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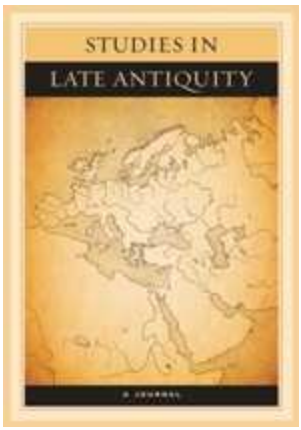


# Imperial Women and Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity



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**Imperial Women and Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity**

Between the fourth and the sixth centuries, a large number of Christian clerics were exiled, often, but not exclusively, as a result of theological dispute. Nearly 500 of such cases are recorded, although the actual number was potentially much higher.[1] While the legal circumstances, experiences, and commemoration of male exiled clerics have attracted attention – not the least, by other contributors to this volume – it has gone so far largely unnoticed that, of these c. 500 cases, a statistically not insignificant 25 per cent involve the activities of women in some form.[2]

Some of these women were themselves exiled.[3] More frequently than as exiles themselves, however, women appear as supporting characters within the drama of clerical exile. Their roles were varied, as Figure 1 shows.[4] Without any further gloss, this graph appears to present a predominantly positive relationship between exiled clerics and women. They appear among exiled clerics' correspondents[5], as tending to them during exile through the provision of food, books, hospitality or companionship[6], or at the receiving end of exiled clerics' liturgical or charismatic pursuits, such as preaching or the performance of miracles. The types of women recorded as involved in clerical exile are equally varied. They range from deaconesses to pagans, from Christian virgins to prostitutes, and from slaves and peasants to family members of exiled clerics and aristocrats.

**[Figure 1**: Activities of women during clerical exile]

The largest group of women is, however, belonging to the imperial family: wives, sisters, sisters-in-law, mothers, daughters and nieces of emperors (see the Appendix).[7] This is because much of our information about clerical exile derives from the fifth- and sixth century 'Church historians' (above all, Rufinus, Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, the Anonymous

of Cyzikus, Theodore lector, John of Ephesus). These authors had a deep interest in the relationship between Church and Empire.[8] Therefore, the women about whom they wrote were, almost inevitably, often those of ruling families.

Attention to the role of imperial women in clerical exile has so far rested predominantly on just two, spectacular cases: the clash between John Chrysostom of Constantinople and the empress Eudoxia that allegedly led to the bishop's two banishments in 403 and 404; and the conflict between Pulcheria, Theodosius II's sister, and Nestorius of Constantinople, who was deposed in 431 and banished in 435.[9] Yet, despite this relatively late date of many of our sources, the involvement of imperial women is recorded for as early as the aftermath of the council of Nicaea in 325, after which exile of deposed and condemned clerics became a standard, if often ineffective tool in imperial attempts to guarantee the peace of the Church.[10] As Figure 2 shows, imperial female involvement then appears persistently throughout the period, emerging, in particular, around times of great doctrinal controversy, such as under the non-Nicene emperors Constantius II and Valens, at the time of the Christological councils of the fifth century (Ephesus, 431; Ephesus II, 449; Chalcedon, 451), and during the struggles between supporters and opponents of the council of Chalcedon under emperors Justin and Justinian in the sixth.[11]

[**Figure 2**: Chronological distribution of the involvement of imperial women in clerical exile (ordered by start date of the exile in question)]

Of course, the data at our disposable are still rather limited. Nonetheless, they are more abundant than has hitherto been acknowledged, and have a long chronological spread. This provides an opportunity to attempt a reconstruction of the nature of the involvement of imperial women in clerical exile during late antiquity that is more comprehensive than the anecdotal approaches focused on single imperial women undertaken until now. More

importantly, the data also provide an opportunity to understand how this involvement was subsequently reported and to what purpose, for our authors almost exclusively write about deceased imperial women. The article argues that while there were important continuities (such as a predominantly negative reporting), the ways in which late antique authors describe the complicity of imperial women in clerical exile changed twice between the fourth and the sixth centuries. While there is relative restraint in the face of involvement of imperial women in the exiling of clerics in sources dated to the fourth century, this changes to outspokenly negative portrayals of their involvement in the fifth, and then changes to ambiguous assessments (a mixture of negative and positive judgment) towards the end of the fifth and into the early sixth. This means that a positive spin on imperial women's interference with clerical exile appears relatively late. More important, I will show that such positive spin almost exclusively appears in sources that were either produced by opponents of the council of Chalcedon, which had taken place in 451 to define the nature of Christ, or in Chalcedonian sources drawing on such resistance texts. These Christians, whom modern scholars call Miaphysites as they rejected the Chalcedonian formula of Christ's 'two natures and one person', were above all located in Syria, Egypt and Palestine.[12]

The article will argue that these changes in representation needs to be seen in conjunction with the now very well established real changes in female imperial roles between the fourth and the sixth centuries, in particular the increasing incorporation of women into imperial expressions of power from the late fourth century on.[13] This means that it was not only gender that affected the representation of these women, but also their social role. I will show that Greek and Latin patristic literature was much slower to come to terms with changes in female imperial roles than more marginalized Christian authors, such as Syriac exiles. As such, the study of clerical exile provides a window into the multiplicity of early Christian historiographical traditions regarding the representation of women, and imperial women specifically. These conclusions will also help to set the well-known incidents of female

imperial involvement with clerical exile, that of Eudoxia and Pulcheria, into a wider context. The pronounced negative attitude towards Eudoxia and Pulcheria that previous scholars have noted were by no means a freak occurrence. However, it may not be accidental that such attitudes mostly appear in fifth-century texts, when the empress began to emerge as an important court figure in her own right and, with this, shifted into the view of authors not only as a contemporary character to comment on, but also as a literary device for how to explain events in the past.

In order to establish these conclusions, this article will, firstly, adopt a quantitative approach to late antique reports of imperial women and exile. In addition to trying to determine the authenticity of imperial women's activities in this area, this will seek to reveal, on a numerical level, how late antique authors presented such behavior. The remainder of the article will submit to further scrutiny the representation, over the course of late antiquity, of one type of imperial female involvement in clerical exile: the imperial woman's patronage of exiled clerics. While this scrutiny will be, for the major part, of a qualitative nature, to unpick the broad trends identified in the first part of the article, it will also employ digital social network analysis. However, rather than just identifying 'real' social networks between women and exiled clerics, I will use this method and the underlying social theories to further uncover narrative patterns in the representation of imperial women's roles in clerical exile in late antique texts. This builds on observations made in the preface to this volume about the usefulness of network analysis as a tool to reveal and visualise how late antique authors constructed networks based on how they imagined social relationships to function. It is similar to the approach adopted by Richard Flower in his contribution to this volume.[14]

## Late Antique Assessments of Imperial Women and Clerical Exile: The Numbers

Looking at clerical exile cases quantitatively, across late antiquity as a whole, and focusing on the role of imperial women exclusively, Figure 3 reveals that the predominance of incidents of female support for exiled clerics suggested by Figure 1 is misleading. Stories about conflict, mostly, where an imperial woman brought about the exile of a cleric, far outweigh those of female support for exiled clerics.[15] Against this background, the cases of Eudoxia and Pulcheria mentioned above appear relatively normal. Support – by which I mean acts of patronage such as provision of material sustenance or intercession for a cleric with the emperor either before or during exile – was mostly associated with types of women other than imperial, particularly aristocrats or ascetics.[16]

[**Figure 3**: Imperial women: enemies or patrons of exiled clerics?]

It is, of course, entirely possible that imperial women frequently clashed with prominent churchmen in this period. This was not because of their scheming female nature – even though, as we shall see, this would usually be the view of contemporaries – but may have been due to a combination of dynastic and structural changes particularly under the Theodosian dynasty (379-450). As Kenneth Holum and Anja Busch have shown, female members of the Theodosian dynasty were promoted to the population as pious and chaste representatives of what the Christian, Nicene empire stood for. This may well have come at the expense and to the annoyance of local bishops, especially in imperial residences where there was spatial proximity between the imperial and the ecclesiastical spheres.[17] Nonetheless, it would be naïve to think that imperial women's endeavors, whether positive or negative, were not also recorded because they made a good story. As Averil Cameron observes, the tendency 'to put the responsibility for events good and bad onto a woman' was widespread among late antique authors.[18] The persistent appearance of imperial women in conflict with

exiled clerics in source from across and not just the Theodosian period already confirms this point.

There are two additional reasons why we should practice circumspection in the handling of stories of imperial female involvement in clerical exile. First, as Figure 4 shows, imperial women's actions relating to clerical exile were predominantly seen as having had unfortunate or even impious consequences over the entire period under study. This widespread negative reporting is remarkable, because there were occasions when imperial women apparently brought about the removal of a cleric who was almost universally seen as troublesome, such as Pulcheria seems to have done with Nestorius in the 430s. Yet, while we hear much criticism of this state of affairs from marginalized Nestorian sources, Christian writers who are hostile to Nestorius choose to be almost completely silent about her role.[19] The only source that openly celebrates Pulcheria's interference are the Coptic Acts of Ephesus.[20] In sum, even when there were reasons to report an imperial woman's conflict with a cleric positively, this was generally not done. As Figure 5 shows, the vast majority of reporting is negative. The case of Eudoxia, famously portrayed as a latter-day Jezebel, the biblical persecutor of the prophet Eliah (1 Kings 21), is only a particularly well documented example here.[21]

[**Figure 4**: Late antique assessment of imperial women's interference with clerical exile overall]

[**Figure 5**: Late antique assessment of female behavior in 'conflict' stories]

Second, and more importantly, the negative reporting just described was, to a large extent, independent of whether a woman's actions amounted to conflict with an exiled cleric or his support. It should not surprise us that stories about imperial women's endeavors to have clerics banished were, on the whole, considered very critically, because these amounted to

transgressions into administrative and legal, that is, male spheres. As Figure 6 shows, however, incidents of an imperial woman's patronage – something that we may consider as the 'female' realm and an empress' duty – could also be reported very negatively.[22]

[**Figure 6**: Late antique assessment of imperial women as patrons of exiled clerics]

Figure 6, admittedly, presents an overall reasonably balanced assessment of imperial female patronage for exiled clerics. But Figure 6 and also Figure 5 already indicate an idiosyncrasy of the positive reporting on such behaviour: it appears mostly in Miaphysite sources (which includes John Rufus noted in Figure 5[23]). In addition, this chart, and those presented by Figs. 3, 4 and 5, are, however, somewhat skewed by the fact that their underlying data are not related to change over time. In the following, I will trace this rhetorical development, beginning with a discussion of how interference of imperial women with clerical exile was reported in the fourth century, during the Nicene controversy, before moving on to the fifth and sixth centuries. In doing so, I will focus on stories of support, where imperial women are recorded as patrons of exiled clerics. This is not only for the sake of expediency or because, compared with stories of conflict, these have received much less attention by historians. Stories of female imperial patronage are also a useful case study, because they provide insight, on the one hand, into powerful traditions of negative gender stereotyping to explain complex political and theological processes in past and present. On the other hand, they also provide insight into moments in which these traditions were ignored or reassessed.

