caesar in order to resist Magnentius' attempt to usurp in 350. Pulcheria crowned her new husband Marcian in 450.

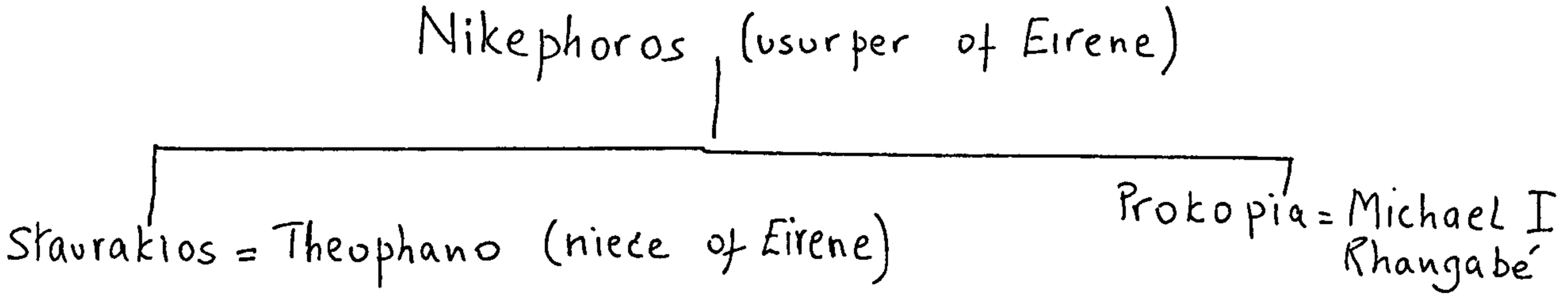
8. This is fully discussed in the next chapter on Euphrosyne.

9. It seems a curious fact that no female ruler was killed covertly, for instance by poison or a stab in the back, yet they are accused of procuring their Emperors' deaths by such covert means. Others in this study are so accused, that is Theophano and Zoe , and it was said by a later chronographer to be used as an excuse by Constantine to have Maria of Amnia put in the convent.

10. J.B. Bury 'Charles the Great and Irene' *Hermathena* VIII (1893) pp.17-37.

11. See note 7, although a 400 year old precedent. I do not see how he could have convinced her himself. Perhaps Tarasios could have persuaded her, but as it seems likely that he was in the plot to support Nikephoros, he was the natural one to crown him.

PLATE VIII



EXTRACT FROM STEMMA - EUPHROSYNE

EUPHROSYNE RULED AS AUGUSTA 823 - 830

Euphrosyne, the granddaughter of the Empress Eirene, was on the throne of the Byzantine Empire from her marriage to the Emperor Michael II in *circa* 822/3 until she retired to her convent of the Lady Euphrosyne in June 830 shortly after the marriage of her stepson, Theophilos. Being Eirene's granddaughter it might have been thought that she could have emulated Eirene and exerted her right to rule longer than she did, or at least have given Theophilos a year or two of joint rule after his father's death, perhaps until he was 18, before he exercised sole rule. She did not. The explanation may perhaps be found in the circumstances of her early life, confined in a convent, but the fact that she deliberately chose not to confront Theophilos and assert her right against his wishes, makes her an interesting study. The sources are found in the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* in the Bonn edition.

Euphrosyne was the daughter of the Emperor Constantine VI and his first wife, Maria of Amnia. Her grandmother was the Empress Eirene, co-ruler and mother of Constantine and later sole ruler after the deposition of her son. It seems likely that Euphrosyne was the second daughter of Constantine and Maria. Another daughter, Eirene, is mentioned in the list of royal personages buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles and other royal burial grounds listed in the *Catalogus Sepulchorum*[1] and it is a reasonable assumption that the Emperor's eldest child would have been named after his mother. Euphrosyne was a suitable name for a second child as, if the *Patria*[2] is to be trusted, the Empress Eirene adopted an orphan named Euphrosyne, who seems to have been no relation, and brought her up as though she were her own, thus the baby princess may have been named after her. It may also be significant that St. Theodore of Studion wrote a letter to two nuns Eirene and Euphrosyne[3] exhorting them to continue in the religious life. This letter has been assumed to have been written to the two princesses, though there is no internal evidence to support this assumption: however if the letter is indeed addressed to the two princesses he would naturally have put the eldest's name first in his address.

In January A.D. 795, the Empress Maria entered a convent and was divorced by her husband so that he could marry his mother's lady in waiting, Theodote. The Chronographer does not mention the girls at all

so we do not know if they entered the convent with their mother, joined her later, or were put in a separate establishment. That Euphrosyne became a nun like her mother is not in dispute, later chronographers mention the fact with some degree of disapproval at a nun marrying. She could have been no more than four or five years old[4] at the time of her mother's retirement from the world, and she may have had little or no alternative to becoming a nun.

While Euphrosyne was away from the world in her convent, events in the world outside were anything but quiet or stable. Although only twenty years separate the end of Eirene's reign from the time of Euphrosyne's marriage to the Emperor Michael II, the Empire was subject to major upheavals, including no less than five rulers successively on the throne. It may be helpful, therefore, to give below a brief outline of events.

Euphrosyne's father divorced her mother and married his mistress in A.D. 795. Their son, Leo, survived only five months and died in 797. Eirene assumed sole rule after Constantine was blinded in August of the same year. Her sole rule lasted until November 802 when her finance minister Nikephoros usurped her. The years of Eirene's rule were ones of peace, no major campaign being mounted against Arab, Bulgar or Frank.

The peace was shattered in Nikephoros' time; he lost a campaign against the Arabs and bought peace with them by a series of agreed payments which were somewhat less than those originally agreed by Eirene and Constantine. Although Eirene had been prepared to negotiate a form of joint rule with Charles, King of the Franks, Nikephoros usurped the throne before any arrangements could be made. Those ambassadors were obliged to return to Charles with the news of Nikephoros' succession and Charles made no other attempts to gain control of the Eastern Roman Empire. Nikephoros and his son, Staurakios, were less successful against the Bulgarians. Nikephoros lost his life while on campaign against Khan Krum and, in true barbaric style, Krum had Nikephoros' skull made into a drinking cup for his victorious warriors. Staurakios, now sole Emperor, was so severely wounded that, even though he escaped to return to the capital, died two or three months after. The northern part of Thrace was so devastated in this campaign that it remained an

unpopulated wilderness until 856 when it became part of Bulgaria. Staurakios had considered that his wife, Theophano, a niece of the Empress Eirene, might rule in his stead as an agent of the Senate. However, although his brother-in-law, Michael, had refused the crown when Staurakios first arrived in August or September in the City,after sustaining his injury, the army, the Senators and the Patriarch Nikephoros took matters into their own hands and proclaimed Michael Autokrator in October. Staurakios accepted the *fait accompli* and became a monk as an outward sign that he resigned the *imperium* into the hands of his brother-in-law. Staurakios died in January 812.

Staurakios and Theophano had no children so the next in dynastic succession was Staurakios' sister Prokopia and her husband Michael Rhangabe who already had a family. Michael I's reign lasted only from October 811 until July 813 when Leo V was proclaimed Emperor, when, like his late brother-in-law, Michael took holy orders, as did his wife and their children, though all entering different monasteries. The cause of Michael's downfall was his unsuccessful campaign against the Bulgarians who were raiding Thrace and Macedonia, even coming near to menacing Constantinople itself. Leo V was obliged to defend the walls of Constantinople against Krum and the campaign against the Bulgarians lasted over a year, concluded only by the death of Krum. A long period of re-construction of devastated towns and farms in the country north of Constantinople was necessary. To the south, the Arab rulers were occupied with internal troubles so Asia Minor was enjoying a period of stability. Leo appointed his old companion in arms Michael the Armorian from the Anatolikon theme as Domestic of the Excubitors. He raised him to the rank of patrician also promoting his other contemporary companion in arms, Thomas the Slav to be Turmarch of the Foederati.[5]

Leo V's reign lasted from July 813 until Christmas Eve 820 when he was murdered by adherents of Michael II. Michael had been proved to have been plotting against Leo from his position as Domestic of the Excubitors[6] and had been condemned to be burned alive in the Palace baths furnace. Leo's wife, the Empress Theodosia, persuaded her husband that Christmas Eve was an inopportune and inauspicious time for such an act, so Michael was locked into a servant's room in the Palace. His supporters, hearing of this, murdered Leo in the Chapel of St. Stephen

at the dawn of Christmas morning and they subsequently released Michael.

In the latter part of Leo's reign, probably towards the end of 820, Thomas the Slav had raised a revolt in Asia Minor, enthusiastically supported by the Arabs and the poor farmers in the border country. He defeated the small force Leo sent to deal with it and gathered considerable support from a very disparate group of people, Caucasians, Persians, Arabs and a great many of the re-settled Slavs in Phrygia[7]. It was Michael's contention that Leo was failing to deal with the revolt adequately that impelled him to make such criticism that resulted in his imprisonment and eventually led him to take control himself[8]. The war with Thomas lasted three years and devastated large tracts of land and involved large numbers of people, it was in truth a civil war. At the start of his campaign, Thomas persuaded people that he was the Emperor Constantine VI. This, and his espousal of iconophilism at a time when Leo was enthusiastically pursuing a thorough-going campaign of iconoclasm, gave Thomas a tremendous number of supporters. Towards the end of his campaign, when he was holding the greater part of Thrace, the fiction that Thomas was really Constantine VI seems to have been dropped. Michael finally defeated Thomas at the seige of Arcadiopolis in October 823, but not before Thomas had appeared twice before the very walls of Constantinople.

The issue of iconoclasm had been debated fiercely in Leo's reign after a period of religious toleration during the reigns of Eirene, Nikephoros and Staurakios and Michael I's brief period of power, when the support for the veneration of ikons was enhanced. Leo V made a determined effort to re-impose iconoclasm, bringing arguments into the public eye with another church council in 815. This council made reference to Eirene's council of 787, ascribing Eirene's part in it to 'female simplicity'[9]. Leo himself is said to have remarked that only those emperors who had not venerated ikons died a natural death and that he wanted to follow their example and found a long dynasty, even to the fifth generation[10].

Once Michael II had come to the throne he was obliged immediately to deal with the threat of Thomas the Slav and the civil war that the revolt caused. He also had to deal with the question of ikon veneration.

Although he was not in favour of ikon veneration personally, he was reluctant to impose his private views on others. No actual support was given to the iconophiles but active persecution was stopped. He refused to allow any public debate on the matter.

Michael was married to Thekla, daughter of the general under whom he, Leo and Thomas were all serving together and it seems likely that Leo was godfather to the infant Theophilos, son of Michael and Thekla.[11] By the end of the civil war Thekla had died and one of the first of Michael's considerations after the war was to discuss his lack of a wife with the Senate. The sources imply that through some kind of influence Michael orchestrated the Senate's demand that he should take another wife so that the Senators' wives would have their own court. Theophanes Continuatus credits the Senate as saying ' for it is not possible for a king to live without a wife and our wives to be deprived of a mistress and queen'[12]. Michael's choice for his second wife was Euphrosyne. The decision was in some ways extraordinary, but it gave Michael considerable advantages.

There is no reference in any of the chronographers or in hagiography to the dispensation from her vows that must have been given to Euphrosyne by the Patriarch Anthony. Finlay[13] remarks that he gave his permission for the marriage but does not support the statement with any reference to a text. Bury[14] quotes Finlay and Treadgold[15] quotes Bury, all assuming that the permission was given without difficulty. By allying himself through marriage to the daughter of Constantine VI and, therefore, the Isaurian dynasty, he established a real connection between that dynasty and his, the Amorian. The marriage would also dispose of whatever credence people still gave to Thomas the Slav's earlier claim to have been Constantine VI, Euphrosyne's father. As she was likely to have attended his funeral, he was buried in her mother's monastery, she could reassure anyone about that. Michael was a rough, illiterate soldier who spoke Greek so badly that he was named the Stammerer[16]. He had been born of poor parents in Amoria in Phrygia, the headquarters of the Byzantine Jews and of the sect called Athingani, both heretics from the Byzantine point of view. The convent-reared Princess Euphrosyne had a distinguished background and, through her mother, Maria of Amnia, connections with the Paphlagonian aristocracy.

She would therefore, prove an admirable wife for Michael and a suitable 'mistress and queen' for the Senators' wives. In a sense, she legitimated Michael's claim to the throne, because by being born in the purple herself she could bestow her residual Imperial power on her husband, as Prokopia had done in the case of the previous Michael. His acceptance by Church and Senate as well as the military support gained by vanquishing Thomas gave him a perfect right to the throne, but the accusation that he had murdered his way there was inescapable. His alliance with Euphrosyne and the Isaurian dynasty gave an aspect of credibility and some pretension to civilisation which his poverty-stricken and possibly heretical background needed. Nevertheless, Michael had to put against these advantages the possible repercussions caused by the scandal of a nun marrying. Second marriages were frowned upon by strict members of the church and for a nun to have her vows dissolved in order to marry might have alienated an influential section of the public. Some indication of the reaction of such a strict member of the church can be seen in St. Theodore of Studion's letter to Maria Augusta[18] dissuading her from joining her daughter in the palace when he says ' your godfearing self should stay at home (οἴκοι) while Augusta holds the imperial palace, in this case the sword of the gospel has been revealed bringing its severance'. Also Theophanes Continuatus criticises Euphrosyne for marrying Michael[19].

It may be that Euphrosyne had been entertaining doubts as to her vocation before Michael's offer of marriage; or perhaps as a result of preliminary enquiries he may have made on the subject there were rumours of Euphrosyne wishing to take up public life again. The letter from St. Theodore of Studion addressed to Eirene and Euphrosyne, already mentioned above, exhorting them to continue with convent life and extolling the virtues of life as a nun, a bride of Christ, might have been written, unasked, to circumvent the possible marriage. Considerable courage must have been needed to emerge from a convent to take on the role of Empress, to live with an illiterate, tough soldier who had murdered his way to the throne. Michael must have had great respect for her through six years of marriage to arrange with the Senate that they should recognise and support her rule and that of her children after his death[20]. However, after Michael's death Euphrosyne ruled as co-ruler with Theophilos, not as his regent only, as the chronographer's

angry remarks indicate '...but (the Senate) would in all probability have her as their mistress after their (joint) reign as emperor. This man thought he would wield power not only in that age but also in the age after him ...'[21]

In his article 'The Problem of the Marriage of the Emperor Theophilos' Warren Treadgold[22] has painstakingly set out a chronology to account for the date of the marriage of Theophilos, arranged by Euphrosyne, his stepmother, as well as proposing dates for the birth of Theophilos' children. On page 337[23] Treadgold says 'If Theophilos was born in 812/3, he was crowned at eight, carried the fragment of the True Cross at nine, grew his first beard and took power with his stepmother at sixteen and was married at seventeen'. Treadgold also adds on page 338 'Since Theophilos was only seventeen at the time of his bride-show, his stepmother and co-regent Euphrosyne was in a position to exercise strong influence on his choice of bride. ...Considering Euphrosyne's power, which was supported by her prestige as the daughter and widow of emperors and confirmed by the oath of the Senate, it would not be surprising if Theodora was more Euphrosyne's choice than her stepson's (Th. Cont. 78).'

Michael II died on 29th October 829, succeeded by his widow and son. She then set about arranging a bride show for him, just as her own mother had been chosen as her father's bride. To set the scene suitably for such an event, while messengers were searching the Empire for suitable candidates, she had the Triclinium of the Pearl built. Although one source[24] records the bride show and includes an account of Theophilos giving a golden apple to Kassia with a cheeky epigram 'Through a woman came man's tribulation'[25] this story is amplified in a very fanciful way in the Life of St. Theodora recording that Theodora was the final recipient of the golden apple[26].

Scholars have assumed that, with these two contestants, the bride show was rigged in favour of iconophile girls in accordance with the inclinations of Euphrosyne herself. If she were to have been following the practice of her husband and, what I have argued previously, was the practice of her grandmother Eirene, it seems more likely that the bride show had an equal number of girls from families supporting either side

of the argument. She would thus appear to have been even-handed and, therefore, risked no criticism from either quarter. The fact that Kassia and Theodora's family were supporters of the veneration of ikons does not prove that Euphrosyne herself was the ardent supporter of that veneration that scholars have made out. Evidence for this rests on the fact that she was the granddaughter of an iconophile saint, St.Philaretos, was in a convent dedicated to ikon worship and was in close touch with that arch iconophile, St. Theodore of Studion. The views of St. Philaretos were not stated in his Life as has been previously discussed. There is no evidence of the prevailing practice of the convent of St. Euphrosyne at this time and it may or may not have been in favour of ikon worship. That St. Theodore was in touch with Eirene and Euphrosyne exhorting them to persevere with convent life, emphasising the value of their life as brides of Christ, is not seriously in dispute, though this letter[27] was addressed to Eirene and Euphrosyne as μοναξούσαις but gives no direct reference to their being of royal blood and might even have been addressed not to the royal princesses at all but to two other nuns bearing those not uncommon names. However, St. Theodore was, for certain in touch with their mother, Maria, but the tone of that letter sounds as though it might have been written gratuitously, not necessarily in response to a query from the Augusta as to whether or not she should join her daughter in the palace after the marriage. St. Theodore's objections to Maria joining her daughter may have been based on the grounds both that he saw a nun's life as infinitely preferable for a woman to that of a secular life, and that he disapproved of the regime in the palace. Michael would have no discussion of the ikon veneration subject at all and St. Theodore may still have hoped that Euphrosyne could have persuaded Michael to be more keen to back the overt return to ikon veneration. Of course, he disapproved of Euphrosyne having her vows dissolved in order to marry and would be equally disapproving of Maria leaving her convent, sympathetic though he was to her misfortune[28]. But, if he could have enlisted the royal ladies' support for his more extreme iconophile views he might have been prepared to forgive Euphrosyne for abandoning her convent, but for both to have done so was going too far. He had already refused to be in communion with the Patriarch Tarasios for his part in Constantine's marriage to Theodote and his disapproval of the regime at the palace may be reflected in the remark that Theophanes Continuator makes concerning Euphrosyne being

proud of having Constantine for a father. The Continuator is biased in favour of iconophiles and against Michael II, and this remark may reflect the icnonophile prejudice against Constantine and, therefore, his daughter. It may have been a sneer, but might have been a straight comment that she was proud of being of royal descent through five generations in distinction from her husband who could claim no distinguished ancestors.

It may be seen from the foregoing that the case for Euphrosyne being an ardent iconophile is not quite convincingly made out. The evidence that we now have, albeit limited, more realistically points towards a woman who was not prepared to upset the *status quo* and was happy to follow her husband's tolerant attitude towards people of other beliefs. It may be that Euphrosyne was inclined to be more even-handed than her husband and give an opportunity for the practice to be more positively tolerated, signalled by the inclusion of girls from iconophile families to be included in the bride show. Theophilos' choice of Theodora probably reflects more his eye for beauty than any discreet rigging of the bride show by Euphrosyne. An Arab commentator[29] remarked glowingly on Theodora's beauty, he could hardly keep his mind on his embassy to the court for being stunned by Theodora's looks.

If Euphrosyne was indeed an ardent iconophile and wished to ensure that her stepson and co-ruler married an iconophile who would continue to influence him in this direction, she failed conspicuously. That Theodora's family saw the advantage of the restoration of ikon veneration is not in doubt and this will be discussed in the next chapter. Were Euphrosyne to have been such an ardent iconophile one must assume she would have brought up Theophilos to have venerated ikons too. He was ten, or at the most, eleven when she married Michael and there would have been plenty of time for her to have exerted considerable influence on his religious upbringing, particularly having been brought up in a convent herself. One wonders if he would have been such a scourge to those who venerated ikons if he had been thus reared. However, the influence of John the Grammarian, who became Patriarch, may have been decisive; he was Theophilos' tutor before becoming Patriarch and was passionately against the veneration of ikons, bringing the whole of his considerable learning and personality to bear on the subject.

It is possible that this is an example where a man's influence over another male is naturally greater than the power that could be wielded by a woman over that male. Eirene's restoration of ikon veneration was put down to 'female simplicity'[30] and John's formidable intellect and reputation for learning would carry its own weight, iconoclasm was 'manly' and the veneration of ikons something for women, a comfort for their inferior status.[31] It is open to interpretation that it was in the face of this failure that Euphrosyne decided to retire to her convent after Theophilos' marriage in order to avoid an open breach with him: this theory presupposes that Theophilos made it plain that he supported the iconoclastic view before his marriage.[32] If Euphrosyne followed what has been argued in the previous chapter was her grandmother's approach of *laissez faire* as her husband Michael had done, then Theophilos' hard line would have been unacceptable, even though it did not show itself until a year or two later in his reign.[33]

It seems evident that the practice of ikon veneration was carried on discreetly, even in the palace, and though a discussion of this properly belongs to the next chapter on Theodora, one recent argument in favour of Euphrosyne being an active iconophile must be noticed. Treadgold[34] has argued that it was Euphrosyne, not Theoktista, Theodora's mother, who was living in the monastery of Gastria and responsible for the daughters of Theophilos and Theodora being given ikons to kiss[35]. But Euphrosyne was buried at the convent of the Lady Euphrosyne as Philip Grierson has shown, pointing out in his commentary on the Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors[36] that Constantine VI, his widow Maria and his other daughter Eirene were also buried in a single sarcophagus in the monastery of the Lady Euphrosyne. The *Patria*[37] has a very garbled account of how Michael, son of Theophilos, turned his mother and sisters out of the palace and led them to a monastery, this passage adding that the Sister named Euphrosyne was separated from them. Thus the *Patria* may be preserving the fact that Theodora and her daughters were sent into a different convent from her mother-in-law, so Theodora and her daughters almost certainly did go to the convent of Gastria where her mother, Theoktista lived.

However, it is possible to conjecture that Euphrosyne did indeed retire first to Gastria but at a later time removed to the monastery of

the Lady Euphrosyne where her father was already buried. Theoktista, Theodora's mother was created 'zoste'[38], presumably in the early part of Theodora's marriage, perhaps after the first child Thekla was born. This title carried with it court duties such as being the *doyenne* of the ladies in waiting and must, therefore, have required Theoktista to live in the royal palace. Attendance at ceremonial occasions was, therefore, part of her duties and would have been considered entirely unsuitable for a nun. It follows that Theoktista could not have retired to any monastery while she held this honour. The story of the little princesses going to Gastria and being given ikons to kiss by their grandmother depends on the youngest, Pulcheria, born in 836, being too young to dissemble about what had happened, but old enough to talk coherently. She may perhaps have been three years old and Theodora probably about thirty three years old, Theoktista could then have been in her fifties. It seems not unreasonable to propose, therefore, that Theoktista may have wanted to retire from the formidable and exhausting ceremonial of the court by that time, though wanting to stay within easy reach of her daughter. Gastria was a royal foundation and, presumably, accustomed to accommodating august personages; where better for Theoktista to retire? Might not Euphrosyne either have removed to the Lady Euphrosyne already, possibly after the return to ikon veneration, or later simply in order to allow Theoktista to enter Gastria? The more plausible theory seems to be that the return to ikon veneration may have caused Euphrosyne to feel that a discreet distance between herself and the court was a more tactful move than to stay and be revealed as no more than luke-warm at this turn of events. If Euphrosyne was indeed at the monastery of the Lady Euphrosyne by the time Pulcheria was about three, then it would seem more natural that the little princesses would visit their maternal grandmother who had been so closely connected with the court rather than Euphrosyne who was their father's step-mother.

As we have seen, once Theophilos was married to Theodora, Euphrosyne retired from the court. If she had to any extent rigged the bride show in favour of Theodora it may have been from the point of view that her family came from the same region as Euphrosyne's mother. It is quite possible that the two families may have known each other. As was proved later, Theodora's brother, Bardas, was a man of talent and a

leader of the moderate group in the capital, Euphrosyne may have seen that the young Theophilos would need the support of a family with moderate views.

After she had retired to her convent, the Greek chronographers fail to mention Euphrosyne again, but there are two references to her by Michael the Syrian.[39] One is that she bore a male child, but believing him to have Jewish blood through the antecedents of her husband, she had the child killed, surely a most scurrilous invention. She may perhaps have had a child, but it might have been still born or died in early infancy. It should be remembered that Euphrosyne must have been in her early thirties when she married and, allowing for the poor diet in women's monasteries, may not have been robust enough to bear a child successfully. One other reference from the Syrian Chronicler[40] is that she sent a message to Theophilos, who was campaigning in Asia Minor, to the effect that there was a plot to usurp him, having given out that he had died on campaign. If this account is true, it indicates that Euphrosyne kept her informants and that her advice was heeded. There was certainly a rumour that Theophilos had died on campaign and he did hurry back to the capital. Nevertheless, the claim that this news came from Euphrosyne does not appear in any of the Greek chronographers and it does seem quite unlikely.

Euphrosyne actually ruled jointly with her stepson for about nine months. She had the backing of her late husband's instruction to the Senate[41] to which it had agreed, so there should have been no impediment in her way if she had chosen to continue to rule. No hint that she had any real disagreement with Theophilos emerges in any of the accounts of this brief period, though Theophanes Continuatus[42] mentions that Theophilos had expressed his determination to rule alone once he was married. This may have been an ambition expressed when the boy was young, a co-ruler with his father, as no time is assigned to this sentiment. What made her retire to the convent can only be conjectured. If, as has been suggested, she was not devoted to the veneration of ikons but preferred that it should not be made an issue of controversy, that is her husband's approach maintained, Theophilos' youthful enthusiasm to impose his will on church and people may have been distasteful to her. Yet she may have wished to allow him a free rein, untrammelled by her

restraining hand. She was, it must be remembered, not a regent while Theophilos was in his minority, but a co-ruler. Quite simply, Euphrosyne may have tired of court life and preferred to retire to her monastery. On the other hand, she may have feared plots to exile her emanating from those who were hostile to her marriage with Michael, or were hostile to Michael himself, and anticipating this move, she exiled herself to a place of her own choosing[43].

If Euphrosyne was an iconophile, as assumed by most scholars, she would have seen that this influence on her stepson had signally failed. If Theodora's family's devotion to ikon veneration was already known, Euphrosyne may have felt that she could better leave the iconophile influence to Theodora and her family. There is also the possibility, mentioned above, that Theophilos wished to assert his independence and rule alone once he was married, even though he was only seventeen, and establish an individual style of ruling not associated with his father. Some support for this is given by the fact that he punished the co-conspirators involved in his father's usurpation and murder of Leo V[44]. He did not do this until Euphrosyne had already retired to her monastery, out of the world of the court. It would have been tantamount to a serious personal insult had he taken this step with his stepmother still on the throne and might possibly have encouraged an anti-Theophilos faction.

From this brief survey of the reign of Euphrosyne one can hardly draw any firm conclusions about how she exercised imperial power. Some courage must have been shown by her in emerging from the monastery to become the Augusta. Her life must have suddenly become dramatically different and it would take a woman of fortitude and determination to adapt not only to married life but also to the protocol and very public duties she had to perform as Augusta while her husband was alive[45]. Her pride in her father might have inspired her determination that his rightful place as ruler was, in a sense, carried on by her.

Once she was co-ruler with and regent for Theophilos even more responsibilities would have devolved upon her, it was no longer a question of being queen and mistress to the wives of Senators, she had to assent to all decrees and sign them. with Theophilos, power was

personal and direct still in the Roman Empire. The only act we know she was personally responsible for was the building of the Triclinium of the Pearl for the bride show and, of course, for the orders instituting the bride show itself. The possibility that she warned Theophilos of an impending revolt in Constantinople could probably be discounted. Her attitude towards the vexed question of ikon veneration is less certain. The more restrained, less superstitious practice that Leo IV and Eirene were tacitly allowing may have been the prevailing attitude in Euphrosyne's childhood and inculcated by her mother while they were in the monastery and was that followed in Michael's reign. The passionate and fierce devotion shown by the Studios monks was far from this more moderate practice. It is possible that Euphrosyne's influence may have lasted a little time after her retirement as Theophilos waited a year or two, perhaps even till 834, before instituting any really severe attacks on iconophiles, and then it may be that he was influenced by the Patriarch John the Grammarian.

Euphrosyne is a shadowy figure and only conjectures are possible with regard to her life. On a balance of probabilities, if the muted nature of her supposed iconophilism is allowed, a picture of a tolerant, discreet and gentle person emerges, who was far removed from the passionate and intransigeant monks of St. John Studion, whose abbot presumed to advise her. She had brought up her stepson to be a fond father and husband, a civilised man who appreciated art and literature to a very marked degree and who had a deep concern for justice irrespective of social status. How much of this he got from his father, who may have wanted all those things for his son that he never had for himself, or how much he got from Euphrosyne, or even John the Grammarian, one cannot know,but the possibility that Euphrosyne's influence was crucial remains. Her example in building the Triclinium of the Pearl may have set Theophilos the example for his later passion for building. Unlike Eirene, she gave the young Emperor his head and tactfully removed herself from the scene of power, in fact behaved as contemporaries thought a female should.

NOTES TO EUPHROSYNE

1. Philip Grierson 'Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16. 1962 p. 34

2. *Patria Constantinopolitanarum* ed. Th. Preger, Teubner 1901 p. 243 paragraph 77.

3. Migne *P.G.* 99. letter 104, col. 1361

4. If she was the younger of the daughters she could not have been more than three at the most, possibly younger.

5. Foederati were part of the Imperial guard, cf. Bury 'Administration' pp. 64-5

6. Excubitors were the guardians of the Imperial bedchamber, cf. Bury 'Administration' pp. 57-60

7. See Bury. *E.R.E.* Appendix V pp. 462-464 for the probable chronology of this war.

8. See Michael's letter to Lewis the Pious written April 824. Mansi XIV colls. 417-422 '*De Non Adorandis Imaginibus*'.
This may be a fine piece of hindsight and excusemanship, but it must have had a considerable basis of truth.

9. Mansi XIV pp. 135ff. Bury gives a translation of the *acta* on pp. 69-70 in *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire* London (1912).

10. *Scriptor Incertus* ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1842) pp. 346, 349.

11. Theoph. Cont. 23 and Genesios 12

12. Theoph. Cont. p. 78, para. 24: '...οὐ γάρ ἐστιν οἷον γυναικὸς ἄνευ φάσκειν βασιλέα τε ζῆν καὶ τὰς ἡμετέρας στερεῖσθαι γαμετὰς δεσποίνης καὶ βασιλίδος.'

13. George Finlay *History of the Byzantine Empire* Edinburgh 1856 2nd ed. p. 169.

14. J.B. Bury *E.R.E.* p. 111 who says: 'The Patriarch did not hesitate to dissolve Euphrosyne from her vows that she might fill the high station for which her birth had fitted her'. See also note 3, p.111.

15. Warren T. Treadgold 'Brideshows of the Byzantine Empire' *Byzantion* XLIX 1979. p. 402. n. 28

16. Theoph. Cont. 49. He probably spoke either Syriac or Aramaic.

17. Theoph. Cont. 49 and see *Acta Davidis 230*

18. M. *P.G.* 99 colls. 1560-1561. In this letter St. Theodore is counselling Maria Augusta not to leave her convent and join her daughter in the palace. The letter is couched in very respectful terms employing the 1st person plural throughout, but he makes his views clear nonetheless.

19. Theoph Cont. 79, para. 24 and p. 86.

20. Leo Grammaticus 213 or Georgius Monachus Addition 789

21. Theoph Cont. 78. para. 24.

22. Warren T. Treadgold *G.R.B.S.* 16.3 Autumn 1975

23. see above note 22.