**Athanasius and Constantinian Women in the Aftermath of Nicaea**

Scattered across the works of Athanasius, Nicene bishop of Alexandria (328-373), are references that connect several female members of the Constantinian dynasty to the struggles

that followed the council of Nicaea in 325, at which the views of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius on the relationship between God the Father and Christ the Son had been condemned. Constantine had banished both Arius for refusing to accept the creed that the council ratified, and a number of bishops, among them Eusebius of Nicomedia, for continuing to back Arius after the council. However, within a few years the bishops who supported Arius regained Constantine's favor, were recalled from banishment, and, at least as reported in the Nicene literature, initiated a counter-offensive in favour of Arius and against Nicene bishops led by Eusebius of Nicomedia. This was to last for decades, bolstered by the patronage they subsequently received from Constantine's son, Constantius II. Athanasius himself now was either banished or put to flight five times.[24]

On the second of these occasions, after he had been deposed by a council in Antioch in early 339, Athanasius fled to Rome, whose bishop Julius was a friend.[25] Here, as he himself tells us in his *Defense before Constantius*, written between 353 and 357, he was received by Eutropia, Constantine's half-sister and aunt of the then ruling emperors Constantius II and Constans.[26] Contact with Eutropia may have been through her brother, Flavius Dalmatius, who had given Athanasius military protection after his previous deposition at the council of Tyre in 335.[27] Eutropia, in turn, seems to have given Athanasius access to the senatorial aristocracy of Rome and to her nephew Constans, who eventually returned Athanasius to his see. Her activities can, however, only be deduced from her social network, not from Athanasius' description of their relationship.[28] Athanasius mentions only that she – who had been his host in Rome – had been killed by the usurper Magnentius, probably in the summer of 350.[29]

Other women of the Constantinian dynasty appear in Athanasius' *History of the Arians*, a polemical narrative text he wrote in late 357, for possibly Egyptian monks.[30] The relevant passages can all be found in three subsequent chapters towards the beginning of the extant text (chs. 4-5). Some of these women, Constantine's mother Helena and Basilina, wife of

Constantine's half-brother Julius Constantius, bring about the banishment of bishops (on which see the Appendix). However, Athanasius also makes a brief mention of women lending patronage to his opponents. After giving a longish list of other bishops who were also banished by imperial letters, Athanasius turns to Marcellus of Ancyra, who had been deposed at a council of Constantinople in 336 and then banished on instigation of Eusebius of Nicomedia, who had access to the emperor through his 'women' (para tw=n gunaikw=n sustasi/n).

Athanasius' interest in these 'women' derived from his desire to show that Constantine's turning against Nicene bishops was because he had been tricked. While the architect of this deception was Eusebius of Nicomedia, he could succeed only because he had help from the laity, who should have stayed out of ecclesiastical affairs. The latter included imperial officials, to whom Athanasius turns immediately after his account of female complicity in the banishment of Nicene bishops.[31] Yet, that Athanasius apparently chose to open his *History of the Arians*[32] with this complicity demonstrates his belief in the narrative power of the topos of 'womanly influence', which was widespread in classical and biblical literature.[33] It set the scene for Constantine's change of mind about the 'Arian' heresy: While not entirely without guilt, he was a victim of female abuse of power, which was a constant throughout human history.

Nonetheless, it is remarkable how little Athanasius made of this story, when compared with later accounts of similar acts of female patronage for heretics discussed below. The motivations or exact involvement of Constantinian women to facilitate communication between the previously banished Eusebius and Constantine is barely reconstructable from Athanasius' account. Athanasius also remains vague on their identity. If we believe Athanasius that female intervention for Eusebius actually happened, it is possible that one of the women was Basilina, since we know from Ammianus Marcellinus that she may have been related to Eusebius of Nicomedia.[34] On the other hand, Basilina already died in 333, some

time before Marcellus' deposition, and at a very young age. Perhaps Athanasius was trying to imply that Constantinian 'women' had aided Eusebius in his own return from banishment and into the emperor's favour. This is at least what later authors suspected.[35] In any case, Athanasius does not provide us with further clues.

It is also remarkable, again in comparison with later accounts of exile, how little Athanasius made of the support he himself had received from Eutropia. This may be due to the purpose of the *Defense before Constantius*. The *Defense* was written to clear himself of the charge that he had induced Constantius' brother, Constans, to invade his brother's territory, and had then conspired with Magnentius, who had killed Constans in 350. It would have been impolitic to draw attention to the details of his relationship with Eutropia, who, as was mentioned above, may have given Athanasius access to Constans. In the *Defense*, Athanasius suggests that he had never sought an audience with Constans.[36] His relationship with Eutropia is mentioned only to prove Athanasius' innocence of conspiracy with Magnentius. Here, Eutropia was useful to support Athanasius' point that he had never been in contact with the usurper. For, as he says, how could he have conspired with the man who had killed Eutropia, his host? Eutropia was Constantius' aunt – as highlighted by Athanasius himself – and reference to her murder also points at the bond between Athanasius and the emperor, his addressee, to evoke a shared sense of grief. Eutropia is mentioned nowhere else in Athanasius' writings. More emphasis of his link to her would have made him awkwardly comparable to the 'Arians' who, as he himself established in the *History of the Arians*, succeeded only through the support of women.

Athanasius gives us some information about imperial women's involvement in clerical exile, but what he has to say is only noteworthy in comparison to other fourth-century authors commenting on the exile of Nicene bishops. These completely ignored the role of imperial women, even though some of them had much to say about the dismal behavior of emperors.[37] Taken on its own merits, however, Athanasius' account of imperial women's actions is rather

subdued. This changed towards the end of the fourth century, along with the whole manner of the reporting of imperial women's intervention in clerical exile.

**The Sister of the Emperor: Constantia and the 'Arian' presbyter**

From the late fourth century on, Christian authors became much more explicit about imperial women's actions with regard to the exile of clerics. This is not only the case for imperial women who allegedly brought about the banishment of famous bishops, such as Eudoxia, her daughter Pulcheria and others (see Appendix), but also for those women supporting exiled bishops. A series of authors from across the fifth century record the story of Constantia, wife of Licinius and Constantine's half-sister, who allegedly aided in the return of Arius from exile (and, in one version, of Eusebius of Nicomedia too). The story strongly reminds us of what Eutropia – interestingly, Constantia's sister – had done for Athanasius, which may well have been known in the circles in which Constantia's story developed. In this respect it is significant that the *Defense before Constantius* and the *History of the Arians* were both part of the famous *Apologienkorpus*, a collection of Athanasius' apologetic and polemical writings assembled in Constantinople in the early fifth century.[38] Many fifth-century authors took a similar perspective as the *History of the Arians* and vilified a Constantinian women who supported exiled clerics – albeit a different one than those Athanasius had mentioned – rather than taking up the more restrained view of the *Defense before Constantius* which they also may have known. Whatever the influence on these authors was, it was considerably amplified.

The following will first compare the different accounts of the Constantia story, as told between the late fourth and the mid-fifth century, by the church historians Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. This detailed comparison will show that the story was almost certainly fabricated. I will then submit the story to a re-reading in light of modern network theories. This will show that fifth-century church historians had a similar perception on how

information (in this case, 'heretical' information) disseminates as some modern sociologists. However, given that such sociological models can be criticized as reductive, this similarity adds to the impression that Constantia's network and her role within it presented by the church historians was, in fact, a narrative creation to aid these authors' literary aims. Finally, I will consider the retelling of the story in two further texts written in the second half of the fifth century, the *Dialogue against the Arians, Sabellians and Photinians* by Vigilius of Thapsa and the Church history of the so-called Anonymous of Cyzikus. Unlike the earlier church historians, who were mostly concerned with presenting the spread of 'Arianism' in the fourth century, Vigilius and the Anonymous of Cyzikus may have retold the story in a more direct response to current affairs: in Vigilius' case, the persecution of Nicene Christians in Vandal Africa; in that of the Anonymous of Cyzikus, the emergence of Miaphysite resistance to the council of Chalcedon, and female imperial support of it.

The story of Constantia and Arius appears first in Rufinus' Latin *Church History*, published c. 403/4, though given that this text may be a translation of the earlier lost *Church History* by Gelasius, it could already have been current towards the end of the fourth century.[39] It tells how, after the banishment of Arius in 325, a presbyter who was one of his followers persuaded Constantia, Constantine's sister and widow of Licinius, with whom he had become familiar, that Arius had been unjustly condemned. This happened shortly after the death of Helena, Constantine's mother. Before Constantia died, she commended the presbyter to her brother Constantine, urging him to listen to the man so as not to taint his empire with the punishment of the innocent. Constantine accordingly recalled Arius and sent him for judgment to a synod in Jerusalem which, as it was controlled by 'Arian' bishops, rehabilitated him. However, when Arius tried to return to Alexandria, the city's bishop, Alexander, and Athanasius, Alexander's deacon and successor, refused to receive him. Constantine also entrusted his will to Constantia's presbyter on his deathbed. The presbyter then passed the

will and his influence on to Constantius II. As a consequence, Constantius enforced the reinstatement of Arius in Alexandria.[40]

No extant text of Athanasius, our contemporary witness to the events after Nicaea, mentions Constantia. This is not to say that Gelasius or Rufinus did not draw on other accounts about the women close to Eusebius of Nicomedia, and, inspired by these, read between the lines of Athanasius' polemics, in particular with regard to Athanasius' unspecified 'women' around Eusebius of Nicomedia. The fifth-century heterodox church historian Philostorgius reports that Constantia was acquainted with Eusebius of Nicomedia and advised him to sign the creed of Nicaea.[41] That Constantia knew Eusebius is not surprising, given that she and Licinius had resided in Nicomedia at the same time as Eusebius became bishop there.[42] Philostorgius may have also deployed the standard ecclesiastical misogynistic invective of other church historians: Eusebius of Nicomedia (who he sympathized with) was tricked by a woman into signing a devious creed. Nonetheless, his story shows that Constantia's acquaintance with Eusebius may have been common knowledge throughout the fourth and into the early fifth century. From this it would have been easily deduced that she must have been aware of Arius' predicament as well.

Still, Rufinus' story about Constantia and the presbyter is clearly a fabrication. This can be concluded from the fact that the presbyter is left anonymous and, more importantly, from mistakes in Rufinus' chronology. To begin with, Rufinus lets Constantia die after Helena and before Arius was recalled. However, Helena probably died after 329, while the recall of Arius should be dated to 327/8 already.[43] Even more importantly, Rufinus also lets Arius live on into the reign of Constantius, while we know he died in 336, a year before Constantine.[44] Rufinus' dates shift the events described into the 330s, suggesting that he (or even Gelasius) were interested in deflecting the blame of Arius' reinstatement from Constantine onto Constantius II.

The 'synoptic' church historians, writing a little later in the mid-fifth century – Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret of Cyrrhus – rectify this chronology. Socrates, on whose text the other two, especially Sozomen, depend, notes that his discovery of Athanasius' writings led him to recognize the unreliability of Rufinus, whom he had previously used as a source for the events of Nicaea.[45] As a result, Socrates, and the other two, correctly report, following Athanasius, that Arius died before Constantine. Nevertheless, none of the three give up on the story of Constantia and the presbyter altogether. On the contrary, they relate it enthusiastically, with revealing modifications.[46] First and probably under Athanasius' influence, they increase Eusebius of Nicomedia's and his friends' role in the story, making them responsible for the presbyter's machinations. Arius also got a companion, the deacon Euzoïus. Second, they suppress the presence of Helena. This was important to keep the right chronology of events, but censorship of her connection with an 'Arian' empress may also have derived from Helena's status as the model for the pious empress that Helena had by this time received.[47] Instead, another, more suitably evil empress appeared. Immediately after pouring scorn over Rufinus' chronology, Socrates spins his story on. He reports that as soon as the presbyter had entered Constantius' household, he, instigated by Eusebius of Nicomedia and his cronies, struck up a friendship with the 'empress' (this must be Eusebia, Constantius II's second wife[48]) and her eunuchs, above all, the chief-eunuch Eusebius. As a result, the entire palace, including eventually the emperor, began to follow 'Arian' teaching. Through the imperial officials who worked in the palace the 'Arian' doctrine was also disseminated beyond, and soon all households in the city (Constantinople?), and eventually the whole empire, began to quarrel about it (e)n de\ th= ? po/lei kaq ) e(ka/sthn oi)ki/an dialektiko\j po/lemoj h)=n).[49] This version is repeated by Sozomen, but not by Theodoret, who concludes his story with Constantius receiving the presbyter and, on his and Eusebius of Nicomedia's advice, expelling Athanasius from Alexandria (which refers to the events in 339).[50]

It is clear that the synoptic church historians, while having their doubts, considered the story too good to lose. It would, however, be rash to assume that this was an entirely cynical move. Fifth-century authors interested in the formulation, acceptance of and opposition to the Nicene creed were faced with the challenge of recording complex processes that had taken place a century earlier and that, due to a lack of documentation, or at least unbiased documentation, could be only dimly understood. They therefore clung to a plausible explanation of the dissemination of the 'Arian' heresy. Whatever its veracity, its plausibility to them should not surprise if we consider the story in the light of modern network theory.

The story's perspective on how information spreads is in fact not dissimilar to what modern sociologists have postulated. In his famous study 'The Strength of Weak Ties', Mark Granovetter argues that flow of information is facilitated through so-called 'brokers' of social networks. 'Brokers' are not part of densely connected social clusters themselves, but connect such clusters and also potential 'outliers' (individuals connected to a larger social network through one other individual) with each other. 'Brokers' therefore bridge 'structural holes' within a larger social network, which arise through contacts of reciprocal need. Without them, social networks would essentially trade the same knowledge.[51] Other network analysts point at the power of informal or horizontal social relationships, created, for example, by kinship, friendship or even just spatial proximity, that cut across vertical or hierarchical relationships created by formal institutions.[52] Taken together, these models suggest that the most successful social 'brokers' are those who have informal relationships with a number of tightly knit, but isolated social clusters. Network scientists have developed algorithms to reveal such dynamics, in particular the 'betweenness-centrality measure', which calculates the shortest connection between all actors in a network.

Figure 7 shows a diagram of the social relationships described by the synoptic church historians, which have been calculated by this measure (size of the nodes reflects who has the shortest connections across the network, that is, functions as 'broker').[53] The diagram shows

clearly that these authors, just like modern social network analysts, suspected that information, in this case, heretical teaching, passed through 'structural holes' between otherwise unconnected, but tightly knit sub-groups, in this case between the ecclesiastical, institutional groups of heretics on the right (dark blue nodes) and the Constantinian kinship group on the left (light blue nodes). The bridge over this 'structural hole' was, in turn, created through the informal, domestic relationship between the presbyter, the 'broker', and Constantia, who acted as a gatekeeper to her male relatives, but was also interested in new information to save her brother from perdition. What the graph cannot show fully is that it was not just teaching that passed through the 'structural hole', but, in accordance with ancient patronage habit, also the presbyter, that is, the 'broker' himself, who eventually ended up in Constantius' household. The upper half of the diagram shows the network created through this process, as described by Socrates and Sozomen. As we can see, this subsequent scenario imagined by these two church historians mirrors what had happened earlier with Constantia: the presbyter is the 'broker' who connects the group around Eusebius of Nicomedia with the empress and her eunuchs, who act as gatekeepers to the emperor and his imperial officials (this group of 'court members' appears as dark green nodes). It is then implied the imperial officials again speak to their wives, so it continues to be the informal, domestic relationships connected to the o)iki/a (light green nodes) that explains the spread of heresy and the quarrels around the form of the right Christian faith. What is remarkable about the algorithm underlying the diagram in Figure 7 is that those it has calculated as 'brokers' purely on the number and distribution of their social connections, and not by some other attributes, are indeed those who the Nicene church historians identify as chiefly responsible for this spread (Arius, the 'Arian' presbyter, Constantia, Eusebia, Constantius II, the imperial officials).

**[Figure 7**: Social network that led to the recall of Arius; based on Rufinus, Historia ecclesiastica 10.12; Socrates, Historia ecclesiastica 1.25; Sozomen, Historia ecclesiastica

2.27; Theodoret, Historia ecclesiastica 2.3; Anonymous of Cyzikus, Historia ecclesiastica 3.12; Vigilius of Thapsa, Contra Arianos, Sabellianos, Photinianos dialogus 1.1-3.]

Given that modern sociologists come to the same conclusions, the church historians' ideas on how information circulated may well have been true on a general level. However, engagement with further social network theories reveals that these ideas are just that: a model of what may have happened. They help us to identify the story not as a repository of facts, but as a rhetorical construct. It should, in fact, be noted that Granovetter's model of strong and weak ties has also been criticized. Above all, it does not account for the strong tendency of individuals to strike connections with other individuals of the same social background, status and mentality ('homophily').[54] Social networks may therefore, usually, be of a much more homogeneous nature than presented by the church historians (and Granovetter), and provide less opportunity for an 'outsider' to act as broker of information. Historians have indeed argued that the events in the aftermath of Nicaea were far less binary than our sources suggest. For example, we may remember that Eusebius of Nicomedia was, most likely, a kinsman of Constantine and Constantius. There must, therefore, have been reasonable overlap between his and the emperor's networks, as there was, probably also between those of Nicene and ante-Nicene bishops, whose allegiances shifted over time anyway.[55] In fact, the heterodox church historian Philostorgius reports that it was Eusebius of Nicomedia who the dying Constantine entrusted with his will to give to Constantius.[56] Eusebius of Nicomedia therefore may not have needed the help of an anonymous presbyter to gain access to either emperor, which, again, confirms that the presbyter was probably an invention. The Nicene church historians, just like Granovetter, hence had a reductive view on the spread of what they thought of as 'heresy', blaming a woman and her anonymous and lowly household dependent.

This reductive view was probably also because, looking to explain the puzzling inconsistency of the first Christian emperor's dealings with the 'Arian' faction and his son

Constantius' 'semi-Arian' sympathies, the story not only provided the most plausible, but also the most convenient explanation. Emphasizing the deception of a woman by an unnamed lowly man relieved fifth-century authors from scrutinizing the potentially embarrassing behavior of the named imperial men involved more closely. Constantia was less important, not only because she was a woman, but because she was the widow of the pagan persecutor Licinius. The story also allowed Constantine to be exonerated from any willing or conscious complicity. Here, Socrates is the most cautious, as he leaves it largely to his readers to draw their conclusions about the emperor's true faith. Sozomen instead doubts that Constantine could have believed the presbyter, wondering whether he did not rather want to indulge his sister. Elsewhere Sozomen, alone among the church historians, adds that Constantia was also behind recalling Eusebius of Nicomedia himself from the exile Constantine had imposed on him after he had refused to give up contact with Arius.[57] In Theodoret's version, Constantine remains oblivious about the presbyter's real nature altogether, and it is only revealed when the presbyter hooks up with Constantius, who, everyone could agree, was a villain.[58]

Importantly, for all of the authors who reported the Constantia and Arius story, it also allowed to ground Constantine's behaviour in Scripture, which provided it with greater truth. A slightly later text than the synoptic church histories, Vigilius of Thapsa's *Dialogue against the Arians, Sabellians and Photinians*, written in Vandal North Africa, also recounted the return of Arius from exile with reference to the story of the presbyter.[59] The text, composed in or after 484, records an imaginary debate between Athanasius and the leaders of well-known heresies in front of a judge named Probus, whose victor was, of course, the bishop of Alexandria. The Constantia story, which appears in the preface, served Vigilius to situate this debate historically, but also within a divine plan. Without beating around the bush, Vigilius presents the presbyter as the devil, who similarly as he had done in snake-form with Eve, induced Constantia to pass on the 'fruit of the poisonous word' (*pomum uenenati uerbi*) to her brother. Constantine, in turn, like the first man, unknowingly deviated from the right path

(*exemplo primi hominis, nescius per transgressionis uiam dilabitur*). None of the other authors spelled this line of thought out quite as crudely as Vigilius. Yet, it is clear that this biblical dimension is present also in the Church histories, aligning what had happened after Nicaea with the trajectory of human history, signposted by the deception of a woman and marked by the fallibility of a man.

The fifth-century authors who seized on the story of Constantia and the presbyter were hence determined by the limits of historical research of the time, as well as led by their will to exonerate Constantine and to position the events in a greater divine scheme. Yet, the synoptic church historians perhaps also found the domestic politics presented by the Constantia story convincing, because it reflected imperial customs of their own time. It seems to have been institutionalized and generally accepted practice at the Theodosian court to approach women and eunuchs to gain access to the emperor, as petition habits show.[60] Our authors retrospectively applied this situation to the time of Constantine also, perhaps because they understood from Athanasius' mentioning of 'women' as gatekeepers to Constantine that the situation then would have been similar. In this they were probably misled by Athanasius' polemics, because the kind of power Theodosian imperial women wielded is unlikely for the Constantinian dynasty.[61] We can perhaps note in the synoptic church historians a general uneasiness about this power and the resulting overlap between secular and ecclesiastical business.

A direct response to concrete events – a *Sitz im Leben* – of the synoptic church historians' retelling of the Constantia story is, however, difficult to establish. Yet, such a direct response may be detected in later texts that include the story, the already mentioned *Dialogue* by Vigilius of Thapsa and the Church history of the so-called Anonymous of Cyzikus, written c. 475. Both Vigilius of Thapsa's and the Anonymous of Cyzikus's version of the Constantia story were far shriller than the synoptic church historians', perhaps because they wrote in more uncertain times. Vigilius, the bishop of Thapsa in Byzacena from at least 484, clearly

composed his *Dialogue* as a comment on present-day religious conflict between Nicene and Homoian Christians in Vandal North Africa. Vigilius may have been banished to or at least had resided in Constantinople some time before, where he could have picked up the Constantia story, but this is uncertain. He repeats the chronological mistakes made by Rufinus, so could also have followed a Latin tradition of the story.[62] It is unlikely that he was interested in Constantia or imperial women beyond their convenient ability to gender his text and, through this, denigrate his opponents.

For the Anonymous of Cyzikus, interest in contemporary imperial women may have been even more acute. Of all the church historians, the Anonymous' account of the Constantia story is the longest and most elaborate. It is over long stretches held in dialogue format between Constantia and her brother. They are represented as united in grief over the death of Helena – here erroneously described as the mother of Constantia also – which served to partly also exonerate Constantia, tricked by a 'top-rate flatterer' (qw=pa a)kroqi/nion) during a dark hour of her life.[63] The Anonymous also, as the first among the authors who mention the story, gives the presbyter a name, Eutokios ('he who aids in childbirth'). This may be to underline his hybrid nature as an interloper, not only between heretics and the imperial household, but also between the sexes. Yet, it also may be a metaphor for the benefit of a contemporary audience much used to debate around the birth and human nature of Christ. By his own admission, the Anonymous' Church history aimed to make a contribution to these very debates.

As detailed at the beginning of his church history, the Anonymous was the son of a presbyter from Cyzikus who lived in Bithynia. From here, he witnessed the usurpation of Basiliscus against emperor Zeno in 475, which triggered fierce theological debates. A sect of heretics who the Anonymous calls 'Eutychians' – followers of the archimandrite Eutyches whose teaching can be understood as denying Christ's complete (and hence imperfect) humanity – had gained influence on the palace (ta\ basi/leia) and turned Basiliscus

against the right faith. Outrageously, they, or rather their followers in Bithynia with whom the Anonymous debated, claimed continuity from the council of Nicaea. The Anonymous therefore set out to write the history of that council, to demonstrate that, if anything, his opponents were in continuity with heretics, namely 'Arians'.[64]

It is unlikely that those who took theological influence on Basiliscus' 'palace' were followers of Eutyches (even though he had also been condemned at the council of Chalcedon in 451). Rather, for the Anonymous this was short-hand for Miaphysite Christians. Basiliscus had recalled some Miaphysite bishops who had been banished previously, Timothy Aelurus of Alexandria and Peter of Antioch (the Fuller), and circulated an imperial statement of faith that referenced all ecumenical councils, bar that of Chalcedon. Basiliscus' motives are obscure, but what is important in this context is that rumors circulated that his wife, Aelia Zenonis, and monks from Alexandria were behind the emperor's actions. In addition, it may have been Basiliscus' sister Verina, widow of the previous emperor Leo, who had instigated his usurpation.[65] Whether all of this was true or not, it may explain the Anonymous' interest in female influence to end the exile of heretics, for which the story of Constantia provided him with a powerful moral tale.

Yet there may be another contemporary context for the Anonymous' fascination with Constantia, which brings us back to the theme of how assessment of imperial women's support for the exiled changed over the course of late antiquity. Imperial women had indeed begun to support Miaphysite Christians only a short while before the Anonymous of Cyzikus wrote. It is to Miaphysite accounts of such support that we now turn.

## The 'Believing Queens':[66] Theodora and Eudocia

The story of Constantia should not lead us to assume that imperial women supporting exiled clerics were always a rhetorical construct. As detailed above, Athanasius was certainly

assisted by Eutropia and several other cases listed in the Appendix, some of which will be discussed below, have a historical foundation. Nonetheless, such cases documenting social realities could still be reported about quite differently. In the following, it will be argued that from the end of the fifth century, and in Miaphysite sources, we see the emergence of a positive portrayal of the empress as a patron of the exiled, in a startling departure from both Athanasius' embarrassed restraint and the vilification by fifth-century authors described above.