24. Georgius Mon. Add. 790

25. Θεο: ⟨ὦ γύναικα⟩ διὰ γυναικὸς ⟨εἰς⟩ ἐρρύν τὰ φαῦλα
Κας: ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ γυναικὸς τὰ κρείττονα πηγαζει.

26. *Vita Sanctae Theodorae Imperatricis* ed. W. Regel Petrograd 1891 pp. 3-4

27. M. *P.G.* 99. colls. 1360-1. see note 3. The letter is dated quite wrongly to A.D. 816 by Baronius, whereas Euphrosyne did not marry until c. 822. Even if Michael started negotiations well before then and the letter was written to circumvent them, the date is still a long way out.

28. St. Theodore mentions three misfortunes that have befallen Maria, he cites the first as being deprived of the throne, the second as being separated from her flesh and blood and the third being her daughter's re-entry into secular life. The first Theodore even refers to as exile (ἐξορίαν). What exactly he means by being parted from her own flesh and blood is obscure but might refer to the girls being brought up apart from their mother, were they kept in the palace with Constantine and exiled to their mother's convent when Constantine was deposed, or were they in another convent? It may be a rhetorical flourish indicating that Maria's own family were no longer round her or her married one of Constantine and Eirene.

29. See Bury *E.R.E.* pp. 83-4 note 4.

30. see note 9.

31. 'In Search of Byzantine Women' *Images of Women in Antiquity* eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt. London 1983. See also 'Women and the Faith in Ikons in Early Christianity' *Culture, Ideaology and Politics* eds. R. Samuel and G. Jones (London 1983)

32. In A.D. 832, see Theoph. Cont. 121

33. see Bury *E.R.E.* p. 35 where he suggests it could have been as late as A.D 834.

34. 'The Problem of the Marriage of Theophilos' *G.R.B.S.* 16.3 (1975) p. 339.

35. There are two stories concerning the princesses being given 'dolls' to kiss; one involves the girls visiting their grandmother in Gastria, questioned by Theophilos afterwards Pulcheria told how she gave

them 'dolls' to kiss, see Georgius Mon. Add. 790, who puts Euphrosyne in Gastria. The alternative version is that Theodora gave the girls 'dolls' to kiss, observed by Denderis the court Clown who told Theophilos, see Th ph. Cont. 90-92.

36. see note 1.

37. *Patria Constantinopolitanarum* p. 243.

38. see Bury *Administration* p. 33 (No. 15) who says that the title might be translated as 'mistress of the robes' and she was the only lady who was a patricia (πατρικία) in her own right.

39. Vol III. p. 15

40. ibid

41. see note 20..

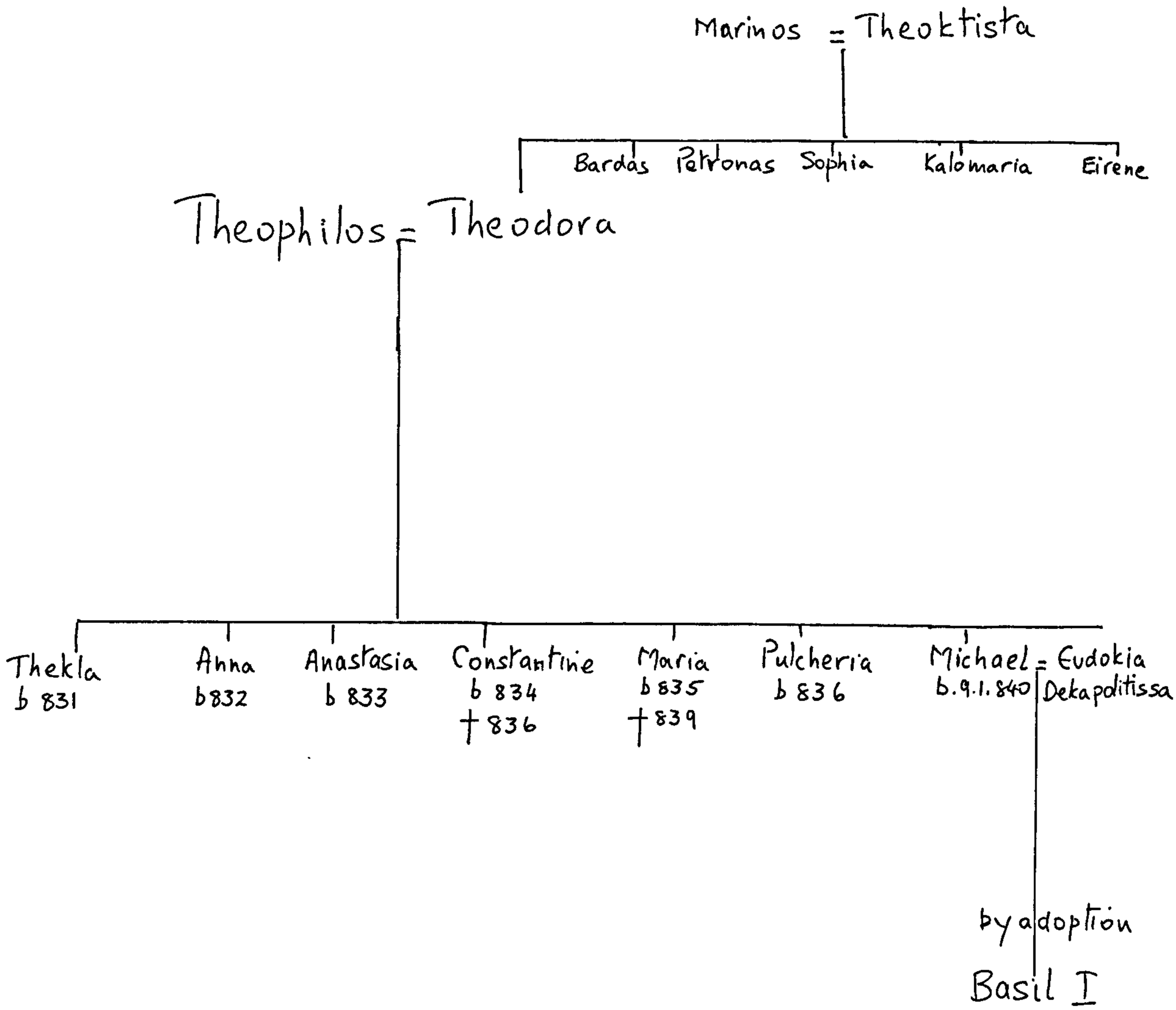
42. Theoph. Cont.78.

43. She might have preferred to build a new convent rather than return to the one she had left for the secular world of the court.

44. Genesios 51

45. Her lack of experience would account for her needing her mother at her side.

PLATE IX



EXTRACT FROM STEMMA - THEODORA

THEODORA - REGENT FOR MICHAEL III, RULED 842-858/9

The sources for Theodora are contained in the Bonn edition of the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, none of which, except for the Life of St. Ignatios[1] was written by a contemporary. They were probably written after 945 when Constantine VII was sole ruler and some were derived from a set of annals containing a mixture of notices of births, deaths and marriages, battles as well as prophecies and natural phenomena. These had no connecting commentary; but, on the other hand, other sources took their work from lost hagiographies, either church-inspired or secular. All the sources suffer in varying degrees from a bias that led to the suppression (and occasionally the imaginative inclusion) of material facts and events. Scholars have been engaged in attempting to chart a reasonable path through this jungle of tendentious matter and agree that a Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete forms the backbone of much of some of the sources, but this Chronicle had been altered, re-interpreted and, to some extent, completely lost.

The problem of these conflicting and biased sources has been dealt with by Romilly Jenkins in 1948[2], 1954[3], and 1965[4]. Patricia Karlin-Hayter has conducted further research which has thrown considerable light on the problem in 1971[5] and Warren Treadgold[6] has followed Jenkins' 1956 work by further research on the chronology.

The sources blacken the character of Michael III; Jenkins sees the problem as lying in Constantine VII's effort to give the lie to the theory that his father was the illegitimate son of Michael and Basil I's second wife, Eudokia Ingerina. Constantine attained sole rule in 945 and was the surviving member of the Macedonian dynasty which had its origin with Basil I. He had been forced to occupy himself in some way while his father-in-law, Romanos Lekapenos was the effective ruler of the Byzantine Empire. This enforced retirement gave him a taste for history and for a concern with literary style. Romilly Jenkins[7] has pointed out that Constantine's Life of Basil might very well have been based on the lost *enkomion* by Nicholas of Damascus on Augustus, Michael's reign being the *psogos* showing how bad things were before Basil took power. Jenkins proposes[8] that the *Scriptores post Theophanem* were written 'beneath the emperor's eye' and thus 'the reigns of the emperors who immediately preceded Basil I could not be represented as

other than uniformly disastrous, because it was part of the imperial myth that Basil supervened to bring salvation after fifty years of uninterrupted decline'. In his paper 'Constantine VII's Portrait of Michael III'[9] Jenkins points out that this part of the *Vita Basilii* is based on Plutarch's *Life of Anthony* and part of his (lost) life of Nero.

Even the sources that contain most of the lost Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete[10] were written by monks and by no means free from bias and, in any case, were more concerned to show the results of human sin, signs and portents, rather than objective history. 'Like most Byzantine chroniclers, the Logothete slanted his narrative, not by falsifying it, but by omitting what was good and successful and including what was mischievous or disastrous: *suppressio veri* leading to *suggestio falsi*' [11].

It is, therefore, with this in mind that a careful way has to be picked through tendentious matter, designed to show Michael in a bad light and, by implication, Bury's judgement on Theodora as a mother: 'She was not an unscrupulous woman like Irene, she did not aspire to be Autocrat in her own right or set aside her son; but well knowing her son's incapacity she had doubtless looked forward to keeping him in perpetual tutelage and retaining all the serious business of government in her own hands[12].

NOTES TO THEODORA - SOURCES

1. *Vita S. Ignatii* M. *P.G.* 105 Colls. 487-574
   Written by Niketas the Paphlagonian, probably during his exile in 909. Also see note 10.

2. 'Constantine VII's Portrait of Michael III' Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques. *Académie Royale de Belgique* 5e serie XXXIV 1948, pp. 71-77.

3. 'The Classical Background of the *Scriptores post Theophanem.*' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 1954, pp. 13-30.

4. The Chronicle Accuracy of the 'Logothete' for the Years A.D. 867-913' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19. 1965. pp. 91-112.

5. 'Études sur les Deux Histoires du Règne de Michel III' *Byzantion* XLI (Brussels 1971) pp. 452-496.

6. 'The Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 pp. 166-197.
   and 'The Bride-Shows of the Byzantine Emperors' *Byzantion*XLIX (Brussels 1979) pp. 395-413

7. See 'Classical Background' note 3 above esp. pp. 23-24

8. See note 3 above p. 17.

9. See note 2 above p. 18.

10. Contained in the Bonn editions of the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* in Leo Grammaticus, Theodore Melitene,and in the Addition to Georgius Monachus, also Theophanes Continuatus.

11. See Jenkins note 4 above, p. 96.

12. J.B. Bury *E.R.E.* p. 159.

Theodora's religious policy

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Euphrosyne organised the bride-show for her seventeen year old stepson which resulted in the marriage on June 5th 830 between Theophilos and Theodora. Theophilos ruled with Theodora as Augusta[1] until his early death in 842, leaving as his heir Michael III who was only three years old.[2] Theophilos had appointed a regency council to assist Theodora rule, the composition of which is not entirely clear. Undoubtedly Theoktistos, who was the Keeper of the Inkpot (του καντικλέου)[3] and Logothete of the Drome, mentioned so dramatically in the Vita Theodorae[4] was the chief adviser and favourite of Theodora. Theophanes Continuatus[5] also mentions Theodora's brother Bardas in the council and Genesios[6] mentions both Theoktistos and Manuel, Theodora's brother.[7] It is also possible that the council contained both Petronas, Theodora's brother and her uncle, Sergios Niketiates[8], though these two may have been added a year or so after Theophilos' death to strengthen the council during its deliberations over the restoration of ikon veneration.

It is difficult, therefore, with such a strong regency council to distinguish Theodora's part in many decisions, though it is possible to see her own specifically feminine hand in some negotiations and acts. Some aspects of her reign are so distinctive and form a convenient parallel with Eirene's reign that they will be discussed fully below; they are her part in the restoration of ikon veneration involving her relationship with the church; her relations with other countries, including her negotiations with Boris the young, newly-established Khan of Bulgaria and her negotiations with the Arabs over the release of the Amorian prisoners as well as her severity over the persecutions of the Paulicians. Lastly her relationship with her son will be considered.

Theodora's part in the restoration of ikon veneration was probably less personally enthusiastic than one might expect from the encomium[9] and the representation of her holding the medallion of Christ's head, the *imago clipeata*, now found in the Menologion of Basil II[10], but which undoubtedly is a miniature copy of a larger picture which may have hung either in the royal apartments or, more likely, in Hagia Sophia. It must be remembered that Theodora was dévoted to her husband Theophilos

and must have agreed publicly with his policy of iconoclasm, even if she may have had her private doubts concerning it. She must, in fact, have been pulled both ways during her marriage; on the one hand her mother Theoktista giving the little princesses ikons to kiss on their visits to her in Gastria[11] and on the other hand the vehemence of her husband's attitude, fervently backed up by John the Grammarian as Patriarch, may have given her a profound distaste for the whole issue.

There seems little doubt that the policy of intransigence towards those who venerated ikons had not worked. Equally, the time when simply ignoring the issue or forbidding discussion was also past. Michael II had seen that the success of Thomas the Slav had added the dissatisfaction even disaffection of the poor in Asia Minor to the aspirations of the iconophiles and that this combination was immensely dangerous. The influence of the reforming Studite monks, their sufferings under Constantine VI and Leo V identified them closely with the poverty of the overtaxed small farmers who had to endure twice yearly incursions by the Moslem iconoclast Arabs in Asia Minor, or sorties and infiltrations from the barbarian Slavs in the north and west. No wonder that Thomas could lead what in effect was a peasants' revolt, uniting them under an iconophile standard. His own Slav origins appealed to the various different racial elements in his army and the iconophilism may have been another element in binding them together. Michael II was so well aware of the influence and charismatic appeal of the Studite monks that he gathered them up from their exile under Leo V and saw that they were safely housed within the walls of the City at the start of the war.

Bury[12] has shown that Theophilos' insistence on iconoclasm was limited to the City and its immediate environs. Those monks who were in the City and openly preached iconophilism were banished. Theophilos reserved his special severity for the two Palestinian monks, Theodore and Theophanes, and for the ikon painter Lazaros. In the case of the Palestinians, that the Emperor of Byzantium should be haranguèd and sèt to rights by foreigners from Palestine, owing alleigance to Arab rulers, was understandably unpalatable and Theophilos' reaction, though harsh,[13] at least spared their lives. He attempted to persuade other notable monks, among whom was Lazaros, famed for his ikon painting, to his own way of thinking and where this failed the unfortunate monks were beaten

and banished, though Lazaros was forced to submit to the final torture of having the palms of his hands seared with hot metal. At the intercession of Theodora, he was released from prison and returned to a monastery across the Bosphoros where it enters the Black Sea. Theodora commissioned him to paint the ikon of Christ that was replaced over the Chalke Gate once the public veneration of ikons was re-established. Apart from these instances there did not seem to have been the persecution that had been seen in the reigns of Constantine V or Leo V, none was put to death and no effort seems to have been made to insist on iconoclasm outside the City and its immediate environs. We see no equivalent of Michael Lachanodrakon in the Thrakesian theme[14].

Although overt ikon veneration had been banned in the capital, there seems, with hindsight now, little doubt that ikons existed there in private hands. Some influential members of the Senate and court must have been known to each other as favouring a return to ikon veneration. It may that Theoktista, Theodora's mother was an iconophile and did her best to inculcate the practice in the royal children's minds[15]. Both the story of the infant Pulcheria telling her father that her grandmother gave them dolls to kiss and the strikingly similar one of the Fool, Denderis, innocently telling Theophilos about Theodora giving the girls dolls to kiss would at least indicate that ikons were still owned and, therefore, used in secret, possibly among Theodora's family and even among those close to the seat of power. The fact that the general Theophobos, married to one of Theodora's sisters[16] was an iconophile and popular in the City may have accounted for Theophilos' last and uncharacteristically violent act. He had Theophobos imprisoned and beheaded[17]. Theophilos may have realised that Theophobos could lead a party strong enough to overthrow the infant Michael and his mother and represent the iconophile element in the country. Robin Cormack[18] has pointed that ikons hung high in a church were still allowed and suggests that anti-iconoclast pamphlets were circulated with illustrations; he gives the example of a poem in the Athonite Psalter *Pantocrator Cod. 61.*

Constantinople and its close neighbourhood had lived through a terrifying time during the reigns of Leo V and Michael II when the walls were menaced by the Bulgarian barbarians. During the early part

of Michael's reign, probably in 822[19], the infant Theophilos carried the relics of the True Cross round the walls in procession with his father during the siege of Constantinople by Thomas, re-enacting a similar time when the Avars were menacing the City in Heraclius' time, when the Patriarch, in the Emperor's absence, carried the ikon of the Virgin in procession round the walls. The mystic dimensions of such a procession were not denied by Michael and, as Thomas was defeated, those inclined to ikon veneration would have ascribed the defeat to the intercession of the saints, the Virgin and to Christ Himself. The cult of relics and the closely akin practice of ikon veneration, particularly having regard to the high-placed ikons in the churches, cannot, therefore, have died.

It can be posed, therefore, that there was support at all levels for ikon veneration, at the highest social level, with the probable backing of a part of the army that had been centred round Theophobos; throughout society through the women who could be said to be naturally in favour of at least the cult of the Virgin; and support from the lowest level of the poor, the aged, the destitute and the disabled, a dangerous mixture if not tactfully handled.

Theodora's personal views are not on record in any of the sources. The tradition which comes out in different versions of Theophilos' last minute conversion, or his removal from the list of those anathematised, points to Theodora's hesitation to agree to the official restoration of ikon veneration in case Theophilos' place in Heaven was jeopardised. She would have preferred to keep things as Theophilos had left them as she had total faith in his wisdom. Genesios' account[20] of Theodora's hesitations sound convincingly circumstantial, but rely on the Magister Manuel persuading her. Manuel died in 838[21] so cannot have played any natural part in the argument[22]. Conceivably, the uncle of Theodora involved in persuading her could have been Sergios Niketiates, but the most likely candidate is Theoktistos, especially as Genesios, in the same account, records that the *silention* discussing the return to orthodoxy took place in the *kanikleon*, Theoktistos' office. Not only is the tradition in favour of Theodora's hesitations but such artistic evidence that exists, for instance the cave churches in Cappadocia[23], does seem to indicate that there was an interval of some two or three

years, or longer in some cases, between the official return to orthodoxy and the actual iconic decoration of churches. Robin Cormack, in his second paper given to the Byzantine Symposium on Iconoclasm remarks: 'The Restoration of Icons in 843 marked the end of the second Iconoclasm as we know by historical hindsight, but there was no instant redecoration of churches. This delay in restoration may be attributed to practical considerations, prudence, or even to the personality of Ignatios. It took thirty years or so before the large churches such as S. Sophia or the Holy Apostles received, with imperial financial support, a mosaic figurative decoration (possibly in these cases for the first time ever)[24]'.

This gap may, as Cormack suggests, be due to a variety of reasons, none mutually exclusive, but may also reflect Theodora's caution or possible reluctance to spend the surplus money saved during her husband's reign on something that was so opposed to his views. Treadgold[25] in his useful book on Byzantine State Finances goes to some trouble to analyse Theodora's expenditure during her regency and, after examining the expenditure necessary for the armed forces and the bureaucracy, he sets aside a notional amount at about 100,000 nomismata annually for other non-military expenditure. This amount he proposes was set aside for building and maintenance of palaces, public buildings, roads, donatives, ceremonies, games charity and the Post which included diplomacy and tribute. He believes that Theodora kept these to a minimum and points out that in all the sources no mention is made in Theodora's reign of buildings and donatives. Neither is there any imperial-backed industry in ikon painting; in fact imperial patronage seems, so far as our sources can show, to have been meagre.

Whether this indicates Theodora's reluctance to be closely and continuously associated with a practice so abhorrent to her late husband or is a reflection of her conservative and cautious attitude towards State expenditure, or both, is impossible to estimate. Although, as has been pointed out above, many of the sources of this period are iconophile in their bias, none makes any specific reference to Theodora ordering paintings to be restored, except Genesios[26] and as he involved Theodora's uncle Manuel in lengthy discussions with Theodora here, the reference may not be very valuable. There is an inscription put up by

the Patriarch Methodios beside the third ikon of Christ on the Chalke Gate (this third time it was painted it was by the monk Lazaros, as noticed above) the translation of which is:'...refuting their lawless error, the Empress Theodora, guardian of the faith, with her scions arrayed in purple and gold, emulating the pious among the emperors, and shown to be the most pious of them all, has re-erected it with righteous interest at this gate of the palace, to her own glory, praise and fame, to the dignity of the entire Church to the full prosperity of the human race, to the fall of malevolent enemies and barbarians'.[27]

As already noted in the chapter on Eirene's practice in restoring ikon veneration, the ikon of Christ on the Chalke Gate held a special place in the eyes of the Byzantines, particularly in the case of the women, and it was clearly the one obligatory act that demonstrated the return to orthodoxy that was unequivocally intelligible to the populace at large. It had been the first important public ikon to be taken down and was each time the first to be replaced, each time, one must assume, with considerable publicity as the sources are concerned to mention it particularly.

The Greek Anthology[28] records a picture of Christ above the Imperial throne in the Christotriclinium (formerly the Chrysotriclinium) as well as an image of the Virgin over the door and pictures of the Emperor, Patriarch and 'their fellow workers'(σὺν τοῖς συνεργοῖς). No. 107 following this description of the images in the Christotriclinium is dedicated to the Emperor Michael. There is no mention of the Empress Theodora in either epigram. Altogether, we are left with three inscriptions and a miniature, which is likely to be a copy of a larger picture, of Theodora holding the *imago clipeata* of Christ, but no other accounts of ikons being restored or newly commissioned. Even allowing for the fragile nature of the art involved and the considerable passage of time, this still appears to be an indication of the slowness with which the movement gathered strength. Without imperial patronage enthusiastically bestowed, such an increase in the public display of this sacred art would naturally be slow to come into flower. With the accession of Basil I, after the murder of Michael, the trend towards such church decoration is seen.

It might be said to be a classically feminine trait for a wife to be faithful to her husband's known views and, again, for a woman to show caution in accepting a policy that was diametrically opposed to anything she had previously known. Nevertheless, it is demonstrable that the issue of iconoclasm had already run its course by the time Theodora came to power; by accepting the political wisdom of pursuing what was in reality a middle line between the polemics of John the Grammarian from the Patriarchal chair and the noisy intransigence of the Studite monks, she was showing sound political sense such as would be shown equally by a male emperor; such shrewdness is not necessarily an exclusively feminine trait.

Her chief adviser, Theoktistos had been a close adviser to Michael II as well as to Theophilos, and thus was a very experienced politician. He was obviously concerned to maintain the Amorian dynasty and must have seen that the time had come for a more moderate and conciliatory policy. The *silention*, presumably convened by Theodora, or in her name and at her command, was held in his house where the policy of a return to orthodoxy was agreed. At the same time, the proposal to elect Methodios as Patriarch and depose John was taken there. Both these decisions were the outcome of a policy of moderation. With the proviso that her husband's memory was not to be anathematised, the policy of appointing a Patriarch who understood the art of compromise and expediency was agreed to by the Empress.

At the start of her reign she had coins struck with her bust on the obverse, wearing the female crown and with the busts of Michael and her eldest daughter, Thekla[29]. Only later, Wroth suggests 852, do we get on the obverse the beardless Michael and his mother with a bust of Christ on the reverse[30]. Interestingly, the miliaresion corresponding to the time of the first mentioned solidus shows a cross potent on three steps on obverse, with an inscription of Michael, Theodora and Thekla on the reverse[31]. We may gather from this that Theodora was more concerned with reinforcing her right to the throne as well as her son, rather than advertising her devotion to the ikon of Christ, which only appears later.

A similar policy of caution and dynastic aspiration was followed

by Eirene, but though the circumstances were different, the same cautious and dynastic approach was followed by both Empresses. Their coinage policy was similar, reinforcing the image of the family and dynasty in people's minds rather than a possibly controversial imposition of an image of Christ on the coins, the use of the stepped cross reflecting the iconoclastic pattern of the Isaurian and Amorian emperors.

Whether one can say that a stronger - masculine - ruler would have imposed his will more forcefully on his advisers and allowed a greater time to elapse before agreeing to a religious policy at variance with that of the previous ruler is open to question. It could be argued that an astute and realistic ruler would seek a compromise and agree to a degree of toleration; it could also be argued that to seek a compromise was a characteristic of a Byzantine ruler, who would only seek to fight if all other negotiations had failed. Politics, the art of the possible, is not a skill necessarily confined to male rulers, but one which Byzantine empresses learned both from precedent and experience while their husbands were on the throne. Both restorers of ikon veneration were reluctant in the first instance, but assessed the temper of the majority as being in favour of such a move. Neither Eirene nor Theodora are indicated by the sources as being personally keen ikon worshippers, though both had a story of being found out in secret ikon worship by their husbands, each told by one late source only[32]. Both were adroit enough to maintain a public image that matched the public policy. Once their position on the throne was really secure, the outlet for their religious fervour was assured and public - as reigning monarchs they were obliged to accompany the Patriarch in certain processions to places of worship throughout the City[33] and were, naturally, in touch with the Patriarch and his senior clergy daily. The reasons advanced in the Appendix for the unique place that ikons had in the lives of women were not so cogent in the lives of the Augustae. Rather than seeing a reflection of the important place ikons had in the lives of women particularly in the restoration of ikon veneration by the women empresses, it seems more accurate to argue that they were responding to certain political circumstances with sensitivity and a will to compromise, in a word, exercising statesmanship.

NOTES TO THEODORA AND RELIGIOUS POLICY

1. See Elisabeth Bensammar 'La Titulaire de l'Imperatrice et sa Signification' *Byzantion* XLVI 2. (1976) pp. 243-291, esp. pp 272-8, who believes that Theodora was co-ruler. From coin evidence Thekla was also regarded as one of the rulers, cf. Wroth p. 431 or Plate XLIX no. 19.

2. Warren T. Treadgold 'The Problem of the Marriage of Theophilos' *G.R.B.S.* 16.3. Autumn (1975).

3. See Bury 'Administration' p. 117.

4. *Vita Sanctae Theodora Imperatricis* ed. W. Regel, St. Petersburg (1891-98) pp. 1-19. Theophilos sees a brooch on Theoktistos' cloak which he has forgotten to remove; Theophilos clutches at it and it turns out to be a picture of the Theotokos; this convinces him that he must acknowledge the power of ikons, he dies orthodox. The whole of this *Vita* is on a similar level and of almost no use as a source for Theodora's life.

5. See p. 48.

6. See p. 86.

7. But Manuel has already died in 838. H. Grégoire demonstrated this in *Byzantion* IX (1934) pp. 183-204.

8. See A. Vasiliev *Byzance et les Arabes* t.1. ed. H. Grégoire et M. Canard (Brussels 1935) p. 192 note 2.

9. *Vita Theodorae* p. 14.

10. Rome Bibl. Vaticana Cod. Gr. 1613 f.392. See photo plate in H.W. Haussig *A History of Byzantine Civilization* London (1971).

11. Theoph. Cont. p. 90.

12. Bury *E.R.E.* p. 138ff. esp. p. 136 note 1.

13. Imprisoned, beaten, tatooed with scathing verses and exiled.

14. Theoph. Y.W. 6262 p. 446. He made all the monks and nuns in his theme meet in a certain field, agree to marry or be blinded and exiled, the implication was that they were to marry each other. Constantine V warmly approved of this action which resulted in the total clearance of religious from the Thrakesian theme.

15. see 11 above and Theoph. Cont. 91 for Theodora's action.

16. See Georgius Mon. Add. p. 793. But Theoph. Cont. p. 112 says it was a sister of the Emperor whom he married. We know, however, that Theophilos was an only child of Michael and Thekla, there is no account of Euphrosyne having a child surviving long enough to marry, one must presume that it was one of Theodora's sisters whom Theophobos married.

17. Genesios p. 60

18. R. Cormack 'The Arts During the Age of Iconoclasm' in *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1975) pp. 35-44 esp. p. 41.

19. See Treadgold in 'Brideshows' and see Genesios p. 39 or Theoph. Cont. 59.

20. Genesios 80

21. See note 8

22. One should not dismiss a dream-type intervention by Manuel. Hagiography is full of dream warnings and Genesios may have misunderstood his source.

23. Dr. Lynn Rodley in a lecture given to the London Classical Association in November 1980 examined a number of cave churches in Cappadocia and believes that the earliest post-iconoclastic figural decoration is several years after the 'Restoration', possibly dated to Michael's sole reign. Also see Ann Wharton

Epstein 'The Iconoclast Churches of Cappadocia' in *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1975) pp. 103-111 esp. p. 111

24. 'Painting after Iconoclasm' p. 147

25. p. 49-50

26. See notes 20 and 22

27. *Greek Anthology* Loeb ed. trans. W.R. Paton (London 1911) pp. 44-47

28. ibid. Nos. 106 and 107

29. Wroth p. 429 and Plate XLIX 14 and 15

30. Wroth p. 431 and Plate XLIX nos. 16, 17, and 18

31. ibid and Plate XLIX No. 19. Remarkably similar to that of Theophilos and Michael, Wroth p. 421 and Plate XLVIII, 18 and 19; or the miliarasion of Constantine VI and Eirene Plate XLVI No. 7; or, further back, Constantine V Plate XLIV Nos. 4 and 5.

32. See for Eirene Cedrenus M. *P.G.* 121. coll 9000
for Theodora Theoph. Cont. 91-2

33. R. Janin 'Les Processions Religieuses à Byzance' *Rev. des Et. Byz.* XXIV (1966)

Theodora's relationship with foreign powers

Theodora's dealings with the Khan Boris of Bulgaria were incontrovertibly feminine, indeed her letter to Boris was a masterpiece showing an exploitation of her position as a female ruler of Byzantium. Genesios[1] gives his version very briefly saying that the Bulgars sent an insulting message that they would invade having annexed Corystolon and Mysian. The Empress replied that if he did so she intended to ride at the head of her army, if he chose to fight and win against a woman no glory would accrue to him, if he lost he would be the object of derision by all.

Theophanes Continuatus[2] says that Boris, whom he calls Bogoris, (Βώγωρις οὗτος ἦν) hearing that the Romans were governed by a woman made threatening moves. Theodora's reply was similar to that reported by Genesios. Not unnaturally, Boris withdrew, but Theodora had the political acumen to allow him to occupy two deserted forts, those of Zagora and Debeltum[3]. It seems likely that her armies were in no state to withstand a determined onslaught from the Bulgars, but were occupied in trying to subdue the Slavs in Southern Greece. It is also possible that the surrender of the two forts might have taken place later when Michael made a punitive expedition against Boris in 863 in order to detach the Bulgars from the influence of Frankish and the Church of Rome's interests. Theophanes Continuatus also has a highly coloured tale, following immediately on his account of this exchange between Theodora and Boris. He says that Boris's sister, who had been captured some time previously and was living at Constantinople, was offered by Theodora to Boris in exchange for a monk Theodore Kupharas who was a captive at Boris's court. The exchange was effected and Boris's sister laboured to covert her brother to Christianity. The author casts forward in time to Boris's baptism where he took the name of Michael (...καὶ Μιχαὴλ κατανομάζεται κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ βασιλέως ...)[4]

Whatever the truth of these stories of Theodora's relations with her northern neighbour, it is evident that, like Eirene, she had no intention of deploying her army against the Bulgars. Like Eirene, she may have been keeping her armies busy in Greece in an effort to police the Slavs there.[5] Like Eirene, she saw the advantage of employing Christianity in an attempt to ally herself with this

troublesome neighbour. However, unlike Eirene, she calculatingly used her femininity in the threat to ride into battle at the head of her army. Even if the story is untrue, though there seems no reason why it should not be true, it reflects the historians' view of Theodora as someone who would use her sex in such a way. That is, she was a woman and would rule like a woman and use all the advantages that accrued to being female to the best advantage.