Among empresses who supported exiled clerics, the most famous is, undoubtedly, Theodora, wife of Justinian (d. 548). It is well-documented that she assisted and provided for a large number of exiled Miaphysite ascetics and clerics, even though her husband was a fierce defender of the council of Chalcedon. For example, according to John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, a hagiography of Miaphysite holy people written in the 560s, she hid the bishop of Constantinople, Anthimus from the emperor's anger in the imperial palace, after he had been deposed and banished as a Miaphysite sympathizer in 536. This allowed the holy man to live a life of ascetic virtue. He was only discovered after the empress' death.[67] In the same year of 536, Theodosius, the Miaphysite bishop of Alexandria, who, according to Chalcedonian sources had been Theodora's choice for the see,[68] was also deposed and banished. He was sent with three-hundred of his clerics, the Syriac holy man Z'ura and bishop John of Hephaistopolis, to a fortress near Constantinople, where Theodora 'who was perhaps appointed queen by God to be a support for the persecuted' provided them with food and money.[69] John of Hephaistopolis later feigned illness, was transferred by the empress first to the palace and then to an imperial villa outside Constantinople and from there managed, albeit without Theodora's knowledge, to go on trips across Asia minor to ordain priests.[70] Already earlier, towards the beginning of Justinian's reign,[71] Theodora had, again according to John Ephesus, asked the emperor to transfer Mare of Amida, banished to Petra in Arabia, to the more pleasant surroundings of Alexandria, and, when Mare had died, she took care that his

relics were returned to Amida. The sixth-century hagiographer of Severus, the famous bishop of Antioch who had lived in hiding in Egypt, but had come to Constantinople in 536 for cross-confessional conversations, reports how the empress helped Severus escape after the talks broke down.[72]

Figure 8 shows a network diagram that visualizes Theodora's intervention in clerical exile, drawn from the Migration of Faith database. It demonstrates that she was involved, or reported to have been involved, in banishing clerics, but to a far greater extent she extended patronage on the exiled. The contrast with her husband Justinian's behavior is striking.[73] The contrast was perhaps not unintended. Under Justinian's predecessor Justin (d. 527), his uncle, many Miaphysite leaders and their followers had been banished or escaped arrest, including Mare of Amida and Severus of Antioch just mentioned. In the 530s, Justinian attempted compromise on various occasions, and it is probably in this context that we have to locate Theodora's activities. It is difficult to ascertain her independent agency amidst the polemics from both Miaphysite and Chalcedonian quarters. Many historians believe she was a firm Miaphysite herself since her youth and strategically intervened for her fellow believers with the emperor.[74] This may well be, but it has been shown recently that the majority of her interventions for Miaphysites in exile, and her ostentatious demonstration of her faith generally, came late (around 536), with the agreement of the emperor, and may have been meant to create a climate of benevolence which left open the possibility for reconciliation. In this light, Theodora's patronage of the exiled appears as part of female imperial *philanthropia*, which, increasingly, came to encompass care for strangers and the oppressed.[75] Furthermore, while her actions provided relief and perhaps facilitated dialogue, they also contributed to a higher surveillance of exiled clerics, which may well have been in the emperor's interest.[76]

**[Figure 8**: Exile Network under Justinian 518-565]

Chalcedonian sources have very little to say about Theodora's support for exiled Miaphysites. To be sure, they, and in particular Liberatus, whose *Breviarium* was written before 568, do not refrain from chronicling her (irrational) Miaphysite sympathies, but limit these to her alleged role in the removal and banishment of bishops: Gaianus of Alexandria in 536, and Silverius of Rome in 537.[77] The silence about Theodora's patronage activities in Chalcedonian sources is perhaps surprising, particularly given negative attitudes to imperial women supporting exiled clerics in Church Histories described above. It could mean that these were far less extensive than made out in Miaphysite sources, or they were simply not that well known. There may, hence, have been practical reasons for these sources omitting or highlighting information about Theodora's actions.

Nonetheless, I would suggest that silence about Theodora's patronage activities in Chalcedonian sources and insistence on them in Miaphysite also had to do with different rhetorical traditions. In the case of Chalcedonian writers, it is very clear that they followed a well-established tradition of styling the empress as the quintessential persecuting woman. As the cases of Eudoxia and Pulcheria and others listed in the Appendix show, this was a more established tradition than vilifying an empress for supporting heretics during exile, of which the Constantia story is a rare, if often retold example. In addition, Theodora's patronage, unlike Constantia's, did not venture into the male sphere, as it limited itself to providing material support during exile and to relics translation, and never questioned the legality of an emperor's or a council's decisions through pleading for the return of an exiled cleric. All of this may explain why Chalcedonian sources focused on Theodora bringing about the banishment of bishops, rather than her lending support to heretics. As for Miaphysite authors, it may have been useful to show that an empress chose to undermine the emperor's authority in persecuted clerics' favor. This was a rhetorical trick widespread across patristic literature,

not just with reference to emperors and empresses, that at once questioned a secular male hierarchy and reconfirmed it in a different, clerical form.[78]

Yet in the case of John of Ephesus such a reading overlooks the generally positive image he depicts of Justinian too.[79] It also overlooks that when it comes to positive reporting of Theodora's support of exiled clerics, Syriac Miaphysite sources were far more outspoken not only than Greek and Latin writers, but than (generally much later) Coptic sources, too.[80] Insisting on Theodora's support for exiled clerics, therefore, could also have to do with the unique roles afforded to women in Syriac Christianity generally, and in Syriac Miaphysite writing specifically.

As Susan Ashbrook Harvey and others have shown, women and the feminine are granted prominence and positive agency in Syriac Christian texts not often seen in other early Christian contexts, and certainly not in the Greek and Latin patristic literature, which would even consider some of these texts with suspicion. On a general level, this could be due to a 'stronger receptivity towards feminine aspects of the divine' deriving from pre-Christian religious traditions and deeper engagement in this region with old-testamentarian salvation history, which often featured women.[81] In this instance, it should be noted that there are several positive royal characters within this salvation history that provided lessons on female strength in times of male distress (for example, Esther who saved her exiled people, Jehosheb who hid her nephew from massacre, or the Pharaoh's daughter, who saved the infant Moses).[82] Earlier Nicene and Chalcedonian writers ignored these, at least when writing about exile. While Miaphysite Syriac authors did also not directly locate Theodora's action within a biblical dimension, the association can at least not be excluded (in particular, with respect to the motif of 'royal women hiding holy men').[83]

On a more specific level, we should remember that, unlike most other authors writing about clerical exile – Nicene, Chalcedonian or Coptic – Miaphysite Syriac authors like John of Ephesus or the sixth-century biographer of Severus of Antioch did so from a direct

experience of a persecuted community. This may have fostered a more pragmatic and less prejudiced assessment of the contributions women made which were desperately needed in times of crisis. As a consequence, women were judged more on the basis of their commitment to the right faith than on their gender. Theodora is, in fact, not the only woman appearing in the work of John of Ephesus. He dedicates much space to Syriac holy women aiding Miaphysite refugees or being banished themselves, the latter a rare occurrence in late antique accounts of clerical exile, which is additionally remarkable for its forgoing of overt gender stereotypes or insistence on standard societal roles.[84]

Further evidence that positive portrayal of an empress supporting the exiled may be an approach specific to Miaphysite Syriac writers derives from the fact that the earliest recording of such an portrayal, even predating John of Ephesus', can also be found in a Miaphysite source, John Rufus' *De obitu Theodosii*. This text, written probably around 500, possibly under Syriac influence but certainly transmitted in Syriac, is a hagiographical account of the death of Theodosius, bishop of Jerusalem 451-3, and the life of a monastic leader in Palestine, Abba Romanus.[85] John Rufus was a former priest at Antioch, who, upon banishment of Antioch's Miaphysite bishop Peter the Fuller in 476, had resettled in Palestine.[86] His *sujet*, the monk Theodosius, had become bishop of Jerusalem in the aftermath of the council of Chalcedon when Palestinian monks riotously objected against their bishop Juvenal's subscription to the council, in the process electing one of their own to the see of Jerusalem. After the riot was suppressed, Theodosius and several other monks were banished (Theodosius later escaped, was re-arrested and died in Constantinople). Among them was Abba Romanus who was sent to Antioch. As John Rufus recounts, five years into his banishment a famine struck Palestine, which was interpreted as divine wrath for the treatment of Romanus. Juvenal, who in the meantime had retaken his see, asked the empress Eudocia to petition emperor Marcian for Romanus' return. As a result of Eudocia's intervention, not only Romanus, but all other banished monks were recalled. Romanus himself settled in

Eleutheropolis where he built a monastery with funds provided by Eudocia.[87] According to the Church History of Zachariah of Mytilene of c. 490, another Miaphysite writer from Palestine, but close to leading Syriac Miaphysites, an empress had also asked Marcian to spare the bishop of Maiuma Peter the Iberian from banishment, another of the riotous monks-turned-bishops. This was most likely also Eudocia.[88]

Eudocia was a special empress. Wife of Theodosius II, she had to leave the imperial court at Constantinople in disgrace – but with her status and wealth – in c. 444, for reasons that cannot be discussed here and were also mysterious to her contemporaries, and settled in Palestine.[89] Her Miaphysite sympathies and contacts, picked up, perhaps, already during an earlier visit to Palestine in 438,[90] are reasonably well attested also by contemporary Chalcedonian sources. Leo, bishop of Rome, wrote her a letter in June 453 trying to convince her of the Chalcedonian formula and asking her to use her influence on persuading the rebellious monks.[91] Whether she used her resources to actively support the riot as is claimed in much later Chalcedonian sources is, however, unclear.[92] It is remarkable that Marcian apparently did very little about Eudocia's subversive activities. In fact, he may have hoped, like Justinian did less than a century later, that the authority Eudocia enjoyed with ecclesiastical opponents would help to de-escalate the situation. It is perhaps in this context that we also have to reinterpret his willingness to give into her demands to have banished monks recalled.[93] In any case, here was an imperial woman in unusual circumstances, an ex-empress, without official power, but with proximity to the ear of the reigning emperor and sympathies for who Chalcedonians considered 'heretics'. For the Anonymous of Cyzikus discussed above, she may have appeared as a striking parallel to Constantia, an ex-empress with continued proximity to the current emperor, her brother Constantine.

According to a Chalcedonian source, Cyril of Scythopolis, writing in the mid-sixth century, Eudocia eventually accepted the decisions of the council (rather dramatically, after her daughter and granddaughter had been kidnapped by the Vandals). This version of events

may well have been meant as a warning for non-conforming empresses in Cyril's own time, like Theodora. Cyril is also the only Chalcedonian source that alludes to Theodora's help for Miaphysite exiles.[94] If Eudocia's Chalcedonian conversion was true, it did not leave a trace in Miaphysite writing. For John Rufus and Zacharias of Mytilene, who both wrote after Eudocia's death in 460, she remained a patron to be celebrated. This suggests, again, that we find ourselves in front of a unique rhetorical tradition of viewing female contribution to the struggle for the right faith.