Theodora's relations with her southern neighbour, the Arabs in Asia Minor, were perforce of a more actively military nature. Crete was invaded by both Spanish and African Arabs and Theophilos, hampered by his wars against the Asian Arabs, could only continue his father's policy of building up the navy and wait for a suitable opportunity. This never seemed to have occurred in his reign but Theodora is credited with sending Theoktistos against the Western Arabs on Crete in 843[6]. He was successful in restoring Byzantine sovreignty here and, though Theodora is credited with the originating orders, it can be conjectured that it was Theoktistos in concert with Theordora's brothers and uncle who judged the navy sufficiently strong and the opportunity of the new and unpopular Caliph Wathik, in Bagdad, to assume a degree of quiet in Asia. He was wrong, as Cappadocia was invaded either the same year or in 844 and he headed an army to repulse the Caliph but was badly beaten at Mauropotamum[7].

Amorion had been captured through treachery in Theophilos' time and the enormous number of captives in the Caliph's hands had been a source of shame to the Emperor. Theophilos made a determined, but wholly unsuccessful effort to ransom these people. The Arabic Sources[8] imply that the sum offered was derisory. In March 845 forty of the most distinguished captives, having been kept in captivity at Samarra and firmly refused to renounce Christianity, were each beheaded on the banks of the Tigris. The legend says that they were meticulous in offering themselves to the sword in strict order of rank and instead of the bodies sinking into the river, they all floated on the top[9]. By September 845, Theodora had succeeded in negotiating an exchange of captives, thus retrieving the honour of Byzantium to some extent. A long, detailed account of the exchange is given in the Arabic sources[10], even to such a detail as the two bridges that were flung across the river so that each

side could clearly see each captive cross, thus ensuring the numbers were equal, man for man, woman for woman and child for child.

In these relations with the Arabs, Theodora was simply continuing her husband's policy, no doubt advised mainly by Theoktistos and probably her brothers and uncle, all having military experience. She was by no means conciliatory towards her enemy and prosecuted the war with vigour. Only the Arabic sources give details of two naval expeditions against Damietta on the Egyptian coast, but these, too,were evidently part of the strategy of preventing assistance being given to the Cretan Arabs. Undoubtedly, this was a prudent policy as Wahtik was fully occupied with domestic problems. This presents a great contrast with Eirene's policy. Her husband, no great army commander, had conducted only one great campaign against the Asian Arabs, though there is little doubt that the twice yearly sorties and scuffles along the border had continued to take place, with the local theme generals defending the country as best they could. Eirene's reign coincided with the ascendancy of the Caliphate and their renewed vigorous policy against the Byzantines. She chose to negotiate and buy them off, expensively. Unlike Theodora, she had no dashing brothers and uncles experienced in the field , but only eunuch advisers and senators more experienced in protocol than organising and leading an army. By contrast, it was to be expected, therefore, that Theodora would follow her late husband's lead and listen to her military advisers; her negotiations over the Amorion prisoners were also an extension of Theophilos' policy, though she had the advantage of dealing with a different Caliph and was further forced into concluding a satisfactory arrangement by the martyrdom of the Forty[11], though there is some doubt as to whether the news of the martrydom could have reached Theodora in time for any alteration in the terms already sent to the Arabs.

Theodora's persecution of the Paulicians strikes one at this distance of time as appalling and with the advantage of historical hind-sight was very much ill advised. This Christian sect had been regarded as dangerous heretics since Constantine V, who had removed large numbers from the borders of Byzantium and Persia to the depopulated part of Thrace. They were in many respects treated as a hostile tribe within the borders of the Empire, though they were loyal to Byzantium rather than to the Arabs, whom they fought with some savagery. By the

time Theodora had dealt successfully with Boris, she turned her attention to the remainder of the Paulicians in Asia Minor, where they formed a useful buffer between the hinterland and the Arab held part of Persia. Theophilos had harried them as 'Manichaean' heretics, some being imprisoned in Constantinople. As iconoclasts *in extremis* Theodora had a further reason to deal with them; some public demonstration of the return to orthodoxy was needed and the Paulicians may have made a convenient target. The persecution was of unparalleled savagery; Theophanes Continuatus[12] deals with it in detail stating that those who would not abandon their views were killed by the sword, by crucifying or by drowning (...τοὺς μὲν ξύλῳ ἀνῆρτων τοὺς δὲ ξίφει παρεδίδουν, τοὺς δὲ τῷ τῆς θαλάσσης βυθῷ)[13].

It can only be conjectured that her orders to the officers were of a general nature and that they carried them out with missionary zeal. Nevertheless, the responsibility is laid entirely at Theodora's door and no source records her (or their) remorse at such a massacre. Even if she genuinely believed that they were heretics she made no real effort to persuade them as Theophilos had done with the iconophile monks and possibly even with the Paulicians themselves. Such a violent reaction against dissenters had been no part of Eirene's policy; for instance the iconoclast elements in the Imperial guard were sent home to their villages, their families having been sent home previously. Oddly, the Paulicians who had been transferred to Thrace seem to have been tolerated by both empresses. It may possibly be suggested that having returned the church to orthodoxy, Theodora was anxious that there should be no heretics in the Empire. If the persecutions took place as late as 847, when Ignatios was Patriarch in succession to the moderate Methodios, his rigidity in church matters and secular ignorance could have been an added reason for the severity; Eirene had the advantage of an accommodating Patriarch in Tarasios and such violent reactions were, in any case, no part of Eirene's way of conducting affairs. Theodora was perhaps more secure on the throne than Eirene, having a strong family and both husband and father-in-law as strong men behind her, she might, therefore, be more able to risk severe measures than Eirene had been able to do. The style of government was quite different so far as foreign policy was concerned and seems to have been due to both a straight reaction to political events by both and a willingness by

Theodora to exploit her feminity; with strong males in her family, she had no need to be seen to govern like a man, whereas Eirene merely avoided conflict as far as possible and ignored her femininity.

NOTES TO THEODORA'S RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN POWERS

1. Genesios 85-6
'...ἡ δὲ βασίλισσα τούτῳ ἀνδρειοφρόνως μετὰ τοῦ ἑαυτῆς στρατοπέδου ἄχρι βουλγαρικῆς γῆς αὖθις ἐπαναστεύειν ἐμεγαλαύχησεν· "καὶ εἰ μὲν γυναῖκα ἠττήσειας,οὐδέν σοι πρὸς νῖκος τὸ καύχημα· εἰ δὲ καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης ἐκνικηθείης, πᾶσι τὸ σὸν ἥττημα καταγέλαστον".

2. Theoph. Cont. 162.

3. Theoph. Cont. 165.

4. Theoph. Cont. 162-3

5. Eirene sent her chief eunuch Staurakios on a pacifying expedition through Thrace and Hellas as far as the Peloponnese. An interesting modern parallel is the efforts of the Shah of Persia as well as the Turkish government to police the Kurdish area. See Freya Stark *Riding to the Tigris* (London 1959) esp. p. 92-94.

6. Geogius Monachus Add. 814

7. The whereabouts of this place still has not been agreed. See Georgius Monachus Add. 815.

8. Vasiliev *Byzance et les Arabes* Vol. I (Bruxelles 1935) pp. 289-291

9. See Vita Ioannicii by Ignatius the Deacon who had written the account by the middle of 847. Van den Gheyn *Act. Sanct. (Nov.4)* (1844)

10. Vasiliev *Byzance et les Arabes* pp. 353-4

11. This incident is not to be confused with the story of the famous ikon of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, though there are striking similarities, not only the number of martyrs (a holy number) but also both martyrdoms were military and both involved the bodies in water - though the latter was an icy lake.

12. Theoph. Cont. 165-6

13. ibid. 165B.

Theodora's relationship with her son Michael

Michael was a toddler, just turned three years old when his father Theophilos died, so in order for him to succeed to sole rule at his majority, his mother, with the aid of the regency council had to rule for him. Not only had he a mother fully occupied with the business of ruling a huge Empire, but also he was the youngest of the family which now consisted of five girls. His older brother, Constantine, had died aged three in 835, Michael was thus the much needed, long awaited heir, no doubt pampered and cosseted and very probably spoiled by his sisters and nurses.

The first comment on the relationship between Michael and Theodora comes when, at the age of fifteen in 855, Michael was married off to Eudokia Dekapolitissa. By this time Michael already had a mistress, Eudokia Ingerina who seems likely to have been from an iconoclast family[1] and was considered to have been a shameless or impudent woman[2]. Cyril Mango[3] believes that she could have been about three years older than Michael.

Theodora and her chief minister Theoktistos realised that Michael being the Emperor would necessarily be the begetter of the next occupant of the throne. It was unthinkable that they should risk a liaison like this producing the next Emperor, so a bride-show was arranged, though to placate Michael, Eudokia Ingerina was allowed to compete[4]. Another Eudokia was chosen as the bride, the daughter of an unknown Dekapolites. We hear nothing more of her and as no child is recorded one wonders if the marriage was ever consummated. Michael continued his liaison with Eudokia Ingerina.

Both Leo Grammaticus (at p. 249) and Georgius Monachus (at p. 840) allege that Eudokia Ingerina had two children by Michael, Leo VI and Stephen who was briefly Patriarch in 886, though by the time the children were born she had been married to Basil I. The scandal envisaged by Theodora and Theoktistos had been averted by the simple expedient of persuading Basil[5] to divorce his wife Maria and marry Eudokia, before Leo was born, allowing Basil to keep Michael's eldest sister, Thekla, as his mistress[6]. However, when Michael had his bride-show Basil was

probably not even in Constantinople and most certainly not within the orbit of the court.

It would appear that by now Michael was not only physically mature, but also was showing a mind of his own and even exerting some influence on his mother by insisting that his mistress should be included in the bride show. Yet she did not step down. She could have followed Euphrosyne's example and retired, leaving Michael to rule, advised by Theoktistos and members of her family. Leaving aside for the moment the idea that she wanted power for herself, she may have been too mistrusting of members of her own family to risk such a plan. She had already been persuaded by Theoktistos to exile her brother Bardas[7], though he might have been *persona grata* to some extent if the Vita S. Irenes is right in saying that he married a sister of S. Irene after Michael's bride-show[8]: There may have been some plot dreamed up by members of the family to secure their own power behind the recall of Theoktistos from Crete[9] '...σφοδρότερον δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπτοήθη καὶ τὴν φυγαδείαν ἠσπάσατο, τὴν Αὐγοῦσταν μαθὼν ὡς ἄλλον βασιλέα προεχειρίσατο...' which was followed, probably immediately, by Theoktistos persuading Theodora to exile Bardas from the City and Senate: ...θεόκτιστος δὲ ἐκεῖθεν ὑποστραφεὶς πρὸς τὴν πόλιν εἶχετο τῆς αὐτῆς οἰκειότητος. καὶ τῷ τῆς Αὐγούστης ἀδελφῷ βάρδᾳ εἴς τινας λόγους ἐλθὼν τὴν ἧτταν τούτῳ προσῆπτε καὶ ἀνετίθετο, ὡς τῇ παραινεσει τούτου καὶ τῇ βουλῇ τὸ 'Ρωμαικον ἐτράπη στρατόπεδον·καὶ τοῦτον τῆς πόλεως ἐξῶσεν βουλῇ Θεοδώρας Αὐγούστης'.

This period, 843-844, marks the ascendancy of Theoktistos[10] and his increased influence over Theodora and, of course, Michael who was only four or five years old at this time. He built himself a dwelling close to or probably within the palace precincts and must, therefore, have been within very easy access to the royal apartments.

By 855 a little group of men had arrived in the capital who may have seen that their way of advancement could only be through supporting Michael against Theoktistos; the position of Theodora being obscure in their intentions, but arguably she was not seen as in any way threatening to Michael's interests. Theophanes Pharganos had deserted to the Arabs at the battle of Mauropotamum, but in a cast forward to round off the story, Georgius Monachus (at p. 815) says that he returned

later: '...ὃς ὕστερον χρόνοις τισὶ λόγον ἀπαθείας λαβὼν προσφεύγει τοῖς Χριστιανοῖς '.

Here we come to a difficulty in interpreting the conflicting accounts of the various sources mentioned above. Patricia Karlin Hayter[11] after examining the available sources concerning the murder of Theoktistos has concluded that : 'Bref, pour les quelques lignes, c'est la tradition Génésios-THc (=Barber 232 (apograph du Vat. 167) Theophanes continuatus ex recog. Imm Bekkeri, Bonn 1838) qu'il faut préférer. La version du Logothète représente une autre tradition, qui noircissait Bardas.'

Whatever tradition is right, bearing in mind in reading the above sources the addition of the role that Manuel the Magister is said to have played, though he had died some years previously, there is little doubt that Michael was influenced by his uncle Bardas with the aid of Theophanes Pharganus and the parakoemomenos. Damien, with the probable addition of his tutor. Each saw that, while Theoktistos remained the chief adviser to Theodora, Michael would not hold effective power. The plan to exile Theoktistos turned into his murder and Michael was left to placate Theodora who was distraught at the loss of her favourite. Theophanes Continuatus (at p. 169) goes further by suggesting that Michael was to be deposed by having his eyes put out so that either Theodora or one of her daughters could marry and thus provide an emperor: '...γάμον μητρί σου ἢ τῶν ταύτης θυγατέρων μιᾷ ἐμμελετῶν, καὶ σοῦ τοῦ ταύτης υἱοῦ πόρρω που ποιῆσαι τοῦς ὀφθαλμούς. This would have excluded any ambitions Theodora's brothers might have entertained to get closer to the seat of power.

The murder of Theoktistos happened on 20th November 855[12], but Michael was not proclaimed sole emperor until March 856. This period was occupied in efforts to placate Theodora who was implacable in her grief for Theoktistos and opposition to Michael and her brother Bardas. All sources agree that Theodora was determined not to forgive Michael and that she refused all efforts to appease her and reconcile her to joint rule with him. Eventually, finding the incessant upbraiding too much to endure, Michael made arrangements for Theodora to retire to a convent.

Here again, the sources are in confusion, but there is little doubt that Michael's sisters were first sent to a convent, either all to Gastria or the eldest to Karianos and only Pulcheria to Gastria as she was her mother's favourite and it was hoped that Theodora would join her at Gastria. There was a time lag as Theodora refused to go and refused to be tonsured. As pointed out above, the Patriarch Ignatios refused to perform the ceremony and one source[13] claims that it was Theodora's brother, Petronas, who apprehended her at the church of Blachernae and forced her into retirement.

Before she retired, Theodora gave an account of the State finances to the Senate. This is only briefly noted in the sources but it was an unusual step to take. Theophilos had spent freely on buildings and ornamenting the palaces, nevertheless, there was still a surplus when he died. It may be that Theodora suspected Michael of being a spendthrift or perhaps her brothers of persuading him into a spending spree. If she declared the surplus that she was handing over, the record of his finances would be all the plainer to read. Treadgold[14] has shown that Theodora was a very cautious spender of the State finances, a good housekeeper. Whether this was her own natural caution or whether Theoktistos felt that the Treasury needed to build up a good reserve is, of course, unknown. However, it is arguable that such cautious housekeeping is a good feminine characteristic and was one that was shared by Eirene who had kept a considerable treasury under secret lock and key, even from her finance minister. The State treasury was specifically a royal responsibility and to a large extent derived from personal landholding. It seems reasonable, therefore, to assume a considerable degree of personal responsibility for Imperial expenditure resting on the Sovereign's shoulders.

Although Theodora did retire to the convent, she was restored to the palace again during Michael's reign. There must have been a *rapprochement* between the two which may well have taken place after the victories over the Arabs in 863. Bury[15] has shown in Constantine VII's *De Caerimoniis* that in 863 there were three Augustae which indicates that Theodora and Thekla were present with Eudokia Dekapolitissa. What is more likely than that Theodora and Thekla were summoned to take part in the triumph? The rebuilding of Nicaea and Ancyra by Michael in 858

and 859 must have pleased Theodora since Ancyra had been lost by Theophilos in 838. Jenkins and Mango[16] have shown that the Church of the Virgin of the Pharos was dedicated between April and the end of the year of 864 and was part of the same programme that redecorated the Christotriklinos already referred to above, all buildings embarked on when Michael was sole Emperor with Theodora's brother Bardas as Caesar.

Grierson notes in his article on 'The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors' that there is a contradiction between Eirene's burial at Prinkipo and the presence of her tomb in the Mausoleum of Justinian. He accounts for this by the fact that Constantine V's tomb was ejected and broken up, the marble being used in the construction of the Church of the Virgin of Pharos. As we have seen, this church was dedicated in 864, which provides a *terminus post quem* for the removal of Constantine's tomb. Grierson[17] also points out that Ignatios was stretched out over the sarcophagus of Constantine V after the Council of 861 in an effort to persuade him to agree to his own deposition. This unpleasant story, found in the Vita Ignatii[18] gives a *terminus ante quem*. Bearing in mind the Byzantine addiction to symbolism, the restoration of Eirene to a place of honour in the royal mausoleum from her convent on Prinkipo would parallel the restoration of Theodora to the royal palace from her convent. It was a symbolic act of *rapprochement*. It also would serve to remind Theodora that during the reigns of both herself and Eirene the church had returned to orthodoxy and that, now the opposition had died down, the rebuilding and decoration of churches could take place. If, as I believe, both Empresses were doubters, this act of Michael adds a subtle point to the operation. That Theodora is recorded in the *Catalogus Sepulchrorum* as being associated with Michael in the destruction of Constantine's sepulchre, as Grierson's article points out, is now explained. Even though it took place in Michael's sole reign, it was a deliberate act of affirmation, ordered by her son, by Theodora and, by implication, by Eirene, that orthodoxy had returned to stay. It may, thus, indicate that Michael could demonstrate to his mother that he was a mature and successful ruler, whose piety was plain for all to see and that he could successfully pursue a positive policy which was not his father's and which she chose not to implement fully. He was his own man.

Whether Theodora was truly reconciled to Michael or whether she put a brave face on his efforts to provide a successor in order to stay in the palace one cannot tell. Bardas may have married Irene Guberina's sister after he was made Caesar in an effort to associate more closely with Michael and his mother and the bride-show that she had arranged (in which the two Guberina sisters were not successful). It is possible, therefore, to suggest Theodora's hand might have been in this match. If the story that Bardas married Irene's sister is true, then she must have been his second wife, as his son was married by 866.

The events of 866 when Bardas was murdered, and Basil I was married off to Eudokia Ingerina, and then made co-emperor, might also show some part of Theodora's influence, though only in an indirect way. Mango[19] has proposed a theory to account for Michael's extraordinary decision with regard to Basil, qualifying the theory by prefacing his remarks: 'If Michael was rational at all...'. Michael may have realised by about March 866 that at last Eudokia Ingerina was pregnant by him. Needing an heir, having only his uncle Bardas as Caesar and, therefore, his designated successor, he wished Eudokia's child to be legitimate and born in the purple chamber, reserved only for members of the royal family. He could have followed Constantine VI's example and enclosed his wife in a convent and then married his mistress. This example carried problems with the church which had been divisive and long lasting. Photios was Patriarch at this time, but the deposed Ignatios had too many partisans and Photios too many enemies in the churchfor Michael to risk such a step. Basil had become a close associate and companion of Michael, and it is possible to see his influence eclipsing that of Bardas.[20] It is suggested that Michael persuaded Basil to divorce his wife Maria, by whom he already had one child, Constantine, (†879/880), and to contract a nominal marriage with Eudokia Ingerina; Basil was to eliminate Bardas and Michael would raise Basil to be co-emperor.

Whatever might be thought of the plan, it is reasonable to suppose that Theodora would still have been opposed to a marriage between her son and Ingerina as she had been at the first. The above was indeed the sequence of events and Basil and Eudokia Ingerina were crowned, both with the crown of marriage and the crown of power.

The last mention of Theodora in the sources is of her weeping over the body of Michael, bleeding from his stab wounds[21]. The picture is almost too good to be true, though there is no doubt that Michael's mother would mourn her son's sudden death, too sudden for him to repent of his misdeeds and without the benefit of absolution by a priest. Mrs. Karlin Hayter has proposed that the sources preserve fragments of a large work consecrated to Theodora and her family, part hagiographical and part secular, indicative of the honour with which Theodora was held in later years: '... peut-être beaucoup plus colorée et ou, de toutes façons une place était fait à sa famille ...'[22]. If she is right, and the argument is persuasive, this last scene is one of those highly coloured additions owing more to Greek tragedy than to reality. Equally highly coloured, is the death-bed scene in the *Vita* where Theodora showers her son with good advice while she is preparing to die. One version is wrong.

Theodora would have cause to mourn her son, not only for his sake and for his journeying soul, but also for her own and her daughters' future. No mention is made of Theodora once Basil and Eudokia have been conducted to the palace. It is recorded that Eudokia Dekapolitissa was returned to her parents[23] and the *Catalogus Sepulchorum* records Theodora's burial in Gastria with three of her daughters, Thekla, Anastasia and Pulcheria.[24] Had they entered this convent on the accession of Basil and Eudokia Ingerina, the burial there would seem to be the natural thing to happen. Michael's body was buried at Chrysopolis, but returned to the capital later by Basil and re-interred in the convent of Gastria.

The above account of the relationship between Theodora and Michael taken all together seems to indicate a somewhat distant feeling between them. It is evident that Michael had, like Constantine VI and Eirene, every intention that he and his mother should rule together. Like Constantine, he saw that his mother's chief minister was the stumbling block to his assuming power. Theodora's reaction to the death of her favourite was understandable. Had her brother Bardas and whoever was also in the plot, contrived merely to capture and exile Theoktistos, Theodora's reaction might have been more favourable. Her son was now guilty of murder, her brother had shown himself to be a bad influence

over her son by this deed, and, if the rumours of his affair with his daughter-in-law can be believed[25], was further evidence of his undesirability. Small wonder that Theodora felt alienated from her son and reproached him for taking her chief minister's life. Nevertheless, Theodora's plot against Bardas[26] which more than probably was the final act that forced her retirement to the convent, does indicate that she blamed her brother, rather than her son, for the murder. Theophanes Continuatus (at p. 174)gives an account of Theodora's brother Petronas being the person who actually removed Theodora to Gastria, and, if true, would seem to indicate that Theodora's brothers, rather than her son, were ranged against her. If not true, it may preserve the feeling that sister and brothers were at variance, and at times hostile to each other. Had the rift been so great between Theodora and Michael, she would hardly have agreed to return to the palace, as she did at a later date. Her influence over Michael was arguably still effective once she had returned. It may be that she did want power for herself as sole ruler, she had become accustomed to it because Theoktistos was only a minister and obliged to allow her to make all the final decisions. This love of power might be behind the story of Theodora planning a marriage for herself or one of her daughters and deposing Michael in the traditional way mentioned above. However, this story may be another mischievous addition by a biased source more concerned with vilifying the previous dynasty than with recounting the true reasons for the murder of Theoktistos.

The *Vita* gives no realiable light on the relationship between mother and son because it is an *enkomion* praising her piety, insisting on her passion for orthodoxy and concerned with blackening Bardas' character. However, the *Vita* does state that she had no ambition to rule after she had been sent to the convent[27]. It even gives a spurious speech to Theodora addressing Michael on her death bed, starting: '...now that I am released from taking thought for the people I shall be content to attend to myself, praying for you and for my other children ...'. The *Vita* indicates that Theodora's life in the convent was full of charitable works, as would be expected, and implies that this was fully satisfying to her. Perhaps the *Vita* does preserve some part of the truth in that Theodora's appetite for ruling may have waned; she may have realised that once Michael was established, she had very little

chance of ruling directly herself and would have to confine herself to indirect influence rather than an exercise of direct power.

NOTES TO THEODORA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH MICHAEL

1. See Cyril Mango 'Eudocia Ingerina, The Normans and the Macedonian Dynasty' *Zvornik Radova Byzantina Instituta* 14-15 (1973) pp.17-27 esp. p. 18-20 where he connects Eudokia's family with the iconoclast bishop Inger of Nicaea.

2. Leo Gramm. p. 230 (δι ἀναίδειαν)

3. see note 1 p. 21

4. Treadgold in 'Brideshows' quotes the *Vita S. Irenes* which gives the only account of the bride show in which Irene competed. Leo VI's funeral oration for Basil I mentions that Ingerina, Leo's mother, was in the show.

5. Basil had been a groom at the Imperial court, whose career had been furthered by his association with an enormously rich widow, Danielis. His great strength and ability with horses initially recommended him to Michael. Michael eventually adopted Basil and promoted him co-emperor.

6. Thekla may not have been Basil's mistress in our modern sense, but is more likely to have been a companion *cum* tutor. Her presence in Basil's household might have lent some air of respectability in what sounds like a ramshackle household. If Basil was to be a co-emperor he needed to know how to behave as an emperor; court protocol involving the business of receiving ambassadors, the Senate and petitioners was a very different thing from the informality of the royal stables; Thekla must have been part of the 'ruling' court when Michael was a child as her bust is on the early coins.

7. Leo Gramm. p. 229 and Georg. Mon. Add. 815.

8. It seems likely that he married Guberina (if at all) once he was in power during Michael's reign. He had a grown, married son then and there would scarcely have been time for the lady to produce a marriagable son if the wedding took place soon after Michael's own.

9. Geo. Mon. Add. 815

10. He had assisted at the elevation of Michael II so had been an early partisan of the Amorian dynasty.

11. see 'Deux Histoires' p. 469

12. Bury's dating: see *E.R.E.* pp. 469-471

13. Theoph. Cont. 174. cf. Mrs. Karlin-Hayter's 'Deux Histoires' pp. 469-471

14. 'State Finances' p. 31

15. J.B. Bury 'The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogennitus' *E.H.R.* XXII (1907) pp. 209-227 and 417-439.

16. 'The Date and Significance of the 10th Homily of Photios' *D.O.P.* 9-10 (1955-6). pp. 124-140

17. Philip Grierson 'Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors' *D.O.P.* 16. (1962) pp. 34 and 53-54

18. *Vita Ignatii* Migne *P.G.* 105 coll 521

19. see note 1. p. 24

20. There was a scandal attached to Bardas claiming that he was having an affair with his daughter-in-law, recorded by Theoph. Cont. 169

21. Geo. Mon. Add. 838. Michael was murdered by Basil who feared being replaced by another of Michael's favourites, Basilisces as Michael had threatened. In Michael's eyes Basil had served his turn by legitimating the baby Leo and was thus expendable.cf. Leo Gram. 249.

22. 'Deux Histoires' p. 495

23. Leo. Gram. 250

24. 'Tombs and Obits' p. 57

25. see note 20, but Mrs. Karlin-Hayter has shown that the source is concerned to blacken Bardas - cf. 'Deux Histoires' p. 469.

26. Theoph. Cont. 169-170. She planned to have Bardas murdered on his way to Kosmidion, but the plan was discovered.

27. *Vita S. Theodorae* p. 15.

Conclusion

With the difficulty described above of using sources which were neither contemporary nor objective, but written with the object of enhancing one reign at the expense of another, it is not surprising that no satisfactory picture of Theodora emerges. Because ikon veneration was finally restored in her reign, this achievement tends to eclipse or distort other factors and gives us a false idea of her style of government. The other problem thwarting an accurate judgement is the tenth century chroniclers' bias against Michael III particularly, and the Amorian dynasty generally. Nevertheless, it is possible to construct a general appreciation of Theodora and estimate the quality and style of her government.

During her marriage to Theophilos, Theodora bore five daughters and two sons. To be the mother of seven children was in itself no mean achievement. Infant mortality and maternal death in childbirth was common in all strata of society and, except for Constantine who died as a result of an avoidable accident (he drowned in a cistern, but should have been better cared for by his nurse), all survived in good health. Theodora was thus the head of a large establishment in the gynaecaeum and would have wielded considerable power among the Senators' wives. Her mother had been created a 'zostai patricia' early in Theophilos' reign and, as a mother of a large family herself, was another reinforcement for Theodora's prestige. The description given by Constantine VII[1] of Theophilos' triumph after battle mentions that the Eparch of the City, the Praepositus, the Chief Magister and Theodora welcomed him and implied that the government of the country had been in their joint hands as a State Council while the Emperor was away. If this implication is right, and a royal hand was needed for signature on all edicts while the Emperor was away, Theodora's was the best one available (Thekla's was the alternative) so experience of governing was gained in this way. Confidence from this experience and the double prestige of being Augusta and the mother of a large family, a model wife and mother, allowed Theodora to be more and more independent of her brothers and uncle in the Regency Council. There seems little doubt that, after her initial hesitation over the restoration of ikon veneration, which can be partly attributed to her natural wish to avoid an anathema

being pronounced on her husband and possibly to her own private doubts, Theodora became decisive and positive in her governing. It is evident that she leaned heavily on the counsel of her principal adviser, Theoktistos. Rightly so, as he had been one of those instrumental in raising Michael II to power and was totally loyal to the Amorian dynasty and, apparently, content with his role.

The manner in which Methodios was made Patriarch and John the Grammarian deposed is cause for comment. The council may have been ecumenical, but it is unlikely. There was hardly time for summonses to go out to the Asiatic bishops to attend or, for that matter, for those from Thrace or Hellas to attend. The meeting took place in the kanikleon, not either in the palace or in the Patriarchate, implying some lack of candour about the proceedings. Although John protested vigorously, he was hustled away. This, surely, indicates Theodora's prestige as much as the grip on the factions that Theoktistos must have had, for the change in Patriarch to have been made without riots. Methodios was a familiar and respected figure in the palace; he had been persecuted and exiled by Theophilos for his iconophile views, but recalled and accommodated in the palace because Theophilos valued his knowledge of the occult. It has been suggested that Methodios acted as a confessor to the royal ladies and that Theodora's iconophilism was kept alive by him. I do not believe that Theodora was in any way disloyal to Theophilos. She was the model wife *par excellence*. Though she interceded on behalf of Lazaros the ikon painter, it was only when the punishment for his determination to go on painting had already gone too far. She may have realised that this extreme punishment would alienate too many people towards Theophilos. Unless the chroniclers have deliberately suppressed the information, Theodora did not make use of a public spectacle to introduce her new Patriarch in the way that Eirene did. Of course, the situations were not the same, Eirene did not have to depose Paul in order to secure an iconophile Patriarch; she was in fact pushed into it by the dying Patriarch himself. Theodora, on the other hand, had to depose John and suppress any opposition to the act. Once again, it may have been John's extremism that was distasteful to Theodora. To have a more moderate Patriarch who allowed her to proceed with the restoration of church decoration and other public manifestations of ikon veneration as

slowly as she liked was just what she wanted. However, the change of Patriarch was accomplished peacefully and much of this achievement must be related to the prestige and affection attaching to Theodora.

If this construction of a woman disliking an excess of reaction to opposition is accurate, then her savagery in the massacre of the Paulicians is all the more extraordinary. The Paulicians had fought gallantly against the Arabs and were loyal to Byzantium. They formed a flying column of border defenders and the orthodox farmers must have been thankful for their bravery and skill in fighting. What could have caused Theodora suddenly to act so savagely against them? They were regarded as heretics and it may be that the extent of their heresy was greatly exaggerated to Theodora. Their very success in defending the borders may have made them too popular in Asia. Theodora's slowness in promoting ikon painting may have occasioned some criticism. To establish her fidelity to orthodoxy by demonstrating her intolerance of heresy would be reassuring to critics and, at the same time, reduce the popularity of the Paulicians themselves. Once the order had gone to the army on the spot, it would be the responsibility of the local commander himself to carry it out. The ferocity could well have been his, not Theodora's.