This is not to say that Syriac Miaphysite sources were always fully positive about these contributions. John of Ephesus, in his *Life of John of Hephaistopolis*, almost makes fun of Theodora. She is completely oblivious of what her protégée John gets up to while she believes him ill at her villa. As a result he is able to make ordination trips as far as Cyprus.[95] John of Ephesus may have wanted to prevent the empress from taking center stage in John of Hephaistopolis' story and reduced her to being a naïve tool in his hero's hands. Furthermore, those who were in exile themselves, like Severus of Antioch, did not mention female imperial support in their writing. Severus, in fact, in a letter to the deacon, and previous eunuch, Misael, written in late 536 after he had left Constantinople, even had harsh words to say about the Theodora's theological integrity.[96] There are no letters preserved from Severus to Theodora directly. This may of course be the consequence of the transmission history of Severus' letters.[97] Yet, his reluctance to draw attention to, let alone to celebrate, an empress' patronage reminds of how Athanasius rhetorically handled the aid he had received from Eutropia. It shows that Nicene, Chalcedonian and Miaphysite exiles (but not their Miaphysite hagiographers) agreed that it was probably best to distance oneself from female influence, in order not to jeopardize authority and the purity of one's doctrinal position. This reminds us that Syriac clerics were still men of their time, and that, when the Syriac Miaphysite church moved towards institutionalization this also came at the expense of excluding women.[98]

Imperial Women and Clerical Exile

Still, Miaphysite sources' generally positive attitude to empresses contrasts with what we find in Chalcedonian and earlier Nicene Latin and Greek sources. But even in this realm, something began to change in the early sixth century. The church history of Theodore lector, a reader at the Hagia Sophia, who may have accompanied his Chalcedonian bishop Macedonius into exile in 511, is a case in point. Theodore reported of the banishment of Nestorius that the empress Pulcheria hated Nestorius, because he had falsely accused her of incest with her brother in front of the *magister officiorum* Paulinus.[99] This makes Theodore the first Chalcedonian author to register Pulcheria's role in Nestorius' banishment, if with a somewhat ambiguous assessment.[100] If this was already a radical departure from the usual distance authors kept between 'heretics' and 'orthodox' empresses in order not to stir up any more rumor or to muddy theological debate, a little later in his church history Theodore even more directly alluded to female imperial defense of the right faith. He reports how, in c. 508, Magna, the sister-in-law of emperor Anastasius, a Miaphysite sympathizer, handed him a book written by the Alexandrian Chalcedonian monk Dorotheus about the council of Chalcedon in the hope it would bring the emperor back to the right faith. Her hopes were quickly squashed, because Anastasius banished Dorotheus to Oasis magna in southern Egypt and condemned the book.[101] Anastasius' household was famously divided over matters of faith, which again, may have suited the emperor in order to keep up at least a pretense of dialogue.[102] Of course, Theodore may have reported the incident to pass criticism on the foolish Magna, who was, after all, the cause of Dorotheus' banishment. Even so, he took the for a Chalcedonian writer unusual step of recording that their cause had been taken up by a female member of the imperial household (which also allowed Dorotheus this test of faith). It was a risk because, since it involved a woman, the story was open to different interpretations. Significantly, Severus of Antioch, the Miaphysite leader, mentioned in his *Apologia Philaletes*, written during his exile after 518, that Dorotheus' book had been handed to Anastasius in a deceitful way (which incidentally also confirms again that also Miaphysites

were not shy of using stereotypes of female behaviour to smear the memory of events).[103] Theodore's choice of including Magna into his account of events is, therefore, curious, but it may be explained by his dependence on Miaphysite sources. Among his materials was the now lost church history of the Miaphysite author John Diacrinomenus, which covered the years from 431 (the council of Ephesus) to 512 (the election of Severus to the bishop's see of Antioch).[104] Theodore's use of this work was probably born out of necessity, for there were no Chalcedonian histories of this period. Still, it seems that, in addition to information, Theodore also absorbed Miaphysite ways of treating female characters. It is perhaps a sign that literary traditions were converging in this period.

**Conclusions**

This article has demonstrated that a quantitative approach to late antique assessments of imperial women's roles in clerical exile yields important insights, in particular with regard to narrative patterns in our sources reporting on this phenomenon. On a basic level, we can note a constant negative attitude towards involvement of imperial women in this area or perhaps more aptly, a constant tendency to trade on gendered stereotypes of female imperial behavior. It did not matter whether such involvement amounted to persecution or patronage. What mattered was whether the author in question was seeking to exalt or to denigrate the exiled cleric in question. Biblical female characters provided ready rhetorical models for such strategies. As previous scholarship has shown, for the persecuting empress these were figures like Jezebel. For the supporting empress – or better, the imperial woman taking influence on the emperor on behalf of an exiled heretic – it was Eve. All of this makes for unsurprising, but nonetheless depressing reading. Perhaps due to this, it has attracted the most scholarly attention, albeit concentrated on the persecuting, not the supporting imperial woman.

A more significant and entirely new result concerns the chronological development of narrative patterns. Here we can note that negative portrayals of imperial women engaged in cases of clerical exile peaked in the fifth century. With regard to fourth-century women, we learn about their relationships with exiled clerics mostly through such fifth-century sources. This also means that the nature of these relationships was usually a consequence of anachronistic representation, if it was not downright fabricated. Finally, with regard to the positive portrayal of such relationships, we can see a reverse pattern at play. Positive portrayal appears, at least in our extant sources, only towards the end of the period, and is largely restricted to a particular genre of Christian writing, Miaphysite hagiography, which seems to emerge from a different cultural tradition than Greco-Roman patristic literature. Even then, however, no author praised an imperial woman for bringing about the banishment of a cleric. Praise was limited to empresses' support for clerics during their exile, or for helping an exiled cleric or ascetic to return.

Kate Cooper has argued with reference to John Chrysostom that what all parties involved with the bishop's banishment 'sensed', friends or enemies, was the 'narrative power' of the story of his tumultuous relationship with the empress Eudoxia. It helped his enemies to slander John and accuse him of treason, and his friends to explain his banishment with recourse to the irrational behavior of a woman.[105] This 'narrative power' was certainly also what sometimes drew fifth-century Nicene and Chalcedonian authors to stories of female patronage, rather than persecution. Looking after the Christian needy after the model of Helena, mother of Constantine (who was, significantly, cited in Rufinus' Constantia story as the most honored woman of the empire), was a major expectation of imperial women since at least the late fourth century, when Gregory of Nyssa had exalted such acts of female *philanthopia* in his funeral speech on Aelia Flaccilla, wife of Theodosius I.[106] Presenting an empress as instead looking after a heretic would therefore highlight the perversity of the situation. Such stories, then, served similar purposes to that of persecuting empresses of

providing a simple explanation, the caprices of a woman, for the outcomes of, in reality, complex processes of theological debates and legal decision makings. The misguided support by a woman discredited the decisions taken by men, without, importantly, reopening the case about their legality. Given that the imperial women fifth-century church historians wrote about were generally securely dead, they also provided a safe opportunity for some to comment on the contemporary roles of imperial women at court.

It is interesting, however, that in the fourth century the 'narrative power' of such episodes was, apparently, not yet sensed beyond Athanasius. While we may find the nucleus of subsequent ways to tell the stories of women and exiled clerics already in the writings of Athanasius, even he, compared with later authors, did not fully exploit their potential. This may have been due to the fact that he was a contemporary to the male relatives of the women so disparaged. Even if this was so, similar caution did not hold him or other exiled Nicene bishops back from openly maligning Constantius II. Constantius' wife, Eusebia, however, had to wait decades before, in the fifth century, her (potentially also unhistorical) involvement in cases of clerical exile was commented on.[107] It is equally remarkable that, at least for imperial women, their positive portrayal as campaigner for exiled clerics also came relatively late. This was not the case for other types of women. For example, Palladius, the bishop of Helenopolis, friend of John Chrysostom and author of the *Lausiac History* written in 419-20, reported how, around 373, the Roman aristocrat Melania the Elder followed exiled Egyptian bishops and ascetics around, offering them her assistance from her own funds, and even risking her reputation by dressing up as a slave to minister to them in secret. In another chapter of the *Lausiac History*, Palladius told of a Christian virgin in Alexandria who hid Athanasius in her house, after he had escaped from arrest in 357, serving on him and providing him with books.[108] Of course, stories like these also served a wider rhetorical purpose, which deserves further attention. What is important to remember here is that it took another hundred years for

imperial women to be treated as sympathetically as these non-imperial women in connection with clerical exile.

This observation suggests that the narrative pattern identified in this article had as much to do with the type of woman the stories involved as with authorial agendas or genre; in short, changes in narrative patterns may have also responded to changes in the status of imperial women. Women of the Constantinian dynasty, while more visible than their tetrarchic forebears, still mostly appear as pawns in imperial men's games in our contemporary sources. They were valued for their dynastic potential, but, at least not until very late in the Constantinian period, rarely appear as independent agents.[109] It is therefore little wonder that they did not register as much on fourth-century Christian authors' horizons as the more proactive and even more visible Theodosian empresses did on that of their fifth-century successors. With the establishment of more stationary imperial courts and the emergence of Christian piety as a source of authority, the circle of women with direct access to the emperor seems to have increased too in this period. It is, therefore, also no coincidence that sisters or even sisters-in-law appear prominently in exile stories from the fifth century on. This visibility of Theodosian women was something new, so may have triggered a suspicious or even hostile response from observers of the imperial court.

Yet, by the sixth century, the image of imperial women had changed again. From the time of Marcian, the wife of the emperor in particular was increasingly presented as a partner in reign and, culminating under Justinian, as a patron of the marginalized.[110] The wide-spread representation of Theodora as a champion of the exiled may owe much to Syriac traditions of writing about women and actual Miaphysite experiences of persecution. However, the fact that such positive reports also occasionally appear in Chalcedonian writing, like that of Theodore lector, suggests that, on the whole, at the end of antiquity the role of the Roman empress was in revolution. By the sixth century, observers of clerical exile seem to have become more relaxed about her visibility and role, as long as it extended to female activities

such as providing exiled clerics with food. However, as soon as the empress ventured into male and legal territory, such as contributing to the deposition and banishment of a cleric, she became victim of the customary vitriol that had already fueled criticism of female imperial behavior in the fourth century and earlier.

**Appendix:** List of imperial women involved in cases of clerical exile

**Figures**

Figure 1: Activities of women during clerical exile (chart)

Figure 2: Chronological distribution of the involvement of imperial women in clerical exile (ordered by start date of the exile in question) (chart)

Figure 3: Imperial women: enemies or patrons of exiled clerics? (chart)

Figure 4: Late antique assessment of imperial women's interference with clerical exile overall (chart)

Figure 5: Late antique assessment of female behavior in 'conflict' stories (chart)

Figure 6: Late antique assessment of imperial women as patrons of exiled clerics (chart)

Figure 7: Social network that led to the recall of Arius; based on Rufinus, Historia ecclesiastica 10.12; Socrates, Historia ecclesiastica 1.25; Sozomen, Historia ecclesiastica 2.27; Theodoret, Historia ecclesiastica 2.3; Anonymous of Cyzikus, Historia ecclesiastica 3.12; Vigilius of Thapsa, Contra Arianos, Sabellianos, Photinianos dialogus 1.1-3. (graph)

Figure 8: Exile Network under Justinian 518-565 (graph)

[1] In this article and the underlying *Clerical Exile* database (Julia Hillner, Dirk Rohmann et al. *Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity;* https://www.clericalexile.org/), 'exile' refers to the outcome of a legal process: that is, either because a cleric was sentenced to exile by a legal authority, such as emperor or synod, or withdrew into exile to escape arrest. A synonym for the former is 'banishment' which I also use, mainly for stylistic reasons. I exclude voluntary exile, e.g. as an ascetic activity by choice, from the discussion (but see O'Connell's contribution to this volume for examples, and the overlap between exile 'by choice' and the commemoration of banished clerics). On the recorded numbers of clerical exile as just a tip of the iceberg see Ramsay MacMullan, "Cultural and Political Changes in the 4th and 5th Centuries," *Historia* 52 (2003), 482

[2] These numbers are based on 485 cases of clerical exile collected in the *Clerical Exile* database by 5 October 2017. Of these cases, c. 130 feature activities of women.

[3] See e.g. on women in Alexandria following the condemnation of Athanasius of Alexandria in 355: Athanasius, *historia Arianorum* 72 (ed. H. G. Opitz, *Athanasius Werke*, vol. 2.1, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1941, 222-223); Theodoret, Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.13, ed. Léon Parmentier, Günther Hansen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998; GCS n.F. 5), 125-128.

[4] The data underlying the statistical discussions in this introduction derive from the *Clerical Exile* database, as in n. 1; see also the Appendix. A list of women who appear in the database can be accessed here: Hillner, Rohmann, *Clerical Exile* https://www.clericalexile.org/browse/person?person_gender_untouched_facet=female&page=1 (accessed 18 June 2018).

[5] Prominent clerics who extensively corresponded with women from exile are John Chrysostom, Fulgentius of Ruspe or Severus of Antioch; on John see Wendy Mayer, "John

Chrysostom and Women Revisited," in *Men and Women in the Early Christian Centuries*, ed. W. Mayer, I. J. Elmer (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls Publications, 2014), 211-225; on Fulgentius Uta Heil, "From Hippolytus to Fulgentius: Sardinia as a Place of Exile in the First Six Centuries," in *Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity*, ed. J. Hillner, J. Ulrich, J. Engberg (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2016), 165-192. On Severus see the Appendix.