Theodora's relationship with Theoktistos was necessarily close and cannot have given Michael enough scope to exercise any talent he may have been showing for governing. The Emperor was physically mature by the time he was fifteen and showing a fine spirit of independence in choosing Eudokia Ingerina as his mistress. He must have been accustomed to older female company, having five older sisters and, if Mango is right in supposing Eudokia to be about three years older than Michael, this would seem to be a natural choice. However, Michael needed male company, though, of course, he had a tutor. The nearest male company he could have would be his mother's brothers. Theoktistos must have been in late middle age by the time Michael was adolescent and might have seemed a boring old man. His mother's brothers could only have been in their thirties at the most. A hint that there was an understanding between Michael's tutor and Bardas is given in one version of the murder of Theoktistos by Theophanes Continuatus (at p. 168) where it is suggested that Bardas influenced Michael against Theoktistos through the

offices of the tutor. The actual accusation that Theoktistos was planning to dispossess Michael of the throne by engineering either a second marriage for Theodora or one of the princesses is most likely to be an invention of the hostile Continuer, writing as Jenkins says 'under the eye of Constantine VII'[2].

Michael, prompted by Bardas, could very well have wished his mother to include him more in the business of government and, at the same time, petition for his uncle to be privy to the consultations. Once in power, Michael did raise his uncle Bardas to the government and a very able pair they proved. Even allowing for a source hostile to Theoktistos personally and to Michael, it cannot be denied that Michael was continually concerned to ingratiate himself with his mother. It might be conjectured that Theodora was an imperious woman who was a loving mother to her children so long as they were young and obedient, her favourite was Pulcheria, her youngest daughter. But as soon as her baby boy had grown up, he was no longer malleable, quite unlike the little princesses, except possibly for Thekla[3]. It is tempting to see a kind of parallel, though it should not be pushed too far, between Queen Victoria who kept her daughter Alice by her, was an intolerant mother of the Prince of Wales, more particularly once he was grown up and, in her widowhood relied on Palmerston, whom she did not like, and later Disraeli, whom she loved, rather than on the advice of her son, who would have to rule after her.

This is conjecture, based on a few hints in the sources and to estimate whether or not Theodora wished to exclude her son from ruling during her lifetime is further conjecture with very little from the sources to help. Given that she feared the influence of her brothers, the exiling of Bardas can be construed as this, then it seems probable that she intended to keep the power in her hands and exclude Michael. Had she found suitable young companions or an acceptable man for Michael to model himself on, their relationship might have stood the strain and turned into a viable partnership. Constantine VI could model himself on his grandfather, through the intermediacy of Michael Lachanodrakon. Michael III might well have tried to copy his eponymous grandfather, his father's iconoclastic views making him too difficult a model to follow; but what intermediary other than Theoktistos had he?

His maternal uncles were dashing military men, perhaps Bardas was slightly raffish if there really is any substance behind the allegations of the affair with his daughter-in-law. He would have been very attractive to the young Emperor. It was, therefore, only a matter of time before the combination of an able but frustrated young man and an ambitious older one should seek real power. Had Theoktistos merely been exiled, it is possible that Theodora might have agreed to sharing her power, but it seems unlikely that any such arrangement would have lasted.

Theodora was probably too accustomed to the old regime to give way and work with her son and brother and she was obviously not going to be content merely to live in the palace without being involved closely in the government. That joint rule was attempted may be assumed from the fact that Theodora's statement to the Senate concerning the State finances came some months after the murder of Theoktistos and can be inferred from Michael's efforts to placate his mother's grief and anger at her favourite's murder. The expulsion of Theodora from the palace, as Patriarch Ignatios had refused to tonsure her, was delayed still further. Whether she was in the convent of Gastria or Karianos one does not know, but it is certain that she returned from a convent to the palace some years later to take part in the life of the Court. Whether she could ever come to terms with the maturity and success of Michael is impossible to guess. She may have been grateful enough to be living once again in the palace not to reproach Michael for any shortcomings. That kind of behaviour is an ideal and rarely the case , especially for an imperious woman. It is possible to see Theodora's hand in the need for some hasty arrangements with regard to Eudokia's pregnancy. While Theodora might not reproach Michael for such misconduct, she could very well reasonably express outrage and condemnation at Eudokia herself for the perils of involving the throne with unnecessary complications over the succession.

There are undoubtedly some marks of Theodora's government that point to its being distinctively feminine. Her letter to Boris, whether true or false, indicates that she was seen by contemporaries and later chroniclers as someone who was prepared to use her sex in this specific way. Her hesitation over the restoration of ikon veneration occasioned

by her loyalty to Theophilos was a very proper wifely reaction to the prospect of her husband's memory and posthumous reputation being damned. Her concern to find her son a suitable wife and detach him from an unsuitable liaison would be the reaction of any mother, doubly important if an Empire is at stake. However wicked or misguided her son had been and however much she had upbraided him for his misdeeds, Theodora grasped at the opportunity to be restored to his side. It is claimed by Add.Geo. Mon.(p. 823)[4] that she plotted to have Bardas removed from the palace after her own enforced retirement. This was perhaps only to be expected, but she did not plot to have her son removed. Eirene was blamed for having Constantine's eyes put out and called an unnatural mother; Theodora's reactions were natural and in line with what any mother might have done.

Nevertheless, in any other way there was nothing to distinguish her reign as feminine; she prosecuted the wars as any male emperor would have done; she raised taxes and spent them as any careful man would have done and she was able to give public account of the finances, always thought to be a male preserve.

NOTES TO THEODORA - CONCLUSION

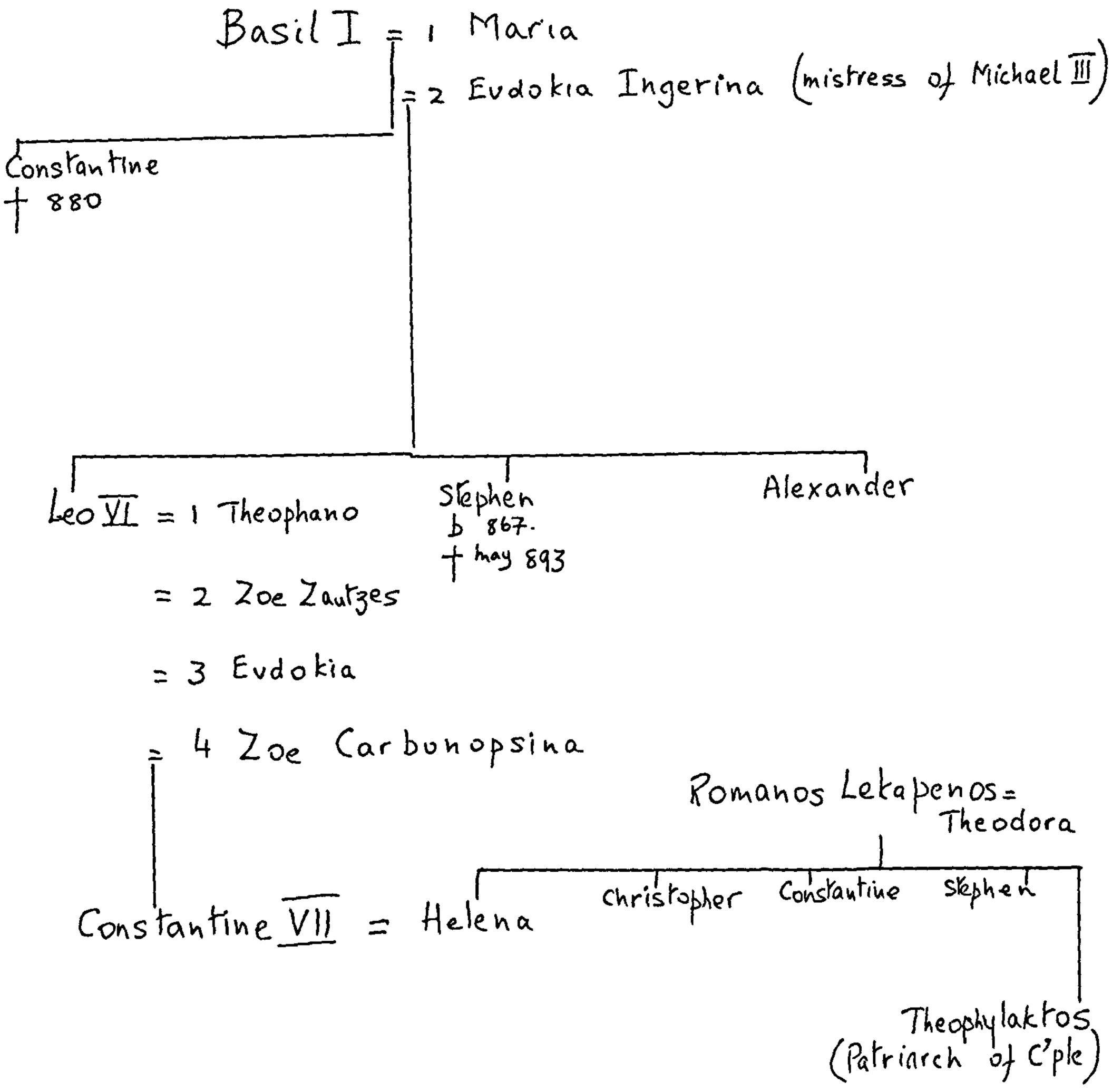
1. It might be expected that the *Vita Theodorae* would mention this, although the author says that Theodora secretly worshipped ikons, keeping the practice from Theophilos as she was terrified of his anger. She cannot have been as fearful of Theophilos if she ventured to remonstrate with him over the punishment of Lazaros.

2. See 'Sources' note 8.

3. As she had been associated with her mother from the first during Michael's minority, and later was made Basil's companion - see note 6 'Theodora and Michael' - she might have developed a mind of her own.

4. Also see Leo Gram. p. 237. Both these sources say that Theodora had a period of insanity on her incarceration in the monastery. Her excessive grief and anger would have no place in a house of prayer and this inhibition could be expected to lead to a reactive depression.

PLATE X



EXTRACT FROM STEMMA - ZOE

ZOE CARBUNOPSINA, REGENT FOR CONSTANTINE VII 913-919

The 'Tetragamy' Controversy

Zoe was the fourth wife of Leo VI and mother of Leo's only son Constantine. Her assumption of power as regent for her son was a triumph of sheer force of personality, coupled with the prestige of being the Augusta, over every possible disadvantage. An understanding of the curious and disadvantageous position she held is necessary before a full appreciation of her ability can be made. The clue is, of course, that she was the fourth wife of Leo VI. The controversy that led to Leo marrying Zoe has now become known as the 'Tetragamy' Controversy, was a *cause célèbre* in Leo's time and has been the subject of considerable scholarly research and speculation in present times. Below is a précis of the circumstances based on the latest research, chiefly by Romilly Jenkins and Patricia Karlin Hayter.[1]

Leo was legally the son of Basil I and Eudokia Ingerina, but, as has been suggested in the chapter on Theodora and Michael, he is likely to have been Michael III's son. Leo's first wife, Theophano, was picked for him by means of a bride show, organised by Eudokia Ingerina. Theophano was a member of the Martinakoi family to which Eudokia was also connected. In its later stages, the marriage was bitterly unhappy, possibly partly owing to Theophano's unceasing mourning for the death of her daughter, her only child, who died in 892; partly also because Leo had never wanted to marry Theophano in the first place, she was, indeed, picked for him. Theophano died in 893 and Leo married his mistress Zoe Zautzes. Before they married, Zoe had produced a child by Leo called Anna and this girl was crowned Augusta in 895, probably after Zoe had died. By 899, the twice widowed Leo, still without an heir, married Eudokia Baiana, a Phrygian lady. Special permission had to be sought from the Patriarch, Anthony Cauleas to regularise this marriage[2]. Basil of Caesarea had laid it down that first marriages were necessary for those who were unable to embrace the ascetic life, but second marriages were not necessary, they were accepted reluctantly, but generally frowned upon by the clergy. He dismissed the idea of a third marriage as a 'fornication'. Fourth marriages were simply not considered. To make matters worse, there was already a Novella, credited to the Empress Eirene, that third marriages

were not permissible. Although Nicholas Oikonomides[3] suggests that this might be a later interpolation, he still agrees that the rule was extant in Leo's time, in fact Basil I, in his *Procheiron Nomos* re-enacted the canonical penalties against a third marriage and said that a fourth marriage had no validity and that the offspring would be illegitimate. Okonomides belives that this was probably re-enacted by Leo. Finally, in order to avoid the charge of breaking the law, Leo applied to the Pope for a dispensation on the grounds that the Emperor was an exception and must provide an heir.

The period between Eudokia's death and Leo applying for a dispensation from Rome saw what was in reality a battle between the Emperor and the Church, one which Leo saw all too clearly that he must win, otherwise Byzantium would end in a position where the Church chose the monarch who only governed at the Patriarch's will. Eudokia Baiana and her infant son, Basil, both died in 898/90 and with their deaths Leo's hopes of continuing his dynasty died too. His daughter Anna may have become an Augusta at this time and Leo's negotiations with Louis of Provence for a marriage with Anna were broken off. The sources give no further news of Anna and it can be conjectured that her death occurred some time during 899-904. Had she survived, it would have been open to Leo to arrange a suitable marriage for Anna and crown her husband as co-emperor.

At some time, probably in the summer of 904, Zoe Carbunopsina was established in the Palace as Leo's concubine, although the liaison may have started much earlier. At this time it should not be supposed that Leo had any idea of marrying Zoe, though he was concerned about the succession. She, herself, may have entertained such an idea. Euthymios, later to be Patriarch, wrote after the marriage that he considered Zoe to be headstrong, high handed with the Church and that she thought more highly of herself than she ought. Zoe was from the aristocracy and had friends in the Senate and their advancement lay in Zoe's power; it would be natural for her to seek the regularisation of her own position and to be encouraged in this ambition by her supporters.

Her son, Constantine, was born in May or September 905, both dates seem possible, in the purple chamber reserved exclusively for royal births.

At last Leo had a male heir but the child was illegitimate, Leo could not marry Zoe according to his father's law which he had explicitly re-enacted. On the understanding that Zoe should be removed from the palace, Nicholas Mysticus, who was Patriarch in succession to Anthony Cauleas,[4] baptised the infant Constantine. By this act Constantine was acknowledged to be Leo's child and, more importantly, Leo's heir to the throne, but he was still the child of a concubine and would only be co-Emperor by courtesy of an agreement imposed on Leo by the Church. Once again, the line of demarcation between the powers rightly belonging to either Church or State had been blurred. Leo continued negotiations with Nicholas in order to marry Zoe once she had returned to the palace, only three or four days after the baptism. Constantine was christened on January 6th, 906, Zoe returned to the palace by Leo's orders in defiance of the Patriarch's ruling, and the marriage, in contravention of Leo's own law, was performed by Thomas the Presbyter, probably on the Sunday after Easter 906[5].

Between the birth of Constantine and this probable date of the marriage much ecclesiastical wheeling and dealing had gone on. Nicholas Mysticus, the Patriarch, had been appointed to keep the peace within the Church[6] after the quarrels over the two factions of the church represented by the Patriarchs Ignatios and Photios. These disagreements had taken place during the two previous reigns with Emperors and Popes playing an ambivalent and sometimes devious part. Essentially, as Mrs. Karlin Hayter has suggested[7], the problem was one of conservatism and liberalism, though emphatically not in the modern political sense. It is plain from his own letters[8] as well as those of Arethas, Archbishop of Caesarea, that Nicholas Mysticus wavered over allowing the marriage. He wanted unity in the church above all and both he and Leo hoped that they could procure unanimous agreement from the other higher clergy. Unfortunately, Epiphanios,bishop of Laodicea, present at Constantine's christening, objected first to the recognition of Constantine and later, vehemently, to the marriage. After Zoe had returned to the palace it became clear that Leo intended to marry her. Arethas, who led the opposition with Epiphanios, had been away in Hellas, reconsecrating the churches that had been defiled by the Arabs, at the time of Constantine's christening, otherwise he would have objected, just as Epiphanios had done at the time. It seems likely that he was still away in Hellas at the time of the

marriage. Leo realised that the negotiations were going to be protracted so he persuaded Thomas, a presbyter, to perform the ceremony. During the summer of 906, Nicholas twice offered a dispensation to Leo from the canonical punishment of exclusion from church ceremonies for four years. Leo refused both times as he was determined to have a unanimous dispensation from the clergy and, it is presumed that Nicholas was going to present his bishops with a *fait accompli*, having granted a dispensation on his own account. Leo believed he could overcome his objectors' opposition by an appeal to Rome. The Pope would keenly take up the opportunity to interfere and exert his authority and perhaps wring concessions out of the Eastern church. By the time Leo's envoys to the Pope had arrived in Rome, put their case and returned with the Papal Legates, the year would have turned. Nicholas renewed his offer of a dispensation a third time at Christmas and invited the Emperor to attend Hagia Sophia for the celebrations. This time Leo agreed, knowing that the Papal Legates were on their way and would probably arrive within a month. However, in a final effort to secure the agreement of his principal opponent, Nicholas invited Niketas Paphlago, who was a friend and pupil of Arethas and currently in Constantinople, for discussions at the Patriarchate on Christmas Eve, but to no avail. Niketas remained totally opposed to the marriage, and any dispensation, and affirmed that Arethas would remain so as well. Nicholas, therefore, refused entry to Leo to Hagia Sophia on Christmas Day, postponing his admittance until Epiphany. Nicholas still could not overcome the opposition and had no alternative but to refuse Leo entry to the church at Epiphany.

The Papal Legates arrived, probably by early February 907, with the dispensation. Leo deposed Nicholas; the opposition, supposedly convinced by the Pope's intervention, about-faced and agreed to Euthymios, who had quietly been part of the opposition, becoming Patriarch. The marriage being recognised should have been sufficient triumph and satisfaction for Leo and Zoe, but Constantine, baptised and legitimated, had not been crowned co-Emperor yet. It seems probable that this coronation took place on Whitsunday 908[9] in response to a threat to Leo from Constantine Doukas that he would usurp the crown[10]. Leo, by crowning his son, made it plain that the future emperor would be Constantine his son, not Constantine Doukas.

Having had her son crowned, Zoe was concerned to have her position as Augusta and mother of the co-Emperor recognised by the church as it had been by the Senate. The *Vita Euthymii*[11] records two separate efforts by Zoe to achieve this as well as a message from the eunuch parakoimomenos, Samonas. The Patriarch was adamant that he would not agree and accused Zoe of being headstrong and high-handed. With this she had to be content.

Zoe's problem in establishing herself

Leo died on 11th May, 912, naming his brother Alexander as Emperor and protector of his child Constantine, then only six years old.[12] Alexander convoked a council and formally deposed the Patriarch Euthymios and reinstated Nicholas Mysticus. He exiled Zoe from the palace, and persuaded by wiser counsel at court, refrained from castrating Constantine, but waited for the frail and delicate little boy to die. For thirteen months Alexander misgoverned the Empire, provoking Symeon of Bulgaria to declare war and provoking a Moslem persecution of Christians in the Caliphate[13]. He died on 6th June, 913. He had suffered a fit after drinking and dining too well on 4th June and it became clear that he was dying[14]. The news was relayed to Zoe, probably by Samonas, and she returned to the palace from her convent exile. An interesting conflation of the two death-bed scenes of the two brothers is seen in the Madrid Scylitzes manuscript[15] where Zoe is pictured with Alexander and the young Constantine at Leo's death-bed but clad in a nun's habit. Alexander acknowledged Constantine as the new sole Emperor but also nominated a regency council for his seven year old nephew. He named Nicholas Mysticus, the two Magisters John Eladas and Stephen, who was the son of Empress Theodora's sister Calomaria, as well as the dissolute favourites John the Rector, Basilitzes Gabrielopulous and John Lazanes. Zoe was not mentioned.

A short struggle for power ensued. Zoe was the crowned Augusta and mother of the new Emperor, as such, even though not named in the regency council, she had a good claim to wield power; the ordinary civil law stated that widows were responsible for their minor sons and the administration of their property. Through Constantine, the protoasecretis, she deposed some bishops[16] ordained by Nicholas during Alexander's reign and replaced them with those ordained previously by Euthymios. It was

the opening shot in her war with the church. However, by the autumn of 913, Nicholas managed to evict Zoe from the palace, confining her to a convent, tonsured as Sister Anna. The rigours of the poor convent diet forced her to petition for a dispensation from observing fasts to Nicholas, which he was graciously pleased to grant[17].

At more or less the same time as Zoe was evicted from the palace, Constantine Doukas saw an opportunity to attempt a revolt[18]. Although the Vita Euthymii attempts to implicate Zoe in the revolt, this cannot be the case, it was in no way to Zoe's advantage to have Constantine Doukas on the throne. The revolt was easily overcome by the watchfulness of John Eladas. It is possible that Nicholas Mysticus was implicated in Doukas' plans, the *Vita Euthymii* mentions this implication, but at an earlier time when Leo was alive. However, perhaps to demonstrate his innocence in the revolt, Nicholas, as head of the regency council, punished the conspirators with unparalleled severity and the extent of this retribution appalled the people to such an extent that it gave an impetus to the move to reinstate Zoe. Nicholas was also engaged in attempting to repair the damage done by Alexander's intransigence with the Bulgarians. Symeon realised that a young child was Alexander's successor and decided that his chances of extending his power could be increased if he could open a path to the Byzantine throne. The impregnable walls of Constantinople stopped his advance physically, but by his negotiations with Nicholas, he thought he could take the Empire another way. He demanded to be crowned 'basileus' and negotiated a marriage between his daughter and Constantine[19]. It is difficult to disentangle from the conflicting sources exactly what Nicholas did over the crowning. He is said to have entertained Symeon and his sons to dinner inside the walls of the City and even to have crowned him with a torque. The Continuer of Theophanes claims he crowned Symeon but only as 'basileus' of Bulgaria. Another interpretation[20] is that he performed an adoption ceremony, making Symeon and Constantine adoptive brothers. Symeon was content with the fact that he had initiated these close links with the Regent and returned to Bulgaria, one must presume, preparing to unite the two countries, either under his own rule or that of his son.

It was these negotiations that gave the Senate fears that Nicholas had gone too far and that he would allow a marriage alliance of some sort

between Bulgaria and Byzantium. It may be this prospect of marrying into the Bulgarian Khanate that lay behind Constantine's advice, given much later to his son Romanos, that royal marriages should not be contracted with foreigners[21]. The fears that Nicholas had over-reached himself, coupled with the appalling ferocity with which he had put down the Doukas rebellion, lost him overall power. The final stroke was cast by Constantine himself, who entreated the regents to allow his mother back[22]:

'...τοῦ βασιλέως οὖν Κωνσταντίνου ἅτε παιδὸς ὄντος καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν μητέρα ἐπιζητοῦντος (ἤδη γὰρ ταύτην κατήγαγεν 'Αλέξανδρος ὁ βασιλεὺς) ἀναβιβάζουσιν αὐτὴν πάλιν.

Her reign

Having established herself through the good offices of the Magistri and the demand of her small son, Zoe had to come to some agreement with the Patriarch Nicholas. She attempted to encourage Euthymios to come back and resume the Patriarchate, but the frail old man would have none of it[23]. She, therefore, had to find some method of working with Nicholas. Although she sharply told him to mind his own business - the church: '... μετ' ὀργῆς τὰ τῆς ἰδιας 'Εκκλησίας φροντιζειν ἐποῦσα' she used his facility in diplomacy to negotiate with the Bulgarians and the Arabs, so far as the latter were concerned, successfully. It became obvious that Symeon, Khan of Bulgaria, would not respond to Nicholas' letters, so Zoe had to settle her other frontiers by what means lay to hand and gather her forces for a determined attack on Symeon's power. Her general, Nicholas Pingili, had established an understanding in Lombard Italy that was favourable to Byzantium[25]. The Armenians were strengthened with Byzantine arms and money, so protecting the furthest border with the Arabs; the Cilician Arabs were soundly beaten by land and sea and Zoe negotiated with the Pechenegs (Patzinaks) to distract the Bulgarians on their eastern border[26]. A short campaign recaptured Adrianople in northern Thrace[27]. All seemed set for a major offensive against the Bulgarians.

The Continuer of Theophanes[28] describes in some detail the distinguished line up of generals that were involved in the Bulgarian campaign. However, either Zoe failed to make clear who was in overall

charge, or the familiar scene of personal advancement and intransigence with possible rivals came to the surface, but the army and navy quarrelled as to which service was the senior and in charge. The Pechenegs went home, tired of this unproductive wrangling, and the day was lost. Another attempt was made to recover some of the lost territory in Thrace by an attack on Catasyrtas, but this failed too.

During the year 917, various alliances were tried out, none of them proving stable. At this stage, the Continuer of Theophanes produces Theodoros, Constantine's tutor, in his narrative of events, but as anti-hero. He implies that it was Theodoros who persuaded his pupil that Zoe's plan, concocted with the parakoimomenos Constantine, was to turn over power to the general, Leo Phokas, to the Emperor's disadvantage. Leo Phokas was the brother-in-law of the parakoimomenos and might have been in a very strong position to usurp Constantine. Only the navy, commanded by Romanos Lekapenos, which lay in the straights of the Bosphoros between Constantinople and the Asiatic shore where Leo's troops were, prevented his triumphant entry into the City. Zoe's favourite counsellor, Constantine, attempted to reduce Romanos' naval force by personal intervention, but once aboard Romanos' flagship he was incarcerated.[30] Deprived of her closest adviser, Zoe met her other counsellors by the Bukoleon clock demanding to know the reason for the rebellion. It is claimed that Theodoros was there too, perhaps escorting the Emperor, and masterminded the scene. He denounced both the parakoimomenos and Leo Phokas and prompted the Emperor to tell his mother that he would transfer power from her to the Patriarch and the Magister Stephen. The following day the poor little boy, horrified at the result of this, saw that his mother was to be taken away from him once again. It was too much for him and he wept, pleading for his mother to stay: '...ἐάστε μετ' ἐμοῦ εἶναι τὴν μητέρα μου' [31]. Undaunted by his charge's reaction, Theodoros let Romanos into the City and from that time Zoe's power was lost.

Romanos allowed Zoe to stay on in the palace until after he had negotiated a marriage between his daughter Helena and the fifteen year old Constantine. The Continuer of Theophanes puts the marriage and Romanos' assumption of the title 'basileopater' [32] before Zoe's expulsion from the palace and her exile once again as Sister Anna. It may be

that she did not go until the church council convoked by Romanos, on Nicholas' suggestion, that produced the *Tomus Unionis* stating that fourth marriages were forbidden; she could hardly stay after that.

Her achievements

In spite of being twice at a total disadvantage, Zoe managed to save the throne for her son and, incidentally, achieve power for herself. It is clear that she was driven to act as a 'strong man' both by her husband's example in saving the succession, and the continuing necessity to save her son's cause. The contrast between the frail woman, forced to be a nun, having to plead for a dispensation from fasts to save her health and the tough, energetic woman, negotiating alliances, building up her army and navy and attacking her invading neighbours, is striking. Once at the side of her son she appears galvanised into action. She is, in fact, a classic example of a 'doer' not a thinker. Had she been able to employ Nicholas Mysticus' ability to see all round a problem and establish a means of genuinely co-operating with him instead of giving him orders, she might have been able to deal better with a very complicated situation. Her enforced period of contemplation in the monastery while Alexander was on the throne and the brief second period while Nicholas was regent, may only have reinforced her determination to see her son safely through his childhood and convincingly in command of the Empire. Her enforced incarceration in the monastery would not have persuaded her that Nicholas' abilities were a good complement to her energy. She saw him in simple terms as her personal enemy and, therefore, only useful insofar as he would carry out her wishes.

If the strictures uttered by Euthymios are true, her personality was not one that endeared her to subordinates. She must, nevertheless, have had a very affectionate side to her; both Leo and her son risked their crown and their futures for her presence in their lives. She could command much respect and devoted service from the eunuchs at the palace; for instance Samonas, the previous parakoimomenos tried to persuade Euthymios to acknowledge Zoe and his successor, Constantine, was faithful to her even to capture by Romanos. Perhaps the overriding concern for both Zoe and her advisers, including Nicholas, when his prior

loyalty to the church was not too strained, was the Macedonian dynasty. Leo's funeral oration for Basil I set the tone, extolling Basil's achievements and fudging his accession, which was achieved by murder, in which Leo's mother was more than likely implicated.[33] Leo himself had a long reign, twenty five years, during which time he had achieved much. Mrs. Karlin Hayter has shown that Alexander III enjoyed a certain popularity with the common people[34]. Zoe and her ten year old son, fighting to save the Empire, was an attractive idea, and they were, no doubt, an appealing sight when they walked in procession on great feast days as noted before in the case of Constantine and Eirene.

Despite all her disadvantages, she succeeded in fighting off usurpers and invaders alike for nine years and she kept the idea of the Macedonian dynasty alive in people's minds until Constantine was old enough to be independent, that is until he was married. Constantine was fifteen at the time of his marriage and sixteen by the time of the church council when Zoe was probably exiled. Romanos was not crowned until 919 and his wife, Theodora, was not made an Augusta until 920, not, therefore, while Zoe was still the Augusta and living in the palace.

Constantine survived his delicate youth, occupied himself with history and the minutiae of court protocol while his father-in-law schemed to replace the Macedonians with his own dynasty[35]. Yet the people rebelled finally and demanded that Constantine resume his rightful place as sole ruler. Zoe's patience and perseverance had triumphed in the end, though she probably did not live to see it. Her style of governing was masculine, if pride, determination and aggression are any more masculine traits than they are feminine. She did what any mother would and protected her son's rights and, despite a distinctly anomalous, even shaky legal position, she re-established the Imperial right to govern without hindrance from the church. She played her part in establishing the charisma of the Macedonian dynasty which lasted, with only two outsiders, until the death of Theodora in 1056.

NOTES TO ZOE CARBUNOPSINA

1. The Greek historiographers on whom I have relied are *Theophanes Continuatus* and the addition to *Georgius Monachus*, both in the Bonn edition of the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*.

Romilly J.H. Jenkins: 'The Flight of Samonas' *Speculum* XXIII. 2. (1948). pp. 217-235.

'The Emperor Alexander and the Saracen Prisoners' *Studi Bizantini e Neoelleniki 7.* (1953) pp. 389-393.

'Nine Orations of Arethas from Cod. Marc. Gr. 524' *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 47. (1954) pp. 1-40, with B. Laourdas and C.A. Mango.

'Eight Letters of Arethas on the Fourth Marriage of Leo the Wise' *Hellenika* 14 (1956) pp. 293-372. with B. Laourdas.

'Letter 101 of the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus' *Byzantion* XXXI (1961) pp. 75-80.

'Three Documents Concerning the "Tetragamy" ' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962) pp. 231-241.

'The Date of Constantine VII's Coronation' *Byzantion* XXXII (1962) pp. 133-138, with Philip Grierson.

'A Note on the "Letter to the Emir" of Nicholas Mysticus' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963) pp. 399-401.

'The Chronological Accuracy of the "Logothete" for the Years A.D. 867-913' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19 (1965) pp.91-112.

'A "Consolatio" of the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus' *Byzantion* XXXV (1965) pp. 159-166.