[6] For examples of such cases see also Margarita Vallejo Girvés, "Banished Bishops Were Not Alone: The Two Cases of Theodoros Anagnostes, Guardian and Assistant," in *Clerical Exile*, ed. Hillner, Ulrich, Engberg, 193-211.

[7] 90 of the c. 130 cases mentioned in n. 2 involved an imperial woman, 17 altogether (see Appendix).

[8] On the church historians' attitudes to empire see Hartmut Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Großen zu Theodosius II. Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

[9] On Eudoxia and John Chrysostom see Florent van Ommeslaeghe, "Jean Chrysostome en conflict avec l'impératrice Eudoxie: le dossier et les origines d'une legend," *Analecta Bollandiana* 97 (1979): 389-414; Kenneth G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses. Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 69-78; J. W. G. H. Liebeschuetz, "The Fall of John Chrysostom," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 29 (1985): 1-31; K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 17-19; W. Mayer, "Doing Violence to the Image of an Empress: The Destruction of Eudoxia's Reputation," in *Violence in Late Antiquity,* ed. Drake, 205-214; Krystyna Stebnicka, "Jezebel and Eudoxia: Reflections of the History of the First Conflict Between John Chrysostom and Empress Eudoxia," *Palamedes: A Journal of Ancient History* 7 (2012): 143-154; Timothy Barnes, George Bevan, *The Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 24-32; Anja

Busch, *Die Frauen der Theodosianischen Dynastie. Macht und Repräsentation kaiserlicher Frauen im 5. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2015), 71-85; Belinda Washington, *The Roles of Imperial Women in the Later Roman Empire (AD 306-455)* (Diss. Edinburgh 2016), 189-206; Jennifer Barry, "Diagnosing Heresy: Ps.-Martyrius's *Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom*", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 24 (2016), 395-418. On Pulcheria and Nestorius: Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 147-174; Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress. The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Nicholas Constas, "Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos and the Loom of the Flesh", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995), 169-194; Christine Angelidi, *Pulcheria. La castità al potere* (Milan: Jaca, 1996); Kate Cooper, "Contesting the Nativity: Wives, Virgins and Pulcheria's 'Imitatio Mariae'," *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 19 (1998): 31-43; K. Cooper, "Empress and Theotokos: Gender and Patronage in the Christological Controversy," *Studies in Church History* 39 (2004): 39-51; Busch, *Die Frauen*, 119-122.

[10] On exile as a tool of imperial church politics see E. Fournier, "Exiled bishops in the Christian empire: victims of imperial violence?," in *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices*, ed. H. Drake (Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 157-166.

[11] The large number of cases recorded for 518 all refer to one incident, recorded in one single text, the seventh-century chronicle of Ps-Dionysius of Tel-Mareh: the banishment of 54 Miaphysite bishops which followed empress Lupicina-Euphemia's campaign for the inscription of the council of Chalcedon into the diptychs of the church of Constantinople. For reference, see the Appendix.

[12] Older scholarship calls them Monophysites, but this distinguishes too imprecisely between followers of the archimandrite Eutyches, also condemned at the council, and other opponents of the council, whose traditions live on in the Coptic and Syrian churches and who,

to this day, distinguish their teachings from that of Eutyches (on whom further below). Note that some scholars prefer the (somewhat anachronistic) labels 'Syrian Orthodox Church' and 'Coptic Church'. On all this see Volker Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 2-3.

[13] On this see Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*; Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2001); Busch, *Die Frauen*; Michaela Dirschlmayer, *Kirchenstiftungen römischer Kaiserinnen vom 4. bis zum 6. Jahrhundert. Die Erschließung neuer Handlungsspielräume* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2015); Diliana Angelova, *Sacred Founders. Women, Men and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding, Rome Through Early Byzantium* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); Belinda Washington, *The Roles of Imperial Women in the Later Roman Empire (AD 306-455)*, diss. Edinburgh 2016.

[14] See also Julia Hillner, "Approaches to Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity: Strategies, Experiences, Memories and Social Networks", in *Clerical Exile*, ed. Hillner, Ulrich, Engberg, 34-43.

[15] For the data underlying the charts in Figures 3-6 see the Appendix.

[16] For examples see below, n. 108.

[17] Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*; Busch, *Die Frauen*.

[18] Averil Cameron, "The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Religious Developments and Myth-Making," *Studies in Church History* 39 (2004): 12.

[19] Cooper, "Contesting the Nativity." Note that for this reason the extent of her role has also been doubted, see Richard Price, "Marian Piety and the Nestorian Controversy," *Studies in Church History* 39 (2004): 31-38.

[20] Wilhelm Kraatz, *Koptische Akten zum Ephesinischen Konzil vom Jahre 431* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904), 49-55: the acts record the people of Constantinople acclaiming Pulcheria after the council of Ephesus. On Theodore Lector and John Rufus see below.

[21] On Eudoxia as Jezebel see, for example, Stebnicka, "Jezebel and Eudoxia," Barry, "Diagnosing Heresy".

[22] On patronage as a traditional activity of the Roman empress since the early empire see Christiane Kunst, "Patronage/Matronage der *Augustae*," in Anne Kolb (ed.), *Augustae. Machtbewusste Frauen am römischen Kaiserhof* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), 145-161.

[23] On John Rufus see the introduction to Cornelia Horn, Robert Phenix, *John Rufus: The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem and Abba Romanus* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008) and further below.

[24] For background see Timothy Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 14-18; David Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemics of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the 'Arian Controversy'* (Oxford University Press, 2006). Gwynn does not believe the actions of Eusebius and others who either supported Arius or who opposed Athanasius to have been coordinated. On Eusebius of Nicomedia see also Jennifer Barry's contribution in this volume.

[25] On Athanasius in Rome see Barnes, *Athanasius*, 47-55.

[26] Athanasius, *Apologia ad Constantium* 6, ed. Hanns Christof Brennecke Uta Heil, Annette von Stockhausen, *Athanasius Werke* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 284.

[27] Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 5827, ed. Carl De Boor (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883), 30-33.

[28] See Julia Hillner, "A Woman's Place: Imperial Women in Late Antique Rome," *Antiquité tardive* 25 (2017), 67-70.

[29] Probably during yet another usurpation, by Eutropia's son, Nepotianus, quelled by Magnentius. On this see Kay Ehling, "Die Erhebung des Nepotianus in Rom im Juni 350 n. Chr. und sein Programm der urbs Roma christiana," *Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft* 4 (2001): 141-158.

[30] Barnes, *Athanasius*, 126.

[31] Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 7, ed. Hans Georg Opitz, *Athanasius Werke*, vol. 2.1: Die Apologien (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1941), 186. The chapter details the praetorian prefects Philagrius and Philip's complicity in the banishment and death of Paul of Constantionple. See Barnes, *Athanasius*, 127.

[32] There is general agreement that the beginning of *Historia Arianorum* is lost, but it is unclear how much we are missing. See Opitz, *Athanasius Werke* 2.1, 183.

[33] See Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 11-12.

[34] Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum* 22.9.4, ed. Wilhem Seyfarth (Leipzig: Teubner, 1978), 271). Ammianus reports that Julian was a distant relative of Eusebius of Nicomedia, which could have been through his mother. Basilina's father, Iulius Iulianus, had been Licinius' praetorian prefect, see Arnold H. M. Jones, John Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1, "Iulius Iulianus," 478; "Basilina,", 148 (henceforth PLRE).

[35] Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.19.3 (GCS n.F. 4: 133) relates that Eusebius was recalled from banishment on the instigation of Constantine's sister Constantia. See also below.

[36] Barnes, *Athanasius*, 64.

[37] See Richard Flower's contribution to this volume.

[38] Hans Georg Opitz, *Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung der Schriften des Athanasius* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1935), 157; Brennecke, Heil, v. Stockhausen, *Athanasius Werke*, xii.

[39] On Gelasius see Friedhelm Winkelmann, "Charakter und Bedeutung der Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisereia," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 1 (1966): 346-385. The state of the question is summarized in Philipp Amidon, *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia, Books 10 and 11* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), xii-xiv.

[40] Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 10.12, in Eusebius, *Die Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 1, ed. Eduard Schwartz, Theodor Mommsen (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908; Die Griechischen Christlichen Schrifsteller=GCS 9.2), 976-978. It is unclear whether Rufinus here implies the presbyter also baptized Constantine. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini* 4.61-62 (SC 559:529-531), reports Constantine was baptized on his deathbed in a suburb of Nicomedia, but does not say who the celebrant was. Jerome, *Chronicon* ann. 337 (GCS 47:234) claims it was Eusebius of Nicomedia. While Rufinus does not mention Eusebius of Nicomedia, the other fifth-century texts transmitting this story clearly distinguish between the presbyter and Eusebius of Nicomedia (though note that Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.32.2 (GCS n.F. 5:89), mentions that Eusebius of Nicomedia was present at Constantine's death. So does Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.16 (GCS 21), who, however, also does not mention the baptism).

[41] Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.9, ed. Joseph Bidez (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913; GCS 21), 10-11.

[42] Julia Hillner, "Constantia, Half-Sister of Constantine and Wife of Licinius," *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): http://classics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-8065 (accessed 15 December 2017).

[43] On the date of Helena's death: Drijvers, *Helena*, 73. On the date of Arius's recall Timothy Barnes, "The Exile and Recalls of Arius," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 60

(2009): 109-129. Note, however, that Barnes believes Arius was exiled and recalled a second time between 333 and 335.

[44] On Arius' death see Ellen Muehlenberger, "The Legend of Arius' Death: Imagination, Space and Filth in Late Ancient Historiography," *Past & Present* 227 (2015), 3-29.

[45] Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.1, ed. Günther Hansen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995; GCS n.F. 1), 92-93.

[46] Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.25, 1.39, 2.2 (GCS n.F.: 72-73, 90-91, 93-94); Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.27, 34, 3.1, ed. Joseph Bidez (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995, 2nd edn; GCS n.F. 4: 88-91, 99-100, 101); Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.3 (GCS n.F. 5: 96-97). I borrow the term 'synoptic' from Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Großen.*

[47] See Angelova, *Sacred Founders*, 134-135.

[48] Constantius was married three times, first to an unnamed daughter of his uncle Iulius Constantius, then to Eusebia and then to Faustina. While the empress is not named here and the date of Constantius' marriage to Eusebia, 353, seems relatively late in relation to the events reported, the identification with Eusebia is warranted as her closeness to the eunuch Eusebius is also reported on elsewhere: Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.16 (GCS n.F. 5: 131-136)

[49] Socrates 2.2 (GCS n.F. 1: 93-94).

[50] Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.1(GCS n.F. 4: 101); Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.3 (GCS n.F. 5: 96-97).

[51] Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973), 1360-1380. The terms 'broker' and 'structural holes' were coined by Ronald S. Burt, *Structural Holes. The Social Structure of Competition* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992) and *Brokerage and Closure. An Introduction to Social Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), who has developed Granovetter's model further.

[52] Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks. Theories, Concepts and Findings* (Oxford University Press, 2012, 74–89.

[53] The graph was laid out using the Harel-Koren Fast Multiscale layout algorithm. The node sizes are based on betweenness centrality values. The graph's nodes were grouped by cluster using the Wakita-Tsurumi cluster algorithm. The graph is undirected. Nodes: 13; Unique edges (links): 5.

[54] Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, James M. Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001), 415-444.

[55] Gwynn, *Eusebians*, 6-10. On Eusebius of Nicomedia's kinship with Constantine see above n. 34.

[56] Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.16 (GCS 21).

[57] Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.19.3 (GCS n.F. 4: 133).

[58] See Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Großen*, 40-59 about the differing attitude of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret to Constantine.

[59] Ps.-Vig, *Contra Arianos dialogus* 1.1-3 (PL 62: 155-6=Vigilius of Thapsa, *Contra Arianos, Sabellianos, Photinianos dialogus*, ed. P.-M. Hombert, CCSL, forthcoming). I would like to thank Robin Whelan for drawing my attention to this text.

[60] Busch, *Die Frauen*, 147.

[61] A good overview on the women of the Constantinian dynasty and their activities is provided by Manfred Clauss, "Die Frauen der diokletianisch-konstantinischen Zeit," in *Die Kaiserinnen Roms. Von Livia bis Theodora*, ed. H. Temporini (Munich: Beck, 2002), 340-369.