Patricia Karlin-Hayter: 'Vita S. Euthymii.' *Byzantion* XXV-VII (1955-7) pp. lff.

2. Migne *P.G.* 111 colls. 179D-200A

3. A detailed analysis of the legal aspects of the third and fourth marriages in Leo's time is given by Nicholas Oikonomides in 'Leo VI's Legislation of 907 Forbidding Fourth Marriages. An Interpolation in the *Procheiros Nomos* (VI. 25-27).' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 30. 1976 pp. 175-191.

4. Patriarch Anthony Cauleas had died between September 900 and

February 901 - see Jenkins, Laourdas and Mango 'Nine Orations'.

5. Georgius Monachus Add. p. 865. 8-9.

6. See 'Nine Orations' p. 5.

7. P. Karlin-Hayter 'Le Synode à Constantinople de 886 à 912 et le rôle de Nicolas le Mystique dans l'affaire de la Tetragamie' *J.Ö B.* 19 (1970) pp. 90ff.

8. See Jenkins 'Three Documents' letter to Malakainos pp. 232-4.

9. See Jenkins and Grierson "The Date of Constantine VII's Coronation'.

10. Theoph. Cont. p. 373

11. *Vita Euthymii* p. 116/118

12. Ihor Ševčenko:'Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII in the Madrid Manuscript of Scylitzes' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23-24 (1969-70) pp. 185-228

13. See Jenkins 'Alexander and the Saracen Prisoners'.

14. Mrs. Karlin-Hayter in 'The Emperor Alexander's Bad Name' *Speculum* XLIV (1969), pp. 585-596 suggests on p. 590 that Alexander's death could have been caused by cancer.

15. See note 12 above - the Plates have no page numbers.

16. Notably the Archbishop of Neapolis - see No. 3 in 'Three Documents'

17. *Vita Euthymii* p. 122.

18. Theoph. Cont. p. 381. 5.

19. Theoph. Cont. 385.

20. See Mrs. Karlin-Hayter 'The Homily on the Peace with Bulgaria of 927 and the "Coronation" of 913' *J. Ö. B.* (1968). pp. 29-39 where she suggests on p. 37 that Symeon's crowning was the consecration of a formal adoption by the Patriarch.

21. Constantine VII Porphyrogennitos *De Administrando Imperio* ed. and trans. R.H. Jenkins and Gy. Moravcsic (Budapest 1949) pp.70-76.

22. Theoph. Cont. 286, para. 6.

23. *Vita Euthymii* p. 122.

24. Theoph. Cont. 386.

25. Georgius Monachus Add. p. 870.

26. Theoph. Cont. p. 386. para. 7

27. ibid. Theoph. Cont. claims that Adrianople was originally called Orestes and then explains who Orestes was.

28. Theoph. Cont. p. 390

29. ibid. also p. 391 - another example of a tutor blindly attached to his pupil and hostile to his 'employer' the Empress: compare the tutors to Constantine VI and Michael III.

30. Theoph. Cont. 392

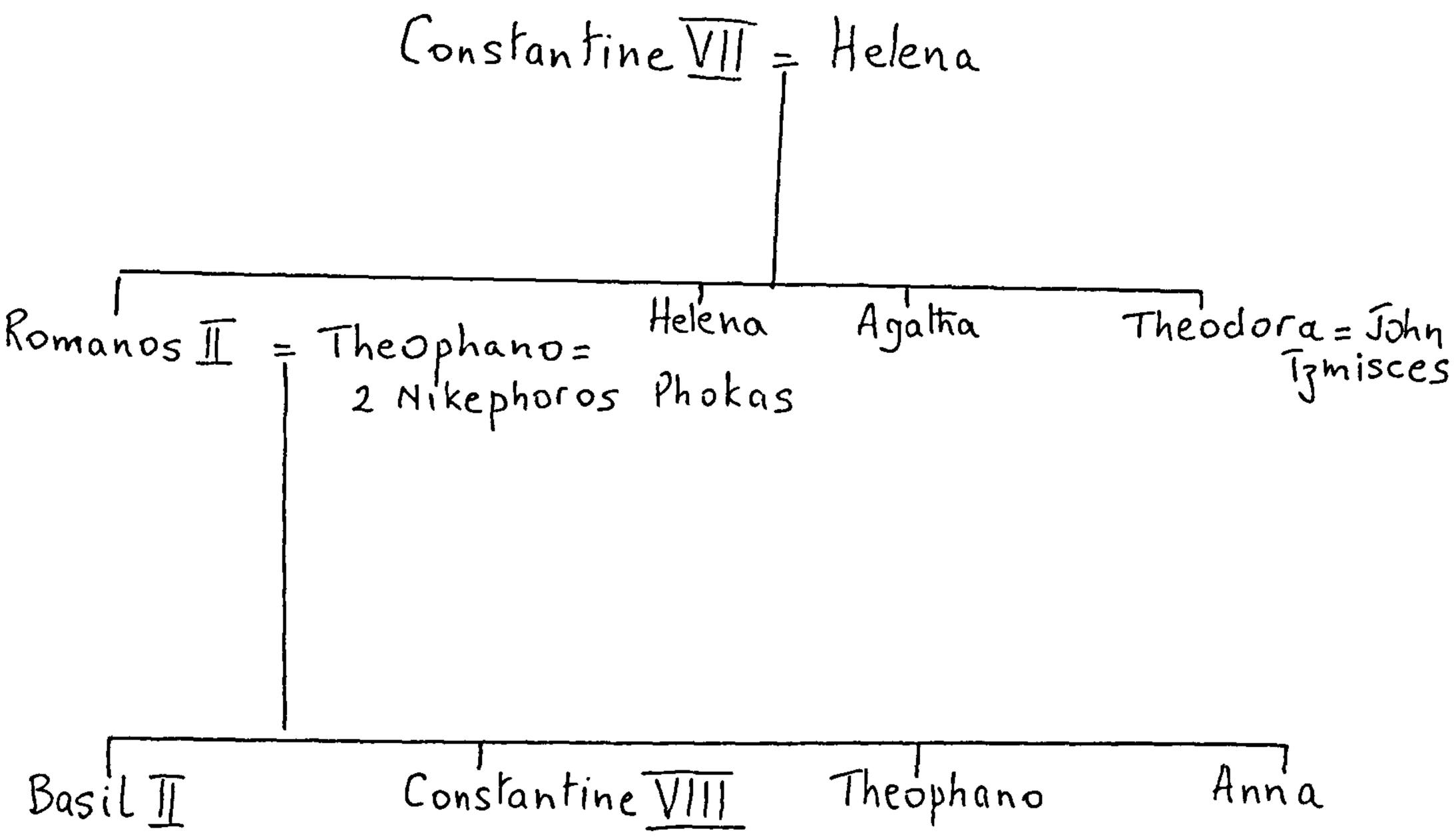
31. ibid. 11-14

32. Theoph. Cont. p. 394. 13

33. See the previous chapter on Theodora.

34. See note 14 above.

35. Near the end of his reign, before his sons deposed him, Romanos reiterated that Constantine should be the senior Emperor.



EXTRACT FROM STEMMA - THEOPHANO

THEOPHANO RULED 15th MARCH - 16th AUGUST 963

Though this lady can hardly be said to have ruled the Empire because the parakoimomenos, Joseph Bringas had already exercised considerable power very effectively during her husband Romanos II's reign, she was instrumental in saving the throne for her two sons and, therefore, she preserved the Macedonian dynasty. She exercised her right as Augusta to become titular head of the Empire during an interregnum on behalf of her infant sons and, then, she validated the next ruler's right to the throne by marriage and thus preserved her sons' rights for a further length of time.

The sources for the Imperial career of Theophano are that part of the history written some time after 1056 by John Scylitzes, which was copied by the monk Cedrenus, and a history written by a contemporary, Leo the Deacon, which dealt principally with military affairs[1].

Theophano was named Anastasia or Anastaso by her family and only took the name Theophano-God manifest- after her marriage to Romanos II in 958. Her father was the owner of an inn. '...νυμφεύεται αὐτῷ ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ πατὴρ ἑτέραν γυναῖκα, οὔ τινα τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ἀλλ' ἐκ χυδαίων φυεῖσαν καὶ τὴν τέχνην καπήλων, 'Αναστασίαν καλουμένην Θεόφανὼ δ' ὑπ' ἐκείνου μετονομασθεῖαν.'[2] It may be conjectured that the pleasure-loving Romanos had come across her in one of his sorties into the night life of Constantinople. Romanos had been betrothed to an illegitimate daughter of Hugo of Provence. This poor little girl, Bertha, known in Byzantium as Eudoxia, had been shipped off to Constantinople at the age of five or six and had died aged ten, still a virgin. Romanos' father Constantine VII, freed of his obligation to Hugo, allowed his son to marry Theophano. She is described as being the most beautiful and elegant of all women of her time.[3]

During Romanos' reign, the young Empress became the mother of three children, Basil born in 958, Constantine and Theophano[4]; her last daughter, Anna, was born two days after Romanos' death. Romanos, though a pleasure-loving and indolent young man was an able ruler and had the benefit of first class advisers[5]. Joseph Bringas, the eunuch parakoimomenos, was an efficient and astute administrator and the general, Nikephoros Phokas, domestic of the scholae of the West, was a

brilliant and successful warrior; Romanos, therefore, had the advantage of these men's achievements.

The only individual action Theophano is said to have made during Romanos' reign is to have demanded that the Dowager Empress Helena and her daughters be removed from the Great Palace; this was in the second year of his reign.[6] Quite understandably, this young girl from a vulgar background, occupied with motherhood, would very likely resent the advice and probable criticism from her mother-in-law. Helena's father, Romanos I, had also come from an obscure background, had usurped the throne from Constantine VII and his mother Zoe (described in the previous chapter) so Helena, herself, was no better born than Theophano. With Romanos' five sisters in the gynacaeum, Theophano may have felt overwhelmed and hoped that fewer women in the palace would make her life considerably easier. Helena is credited with being very managing and autocratic with her husband, Constantine VII, and perhaps with her son, and may have continued in this way after her husband had died. As the reigning Augusta, Theophano would be the senior Empress in the gynacaeum and it would be to her that the Senators' wives paid court. With the Dowager Empress still in the palace, Theophano might have found it exceedingly difficult to assert her authority and establish herself as the mistress of the whole of the womens' quarters. Her sister-in-law, Agatha, had been very close to her father and had acted as his secretary. She may have been familiar with affairs of State and, after the considerable changes in the power structure inaugurated by Romanos, such as the division of the Scholae into two, east and west, she might possibly have criticised these moves. As a princess, born in the purple room she may have felt immeasurably superior to the very probably uneducated, though beautiful, Theophano. Naturally, Theophano wanted such a gaggle of women out of her way. Romanos exiled Helena and his sisters to the palace of Antioch amid tears and upbraiding and then made his sisters take the veil. It was very shortly after this that Helena died[7].

Romanos died on 15th March, 963, having reigned only three years, four months and five days. Two days after his death Theophano gave birth to her daughter Anna. Cedrenus says that Romanos' death was caused by voluptuous and luxurious living, but adds that others thought his death was by poison.[8] Leo the Deacon says that there was a suspicion that

poison was administered from the gynacaeum[9]. Both, of course, are inferring that the beautiful but, in their view, wicked Theophano poisoned her young husband; she would have been only twenty-two years old and Romanos twenty-five and the two little princes can only have been, at the most, five and three years old. It is hardly likely that Theophano can have instigated such a murder, leaving both herself and her sons so vulnerable. It is possible that one of Romanos' sisters may have left a disgruntled servant, whether maid or eunuch, in the gynacaeum, who thought to avenge the princesses' forcible exile and tonsure and this may account for the implication of the gynacaeum.

Fortunately for Theophano, the eunuch, Joseph Bringas continued at the head of state affairs. Nikephoros Phokas had just achieved a resounding victory in Crete against the Arabs and Theophano ordered him into the City to celebrate his victory.[10] Those who doubted Theophano's ability to rule would have their attention deflected by the junketings surrounding the triumph and the general air of success. After this triumph, Nikephoros Phokas crossed over into Asia Minor to conduct a campaign against the Arabs, leaving Theophano uneasily on the throne, but with the full support of both Bringas and the Patriarch Polyeuktos.

While in Constantinople, Nikephoros fell in love with Theophano. Bringas observed this and became suspicious that Nikephoros had the intention of marrying Theophano, securing power for himself and thus curtailing Bringas' own power.[11] By August, Nikephoros must have achieved some kind of agreement with Theophano. He was acclaimed Emperor in Chrysopolis by his own troops and then crossed the straits to the City with his army. If he had hoped for a peaceful acceptance, he was mistaken. Joseph Bringas' worst fears had been realised and he and his adherents fought literally in the streets. Cedrenus says that three thousand people were killed[12]. No mention of Theophano's part in the change of power is made by either source and it is significant that she failed to carry what seems to have been her will, that Nikephoros should succeed, with her advisers. The account of Nikephoros' final acceptance in the City by Leo the Deacon[13] includes a sermon preached by Polyeuktos whose support for Nikephoros was the decisive factor. Polyeuktos crowned Nikephoros on August 16th and in September, Theophano and Nikephoros were married.

Nikephoros' passion for Theophano extended to having her with him on campaign during July of the second year of his reign[14]; though he left her at the castle of Drizio while he went of fighting through Iberia and Cilicia. Not unnaturally, Nikephoros made some changes in the senior appointments. He made his father, Bardas Phokas, Caesar; Basil, the eunuch illegitimate son of Romanos I was made parakoimomenos, replacing Joseph Bringas who had been exiled. Nikephoros' brother, Leo Phokas, was promoted to domestic of the western scholae, Nikephoros' own office, and John Tzimisces, who had already distinguished himself in battle, was made domestic of the eastern scholae. These changes must have resulted in a very elderly court.

No further notice of Theophano appears in either source until Cedrenus remarks that Theophano had turned away from Nikephoros[15]: '... Ἡ δὲ βασιλὶς Θεοφανω ἀποστρεφομένη τὴν συνουσίαν τοῦ Νικηφόρου, τινὰ τῶν τοῦ Τζιμισκῆ μεταπεμψαμένη εἰσκαλεῖται τοῦτον ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ οἴκῳ σχολάζουσα...'. This was hardly surprising as Nikephoros was many years older than Theophano and seems to have been physically an unattractive man. Before his marriage to her he had the reputation of enjoying himself only on the battlefield and otherwise was of an ascetic temperament. Leo the Deacon describes him as being an ascetic of solitary nature who cultivated the company of monks, fasted much and abstained from eating meat[16]. He must have been a strange contrast to Romanos, whose love of luxury in all its manifestations was known to all and whose indulgence may even have led to his early death.

The result of this turning away was that John Tzimisces resolved to usurp the throne and marry Theodora. John was a young and successful general with a considerable following and an attractive personality. He had the confidence of the Empress and may have felt that this was enough to succeed. Nikephoros kept a dismal court and was inept at dealing with foreign ambassadors. Bishop Liudprand of Cremona has left a hostile description of Nikephoros and the court at Constantinople dating from the time of the embassy from the Frankish court asking for one of the princesses for the King's heir Otto[17].

Sicily had fallen again to the Arabs and the northern border was in a continual state of unrest. Nikephoros had hoped that the Russians

would aid him in the struggle against the Bulgars. This they did, but so successfully that Sviatoslav, the Rhos leader, turned to menace Constantinople itself. In these circumstances, John Tzimisces must clearly have believed that Nikephoros was losing his grip on affairs and that, while the two legitimate heirs to the throne were yet so young, the Empire needed a younger and more vigorous man on the throne.

The two accounts of Nikephoros' murder by John and his accomplices are both dramatic and circumstantial. Both involve Theophano as an active assistant, to the extent that she allowed the conspirators into the palace. Professor Evelyne Patlagean has observed, in an unpublished paper delivered to the Institute of Classical Studies in November 1980, that the accounts of the murder are a symbolic hunt; the idea of a pursuit of a deer, the nets used to help trap the animal and even the rough hair and skin of an animal are all employed. The account by Leo the Deacon takes up fifteen pages in the Bonn edition[18]; it is as though the writer was carried away with the sheer pace and thrill of the chase and could not bear to leave it. Cedrenos is more restrained, three pages in the Bonn edition,[19] but the same theme occurs here too.

One may not doubt that Theophano was involved to some extent in the despatch of her husband and she may have thought that she could have married John Tzimisces. However, it would be her third marriage and his second. Both must be implicated in the murder and although the Patriarch Polyeuktos had supported Theophano in her previous efforts to protect her children and the Empire, he could not countenance such blatant flouting of all decencies, not to mention canon law. The Patriarch could hardly get rid of the successful usurper, murderer though he was, but he could punish him with appropriate penances and refuse the marriage.

The bargain was struck, Polyeuktos would crown John providing Theophano was exiled. So at Christmas 969 John Tzimisces was crowned and Theophano was sent to the island of Prote. Cedrenus says that the Patriarch refused to crown John but he adds immediately that John sent Theophano to the Proconnesos, then to Mantineum later[20]. Both sources agree that John married Theodora, one of Romanos II's sisters later. No mention is made after John was crowned of the whereabouts of the

children of Theophano, but Basil succeeded John Tzimisces when he died six years later and the princess Theophano was married off to Otto II during John's reign; Basil was responsible for marrying his sister Anna to Vladimir of Kiev much later. One may conclude that they stayed on in the palace, their royal position unchallenged as long as John had no heir.

Theophano played little part in the actual ruling of the Empire. She had, however, played a traditionally female part in adding to an acclaimed emperor power and prestige by marriage. She also gave to the Empire its most illustrious Emperor, Basil II. She also probably gave to the Germans a redoubtable queen, her daughter Theophano[21] (the Germans changed her name to Theophanu) who married Otto II. After his death she ruled the German empire for her infant son Otto III and gave him a passion for the civilization of Byzantium.

Theophano showed that truly feminine trait, an iron determination to defend the lives and rights of her children. It may have been the shock of her husband's sudden death that brought on her childbirth labour two days later, but even with a new born baby she showed tremendous courage and strength of will, enough to impress both the Patriarch and Joseph Bringas that she had the ability to rule firmly enough for them to support her.

NOTES TO THEOPHANO

1. Both are in the Bonn editions of the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* of 1839 and 1828 respectively.

2. Cedrenus p. 329

3. Leo the Deacon p. 31

4. There is some doubt as to whether she was the daughter of Romanos and Theophano, she might have been a relative of John Tzimisces. Two conflicting theories have been advanced; P.E. Schramm 'Kaiser, Basileus und Papst in der Zeit der Ottonen' *H Z* 129. 1924, 424ff. believes that Theophano/u was the neice of John Tzimisces, but A.A. Vasiliev 'Hugh Capet of France and Byzantium' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 6 (1951) 227-51 believes her to have been the daughter of Theophano and Romanos.

5. Leo the Deacon p. 30/31

6. Cedrenus p. 343

7. Cedrenus p. 344

8. ibid and p. 345

9. Leo the Deacon p. 31

10. Cedrenus p. 345

11. Cedrenus p. 348

12. Cedrenus pp. 349-51

13. Leo the Deacon pp. 32-4

14. Cedrenus p. 361

15. Cedrenus p. 375

16. Leo the Deacon pp. 49-50

17. Liudprand *Opera* ed J. Becker (Hanover and Leipzig 1915) p. 177.7-26
' Septimo autem Idus, ipso videlicet sancto die pentecostes, in domo, quae dicitur Στεφάνα, id est Coromaria, ante Nicephorum sum deductus, hominem satis monstruosum, pygmaeum, capite pinguem atque oculorum parvitate talpinum, barba curta, lata, spissa et semicana foedatum, cervice digitali turpatum, prolixitate et densitate comarum satis hyopam, colore Aethiopen, 'cui per mediam nolis occurrere noctem' ventre extensum, natibus succum, coxis ad mensuram ipsam breven longissimum, cruribus parvum, calcaneis pedibusque aequalem, villino, sed nimis veternoso vel diuturnitate ipsa foedito et pallido ornamento indutum, Sicioniis calceamentis calceatum, lingua procacem, ingenio vulpem, periurio seu mendacio Ulyxem. ... Sedebant ad sinistram, non in eadem linea, sed longe deorsum duo parvuli imperatores, eius quondam domini, nunc subiecti.'

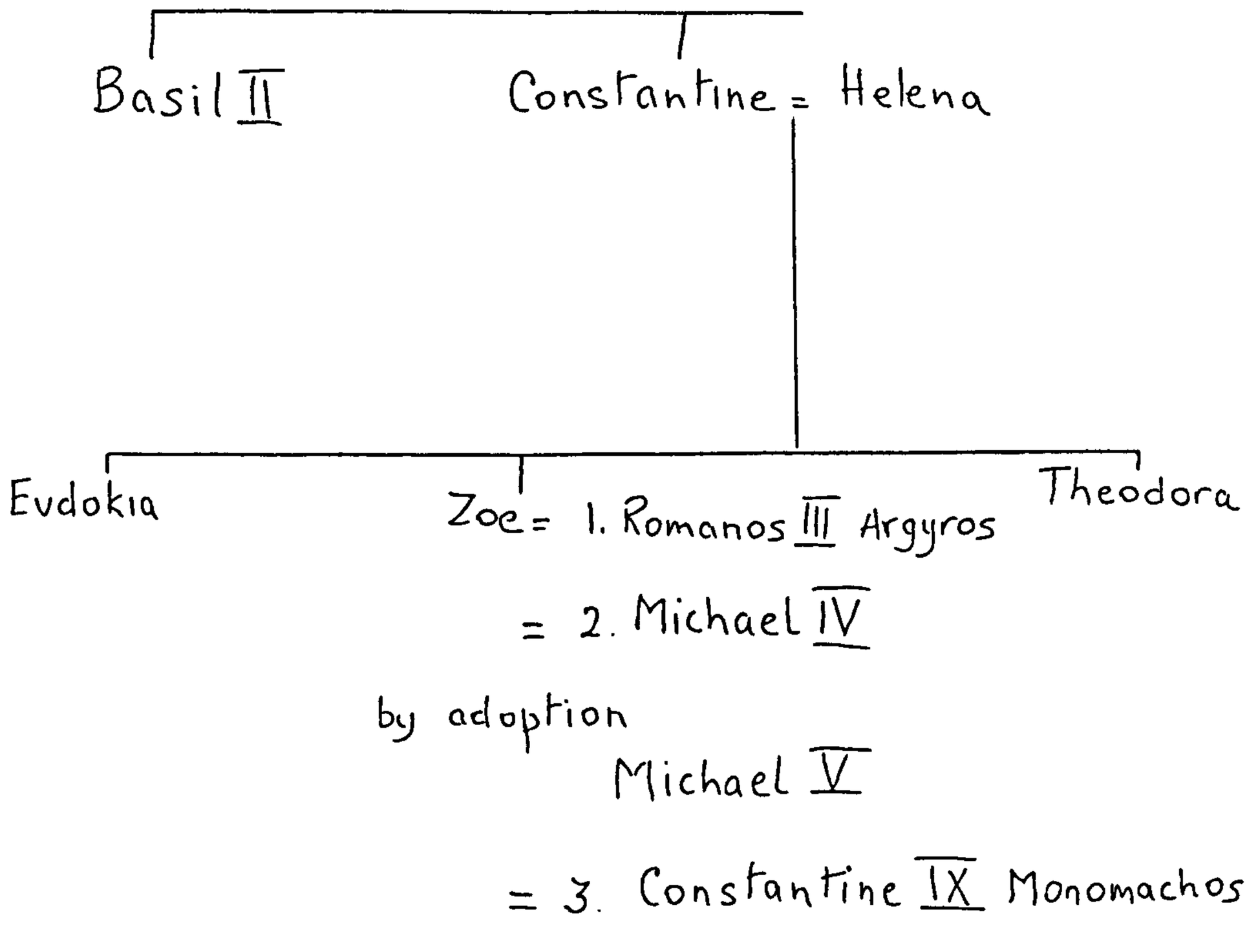
18. pp. 84-99

19. pp. 376-378

20. pp. 380-381

21. see note 4. I am inclined to believe Vasiliev, John had more to gain from marrying off one of the Macedonian dynasty to a potential enemy than a relative, not his own daughter.

PLATE XII



EXTRACT FROM STEMMA - ZOE AND THEODORA

ZOE AND THEODORA

These sisters were the last of the Macedonian rulers, daughters of Constantine VII whose mother, Theophano, had so zealously guarded her sons' rights to the throne. The sisters were both in some ways ridiculous and, as Bury says[1] 'preposterous' in their manner of ruling, but they represented the Macedonian dynasty as some kind of talisman in the minds of the people who seemed determined not to let them go.

The historical sources are contained in the works of Cedrenus, Michael Attaliates and, chiefly, Michael Psellus who was, for the most part of this time, a contemporary and often an eye-witness[2].

Constantine was within a few weeks of his death in 1028 when he realised that he had made no provision for a successor. His eldest daughter Eudokia wished to become a nun and take no part in public affairs. Therefore, having no sons, he decided to marry off one of his younger daughters to a suitable man who could then be made co-emperor and thus succeed him on the throne. His youngest daughter, Theodora, probably a more suitable bride and future empress than her sister Zoe (who seems to have been naive almost to the point of being simple-minded) had no wish to marry the eventual choice made by her father[3]. Constantine was, therefore, left with the middle daughter Zoe as the future Empress. After a false start, Psellus comments that he had taken so little notice of the Senate that he scarcely knew whom to choose, he settled on Romanos Argyros as being the most suitable man[4]. Though Romanos was distantly related to the royal family, both being descended from Romanos Lekapenos' daughters, he was patently unsuitable in that he was already married and was only a year or two younger than the dying Emperor. Cedrenus[5], but not Psellus, mentions that the Patriarch and the higher clergy discussed the divorce that would be necessary before Romanos could marry, but apparently raised no objections once Romanos' wife was safely in a convent. Zoe and Romanos were married only a day or so before Constantine died and Romanos was declared Emperor after the marriage.

Although appearing on ceremonial occasions with Romanos, Zoe seems to have taken no part in ruling. None of the sources mentions that she involved herself in affairs of state. On the other hand Cedrenus[6] gives

a long account of a conspiracy masterminded by Prusianos the Bulgarian to usurp the throne in concert with Theodora. He was aided by a number of patricians and senior military men from Thrace and Thessalonika, as well as his mother who was a zoste and, therefore, a senior lady in waiting to either Zoe or Theodora. The conspirators were imprisoned, beaten, some had their eyes put out and Theodora was expelled from the palace, relegated to a monastery and made to take the veil. Psellus (p.107) merely says that malicious rumours had been spread about Theodora, and Zoe was prevailed upon to exile her sister to Petrion monastery. As Cedrenus' account is so circumstantial with all the names of the conspirators, one might be inclined to trust him; during their joint reign in 1042, Psellus comments on the jealousy between the sisters which might give some more credence to Cedrenus' story.

Psellus (p. 34) describes how Zoe was as anxious as her husband to have a child. Both were past the age for begetting or conceiving a child but Zoe, encouraged by her husband, had recourse to all sorts of charms and other magic to help her conceive. She had been born in 908 and would have been probably forty-eight or forty-nine at the time of her wedding which accounts for Psellus' tone of contempt with which he describes the methods she employed to help her conceive. After a while Romanos abandoned his own magic treatments to aid begetting a child, resigning himself to childlessness and hence paying very little attention to his wife. Not only was she neglected by her husband, but he kept her short of money. The Emperor's sister, Pulcheria, also reinforced her brother's veto on Zoe's spending, fearing perhaps that her openhandedness was encouraging aspirants to the throne (p.35). In fact the Empire became short of money after 1030, partly owing to the rout after the battle of Aleppo where an enormous amount of treasure was captured from the Emperor's tent by the Arabs. A series of plagues of locusts and attacks of bubonic plague reduced the capacity of the Empire to produce large surpluses and probably accounts for Psellus' remark that the Emperor became like a tax gatherer (p.40). Thus the combination of Zoe's generosity and Romanos' loss of treasure may account for the economy measures at that particular time in curtailing Zoe's spending money. However, the risk of adventurers and would-be usurpers being bought with the gullible Zoe's money was cogent reason enough to restrict her.

With the atmosphere between Zoe and Romanos being strained, it was small wonder that Zoe was attracted to Michael, younger brother of John Orphanotrophos. John was a valued member of the inner council advising Romanos and his influence increased considerably during this reign, out of all proportion to his office.[7] Michael was a polite, well-behaved young man, but Psellus (p.47) claims was coached by his brother John to press his advantage with the lonely and susceptible Zoe. Charmed by the attention of a personable young man, the ageing Zoe fell in love with him. They became lovers and Romanos encouraged the liaison, believing that it was better for Zoe to have one recognised lover, an apparently harmless one, than to take a succession of lovers, any one of whom might be more ambitious. Pulcheria, Romanos' sister, disapproved of the affair and Psellus hints that her disapproval led to her early death (p. 47). Cedrenus[8] has nothing good at this stage to say about Michael and says that Zoe was slowly poisoning Romanos and that Michael and his friends were instrumental in drowning Romanos in his bath. Psellus (p.51-52) describes Romanos' suffering and, while carefully refraining from directly accusing them, said that it was generally accepted that Michael and Zoe poisoned Romanos and were then responsible for his drowning.

After Romanos' death Cedrenus[9] says that Zoe demanded that the Patriarch should marry her to Michael and with an enormous bribe or 50 lbs. gold to himself and more to the clergy, persuaded the reluctant Patriarch to perform the ceremony. During the first few months Michael neglected the task of government, devoting all his time to pleasing Zoe with various amusements. However, he soon saw that the business of managing the Empire needed all his concentration. There was no question of Zoe taking any decisions concerning the government, all she had done was to provide the Empire with an Emperor by marrying and crowning Michael.

Michael was an epileptic and it may be that the strain of governing the Empire, even with so astute a counsellor as his brother John, made the incidence of his fits increase. Psellus (p. 62/3) gives this as the reason for his subsequent neglect of Zoe, being ashamed for her to see him in the throes of a fit he kept away from her. Psellus, here, also hints that she may have been intriguing against Michael and on account of this he confined her to the gynacaeum entirely. Cedrenus[10] claims that Michael's fits had become so disabling that the affairs of state were all

in the hands of his brother John Orphanotrophos. Cedrenus is also less circumspect than Psellus and accuses Zoe of conspiring with one of her eunuchs, Sguritza, an expert in medicine, to poison John, not Michael[11]. But Michael, like Romanos before him, had found that Zoe was only interested in the lightest of amusements, had no interest in the affairs of state and was only content if she had his constant companionship. Psellus not only supposes that Michael's fits made him embarrassed in Zoe's presence, but his preoccupation with affairs of state and the monkish counsel he had been given to abstain from any association with Zoe in penance for his part in Romanos' murder and his uncanonical marriage, all combined to distance him from her. He removed her household eunuchs and deprived her of the usual Imperial guard, replacing them with a separately recruited military guard[12], and, of course, the gynacaeum was strictly segregated from the rest of the Great Palace. Psellus (p.62) believes that Zoe cast no reproaches on Michael and adapted to her retired life with calmness and dignity; she was still pathetically fond of him.

Michael had seized the throne in 1034, but by 1040 his epilepsy had grown much worse. The Bulgarians had grown restive and John Orphanotrophos realised that the Emperor might soon be obliged to fight a Bulgarian campaign which would put his health at risk. Therefore, he felt that the succession had to be settled in a way that secured power still in the hands of Michael's family and close advisers. Psellus(p.67) says that John advised Michael that: '...the Empire belongs by inheritance to Zoe and the whole nation owes greater alleigance to her because she is a woman and heir to the throne.'[13] 'Οἶσθα, φησὶν, ὦ βασιλεῦ, ὅτι κατὰ κλῆρον ἡ βασιλεία τῇ βασιλίδι προῆκται, καὶ τὸ σύμπαν εὐνοϊκώτερον πρὸς αὐτὴν ἔσχηκεν, ἅτε γυναῖκα καὶ κληρονόμον τοῦ κράτους, καὶ τῇ ἀφειδείᾳ τῶν δώρων τὰς τῶν πάντων ὑποποιησαμένη ψυχάς.'