[62] Robin Whelan, *Being Christian in Vandal Africa. The Politics of Orthodoxy in the Post-Imperial West* (University of California Press, 2018), 78-85.

[63] *Anonyme Kirchengeschichte* 3.12 (Gelasius Cyzikenus, CPG 6034), ed. Günther Hansen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002; GCS n.F. 9), 131-132 (henceforth AKG). The flowery, highly rhetorical style may be an indication that AKG drew, alongside Gelasius of Caesarea and the extent church historians, on Philippus of Side's lost church history: See Hansen's introduction, xlvi-liv.

[64] AKG, Prooem. 9-13 (GCS n.F.: 2-3).

[65] Theodorus Lector, *Historia ecclesiastica*, epit. 402, ed. Günther Hansen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995; GCS n.F. 3), 112. On the events Rene Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser und Konstantinopel. Kommunikation und Konfliktaustrag in einer spätantiken Metropole* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 567-568.

[66] For the use of this epithet in Miaphysite sources see Susan A. Harvey, "Theodora the 'Believing Queen': A Study in Syriac Historiographical Tradition," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 4 (2001): 209-234.

[67] John of Ephesus, *Vitae Sanctorum Orientalium* 48, ed. and transl. E. W. Brooks (PO 18: 686-7). He also dedicates a whole chapter (47) to Theodora looking after Miaphysite refugees (PO 18: 676-685).

[68] Liberatus, Breviarium 20 (ACO 2.5:135).

[69] John of Ephesus, *Life of John of Hephaistopolis*, ed. and transl. E. W. Brooks (PO 18:528-529); John of Ephesus, *Life of Z'ura*, ed. and transl. E. W. Brooks (PO 17:35).

[70] John of Ephesus, *Life of John of Hephaistopolis* (PO 18:528-537).

[71] See Dirschlmayer, *Kirchenstiftungen*, 183, for the date.

[72] *Life of Severus*, transl. Sebastian Brock, Brian Fitzgerald, *Two Early Lives of Severos, Patriarch of Antioch* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013; Translated Texts for Historians 59). The Life, preserved in Syriac, was probably written originally in Greek by John bar Aphthonia of the monastery of Qenneshre not long after Severus' death.

[73] Hillner, Rohmann, *Clerical Exile* https://www.clericalexile.org/network/person/411 (accessed 7 June 2018).

[74] See, most recently, David Potter, *Theodora. Actress, Empress, Saint* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 169-173.

[75] See Dirschlmayer, *Kirchenstiftungen*, 186-187; Menze, *Justinian*, 211-228.

[76] See Julia Hillner, *Prison, Punishment and Penance in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 169-177.

[77] On Gaianus, who was the candidate of a Miaphysite splinter group, see Liberatus, *Breviarium* 20 (ACO 2.5:135). The *Historia patriarcharum Alexandrinorum* 2.13 (PO 1:459) and the *Arabe-Jacobite Synaxarium* (PO 17:604-606), both in support of his rival Theodosius, do not mention Theodora and neither does the Chalcedonian Victor of Tunnuna, *chronica* 540, ed. Theodor Mommsen (MGH AA 11:199). On Silverius: Liberatus, Breviarium 22 (ACO 2.5: 137), Liber Pontificalis I:293, ed. L. Duchèsne (Paris: Thorin, 1886), 290-293; Victor of Tunnuna, *chronica* 542 (MGH AA 11:200). All mention Theodora.

[78] See Kate Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): 150-164.

[79] See e.g. John of Ephesus, Vita Sanctorum Orientalium 47 (PO 18:676-685): Justinian takes care of and visits the Miaphysite refugee monastery in his palace. On John of Ephesus' relatively positive attitude towards Justinian see also Hartmut Leppin, "The Roman Empire in John of Ephesus' Church History: Being Roman, Writing Syriac," in *Historiography and Space in Late Antiquity*, ed. P. van Nuffelen (Cambridge, forthcoming).

[80] Compare eg. John of Ephesus on Theodosius of Alexandria with the *Historia patriarcharum Alexandrinorum* and Arab-Jacobite Synaxarium, as n. 79. The latter do not only ignore Theodora, they also do not detail that Theodosius was banished to Derkos, but

imply he returned to Egypt. On the memory of clerical exile in the Coptic Church see also O'Connell's contribution to this volume.

[81] Susan Asbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (University of California Press, 1990), 109-110. See also Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Spoken Words, Voiced Silence: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 105-131; Charlotte Methuen, "Widows, Bishops, and the Struggle for Authority in the Didascalia Apostolorum," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995): 197-213, on women in authority in the early Syrian church.

[82] 7-8 Esther, 2 Kings 11, 2 Exodus 5-10. I would like to thank Imogen Herrad for drawing my attention to these passages.

[83] See also Joshua 2:1-7: the story of Rahab, the prostitute who hid Israelites before the taking of Jericho who provides an interesting parallel because Syriac authors also report that Theodora was originally a prostitute: John of Ephesus, *Vitae Sanctorum Orientalium* 13 John of Ephesus, *Vita Sanctorum Orientalium* 13 (PO 17:189).

[84] Harvey, *Asceticism*, 121, 131: "Monophysites in the sixth century needed women's contributions more than they needed the institutional advantages of excluding women". See in particular John's story of Susan and her leadership of a refugee ascetic community in Egypt: John of Ephesus, *Vitae Sanctorum Orientalium* 27 (PO 18:541-558).

[85] Narratio de obitu Theodosii Hierosolymorum et Romani monachi auctore anonymo, ed. E. W. Brooks, *Vitae virorum apud monophysitas celeberrimorum pars prima* (Louvain: L. Durbecq, repr., 1955; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri 7-8). On the text see Cornelia Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-Century Palestine* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 28-31; Horn, Phenix, *John Rufus*.

[86] Horn, *Asceticism*, 42.

[87] Narratio de obitu 8-9 (CSCO 7-8: 25-26, 17-18). See also John Rufus, Plerophories 25 (PO 8:57-63) which also details contact between Eudocia and Romanus.

[88] Zachariah of Mytilene, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.5, ed. E. W. Brooks (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1965/67; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri 41-42), 109. The date for the story is 455. Note also that Zachariah's work may have been altered when it was translated into Syriac in the sixth century; see Geoffrey Greatrex et al., *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor: Church and War in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 28. For identification of Zachariah's empress as Eudocia see Greatrex, *The Chronicle*, 199 n. 125. Other scholars identify her as Pulcheria, see e.g. Horn, *Asceticism*, 92. John Bar Aphthonia, *Life of Severus* (PO 2:222) identifies the empress as Pulcheria, but clearly confuses her with Eudocia. The identity of the empress does, however, not matter for the purpose of my argument. Important is the unusual positive portrayal of her support for the banished.

[89] See Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 176-194; Busch, *Die Frauen*, 162-165.

[90] See Cornelia Horn, "Empress Eudocia and the Monk Peter the Iberian: Patronage, Pilgrimage, and the Love of a Foster-Mother in Fifth-Century Palestine," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 28 (2004): 197–213.

[91] Leo ep. 123 (ACO 2.4, no. 69, p. 77); ep. 117 (ACO 2.4, no. 63, p. 69-70), from spring 453, to Julian of Cos, mentions a second, earlier letter to Eudocia. See also Priscus frg. 28, which mentions her support for Dioscorus, the bishop of Alexandria condemned at Chalcedon.

[92] Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 5945 (de Boor: 106-107); Nicephorus Callistus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 15.9 (PG 147:32) claims Eudocia supported Theodosius and her 'satellites' fought for the monks.

[93] Busch, *Die Frauen*, 165. See also Hartmut Leppin, "Kaiserliche Kohabitation: Von der Normalität Theodoras," in *Grenzen der Macht. Zur Rolle römischer Kaiserfrauen*, ed. C. Kunst, U. Riemer (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000), 75-85 on the division of labor between emperor and empress at the fifth- and sixth-century Roman court.

[94] Cyril of Scythopolis, V. Euth. 30; Cyril, V. Saba 71, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1939), 47-49, 173-174: When asked for help, the holy man Saba blamed Theodora's infertility on her support for Severus. It remains unclear what the support consisted of.

[95] See above n. 70.

[96] Severus of Antioch, ep. 1.63, ed. and transl. E. W. Brooks, *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus of Antioch*, vol. 2.1 (London, Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1903) 198-199.

[97] See, for example, Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene, *Historia ecclesiastica* 9.20 (CSCO. SS 41-42: 95-96/137-140), which cites a letter by Severus in which he mentions the protection he had received from Theodora.

[98] Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism*, 117.

[99] Theodore Lector, *Historia ecclesiastica*, epit. 340 (GCS n. F. 3: 97). On Paulinus see PLRE II, "Paulinus 8," 846.

[100] In addition to Nestorians, Miaphysite authors also allude to this role, if again with ambiguous attitude. See John Rufus, who wrote a treatise against the council of Chalcedon at the beginning of the sixth century, and recorded with dismay how Pulcheria, who as a champion of orthodoxy had been responsible for banishing Nestorius, would then sink into impiety by marrying Marcian and calling the council: John Rufus, Plerophories, 3.

[101] Theodore Lector, Historia ecclesiastica, epit. 481 (GCS n.f. 3: 137). See also Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 6002 (de Boor: 153); PLRE II, "Magna," 700.

[102] See Alan Cameron, "The House of Anastasius," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 19 (1978) 259-276. Magna's son Probus was a leading Miaphysite, while her daughter

married a descendant of the Theodosian dynasty, who we can expect was a Chalcedonian. Anastasius' nephews through his sister Caesaria (who also may have had Miaphysite leanings, see Appendix) were Chalcedonians.

[103] Severus of Antioch, *L'apologie du Philatele*, ed. R. Hespel, *Sévère d'Antioche. La polémique antijulianiste*, vol. 3 (Louvain: Secrétariate du CorpusSCO, 1971; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri 136-137), 15/13.

[104] Warren Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, New York, 2007), 168-170.

[105] Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 19.

[106] Gregory of Nyssa, Oratio funebris in Flacillam Imperatricem, ed. A. Spyra, *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 9: Sermones (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 475-490. Also see Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.19 (GCS n.F. 5:313-314) who details Flaccilla's many good deeds. See Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 26-27.

[107] See the Appendix for references to Eusebia.

[108] Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 46.2, 63, ed. C. Butler, *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1904), 134-135, 158-160. The story of the virgin is also told in Festal Index 32 (SC 317:260), where she has a name, Eudaimonis.

[109] See Jill Harries, "The Empress Tale, AD 300-360," in *Being Christian in Late Antiquity. A Festschrift for Gillian Clark* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 197-214.

[110] On cooperation of the imperial couple see Dina Angelova, *Sacred Founders,* 183-202. On Theodora: Dirschlmayer, *Kirchenstiftungen*, 207-208, who argues that Theodora's engagement for prostitutes and women parallels her engagement for Miaphysite banished clerics and ascetics.