He suggested to Michael that he should persuade Zoe to adopt their nephew, also called Michael, child of their sister Sophia. The young Michael's father had, it was rumoured, been a ships' caulker, though he had gained some rapid and ill-merited promotion to admiral in Sicily after Michael IV's accession to the throne. Zoe was won over to the idea of becoming Empress-mother to young Michael: the future Michael V was adopted and created Caesar.

Psellus was at court by this time and much of his recording is from his own observation; he was a thorough-going snob, both social and intellectual, and had little time for the future Michael V; he was able to observe at close quarters the intrigues and dissimulations of the court and wrote about them only twenty years later. His account (pp.69-70) of the young Michael's ancestry is acidly sarcastic. His estimate of the Caesar's behaviour in the interval before he became Emperor was damning both of Michael, who became known as Calaphates from his father's erswhile caulking occupation, and of John Orphanotrophos, whom Psellus disliked intensely. Psellus' estimate of Michael IV and his brother John was the hostile reaction of an aristocrat of the highest intellectual ability for an upstart parvenu who had the foresight to see that the Empire needed a strong ruler who could hold in check the ambitions of the great families from their vast estates with retainers who could form armies. Though Michael IV and his brother John were unpopular with the dilettante courtiers who had clustered round Constantine VIII and Romanos, Zoe's first husband, there was enough support for the brothers for the damage caused by the extravagance of the previous reigns to be repaired. Zoe's impossible profligacy with money and slender grasp of State affairs were a hindrance to the brothers' efforts at forming a sound base for power. Had she been of greater intellect, she could have been a positive source of help. Her court for the ladies of the 'new men' might have been of considerable prestige and value, but both Psellus and Cedrenus hint that she was a prey for the intriguers who were hostile to Michael, perhaps members of the previous regimes. It was, no doubt, not only John Orphanotrophos who saw that Zoe had made friends by her openhandedness and that she represented the legitimate power of the Macedonians, so successfully established by Basil I and enhanced by Basil II.

Although the young Caesar, Michael, began well by expressing his gratitude and devotion to his adoptive mother, her retirement from affairs, still enforced by her husband, made the possibility of any relationship establishing itself securely between Zoe and the young Michael quite remote. She had served her turn and now the succession was achieved, her presence was superfluous. Psellus claims (p.82-3) that the Emperor took no notice of the Caesar and made no effort to train him in the affairs of State. No mention is made of the Caesar taking part in the Bulgarian campaign of 1040-1, though he may have done.

Michael IV died in December 1041, having abandoned the throne, entering the monastery which he had built, dedicated to the Saints Cosmas and Damien, usually known as the Anargyroi. Psellus says(p.84) that Zoe only heard of his tonsure from someone else, the Emperor having either forgotten her or had not wished to upset her by telling her of his intention to become a monk. Once she heard, she immediately left the gynacaeum and tried to see him, not stopping for a carriage in her anxiety to reach her husband, but going on foot. Michael refused to see her so she was obliged to return to the palace.

Though the Emperor had appointed his nephew Michael Caesar, he had not crowned him co-Emperor. Michael IV died almost immediately after he had entered the monastery, leaving Zoe, the Empress, as ruler. Three days passed before any decisive step was taken. John Orphanotrophos negotiated with Zoe an arrangement that her adopted son should be a kind of puppet emperor, at her command in any way, only emperor in name, ready to carry out all her wishes (Psellus pp. 87-8). Zoe readily agreed to this arrangement and attended the ceremony of Michael V's inauguration and crowning. Again it was her residuary power that conferred the diadem of the ruler on Michael's head.

John Orphanotrophos was exiled either by Zoe before Michael's crowning, according to Cedrenus[14] or by Michael after he became Emperor, according to Psellus (p. 90) and a new regime was inaugurated with George Maniakes and Constantine Dalassenos both acting as principal advisers and governors of the Paphlagonian and Opsikian themes respectively. It is evident that Michael was intending to reform the government with men of talent, rather than with his relations, some of whom had proved themselves incompetent, though his uncle John had proved himself an invaluable adviser but probably far too powerful for his nephew to deal with in the future. As part of the clean sweep, Michael intended to neutralise any power that lay with his 'mother', Zoe. It had, of course, been made abundantly clear to all that the real power lay with the Augusta. She had raised Michael IV to the throne and it was only with her active participation that Michael V could be crowned, this she did by witnessing his crowning, a public act of approbation. If Zoe had created a succession of three men to be emperor by marriage or by adoption, each time specifically nominating him as emperor, then she could be persuaded to nominate another.

Michael V must have seen how easily persuaded and flattered into a course of action she could be and, with an intention of reforming the government he must have seen how vulnerable he was to objections from the dispossessed and what an easy avenue to power his 'mother' was for these dissidents.

Zoe was unceremoniously sent off to a convent on the island of Prinkipo and tonsured. Michael addressed a crowd in the Forum to the effect that she was malignantly plotting against him with the aid of Alexios, the Patriarch. Psellus (p. 94)rather lets himself go with a pathetic account of Zoe's arrest and exile, insisting that she had been wrongly accused. He gives an eye witness account from one of her escort of the journey to Prinkipo including Zoe's complaints, he calls it a kind of dirge. The announcement in Constantine the Great's Forum did not have the effect intended. Instead of the traditional 'Long Life to the Emperor' the crowd objected to his action with considerable indignation.[15] The three historians give similar accounts of the events, but Psellus' version is more drawn out and personally observed and seems to be the most likely to be accurate. He says (p.102) that he himself saw women in public shouting and beating their breasts like Maenads, forming their own individual bands of protestors. The crowd were armed with swords, bows and arrows and spears, though the majority were armed only with stones. Psellus was in the Palace dictating some despatches, but left this and rode through the City to gauge the extent of the riot. Very many were killed, perhaps three thousand, and the Palace itself was invaded and some buildings destroyed. Constantine Cabasilas, probably inspired by the Patriarch Alexios, had the idea of bringing Theodora from the convent of Petrion into the palace to reassure the mob that one of the royal sisters was still there. She appeared on the balcony of the Kathisma but still the mob insisted on Zoe's restoration. Psellus (p.103) says that few knew Theodora as she had been a virtual prisoner for at least ten years. However, Theodora was taken into the Palace, clothed in royal purple over her nun's habit, put on a horse, protesting all the time, and taken to Hagia Sophia. This had the effect of persuading the Senate and most of the mob that the royal house was still demonstrably present and could be in control of the Empire. Meanwhile messengers had set sail for Prinkipo in order to bring Zoe back. At the same time, Michael realised that he had little chance of carrying his influence against both sisters as well as the anger of the mob, so set sail for

the monastery of St. John Studion, the City was in too great a state of disruption for the journey to be made safely through the streets. He and his uncle John Orphanotrophos, who had come to his nephew's rescue from his place of retirement, took refuge in the monastery hoping to be allowed to escape into exile. They were surrounded by a hostile mob, even as far as the doors of the church where they had sought sanctuary. Michael Psellus and the City Prefect, Campanares, were sent by the two sisters to escort Michael and John elsewhere, presumably to the Palace (pp. 106-115). The mob was all for killing them without mercy, Zoe was in favour of forgiving them both, but Theodora, made of sterner stuff and realising the danger of appearing weak at this moment, ordered that the fugitives' eyes should be put out. After considerable trouble with the crowd, it was done in the street by one of the guard escorting Psellus and the City Prefect[16].

Thus Zoe and her younger sister Theodora assumed joint power with no male at hand with whom to share the throne. This state of affairs lasted from April to June 1052. Some of the courtiers and officials who had been dismissed by Michael V and some of those dismissed earlier by his uncle Michael IV were restored to the court and through them, most with considerable experience of administration, the State was governed. The sisters took their places daily on thrones, Psellus (pp. 117-118) says that Theodora sat slightly behind Zoe, both heard petitions, received ambassadors and generally dealt with the business of the State publicly, but from the gynacaeum.

Zoe was not content with this arrangement and considered marrying for a third time. Both Psellus (p.126) and Cedrenus agree that Zoe cast about her for a suitable husband and emperor, considering several candidates. Each sister was jealous of the other and Zoe, feeling she was the senior ruler, needed to be seen to be the most important. This could only be secured if she married again. One possible partner she considered was Constantine the Catepan, surnamed Argoklines, but he died according to Cedrenus[17] at the hand of his wife; she would rather be a widow than forced into a convent and divorced. Zoe's next choice was Constantine Monomachos. He had been exiled to Mitylene by Michael IV but recalled by the sisters and sent off to govern Greece.

Zoe had known Constantine when he was a young man at the court of

her first husband Romanos. Constantine had then been married to the daughter of Romanos' sister Pulcheria, but became a widower quite soon. Psellus (p.125) implies that there had been the makings of a scandal between Zoe and Constantine in the days of her marriage with Romanos, continuing into the early days of her marriage to Michael IV. Zoe consulted her court circle about her plans and then announced to the Senate that she would marry Constantine. Cedrenus[18] only records that Stephen Pergamenos, one of the household eunuchs, was sent to bring Constantine from his new post in Greece to Constantinople, he makes no other comment.

The problem of the third marriage had to be overcome. Zoe's previous marriage was blessed by the Patriarch only after a large present of gold. There was no question of Patriarch Alexios being won over by this means for such an uncanonical affair. Moreover, this was also Constantine's third marriage. He had been a widower when he married Pulcheria's daughter and was a widower once more. He had been consoling himself with a mistress, a niece of his late wife, and had shared exile with her. However, a presbyter called Stypes performed the ceremony, probably in the New Church built by Basil I, on 11th June and the Patriarch afterwards performed the crowning, but Cedrenus says: ' Στέφεται δὲ τῇ ἐπαύριον παρὰ τοῦ πατριάρχου ...[19]' which surely indicates this was a marriage crowning not the giving of the diadem of royal power.

The situation was now somewhat complicated in that Theodora had no intention of returning to her convent again, Zoe had no intention of allowing anyone but her husband to exercise power, so the throne was in effect shared by all three. Robin Cormack[20] includes a photograph of a manuscript of 45 Sermons of St. John Chrysostom, now in St. Catharine monastery, Sinai, showing Zoe, Constantine and Theodora all in a line, with their heads and crowns at an equal height. The only distinction is in the design of the crowns, Constantine's is much more elaborate and the two Empresses have the traditional female shaped crowns. It is worth mentioning too, that the well-known 'Monomachos' crown in Hungary with the enamel panels portrays not only Constantine, but also Zoe and Theodora, each in their own panels, together with dancing figures and the personifications of Humility (ταπείνωσις) and Truth (ἀλήθεια). (sic.)

Constantine had no intention of being deprived of his constant companion, Sclerina with whom he had shared his exile, so he insisted that she should return from Mitylene and join them at Court. In fact, a house was made available to her within the City but not within the precincts of the Great Palace. On her account in 1044, the royal procession in honour of the Feast of the Forty Martyrs was dispersed in disorder. She had accompanied the Emperor and the two Augustae in the procession and the crown protested at the insult of the royal concubine walking beside the royal sisters. Cedrenus[21] devotes a long paragraph to the affair, not reported by Psellus, and says that the Augustae were obliged to placate the crowd themselves: ''Ημεῖς τῆν Σκλήραιναν βασιλίσσαν οὐ θέλομεν οὐδὲ δι'αὐτὴν αἱ μάνναι ἡμῶν αἱ πορφυρογέννιτοι Ζωή τε καὶ Θεοδώρα θανοῦται'.

However, Psellus claims that Zoe was not in the least jealous of Sclerina, even agreeing to her eventually living in the Palace, being called Empress and she even created Sclerina Augusta(p.150).

During Zoe's remaining lifetime, she died in 1050 at the age of seventy-two, she took almost no part in State affairs. She had become excessively religious. Psellus says (Vol. II. p.48) that'her passionate veneration for the things of God had really brought her into contact, so to speak, with the First and Purest Light. Certainly there was no moment when the Name of God was not on her lips'[22]. She had never cared for the traditional occupations of women, spinning or weaving or embroidery, but had in her later years spent much time and energy in inventing and improving perfumes. Psellus' description of Zoe's part of the Palace sounds like a kind of cosmetic factory (p.148). Cedrenus does not mention Zoe further in his history after the account of the marriage with Constantine, until the death of Constantine when he records the sole rule of Theodora, adding that Zoe had already died '(ἡ Ζωὴ γὰρ ἤδη προκατέστρεψε τὴν ζωὴν)'[23]. During the entire account of events in Constantine's reign Cedrenus never mentions either sister, nor does he speak of the Emperor other than in the singular. Psellus (p. 49) all through his account of the four Emperors who were associated with Zoe, comments on her generosity which amounted to profligacy in some cases. He felt that she squandered money though never on herself, but on rewarding any supplicant. He also comments that she could be unexpectedly

harsh, emulating her father who would order blindings indiscriminately without just cause. Psellus comments that had the Emperor not restrained her, many people would have been blinded for no proper reason. At her death she ordered an amnesty for criminals, remitted debts which she must have paid, as Psellus describes the gold that flowed from the Treasury in an uncontrolled flood.(p.50).

Her sister, Theodora, outlived her by six years. As already noticed, during the violence of Michael's deposition, she was firmer than her sister. All the sources agree that it was she who ordered Michael and his uncle to be arrested and to suffer their eyes being put out. Although Psellus does not mention it, both Cedrenus and Attaliotes believe that the Patriarch Alexios was responsible for fetching Theodora from the convent of Petrion to take on the role of ruling Empress while Zoe was too far away on the island of Prinkipo. Perhaps because she was now the only royal nun, Eudokia had died previously, the Patriarch was in touch with her regularly.

During their joint reign of three months, although she was the junior Empress, Psellus seems to indicate that Theodora was the more steady character, more controlled and discreet. Whereas Zoe was open-handed and squandered money recklessly, Theodora was far more circumspect. However, neither sister was fitted to govern either by experience or temperament. It may well be that Theodora wished to exercise power early in Zoe's first marriage as she was accused on plotting against the Emperor, as noticed above. On the other hand, it seems more likely that she was more concerned to dethrone Romanos than to put herself forward as a possible ruler. She had been her father's first choice as a bride for Romanos, but her objection inferred by Cedrenus was to the man, not to the prospect of marriage. From the stray references to her during the reign of Constantine Monomachos, it could be inferred that Theodora was somewhat straight-laced and not inclined to look favourably on any departure from strict morality. She disapproved of both Constantine's mistresses, though this might have been on account of their favourable position at court, possibly at her expense.

On Constantine's death in 1055, Theodora succeeded without any objections and support from powerful quarters at Court. Cedrenus[24]

records that Constantine had decided on his deathbed that Nikephoros Protenon, governor of Bulgaria should succeed him, which plan had been agreed by John the Logothete of the Course, Constantine Protonarius of the Drome, and Basileos the Kanikleon. However, others supported Theodora and without difficulty she took power. Nikephoros Protenon was arrested before he could get to Constantinople. She, therefore, had to replace the senior officials who had supported Constantine's nominee and rewarded her own supporters, but in such a way that no one man had too great an area of power. Psellus claims for himself, that though he had retired from the world and become a monk, Theodora frequently sent for him and sought his advice (p.78). He commented on the impropriety of a woman ruling the Empire: 'Everyone was agreed that for the Roman Empire to be governed by a woman instead of a man was improper and even if the people did not think so it certainly seemed that they did'[25]. However, he felt that the Empire was strong enough to withstand the weakness of petticoat rule.

Even so, Michael Cerularios, the new Patriarch, never entirely sure of his own safety in Constantine's reign, was hoping to dislodge Theodora and she would no doubt have deposed him, just as Constantine had been intending to do. Psellus' allusive description of relations between Theodora and Michael Cerularios gives in a very few words a summary of the breach that had grown between the Throne and the Orthodox Church. By the time Theodora was sole ruler Michael Cerularios' row with the Papacy, and in particular, the legates sent to Constantinople by Pope Leo, had achieved its absurd and, from all points of view, illegal conclusion. The legates had no standing as the Pope had died before they reached the City and they could not represent a dead Pope. Also they had not transmitted the Pope's true message, but had tampered with the letters. Constantine had rightly seen that papal friendliness was essential in Italy and Michael Cerularios' intransigence had put paid to Constantine's friendly overtures. The whole situation had been finally wrecked by the papal legate, Cardinal Humbert's designs. Theodora inherited Michael as Patriarch, along with sentiment in the City against the Latins, whipped up by him. However, Theodora was the direct heir to the throne as Constantine had not been, her popularity as one of the City's 'mamas'[26] was far greater with the common people than had been enjoyed by the ailing Constantine during the Patriarchal-

Papal quarrel. She was, therefore, in a position to tell Michael to keep strictly to church affairs and not rock the diplomatic boat.

Psellus' paragraph (p.80) starts off by calling Michael the Oecumenical Patriarch, adding that it was the customary title of the Patriarch of Constantinople. This is a personal declaration of faith by Psellus in Michael, Orthodoxy and the rights of the Eastern Church in defiance of the objections of the Pope to the title Oecumenical held by all Patriarchs of Constantinople. Psellus goes on 'Michael was the successor of the divine Alexios on the Holy Throne'. Behind this remark, innocent enough when taken out of context, but reminding contemporaries in the context of the relationship existing between Theodora and the Patriarch, that Alexios had been instrumental in restoring Theodora to the scene of power. He then goes on to remark that Theodora had been 'most friendly to him in the time before she became Empress and had treated him with marked respect, once she was firmly established in power, she abominated the man, refusing even to meet him'[27]. Michael Cerularios had favoured the installation of Nikephoros Protenon as Emperor in succession to Constantine, not Theodora. The Patriarch had had reason to support Constantine after the papal documents had been publicly burned and no doubt hoped to strengthen his own position by supporting the Emperor-designate, whom he would have to crown if Constantine did not live long enough to do it himself. The Patriarch could insist on a declaration of faith by the new Emperor before he would crown him, thus ensuring that none of the Pope's demands were satisfied. By supporting Nikephoros, the Patriarch had placed himself in a hostile position to the inheritor of supreme power in the Empire, Theodora. Psellus explains this as 'the Patriarch was vexed because the Roman Empire was being governed by a woman. Characteristically he was filled with wrath at this state of affairs, and he spoke his mind freely'[28]. One can understand this comment as the Patriarch's intemperate accusations against the Latins and his demand that the Latin churches in the City must use the Orthodox creed or be closed, carried out with undue haste and roughness, gave him a well-deserved reputation for wrath and speaking the mind freely. Finally, Psellus comments that it was not improbable that Theodora would have deposed Michael had she lived longer. One might have thought that eighteen months was sufficient for such a course of action, but Michael was popular in certain sections of the City and Theodora may have seen

that she needed further time to consolidate support among the higher clergy before she could achieve this. Psellus could hardly have been expected to agree to this course of action and by his own admission objected to Theodora's choice of new bishops claiming that the appointments were uncanonical - that hoary old Byzantine excuse for inconvenient appointments. These appointments had been made from among what were popularly referred to as 'fighting monks' - Naziraen monks, not necessarily a good choice in any circumstances (p.80). Theodora's position with regard to the Patriarch was further strengthened on receipt of a polite letter from the new Pope Victor III[29] who only complains about the payment of tolls in Constantinople paid by pilgrims on their way to the Holy Sepulchre. He refers to '...semper in bono memores tui et tuae venerabilis genealogiae ...' which no doubt pleased her and might well have irritated Michael by reminding him that Theodora's claim to the throne was incontrovertible.

Theodora had been in excellent health throughout her life and she had no reason to believe that she had anything but a long life ahead of her; she had been at least seventy-four years old on her accession and must have assumed that she could last several more years. She was diffident at first of her own abilities to rule and was not unnaturally showered with advice on all sides. Enjoying the sunshine of power without responsibility Theodora's advisers made no effort to persuade her to consider the subject of the succession. However, she suddenly became ill with a disease of the bowel and a nervous Senate persuaded her to nominate an uncontroversial successor, a native of Constantinople whom everyone knew, Michael Stratioticos. All the sources are quite uncomplimentary about him calling him variously simple, innocuous, an unpopular stop-gap, inane and arrogant; the charisma of the Macedonian dynasty was not at his command and there was no question of Theodora marrying him and thus adopting him into the dynasty.

The intrusion, if one may use that word, into the rulers of the Byzantine Empire of these two extraordinary women is a phenomenon that illustrates both the elasticity and the conservatism of the constitution. The Macedonian dynasty started off with the murder of the Emperor Michael III by his protegé Basil. Yet with such a start it had been notably successful. Basil I lived down the murder to become an outstandingly

brilliant ruler, both militarily and as a patron of the arts; the parallel with Augustus' success in all directions after the murder of his uncle Julius Caesar cannot be escaped. After a period of great disturbance, Basil I inherited an Empire ready for the efflorescence of artistic endeavour that the restoration of Orthodoxy and the veneration of ikons provided. Though Michael III had started church building and decoration, it was under Basil I that the programme really took off. At the same time Basil's military successes were considerable and underpinned the regime so that the prestige of the Emperor could be accepted in the exuberance of the new building and decoration. Basil's supposed son, Leo VI, though he was unpopular with his father, was much loved by his people. He was successful partly militarily and partly through diplomacy in defending his father's extended borders and this gave his long reign the necessary credence for his own programme of enhancing the Emperor's prestige. He too embarked on a building programme emphasising the sacred relationship between ruler and the Heavenly kingdom. An account of one surviving church where this is apparent is given by Dorothy Wood in her booklet 'Leo VI's Concept of Divine Monarchy'[30] where she describes the arrangement of the court as paralleling the Heavenly Hierarchy. Leo's concern to establish the succession legitimately was coloured by the necessity to be independent of the will of the church. Once he agreed to his bastard son, Constantine, being allowed to rule by grace of the Patriarch's indulgence the battle, waged since Constantine the Great between Church and State, was lost. Leo won. That doughty fighter Zoe, Leo's fourth and uncanonical wife, consolidated his work to establish the dynasty but at the cost of her own popularity and freedom, but her struggle to see that Constantine would inherit the throne safely was successful. Neither Alexander nor Romanos Lekapenos dared to risk incapacitating Constantine, public sentiment would not allow it.

His grandchildren, Basil II and Constantine VIII were saved for the succession by the determination of their mother Theophano who, like Zoe paid dearly for her sons' future. In that family dynastic marriages secured, at least temporarily, the friendliness of the Germans and the Russians, through the princess Theophano being married to Otto II and the princess Anna married, though reluctantly, to Vladimir of Kiev. Once Basil II had come to the throne, succeeding John Tzimisces, the fortunes of the Empire were enormously enhanced. Basil became known as

the Bulgar slayer and his reputation, both in the field and in recovering Italian lands as well as the islands enhanced the dynasty still further. Even though Constantine VIII was a lazy and feeble ruler, the lustre shed by his oder brother still covered his ineptitudes and by now the magic of the Macedonian dynasty, coupled with a full treasury, was firmly in poeple's minds.

Nevertheless, considered coldly a thousand years later, the prospect of the aged spinsters flouting all kinds of rules and customs simply to keep the family as titular head of a huge empire is utterly astonishing. First Romanos Argyros divorced his wife and shut her up in a nunnery. We have already seen that Constantine VI had done the same thing while he was already on the throne, the fourth in direct succession in his dynasty but still shocked church and people to an extent that it contributed to his dethronement. John Tzimisces was not allowed tomarry the Augusta Theophano, widow of his immediate successor. How was it that Constantine VIII, together with Romanos, achieved this marriage for the middle-aged Zoe?

There seems a very strong implication that Zoe and her lover Michael were implicated in the death of Romanos. How was it that this couple not only could marry, but that Michael was accepted as the next Emperor? No doubt the powerful Orphanotrophos used his influence and Zoe's openhandedness, once she was allowed access to the treasury again may have helped. Nevertheless, the scandal must have been considerable.

The adoption of Michael's nephew, the second Michael, by Zoe was constitutionally correct and looked back to respectable Roman practice, starting with Julius Caesar's adoption of Augustus; Diocletian extended the idea of adoption of the best man in the circumstances, but rejected the idea of preserving any dynasty. Michael V acted as previous sons had done with their mothers in this study, he put her in a convent. She was a woman who was by then an elderly lady who had no wish whatever to exercise power personally, yet there was an outcry so severe that it led to a riot, fomented by the women crying that they wanted their 'mamas', resulting in three thousand deaths. Yet the previous retirements of Empresses - Euphrosyne and Theodora - had not resulted in such upheavals.

Once this crisis was overcome by the expedient of extricating Theodora from her ten year long obscurity in her convent, the two sisters ruled jointly, although only for three months. The historians agree that they were quite unfitted by lack of experience and intellectual ability to rule, yet rule they did.

Even after this absurdity, Byzantine society accepted two more floutings of convention. Zoe married for a third time, this time to a twice married widower. This time, the Patriarch demurred but allowed one of his clergy to perform the actual ceremony. Leo VI had been obliged to seek special dispensation for his third marriage and that was in order to beget a legitimate heir. Zoe had no prospect of conceiving an heir to the throne and even though Constantine had every intention of making each of his mistresses eventual Empress, he scrupled to depose Zoe or Theodora. Even when Zoe died, mourned bitterly by Constantine according to Psellus, he did not dislodge Theodora altogether; she lived in some obscurity, but still in the Palace, taking no positive part in the business of ruling. Though Constantine named his successor, still the sentiment attached to the house of Macedon won the day and Theodora in her seventies ruled alone.

It can be said that the sisters provided a convenient figurehead for those who exercised power. Undoubtedly, they provided an avenue for ambitious men who wished to exercise power and each of the sisters seemed to be amenable to flattery. Both had access to the Treasury at crucial stages in their careers so could buy support. Zoe was known as a generous openhanded woman and though Theodora was parsimonious, yet she had the keys of the Treasury during her sole rule and no doubt her supporters assumed she would reward them suitably.

However, hoped-for reward, power without responsibility or rule by an oligarchic Senate was surely not enough to account for these two old ladies appearing and re-appearing on the Byzantine throne. Sheer sentimental attachment to a one-time successful dynasty can only be part of the explanation. To have been born in the purple chamber carried special connotations in the minds of the common people. The special relationship existing between the royal family and the Heavenly Family, however little the earthly family might resemble their sacred counterparts,

was acknowledged throughout the Empire. The Hand of God had touched the Emperor and that Divinely given power was thought to have been transmitted to his own flesh and blood - those born in the purple chamber. For the symbol conscious and deeply religious Byzantines that fact was enough.

NOTES TO ZOE AND THEODORA

1. J.B. Bury 'Michael Psellus *Chronographia*' *E.H.R.* IV (1889) p. 43ff. Charles Diehl writes in his Preface to the Budé edition of Psellus '...Zoé...qui pendant vingt-cinq ans, avec ses trois maris successifs, gouverna l'empire et amusa Constantinople de l'éclat de ses aventures à peine soupçonnions-nous la pittoresque et assez scandaleuse existence.'

2. Michael Psellus *Chronographie* ed. and trans E. Renauld Vols. I and II Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres (Paris 1926-8). References to page numbers of Psellus will be given in the text. Cedrenus in this section is quoted from the edition of Migne *P.G.* 122. Michael Attaliates has been used as a cross check but has so little independent matter that he has not been quoted.

3. Cedrenus coll. 217 says that her objection was to Romanos, not necessarily to marriage itself.

4. Vol. I. P. 30. 13-15.

5. coll.217

6. coll 220

7. He was responsible for the 'social services' in the City.

8. coll. 237

9. ibid.

10. coll. 244

11. coll. 252

12. This was probably the Varangian guard. *Sagas of the Norse Kings* trans. Samuel Laing, revised Peter Foote (London 1961) p. 170 tells of how the Empress Zoe wanted Harald Hardrade as a husband. A later incident claims he put out the eyes of the Emperor.

13. E.R.A. Sewter's translation in the Penguin edition, p.100. Renauld's translation in the Budé runs: 'Tu sais, dit il, empereur, que l' empire appartient par la voie d'héritage a l'impératrice, et tout le monde lui est plus favourable en tant que femme et héritière du pouvoir, elle qui, par la prodigalité de ses largesses, a capté les âmes du peuple entier...' p. 67.

14. coll. 268

15. coll. 269. '...'Ημεῖς σταυροπάτην καλαφάτην βασιλέα οὐ θέλομεν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀρχέγονον καὶ κληρονόμον καὶ ἡμετέραν μητέρα Ζωήν.'

16. see note 12. Harald says he took out the eyes of the Greek Emperor (Chapter XIV). He may have been part of the royal guard sent by the sisters to escort Psellus and the City Prefect.

17. coll. 273

18. coll. 276

19. ibid.

20. *Writing in Gold. Byzantine Society and its Ikons* (London 1985) p.191

21. coll 288

22. Sewter's translation p. 187

23. coll. 341

24. colls. 340-341

25. Sewter p. 262

26. Each time the crowd are concerned with either Empress they refer to them as their mothers or even use the diminutive. In Theodora's case she may have seen this as demonstrating her symbolic association with the Virgin. One of her coins has the Virgin on the obverse, see Wroth p. 506, Type 2 and Plate LX no. 5.

27. Sewter p. 269

28. ibid.

29. M. *P.L.* 149. colls. 961-2

30. Published by the Monarchist Press Association, London 1964. Miss Wood examines the paintings of a cave chapel at Korama, the 'Old Tokali' or Court Chapel dating from the years 917-919. She suggests that the chapel is arranged like the throne room of the Great Palace and that the progress of Christ's Incarnation, shown on the upper level is paralleled by the court procedures.

CONCLUSION

The same conception of power invested in a strong dynasty that led Augustus to assimilate Livia into his family is still seen in the accounts of women actually exercising that power set out in this thesis. Augustus had founded a successful dynasty, he had been made divine and in his divine status he had raised Livia to share his status by creating her Augusta. The office of ruler in Byzantium was divine, the holder being specially blessed by the Hand of God, and through the Roman constitution, or more correctly the *mos maiorum*, the ruler handed on his *basilea* to his successors. Just as Augustus had raised Livia to share his divine status so could the Byzantine rulers share their divine status with the female part of their family.

It was Augustus' vision of the virtue of the family that persisted into Byzantine times - a close-knit unit, however far its ramifications spread. The strength that comes from such a unit was underpinned in Byzantine times by the Christian model of the Holy Family. This model also gave a new look to women's status. After the Council of Ephesus the Virgin was called the Mother of God so the old accusation that Eve caused man's downfall had no further force - through woman came man's regeneration.[1]

In all the examples in this thesis, in one way or another, we have seen that the women who exercised personal power were specifically guardians of a successful dynasty. Moreover, each dynasty had been founded by successful warriors. Indeed, if the examples cited in this thesis had started with Constantine I, the same considerations would still apply, and seen in the Theodosian dynasty to a marked degree as Holum has demonstrated.[2]

To consider the women cited in this thesis, Eirene was the guardian of the Isaurian dynasty: Leo III had founded it as the strong man, with military successes behind him, with the consent of the previous Emperor, Anastasios. He extended and consolidated the boundaries of the Empire. His son, Constantine V carried on his work, enhancing the image of the dynasty. His concern that his eldest son should inherit the throne was demonstrated in the care with which he saw his son Leo married; Eirene

as crowned as Augusta before she was married to Leo. Constantine had assimilated Eirene into his family, making her as near equal to his son as her status as a woman could allow. Eirene's position was, thus, unique. She was an Augusta in her own right through Constantine's action, she was the wife of the reigning monarch and she became the mother of the next Emperor. In a sense she was the direct descendant of Constantine V just as much as her husband or son. She was part of the dynasty and guardian of the future dynasty.

Euphrosyne's position was a little different in that Michael II was the founder of the Amorian dynasty; he had no successful warrior-emperors in his own family. However, by marrying Euphrosyne and creating her Augusta he allied himself with the Isaurian dynasty and his successful military campaigns, combined with his somewhat ambivalent attitude towards iconoclasm, invited parallels with the Isaurians. Euphrosyne could thus be accepted as co-ruler with Michael's son. By the time Michael died and Theophilos succeeded, Eyphrosyne was in the position of guardian of the Amorian dynasty which had proved successful so far.

Theophilos' scruples about the method of his father's rise to power, coupled with what may presumed to be doubts as to Theodora's abilities, led him to create a regency council for his baby son. As Michael was only three when Theophilos died, he may have had doubts about Theodora's ability to remain in power long enough to see their son safely to sole power. With Theoktistos as chief adviser, known to be a loyal servant of the Amorian dynasty, and experienced enough to carry weight with the other members of the regency council, including Theodora, the effectiveness of the Augusta's power as guardian for her son was assured.

It was Michael's efforts to continue the Amorian dynasty that led to his own murder and the establishment of the Macedonians. In order to raise Eudokia to royal status she had to be married to an emperor. It is evident that Michael saw Basil as expendable; he remarked that he could just as well raise his friend Basilikos to Imperial status, which prompted Eudokia to remonstrate[3] that he should not joke about such important things. Basil realised that Michael was right, so murdered his way to the throne by first killing the Caesar, Michael's uncle Bardas,

and then by murdering Michael.

Basil's reign, started with such ruthlessness, was consolidated by brilliant military successes, coupled with the inauguration of a public building and artistic programme that added lustre to the reign. By the time his son Leo came to sole power, the dynasty was established, but Leo VI was taking no chances; his panegyric for his father reinforced the image of a successful and pious ruler. His own reign of twenty-five years, with important successes, won through the ability of the military men who served him, was enhanced further by the continued church building and decoration programme started by his father. Leo's contrivances and negotiations over the succession shows the strength of feeling towards the dynasty that had already grown up. By the end of his reign, forty-five years had elapsed since 867, when Basil took the throne. Had the citizens of the Empire not felt that the Macedonians were good rulers, Leo's efforts to see that his son was legitimate and could succeed as ruler might have been unacceptable. Leo had fallen far short of the ideal of Christian marriage, but he had at last produced an heir. His will, naming his brother Alexander as not only the next Emperor, but also the guardian of his son was an astute document. The dynasty was preserved through his brother. His son was the hope for its continuation. Zoe, like Eudokia, was at that moment expendable and Leo could die forgiven by the church, leaving no slur on his son.[4]

Leo had succeeded in preserving the Macedonian dynasty for his son. Alexander did not dare put Constantine out of the way as sentiment for the grandson of the founder of the dynasty was too great. He could only follow his brother's example and nominate a regency council, leaving out Zoe, but including the Patriarch and, most interestingly, the Magister Stephen, son of Kalomaria, who was a sister of the Empress Theodora. By doing so Alexander might perhaps have been deliberately side-stepping his own dynasty and introducing the possibility of Stephen ruling instead of the delicate Constantine.

Zoe had broken all the rules so far and had nothing to lose. She was the rightful legal guardian of her son, he was the heir to a successful dynasty and he wanted his mother. Leo had seen that to allow the church to dominate would spell the end of the power of the Emperor.

Zoe saw even more clearly that the church was now much closer to absolute power than at the end of Leo's reign. She had to succeed. In the minds of the people it is possible that her spell in the monastery had expiated her 'crime' of being a fourth wife and, therefore, made her acceptable in her own right. She was also a mother of a young child. That child was the sole ruler blessed by the Hand of God, the heir to a popular and successful dynasty. Zoe had been created Augusta by Leo and was, therefore, part of the Macedonian family. Constitutionally and psychologically Zoe was the right regent for Constantine. Nicholas Mysticus' devotion to the rights of the Macedonians was ambivalent, but he had had the people's affection for the dynasty and the small person of the Emperor demonstrated to him, it was plainly to his advantage to support Zoe and Constantine while there remained a chance of their success. His own power might be far more curtailed if a strong, adult man ruled instead of mother and son. It was Nicholas who worked with Zoe as well as he could, not the other way round.

In the case of Theophano, we are back with the straightforward situation of a mother, an Augusta, guarding the throne for the infant heirs. Where Pulcheria had taken the vow of virginity to protect her young brother Theodosios II's rights to the throne, Theophano chose a parallel way of ensuring no other heir should lay claim to her sons' rights; she married an old man who could be relied upon to be away campaigning for the greater part of the year. Her femininity was her undoing. Her natural preference for a young, vigorous and successful general led both her and her lover, John Tzimisces to overestimate the power of the Augusta to make and unmake Emperors. Had she had a more compliant Patriarch, she might have succeeded. Perhaps the time between Leo's successive marriages and her own contemplated third marriage - only fifty years - was too short and memories of Leo's scandal long enough to point out the difference; Theophano already had two sons, the succession was in no danger.

The last of the Macedonians, Zoe and Theodora, both created Augusta by the vastly successful Basil II, their uncle, expanded constitutional practice merely by means of the sentiment that the population had for the dynasty, and their affection for the actual persons of these elderly ladies. Nevertheless, it was seen clearly that the power of the Macedonian family lay in their hands, only they could pass on their mystic relationship

with the Heavenly Family. It is interesting to note that the crowning of Michael V by the Patriarch was witnessed by Zoe, then the Empress-mother, as though she had delegated her role to the Patriarch for the actual physical act of crowning but not her rights. After Constantine IX's death, the old rule still applied, Theodora could not be supplanted, she was the Augusta, she was the last representative of the dynasty and was already 'ruling' in that she had appeared with Constantine on State occasions. The dynastic, family, rule lasted until her death. She nominated her successor, understandably a nonentity who could provide a kind of interregnum while the various forces in the Empire regrouped themselves. Later dynasties had their fair share of women who exerted all the power that their predecessors had demonstrated could be exercised by women.

With regard to the problem of whether female rule was recognisably feminine as seen in the reigns of the Empresses in this study, a prior problem of what is in fact 'feminine' needs to be discussed briefly. Over the last twenty years or so, our perception of the role of women in the world has changed and enlarged. Although Mary Woolstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* appeared in 1792, serious consideration has only been given to women's rights comparatively recently. The discussion about women's proper place in society is still continuing and the strident and sometimes outrageous arguments of the 1960's have given place to a less aggressive approach. These arguments and 'new' perceptions have naturally coloured the approach taken in this thesis. That the study was worth making at all was in some part due to the increased awareness of the expanding role that women play in society.[5] For us now the question 'what is feminine' has no easy answer.

For the writer, the essential feminine is expressed in women's unique attitude to children and family. The immediate, fierce and passionate attachment a female feels for the infant, defenceless young of her species is by no means confined to lower animals. It is especially marked in humans. There are, of course, some rare, psychologically damaged women whose emotions are so blunted that they do not react precisely in this way. The single-minded ruthlessness with which women will protect their babies has no parallel in the male. Fathers will now pay much more attention to their infant children and, when occasion demands, will act as the nurturer, but the same quality of passionate

attachment is not seen. Male and female attitudes towards the family and its antecedents are different. For a woman who had been adopted into a new household in infancy to say about her own children 'I need to make sure of their future, the family starts with me'[6] is, perhaps an extreme reflection of the attitude that the past is contained within her, but only the future has reality. This is a quintessentially feminine view of the family, finding no parallel in a male view which is obliged to recreate the past through genealogies in order to give some substance to the future. This view of the past living within her, finding expression in her child, and thus, the future, is the common feature of all the Empresses in this study, even the last two who were the living emblems of a distinguished but distant past.

In their actual manner of ruling little that was consciously feminine can be distinguished. Only Theodora exploited her sex in her dealings with Bulgaria by threatening to step out of her traditional role into that of a male warrior. They were no more dependent on their advisers than other male rulers had been. They were precluded from acting as priest-king. They could not enter the sanctuary of a church as the Emperor could, but their priestly power was exercised through the Patriarch, who could be deposed at the Empress's will. They had, however, a unique relationship with the church. They saw their model as the Virgin Mary who was the agency through whom the Word of God was made manifest. They were, in their own way, agents in the transmission of the Roman tradition, their position as Augusta stretched back to Augustus. Their sons, who would be the earthly counterparts of the Ruler in Heaven would carry on that tradition. It was the church in its role as guardian of the Truth, the Way, that had to care for and guard the earthly family who were the visible reminder of the Heavenly Family - the living ikons.

It may be no coincidence that the restorers of ikon veneration were both women. Though their own personal views may not have made them enthusiastic about this, they may have reacted in an instinctively feminine way to the loss of an old tradition in the church which had special relevance for women. In the same way that they guarded their sons' futures for the dynasty, that conservatism which enabled them to regard themselves as agents rather than individuals, preserving the essence

of what had been handed down by previous generations, led them to see that such an ancient practice as ikon veneration should not be allowed to vanish.

Perhaps the real difference between male rule and female was exactly this distinction between individual and agent. In each case, these Empresses saw themselves as the agents of transmission of power and tradition. Male rulers can innovate and change the order of things; females preserve and conserve the traditional order for future generations.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Kassia's reply to Theophilos at the bride show. See Euphrosyne p. 227, note 25.

2. see Kenneth Holum *Theodosian Empresses*, also see Appendix III where I have cited an example of Eudoxia, wife of Arcadios, being recognised as co-ruler by St. John Chrysostom and being responsible for all the arrangements for the deposition of some relics.

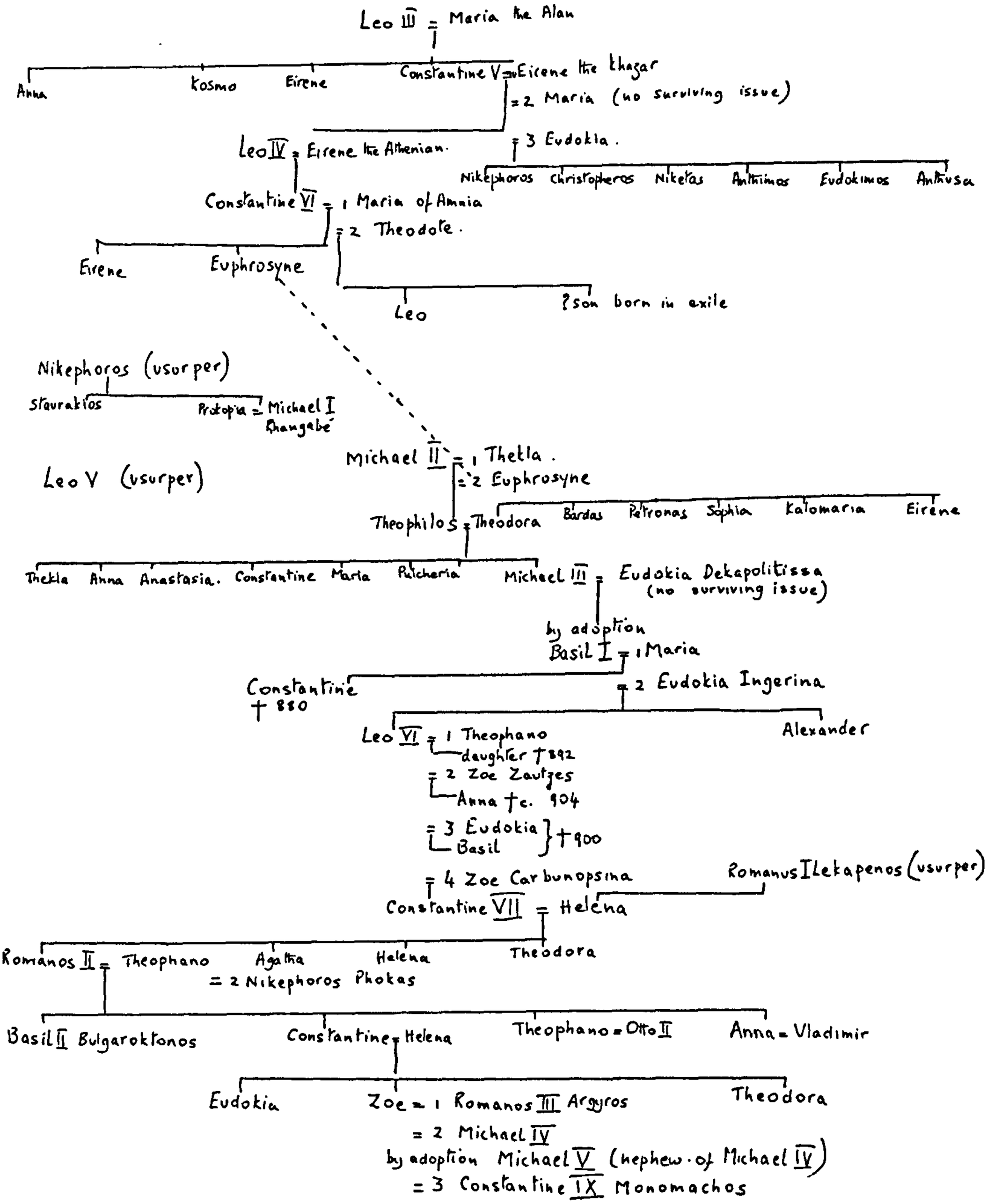
3. See Add. Georgius Monachus p. 838, the embarrassed Eudokia, weeping, says to Michael: 'τὸ τῆς βασιλείας ἀξίωμα, δέσποτά μου, μέγα ἐστί, ᾧ ἀναξίως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐτμήθημεν· καὶ οὐ δίκαιόν ἐστιν καταφρονεῖσθαι αὐτό. '

4. Ihor Ševčenko 'Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII' p. 209 commentary on lines 48-49 of the poem on Leo's death.

5. As the published histories of the reigns of the Empresses in this thesis have all been written with a male bias, it has been necessary to go back to the original sources and re-write their histories from this entirely different point of view.

6. This remark was made to a social worker concerned with planning for the childrens' future.

APPENDIX I STEMMA



APPENDIX II IKONS

Considerable reference has been made in the studies of the first three Empresses in this thesis to ikons; a short note may help the reader to understand the importance of ikons in Byzantine life. There are numerous books and articles on various aspects of this devotional art[1] and this note is only an introduction to a complex subject.

An ikon is a portrait painting or mosaic of Christ, (see Pl. XIII) the Virgin Mary, (see Pl. XIV) or the saints, (see Pl. XV) sometimes even of Old Testament prophets. In later times than those with which this study is concerned, narrative ikons became popular showing the lives of holy men and women, though these may have existed earlier but are rarely now extant. A characteristic of the majority of ikons is that the subject is depicted frontally, even mounted subjects are painted as frontally as being mounted on a horse will allow. (see Pl. XX) Ikons would range from enormous portraits painted or in mosaic in the curved apse or dome of a church, or they could be small carved wood or ivory portable objects. Even rings, brooches, bracelets or pendants (see Pls. XVII-XXI) worn by the owner could, I believe, have been regarded by their owners as ikons. More rarely, models in the round were made an ivory figure of the Virgin with Child in her arms is in the Victoria and Albert Museum and Psellos describes a little figure of Jesus made of a precious stone, perhaps opal, ornamented with silver, made specially for the Empress Zoe which changed colour in different lights.[2] The colours used in an ikon were of straightforward significance, such as brown for earth, green for vegetation, bright red for blood of martyrs, deep red or purple for the blood of Christ or Imperial dignity, white for purity or the Uncreated Light and gold for the sun or the Divine Energy. Certain symbolic additions to a scene in an ikon were traditionally included, such as Adam's skull in a crucifixion scene to demonstrate that Jesus Christ was the new man who overcame death. In early Christian times when the risk of persecution was present, sarcophagi and catacombs were decorated with quasi-pagan figures or scenes that had a special Christian meaning. One of the best known was the shepherd carrying a lamb across his shoulders, the moschophoros, which to a Christian meant the Good Shepherd caring for the followers of Christ. The Egyptian ankh was sufficiently like the cross to be employed as a suitable model without causing suspicion. The philosopher with his scroll became used eventually as a model for Christ (see Pl. XIV)

seated in majesty, though earlier he was used as a model for a follower of Christ studying the Word.

Two strands in the development of the use of ikons seem to appear, one secular and one religious. The image of the Emperor was, in Roman times, sent to all parts of the Empire and was venerated by the general populace. His picture, and sometimes that of his wife, was placed on poles either side of the governor of the province when he was in court and, of course, in the temples. The Emperor's picture was carried in procession into a city and met at the city gates by the civic dignitaries, the ceremony of *adventus*, and it was treated as if the Emperor himself were there. The religious strand starts with the Roman practice of having portraits of family ancestors in their houses which were carried solemnly in procession at certain times, particularly at a funeral, though also at other important occasions. The Egyptian mummy was modified in Roman times to include a life-like portrait of the deceased inserted into the top of the mummy where the face would normally be. These portraits were of wood painted through an encaustic process, the faces looking out directly at the viewer, but the eyes having an other-worldly look, looking somewhat past and through the viewer. Examples can be seen in the British Museum, most notably the mummy portrait called Artemidorus.

By what means these two strands were fused into what we now see as ikons is disputed by art historians. The very early representations of holy people, both in the Roman catacombs and such churches as S.Maria Antiqua, as well as the frescoes at the excavated monastery of Bawit in Egypt appear to owe much to the mummy portrait painting. The idea that such a portrait contained some quality of the original, so that the representation was as though the person was present, owes much to the practice of venerating the Emperor's portrait from the time of his *adventus* into the city, continuing while that portrait was present there.

It seems plain that from both literary evidence and from the little house church excavated at Dura Europos, painting on church walls could have a didactic purpose. The unlettered members of the church were assisted to learn about the church in this way. It was claimed later, when the existence of ikons was being defended, that the portrait of the

holy person could also teach the unlettered by reminding them of the life and work of the original of the portrait. Just as pagan statues and other representations of pagan gods, as well as other people in myth, always had their attributes and were thus recognised and the stories associated with those attributes remembered, so also with an ikon.

The increase in popularity of ikons was closely associated with the rise in ritual both at the royal court and in the church; the liturgy and the cycle of religious processions in every city, but particularly in Constantinople, was coupled with the increasing importance of relics. Averil Cameron has noted the rise in ritual and art from the time of Justin and Sophia[3]. The traffic in relics had been in existence for much longer, in fact since 356/7 when the bodies of the Apostles Luke and Andrew and Timothy were buried under the altar table in the church of the Holy Apostles[4]. There appeared to be a need for some tangible, visible agency of the life to come, representing both the aspirations of ordinary people, however poor and oppressed, with the realisation that martyrs, athletes for God, and saints were in Heaven interceding for them. It was possible to identify with the sufferings of the holy men and women on this earth by means of ikons if you were an evicted farmer, a captive of the Saracens, a beggar, a destitute old person dependent on monkish charity. The privations voluntarily endured by the Stylite Saints[5] would be brought to mind by a picture of a saint on his pillar, whose privations were not so different, except for the pillar, from those endured by the homeless, the cripples and physical sufferers and the aged. The saints' place was in Heaven, others could aspire to a place in Heaven and knew that the intercession of a fellow sufferer would stand them in good stead.

One group who may well have had a particular need for such intercession was, of course, the women. Although their place in Byzantine society was legally far better than in other civilizations, they could own property, were responsible for their husbands' estates and their children if the husband had died or had been taken captive, to mention only two basic rights, nevertheless, they were of inferior status, were far more confined to the home than their men and were still equated with Eve, whose gullibility had caused man's downfall. Women were restricted to the remoter parts of the church, the gallery or the

catechumens' chapel or narthex during the greater part of the liturgy; they had no place in the institutional church as the role of deaconess had declined after the sixth century to a minimal level. For a woman of limited means there was no way in which her religious feelings could be given an outlet other than in personal devotion. Those wealthy enough could engage in philanthropic work or be welcomed into a nunnery, but for a poor woman those outlets were closed. The worship of ikons needed no intermediary and the very character of ikons, with their frontal pose and wide open gaze, made the impression of direct contact more feasible. One way of raising women's status was to invoke the intercession of Mary, The Theotokos, the Mother of God. An ikon of the Blessed Virgin reminded them, and of course, their men, that in Kassia's words 'through woman came man's regeneration'[6], words that displeased the Emperor Theophilos enough to reject Kassia as a possible empress and choose the more compliant Theodora.

By the time of Eirene, the first Empress discussed in this thesis, the place of ikons in the church had been so firmly extablished, their veneration reaching such a central place in the religious life of the Empire, sometimes amounting to idolatry, that a movement to curb it was not unexpected. Leo III, Eirene's grandfather-in-law was responsible for the first major move against ikons in public places by removing the image of Christ that was placed over the Brazen Gate which led to the Great Palace[7]. The removal caused a riot, even causing the women to come out of their homes and pelt the soldiers with stones. Over the next hundred and twenty years or so the arguments, anathemas, scourgings, executions and mutilations were employed by both sides until finally, in Theodora's reign the issue was decided for the iconophiles and, with only occasional rumblings, the war died down.

The remarkable thing, from the point of view of this thesis, is that the veneration of ikons was twice made official church and state policy, each time by a woman ruling alone with a son in his minority. This might lead one to propose that there could be a special relationship existing between a woman and ikon veneration and that the Empresses were following a natural female element in their own lives. Though I have been at pains to try to demonstrate that neither Eirene nor Theodora were the chief instigators of a return to ikon veneration, both were reacting in

a constructive way to a political situation, yet it could very well be said that, because they were women, they had an added sensibility towards the aspirations of the iconophiles and, therefore, were more sensitive to the needs of the people for ikons both in public places and in the churches and homes.

Norman Baynes,in an addressed given in 1930 'Idolatry and the Early Church'[8], examined the arguments advanced by the Christian Fathers both for and against ikons. He concluded:

> 'The image - that hymn of praise as John of Damascus called it, the lasting token of those who have fought and conquered and of demons humbled and put to flight - the image remained: the attack of an oriental art of symbolism was repulsed by Greek loyalty to a Greek iconography: the Mediterranean art of *Darstellung* - of representation - held the field and in every Greek church to-day the iconostasis proclaims alike the redemption of matter and the victory of orthodoxy. By the recognition of a progressive revelation the Greek Church had freed itself from the dead hand of a Semitic prohibition; it had maintained a place in worship for those emotions which had inspired the Greek in the defence of his pagan gods. But during the long struggle the passionate loyalty to the tradition of the fathers had so possessed the soul of the Greek Church that after the victory of the images, after the celebrations of the festival of re-established orthodoxy, it ceased to believe in a progressive revelation of truth, in a tradition which should consciously adapt itself to present needs and as when fresh crises called for restatement of Christian truth.'

Baynes argues that the early Christian prohibition of images, following the Judaic prohibition in Exodus 20. 4-5 and reinforced in Leviticus 26.1 or Deuteronomy 5.8 - 'You shall make you no idols nor graven image ... neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land and bow down unto it' was by far the stronger argument as employed by the proponents of iconoclasm and he traces threads of this argument persisting from St. Paul onwards, right through the rise in the traffic in relics, the elaboration of court ritual and the greatly increased manufacture and use of ikons. Nevertheless, he sees the triumph of ikon veneration as the victory of established practice which grew in response to human need and

aspiration. It was a reaction to the yearning of the human spirit for a reminder of what man could ultimately achieve.

With the very rare exception of the psychologically damaged mother who rejects her baby, there is a passionately and fiercely close relationship between a mother and her baby, reinforced between mother and son by her aspirations for him. Within the tiny, dependent creature to whom she has given life lie all the possibilities for the future. How much more are the possibilities for an empress for her son who would, in time, God willing, inherit the Empire and who then will be Vice Regent of God, the mediator of the people with the all-powerful Ruler in Heaven? The Emperor himself was a living ikon in this particular context, though at the same time conscious of his frail humanity and capability for sin. With this in mind, it is no surprise that a woman ruler would be specially sensitive to the needs of people for ikons, her own sex in particular, almost all of whom had or would have experience of these aspirations when they saw their babies for the first time.

I have argued that Eirene and Theodora were simply reacting as any good ruler would do to the exigencies of a political situation, nevertheless, it is also possible that the very fact that both were mothers of only sons, (both having been co-Emperors with their fathers), made them specially sensitive to the need for ikons. That orthodoxy, the ancient and traditional practice of the church, was restored twice, both times by women, can be taken as some indication that women rulers could react in an instinctive way, even if it were against their own conscious inclinations.

NOTES TO APPENDIX ON IKONS

1. Most easily available are John Beckwith *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* London. (1970): John Stuart *Ikons* London (1975), though this is mainly concerned with Russian ikons: Kurt Weitzmann *The Icon* London(1975): John Taylor *Icon Painting* Oxford(1979). Ernst Kitzinger 'The Cult of Images before Iconoclasm' *D O P* 8 (1954) pp. 85-150 gives the history of the argument for and against the Isaurian iconoclasm.

2. Michael Psellus *Chronographie* ed. Renauld Vol. I p. 149 calls it the Ἀντιφώνητος.

3. see 'Images of Authority: Elites and Ikons in Late Sixth Century Byzantium' *Past and Present* (August 1979) pp. 3-35 and 'The Theotokos in Sixth Century Constantinople' *J.T.S.* n.s. XXIX (1978) pp. 79-108, esp. pp. 80-82.

4. The *Chronicon Paschale* claims that these three Apostles were buried here; Procopius in *de Aedificate* confirms that the three wooden coffins moved by the earthquake in 358 were of these three Apostles.

5. see *Three Byzantine Saints* ed. and trans. E. Dawes and N. Baynes (Oxford 1977 ed.)

6. see the chapter on Euphrosyne who arranged Theophilos' bride show in which Kassia was rejected.

7. see C. Mango *The Brazen House* Copenhagen (1959) esp. p. 121.

8. Norman H. Baynes *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London 1955) pp. 116-143, esp. p. 141.

PLATE XIII

ENCAUSTIC ICON WITH BUST OF CHRIST from SINAI

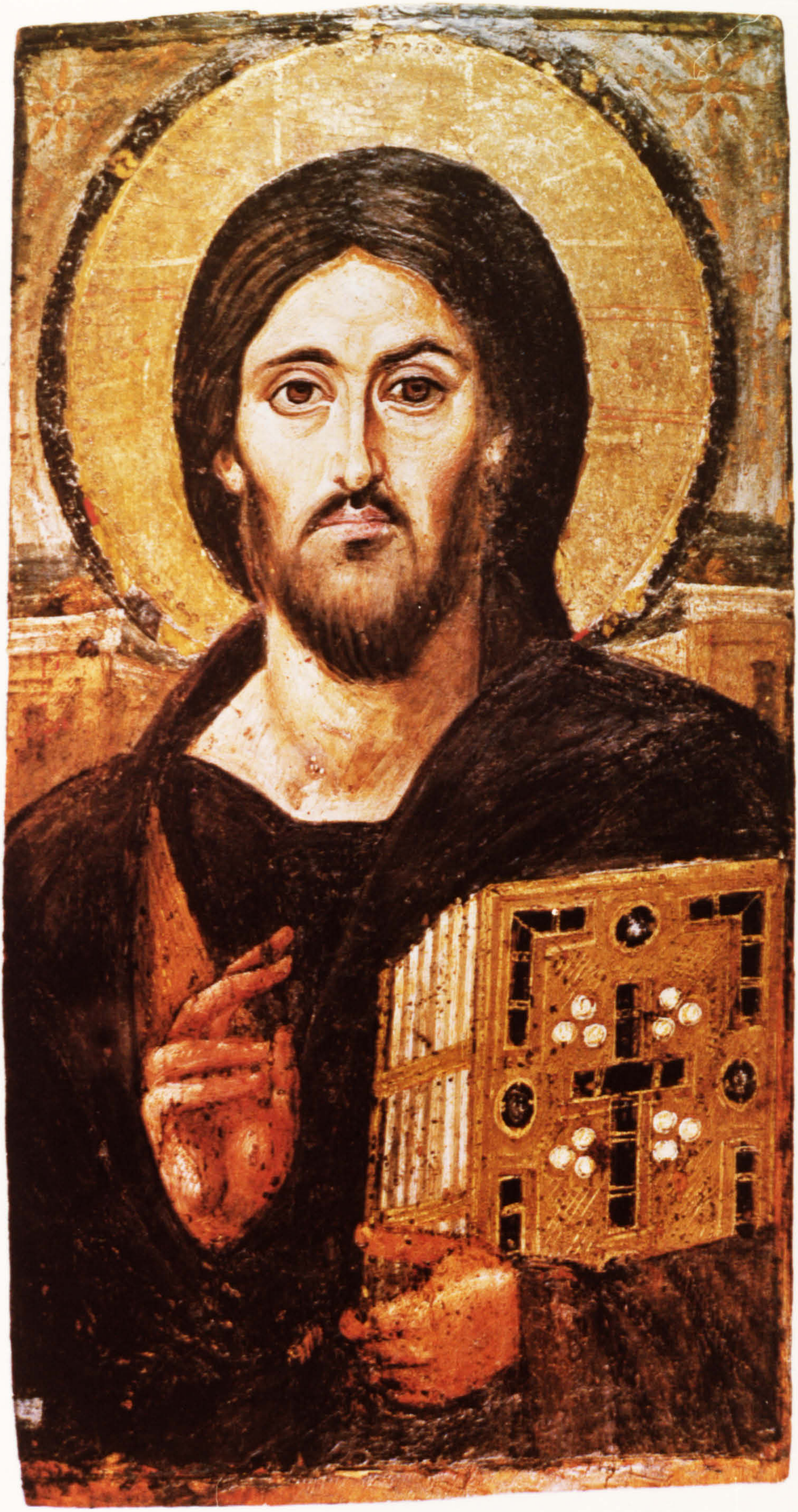


PLATE XIV

IVORY DIPTYCH WITH CHRIST AND THE VIRGIN from BERLIN



PLATE XV

ICON WITH THE CRUCIFIXION from SINAI

with medallions of Saints filling the frame


ΙΣ ΧΣ

PLATE XVI

ICON WITH ANNUNCIATION from SINAI



PLATE XVII

TOP - PLAQUE SHOWING VIRGIN AND CHILD

BOTTOM - BRACELET WITH VIRGIN ORANS





PLATE XVIII

TOP - CHALCEDONY MEDALLION SHOWING VIRGIN ENTHRONED WITH CHILD ON HER LAP

BOTTOM - HELIOTROPE PLAQUE SHOWING VIRGIN WITH CHILD





PLATE XIX

TOP - IVORY OF THE NATIVITY

BOTTOM - PENDANT WITH VIRGIN ORANS





PLATE XX

TOP - BRONZE MEDALLION WITH VIRGIN ORANS

BOTTOM - REVERSE OF THE ABOVE SHOWING S. DEMETRIUS ON HORSEBACK AND A DRAGON





PLATE XXI

PLASTER CAST OF ROCK CHRYSTAL INTAGLIO

SHOWING FLIGHT INTO EGYPT



APPENDIX III

THE TRIER PROCESSION IVORY: A NEW INTERPRETATION

So much has been written about the historicity of the scene the Trier ivory records that to raise the issue again might seem superfluous. Yet the two recent studies by Suzanne Spain, and Kenneth Holum with Gary Vikan both published in the Dumbarton Oaks papers[1] are the only ones that take enough cognisance of the outstanding point of interest, namely that the Augusta with the long shafted cross is the smallest and yet the dominant figure in the carving[2]. Unfortunately, the two texts on which the theories rely are both unsatisfactory in some ways[3]. It may be timely, therefore, to offer yet another interpretation which, although not totally satisfactory, attempts to explain the intention of the artist in somewhat different terms, and presumably the commissioning patron's, in relation to the occasion or ceremony which it illustrates. However, no excuse is needed for contemplating and appreciating this enchanting work of art which is worth looking at not only for its excellence and the brilliance of its craftmanship, but also for the way in which the onlooker himself becomes involved in the scene, perhaps sharing the relaxed air of enjoyment so apparent on the faces of the people in the carving.

A number of particular aspects of this carving need to be considered when we try to match the occasion it represents to a text. Different actions seem to be going on at once, but this simultaneity may in fact represent a time sequence[4]. The architectural features are in two different scales; the church, parecclesion, and the apsidal end of the church on the right are smaller in scale than the gateway on the left, or the galleries in the centre of the scene. The scale of the human figures in the procession is different from the carriage and mules. The size of the Augusta bears no relation to the church in front of which she is standing, to the figures on the church roof or to the carriage and mules, nor indeed to the driver or the two clergy on the carriage. The heads and busts at the back of the scene are facing in different directions, the psaltai with their censers looking out of the arcading face towards the carriage, but all other heads are turned towards the Augusta.

It is possible that this scene illustrates the occasion described vividly by St. John Chrysostom in his Homily II 'Dicta postquam reliquiae Martyrum ...', Migne, *P.G.*, LXIII, cols. 467-472. This describes in

considerable detail the transportation of relics from a great church to the shrine of St. Thomas at Drypia[5]. The uniqueness of the occasion is marked by the fact that the Empress Eudoxia, wife of Arcadius, organised the whole event. She left with the relics at midnight and accompanied them on foot via the forum to the shrine nine Roman miles away, where, at dawn, in the company of all the other women of the city, as well as the magistrates, she received the relics. St. John tells us that she specially arranged for the Emperor and his entourage to come the following day so that the occasion should be a prolonged and joyful one[6]. St. John specially mentions

> "the housewives, softer than wax abandoned their enclosed homes in enthusiasm, rivalling very strong men and accomplished the journey on foot, and not the young ones only but the aged as well - the magistrates left their carriages and lictors and armed bodyguards and mingled with the private citizens".

He goes on a little later in the Homily[7]

> "To prevent the mass of cavalrymen and the throng of armed soldiers harassing the girls, the old women, and the elderly men, and disturbing the festival, she divided up the assembly in a plan worthy of her good sense. If they had both attended today, the whole festival would have ended today, but so that she could create calm on this day and lavish good cheer by adding the morrow she shared the duty with him. For as she shares empire with him she shares pious devotion too and does not leave him without a share in her success, but in every field takes him as partner".

The congruences between the Homily and the ivory are easy to see. The two most important features are the carriage with its two prelates holding the relic casket and the figure of the Empress. The proportions are significant here. The two bishops, if standing up on the ground would be twice the size of the Emperor and his procession or any of the crowd behind, but they are in proportion to the size of the carriage, driver and mules. The relic box, unornamented, stands out in this section of the carving because the two bishops are leaning away from it - braced as though anticipating the carriage coming to a halt. On the other hand the Empress is a tiny figure in comparison with the carriage and its occupants, in fact the figures

carved on the side of the carriage would come to her elbow if placed beside her. In comparison with the church in front of which she is standing the Empress is enormous, the open door of the parecclesion behind her comes only to her knees. In this way she is emphasized as an important figure. This emphasis is further brought out by the position of her feet which are marginally nearer the bottom edge of the carving than the Emperor's, but are on a line with the near side wheel and the nearer mule of the carriage, thus the Empress is brought into relation with the carriage.

The angle at which the heads at the top of the ivory are looking is important. Except for the psaltai[8], those nine busts appearing in the windows separated by pillars, who are holding censers in their right hands and whose left hands are held against their ears, they are all looking towards the carriage; all other heads are turned towards the Empress, even the bust of Christ in the tympanum over the gateway is turned in her direction. Apart from the psaltai, the only exceptions are two of the workmen on the roof of the church. It is the Empress who has organised the procession and deposition of the relics, she who has ordered the refurbishment of the church to receive the relics and it is she who, holding the long cross, is receiving the Emperor at the head of his processsion. But to indicate that it is the relics which take precedence, her hand is indicating the carriage, not the candle the Emperor is holding, and she has, perhaps, moved slightly forward to receive the relics. That she has just taken a step forward may be inferred from the fact that she has grasped a handful of her gown to clear her foot. This is only apparent on close examination of the ivory, it is almost impossible to photograph satisfactorily.

If the missing heads are restored conjecturally, as dotted in on the accompanying sketch, the sight lines are interesting. Diagonals can be drawn parallel to the diagonal of the shaft of the cross. Also three lines can be drawn radiating outwards from the head of the Empress to Christ's head and to the heads of the two bishops. These are all devices which draw the onlooker directly into the scene, focussing the eyes particularly on the Empress. It is as though those regarding the ivory were a part of the crowd, but standing on the right hand side of the procession, on the Empress's left.

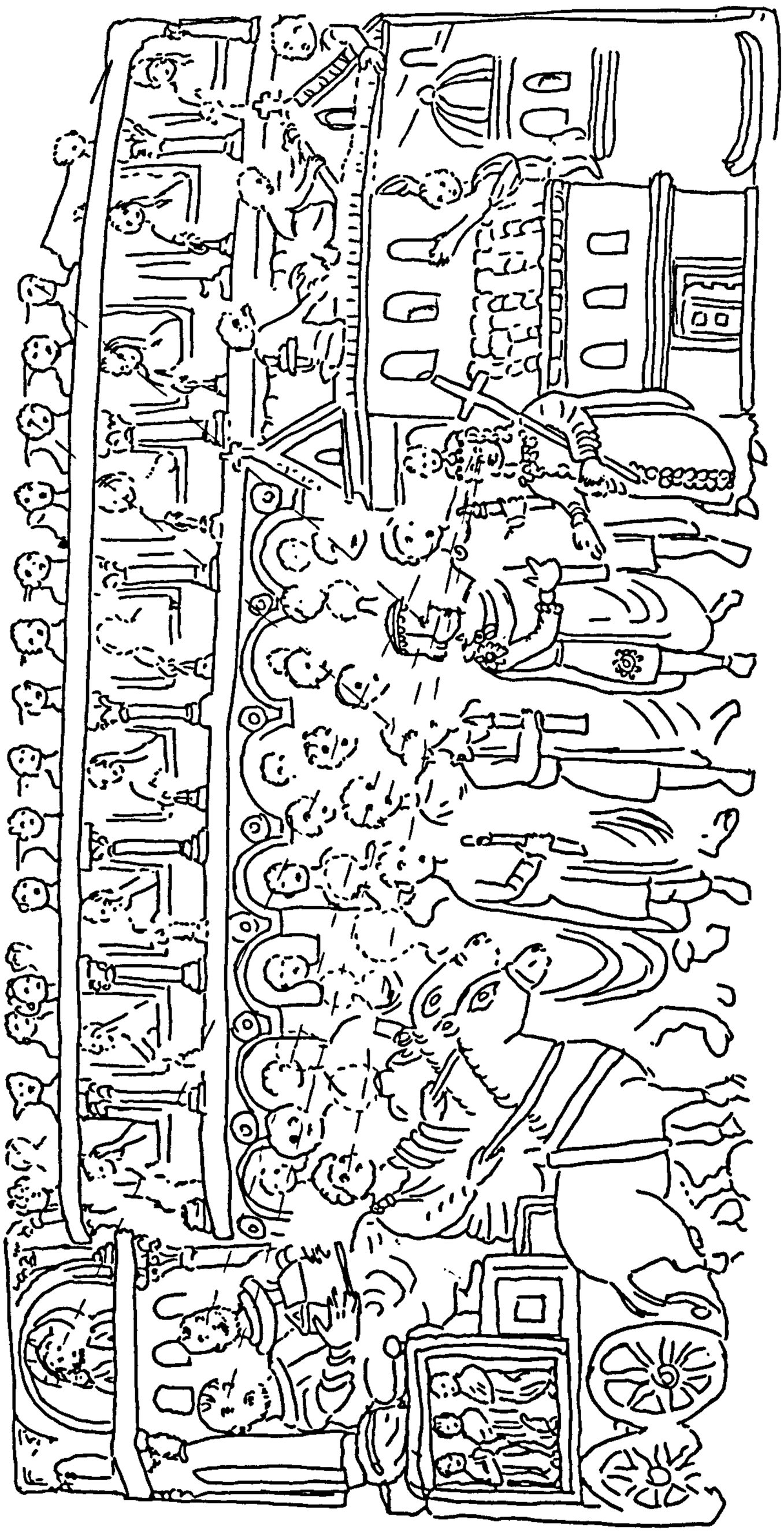
The size of the church is irreconcilable with the size of the figures, but the dimensions of the parecclesion match those of the carriage[9]; the three arched windows on the church, apse and parecclesion are matched by the three apertures on the gateway - surely the Chalke gate. Thus the eye is taken from the gateway to the church, from the carriage to the side chapel with its open door, the beginning and the end of the journey for the casket of relics.

The church is still being built, or at least altered and finished off. Two workmen are kneeling on the roof, the one with the hammer tucked into his belt seems to be the foreman. He is raising his head to the heavens as if he were asking for strength, patience and just that little bit of inspiration for exhorting his staff to get on with the job and finish before the relics are actually deposited. His companion on the roof seems to be concentrating on the job in hand unlike the other two, one clinging on to the further side of the roof seems to be looking around the eaves towards the Augusta and the other, braced against the apse, spreadeagled against the side of the parecclesion, is also looking towards the Augusta. In fact, the latter workman's left hand is overlarge and placed flat against the sill of the end window of the church and gives the impression that he might have been plastering it but couldn't resist the temptation to take a quick look at the Augusta. These workmen in the picture fit admirably with some words of the text and with St. John's well known sympathy and concern for the poor[10]

> "...for you (*i.e.* Eudoxia) are a haven of all the churches and you have made full use of your present royalty to win the royalty that shall be, restoring the churches, honouring the priests, abolishing the error of the heretics, welcoming the martyrs not with bread and board but with heart and soul, not with bricks and mortar but of your own free will or rather with both"[11]

As there are at least two heads inside the church[12] as well as the head appearing from the doorway of the main church (as it were, above the Augusta's head), one could infer that these were the church's own clergy awaiting the arrival of the relics.

PLATE XXII



The galleried structure at the top of the ivory and the gate with Christ's head in the tympanum are two separate structures. That accords with the text if it is accepted that the artist has conflated three separate places mentioned in the Introduction. First, the Empress went into "a great church and took from there the relics of the martyrs", the relics were, secondly, "sent ahead right through the Forum as far as Drypia, a martyr shrine nine miles away from the city", and, thirdly, the Homily describing the events "was delivered in the shrine in the presence of herself, the whole city and the magistrates". The psaltai may have been either in the great church censing the relic casket or in the Forum. The galleried structure with the arcading at the lowest register is similar to the Forum scene on the base of the obelisk of Theodosius I, still to be seen in Istanbul. The gate clearly represents the fact that the carriage has to pass through it in order to go into the country. It should be noted here that the gate is carved to represent two parts, on the far left there is the gateway, but, set at a slight angle towards the right hand side of the ivory, there is the solid wall with blind arcading and the arched tympanum over it with Christ's nimbed head looking towards the Empress. The carriage and occupants, being of such considerably greater proportions than anything else on the ivory, transcend the time scale of all the rest of the events illustrated. By this means the artist has been able to indicate that the carriage with its bishops holding the relics has been involved with all the events on the carving, including, of course, the Emperor's procession which took place on the following day and before which St. John gave another Homily[13].

It must be granted that there are elements of the text which do not fit with the carving. St. John particularly mentions the women[14]

> "housewives, softer than wax abandoned their enclosed homes in enthusiasm, rivalling very strong men and accompanying that journey on foot - and not the young ones only but the aged as well...".

Later he says[15]

> "...to prevent the mass of cavalry men and the throng of armed soldiers harming the girls and the old women and elderly men and disturbing the festival she divided up the assembly in a plan worthy of her good sense. If they had both attended today the whole festival would have been ended today, but so that she could create calm on this day and lavish good cheer by adding the morrow, she shared the duty with him...Herself appearing today, she announced his attendance tomorrow".

Unless they are the bareheaded people in the lowest register of the arcading, there are no women present in the carving; were they represented it seems likely that they would be veiled. There are on the carving no cavalrymen or armed soldiers, the Emperor's procession hold candles as he does, but there is no sign of a weapon[16]. It could possibly be argued, or at least suggested, that this carving forms one side of a relic casket decoration only and that there may have been other scenes on the other three sides. It is possible, therefore, that the military part of the procession was on the other short side. One would expect some representation of the martyrs' lives to be carved on the other long side.

St. John does not mention a companion in his Homily, yet there are two clergymen seated on the carriage and they are similarly dressed. Serapion, the Archdeacon, was known as St. John's companion and advisor[17] and it is not impossible that he was with him. St. John was a man of simple tastes and it is entirely characteristic of him that he would dress plainly, as would his companion. Other texts cited as the historical context for this carving do mention two patriarchs, but some reservations concerning these texts can be made[18].

St. John says that Eudoxia

> "...walked beside the holy ones like a servant girl, touching the casket and its fine linen cover"[19].

However, in this scene she has arrived before the carriage and is indicating its arrival. It might be thought that the phrase 'like a servant girl' implied plain dress, but St. John

specifically mentions

> "...the wearer of the diadem herself, the lady clad in purple..."[20]

which surely accounts for the rather elaborate gown and pallium with its pearl/fur[21] border, and the diadem with its pearl perpendulae.

Eudoxia is congratulated at having had the foresight to have arranged the event over two days; indeed, as has been stated above, St. John gave another Homily in the presence of the Emperor on the second day. But in the carving the Emperor is present, looking fondly at his Empress, clutching his candle. This is a serious discrepancy, but, as suggested above, the artist may have conflated events which happened at different times, if the whole celebration included the Emperor, the artist would hardly have left him out.

St. John uses the presence of the candles in a variety of ways, such as "...the sea was a river of flame"[22] or "...the night was bright as day"[23]. He also quotes from Psalm 133, vv. 11 and 12 and compares the Augusta with the moon shining out among the stars. However, there may well be another reason for the candles, apart from the practical issue of much needed illumination over nine miles traversed between midnight and dawn. It may also account for the fact that it is the Emperor's procession which are carrying the candles in the carving. The relics are to be deposited - re-interred - in the shrine of St. Thomas; in fact they are to have another funeral but this time it is not an occasion for tears and wailing, but one for rejoicing for the martyrs are to bring their powerful blessings on the crowd. What we have here is a funeral procession very similar to the one vividly described in Gregory of Nyssa's Life of St. Macrina[24]. Gregory says that before the funeral procession they had passed the night singing hymns around Macrina's body as in a panegyric for the martyrs[25]. Then he describes how, not wishing to leave out any arrangement proper to a funeral, he organised the crowd into two parts, the women joined the choir of virgins and the men the groups of monks and they sang psalms rhythmically and harmoniously[26]. He describes how the bier is carried by himself and the most distinguished person present, the senator Araxios, father of one of Macrina's closest

companions, Vetiana. They go slowly in procession between long lines of deacons and clergy, all of whom bear candles in their hands just as in a liturgical procession[27].

Holum and Vikan in their brilliant article "The Trier Ivory, Adventus ceremonial and the relics of St. Stephan"[28] seek to re-interpret the plaque in the light of adventus typology. They mention the propompe part of the procession, in fact quoting Eudoxia accompanying the relics at night, saying

> "...the ivory cannot show the first phase, synantesis, as it is clearly not outside the city walls, neither from the make up and demeanour of the crowds does it show the variety and spontaneity characteristic of textual accounts or visual representations of synantesis"[29].

This problem is solved if the procession is seen, not as an adventus, but as a funeral procession appropriate to a particularly holy person whose presence has in the past and is expected to confer benefits in the future. There was at this time a growing interest in the power of relics and accounts of translations of relics are met with in increasing numbers, some of which have been pressed into service to account for the historicity of this ivory[30]. There are texts describing the deposition of relics being accorded funeral rites, as in the translation of the relics of Bishop Meletios[31], and funeral processions were conducted with psalm singing and candles, as in the funeral of Pulcheria[32]. It seems simpler, perhaps, to see this ivory in terms of a joyful funeral procession, rather than in the more complicated terms of an adventus. This is not to say that the relics of those who wear the martyr's crown are not appropriately greeted by an adventus ceremony when they arrive at their resting place, but in this particular case, where the Emperor's procession is carrying candles presumably during daylight, a funeral procession seems more appropriate.

It is tempting, therefore, to speculate on the cause for this two day event. Some clues exist in the text which are illustrated in the carving. Eudoxia is wearing the royal pallium with its opulent decoration and she is wearing a diadem with perpendulae and the

plait from front to back of her head which seems to go with it[33]. She is also carrying a long-shafted cross which one sees on the reverse of contemporary coins[34]. It is surely a processional cross and thus suitable for the occasion, particularly as the long cross was associated with St. Helena and made to contain the chief of all relics, fragments of the True Cross. Arcadius is wearing a tunic with two roundels of embroidery, one on the shoulder and one on the hem, his chlamys has a zigzag pattern running round the neck[35] and he is wearing a very plain diadem, but it could hardly be said that he was ceremoniously dressed as there is just enough decoration to distinguish him from the rest of the crowd. Eudoxia was made Augusta in January 400 and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that this translation of relics was to celebrate her crowning as Augusta. If the event took place soon after, say on February 13th, the feast of St. Priscilla and her husband Aquila, this could account for the reason St. John chose to quote her particularly, as well as St. Phoebe (who is mentioned in the same verse of Romans XVI.16) out of a good many other women whom St. Paul cites with approval.

St. John says

> "What need to mention the women or the magistrates in a case where the wearer of the diadem herself, the lady clad in purple..."[36]

Then a little later he says

> "For as she shares empire with him, she shares pious devotion too and does not leave him without a share in her successes, but in every field takes him as partner"[37]

Even more pointed are the two allusions to Phoebe and Priscilla, coming directly after the risqué reference to "the deed of a harlot"[38] being "deathless in remembrance" "...so much less will He allow the works of a lady to be unknown who is decent and distinguished and sober and has shown such discretion as queen...".

He is at pains to emphasize the disability of being a woman and having a woman's nature

> "The famous Phoebe who once befriended the teacher of the world and became his champion

was a woman and shared the same nature that
you have, yet she shone out so,...[39].

In the next paragraph he says

"Priscilla also had a woman's lot in life,
but that did not prevent her having her praises
sung and becoming immortally remembered..."[40]

He says that Eudoxia can be numbered with these two woman as well as

"...a whole chorus of woman besides that lived the
life of an apostle" because she has "... made full
use of your present royalty to win the royalty that
shall be...".

These women supported St. Paul in his ministry, gave their house as a church and "...who for my life laid down their own necks"[41] and Phoebe is commended to the congregation as "...she has been a succourer of many and of myself also"[42]. St. John saw the need to enlist Eudoxia's influence over Arcadius, but wishing to channel her influence towards his own work of helping the poor and curbing the excesses of the rich, took the opportunity of this occasion to press home his views.

It is indeed sad that relations between Eudoxia and St.John did deteriorate. Even though the "Jezebel" sermon has been proved spurious[43] their relationship ultimately became hostile. But in this Homily all seems set fair. Eudoxia had set up the occasion with considerable flair, it almost seems as if she and St. John had collaborated over it, and it is particularly ingenious to have organised the women to come with the relics through the night, the echoes of the wise virgins with their lamps (candles) are striking. Even so, St. John's fear and distrust of women's sexuality, a fear shared by St. Paul, comes out three times. He quotes the harlot, then immediately after, a comment "although you have a woman's nature" and the assumption that the mere presence of women would provoke the soldiers to "harass" them. But in spite of all this it was a joyful occasion and Eudoxia stage-managed it successfully.

In arranging this two day event Eudoxia was demonstrating symbolically and practically the indivisibility of the roles of man and woman in the striving after the realisation of the Heavenly

kingdom on earth. Her cheerful pleasure-loving nature imposed its own imprint on the occasion and, if this interpretation is accepted, the artist has celebrated both aspects in his enchanting work of art.

1. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 31 (1978), pp. 281-304 and *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 33 (1979), pp. 115-133 respectively.

2. Many of the other scholars seem to ignore this point, see note 18 below.

3. Suzanne Spain's text, *Antiochus Strategos' account of the Sack of Jerusalem in A.D. 614*, trans. F.C. CONYBEARE, E.H.R., 25 (1910), 511 makes no mention of Martina at the actual deposition, her presence is assumed by Ms Spain. She cites a further text by the Armenian Bishop Sebeos, but he says those present were "the king, princes, all the soldiers and residents of the city".

Kenneth Holum and Gary Vikan's text has been called in question by John WORTLEY, *The Trier Ivory Reconsidered*, in *G.R.B.S.*, 21 (1980), no. 4, pp. 381-394. In his book *The Theodosian Empresses*, Calif., 1980, p. 104, note 116 Holum says that Wortley has ignored the *Relevatio Sancti Stephani* ed. Vanderlinden which appeared in *Rev. des Études Byzantines*, Bucharest, 1946, tome IV, pp. 178-217. However, this does not disprove Wortley's theory satisfactorily - see Vanderlinden's note 48 on page 216.

4. This simultaneity can be seen in a number of sarcophagi, notably one in Velletri showing a number of Old Testament scenes, a similar one in the Lateran museum, the Claudianus from Villa della Lungara which shows three registers, the "Two Brothers" and the "Dogmatic", both in the Vatican Museo Cristiano show two registers, and the sarcophagus of Stilicho in Sant' Ambrogio in Milan which shows scenes separated in time and with architectural features. A sarcophagus would seem to be a natural model for a relic casket, both being last resting places for the deceased.

5. René JANIN in *La Géographie Ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantin*, Part I, vol.III, Paris, 1953 shows a small map of the environs of Constantinople in which Drypia appears to be between Hebdomon and Yesilköy, inland somewhat, near the stone

bridge. Also see Ernest MAMBOURY, *Istanbul Touristique*, Istanbul, 1951, p. 593 who puts Drypia near the town of Pempton. (Quite some distance from the centre of the city as any traveller trying to catch a plane at the airport will agree).

6. MIGNE, *P.G.* LXIII, Col. 467 - Introduction.

7. *Ibid.*, Col. 472. I gratefully acknowledge the kindness of Charles W. Whitaker who let me make use of his translations from St. John's Homily.

8. That these *are* 'psaltai' see A. HERMANN, *Mit der Hand Singen. Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung der Trierer Elfenbeintafel*, in *Jrbch. für Antike und Christentum*, I, 1958, 105.

9. This may well be the royal carriage. See W. WEBER, *Trierer Zeitschrift*, 42, Jg. 79.

10. See Florent VAN OMMESLAEGHE'S article *Jean Chrysostome et le peuple de Constantinople*, in *Analecta Bollandiana* tome 97, fasc. 3-4, 1981, pp. 329-349.

11. MIGNE, *P.G.* LXIII, Col. 468.

12. This is almost impossible to photograph satisfactorily, but can be seen on close examination of the ivory.

13. *Homily*, III. M. *P.G.*, LXIII, Cols. 473 ff. Dicta Praesente Imperatore.

14. M. *P.G.*, LXIII Col. 468.

15. Col. 472.

16. But see *Homily*, III, Col. 473 where it appears that all weapons have been laid down.

17. If the dating of this occasion is correct, see below p. 8 (A.D. 400) Serapion was very much in St. John's confidence, he was left in charge of the patriarchal palace only a year later when St. John went to Ephesus (see Paladius, XIV, 49-50).

18. Notably among others, Strzygowski *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Spätantike und frühchristliches Kunst*, Leipzig,(1901), Weigand *Review of Delbrück and Lietzmann, Studien zur spätantiken Kunstgeschichte* in *Kritische Berichte*. Leipzig,(1930/31), and Grabar *Martyrium*, vol. II, chap. VIII, Des Reliques aux Icones, p. 352, note 4, Paris, 1946) all cite the translation of the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste to Hagia Sophia in 544 with the Patriarchs Menas of Constantinople and Apollinarius of Alexandria, but though Justinian is mentioned as lending his own carriage, Theodora is not referred to, indeed Theophanes has recorded her death 4 years previously. Pelikanides Date et Interprétation de la plaque en ivoire de Trèves, in Mélanges Henri Grégoire, *Annuaire de l'Inst. de Phil, et d'Hist. orient, et Slav.*, 12 Bruxelles,(1952) cites the translation of SS. Joseph and Zacharias to Hagia Sophia in 415 with the Patriarchs Atticus of Constantinople and Moses, Bishop of Antardus in Phoenicia, but in this case there were two relic caskets and only Ursus, the City Prefect and the Senate were in attendance, no mention of any royalty. Grümel prefers Leo and Verina, the relic being the girdle of the Virgin, with the two Patriarchs Gennadios of Constantinople and Martyrios of Antioch, but Verina is by no means the chief character. A history of the ivory can be found in DELBRÜCK'S *Die Consulardiptychen und Verwandte Denkmäler*, I, Berlin,(1927-29) with a plate on p. 269. For later scholarship see J. BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, London,(1970), p. 172 and plate 74, also note on p. 41.

19. MIGNE, *P.G.*, Col. 469.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Perhaps it is just a kind of fringe embroidery, see Limestone Funerary Stele of a second or third Century A.D. carving of a woman from Palmyra, Sotheby's Catalogue for Sale Monday

16.11.64, Plate 162, p. 69. R. Delbrück adds a query after the word "perlen" on the Augusta's chlamys, see p. 266 of Die Consulardiptychen.

22. M. *P.G.*, LXIII, Col. 467.

23. *Ibid.*

24. M. *P.G.*, LXVI, Cols. 960-1000; funeral Col. 993 ff. or in *La Vie de Ste. Macrine*, Ed. Pierre MARAVAL, *Sources Chrétiennes*, no. 178, Paris, 1971; funeral pp. 246-252.

25. In MARAVAL ed. p. 248, para. 33, lines 6-8.

26. *Ibid.*, lines 10-19.

27. MARAVAL ed. p. 252, lines 9-14.

28. See note 1 above.

29. *D.O.P.*, 33 (1979), pp. 120-121.

30. See note 18 above, but there are others much less probable *e.g.* Translation of the Holy Coat to Trier (Westwood).

31. M. *P.G.*, XLVI, Col. 861D.

32. *Ibid.*, Col. 868B.

33. See R.A.G. CARSON, *Principal Coins of the Romans*, Vol. III, The Dominate. London, 1982. There are two coins of Aelia Eudoxia which show the plait of hair running from the nape of the neck to the forehead, a Tremissis of A.D. 400 (no. 1576) and a Solidus (no. 1575).

34. The reverse of no. 1575 shows the cross enclosed in a wreath. No. 1594 shows on the reverse a Nike holding a long-shafted cross, struck to celebrate the marriage of Aelia Eudocia to Theodosius II. No. 1535 shows the long-shafted cross on the

reverse, struck to celebrate the marriage of Licinia Eudocia to Valentinian III.

35. This detail is only visible when the ivory is examined very closely.

36. M. *P.G.*, LXIII, Col. 469.

37. Col. 472.

38. Col. 471.

39. *Ibid.*

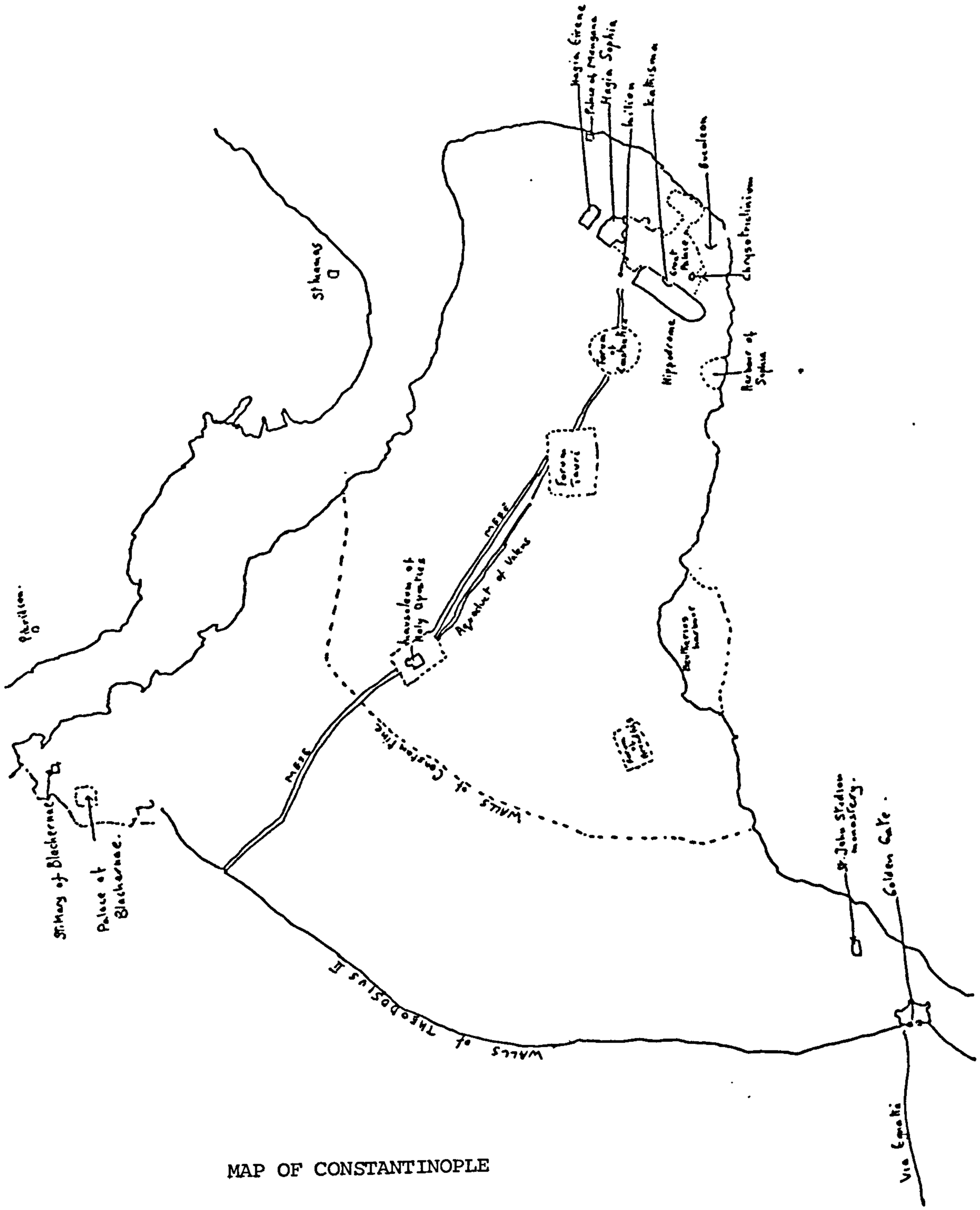
40. *Ibid.*

41. Romans 16. v. 4.

42. *Ibid.*, v. 2.

43. For a refreshingly balanced and sympathetic account of this, with new evidence brilliantly assessed, see Florent VAN OMMESLAEGHE, *Jean Chrysostome et Eudoxie*, in *Anal. Boll.*, Tome 97, Fasc. 1-2, 1979, pp. 146-159, especially p. 151.

APPENDIX IV



MAP OF CONSTANTINOPLE

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