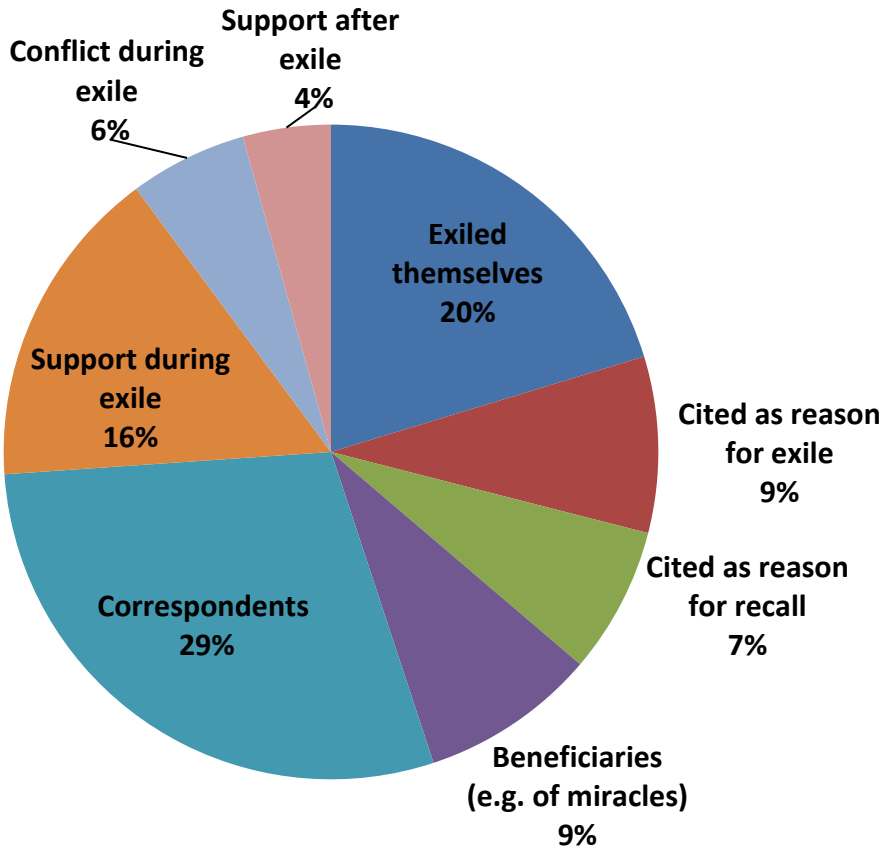



Figure 1: Activities of women during clerical exile

Figure 2: Chronological distribution of the involvement of imperial women in clerical exile (ordered by start date of the exile in question)

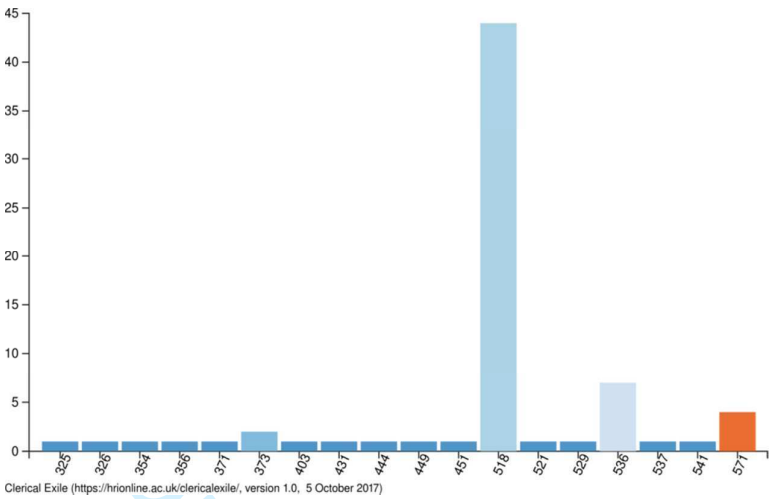


**Figure 3: Imperial women: enemies or patrons of exiled clerics?**

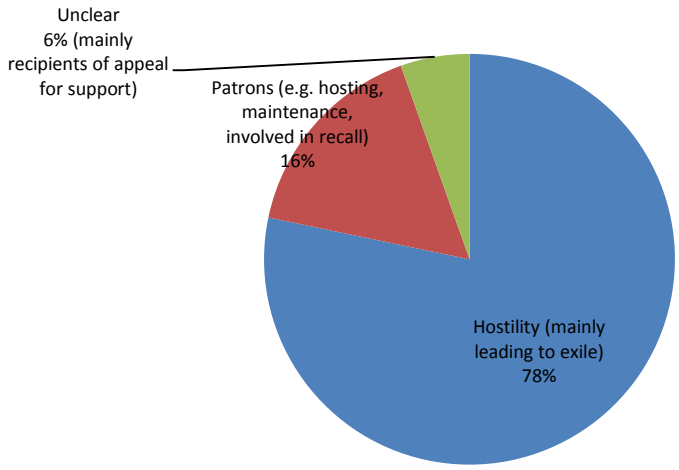


**Figure 4: Late antique assessment of imperial women's interference with clerical exile overall**

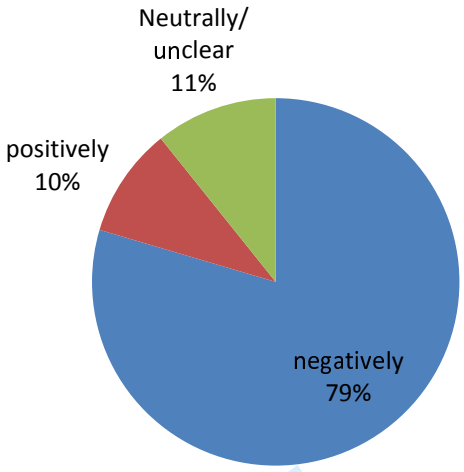
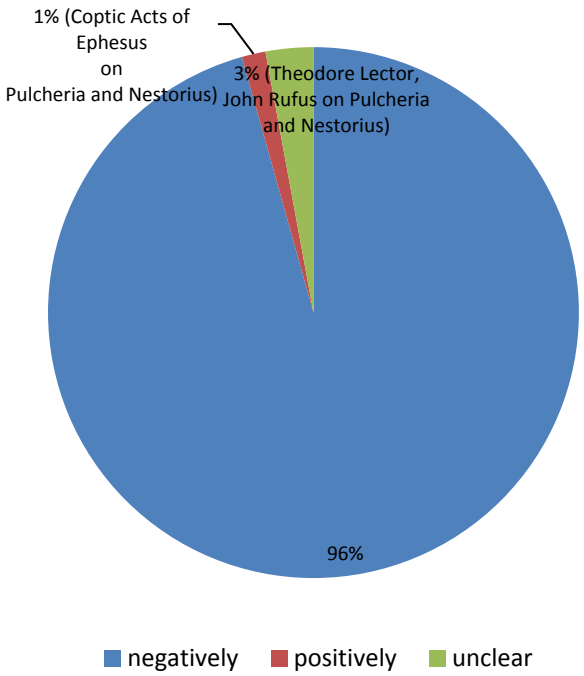


**Figure 5: Late antique assessment of female behavior in 'conflict' stories**



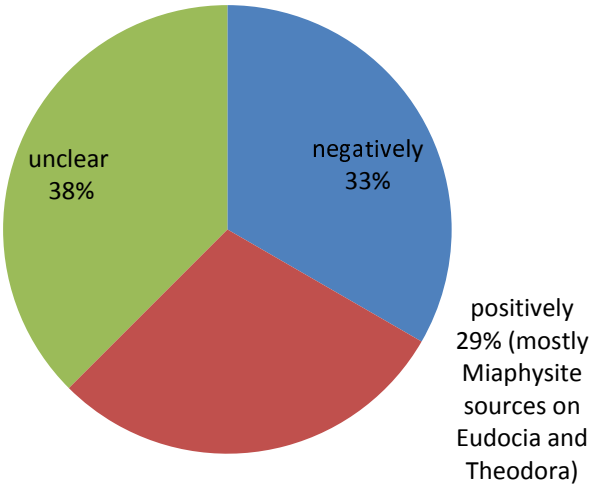



**Figure 6: Late antique assessment of imperial women as patrons of exiled clerics**

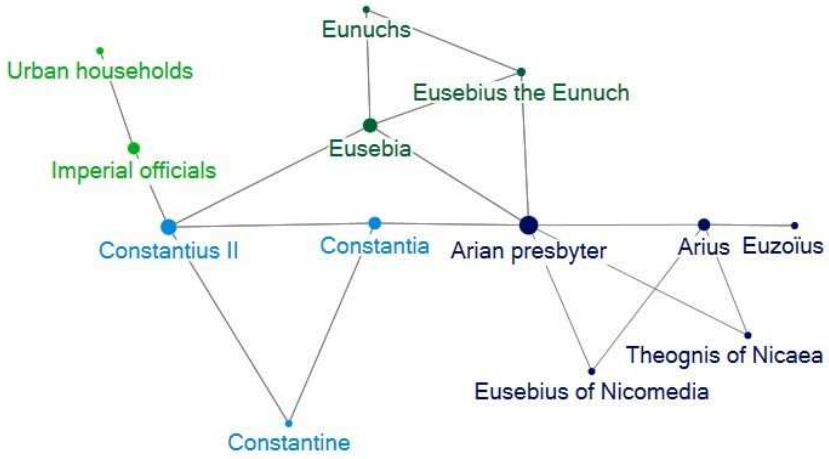



Figure 7: Social network that led to the recall of Arius; based on Rufinus, Historia ecclesiastica 10.12; Socrates, Historia ecclesiastica 1.25; Sozomen, Historia ecclesiastica 2.27; Theodoret, Historia ecclesiastica 2.3; Anonymous of Cyzikus, Historia ecclesiastica 3.12; Vigilius of Thapsa, Contra Arianos, Sabellianos, Photinianos dialogus 1.1-3.

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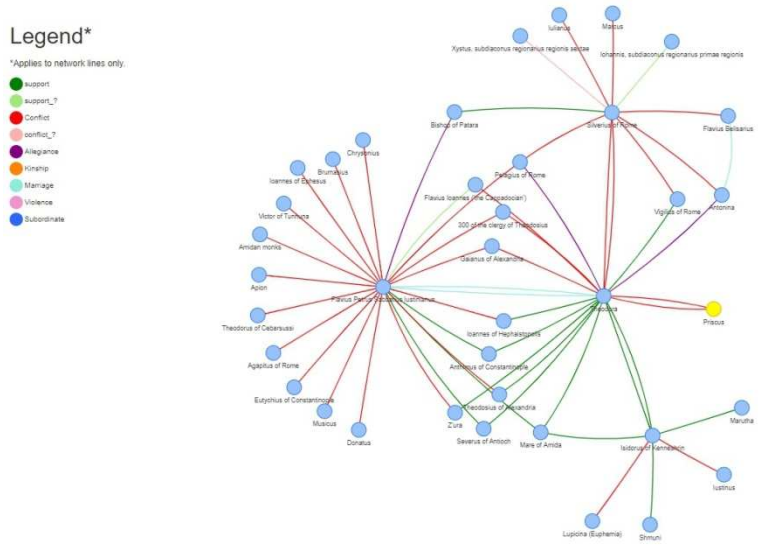


Figure 8: Exile Network under Justinian 518-565

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**Appendix: List of imperial women involved in cases of clerical exile (ordered by date of death of imperial woman)**

| Imperial woman | Exiled clerics or ascetics | Date | Role of imperial woman | Sources |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Helena, mother of Constantine, d. 328/330 | Eustathius of Antioch | 325-330 | Eustathius is exiled for insulting Helena. | Athanasius, Historia Arianorum 4 |
| Constantia, sister of Constantine, d. after 328/330 | Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon | 325/6-8 | Influences Constantine to recall these bishops. | Sozomen, Historia ecclesiastica 3.19.3 |
| | Arius | 327/8 | Influences Constantine to recall Arius. | Rufinus, Historia ecclesiastica 10.12<br>Socrates, Historia ecclesiastica 1.25<br>Sozomen, Historia ecclesiastica 2.27<br>Theodoret, Historia ecclesiastica 2.3<br>Anonymous of Cyzikus, Historia ecclesiastica 3.12<br>Vigilius of Thapsa, Contra Arianos, Sabellianos, Photinianos dialogus 1.1-3 |
| Basilina, mother of Julian, d. 333 | Eutropius of Adrianople | 325-333 | Persecutes Eutropius. | Athanasius, Historia Arianorum 5 |
| Eutropia, half-sister of Constantine, d. 350 | Athanasius of Alexandria | 339-342 | Hosts Athanasius in Rome. | Athanasius, Apologia ad Constantium 6 |
| Constantina, daughter of Constantine, d. 354 | Liberius of Rome | 358 | Hosts Liberius in her villa outside Rome (the episode is anachronistic) | Liber pontificalis I:207<br>Passio Felicis (BHL 2857) |
| Eusebia, wife of Constantius II, | Theophilus, 'the Indian' | 354-358 | Theophilus is recalled to cure Eusebia from illness. | Philostorgius, Historia ecclesiastica 4.7 |

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| d. 360 | Liberius of Rome | 355-6 | Sends Liberius a sum of money for his sustenance. | Theoderetus, Historia ecclesiastica 2.13, 14, 17 |
| | Theophilus, 'the Indian' | 358 | Induces Constantius to banish Theophilus. (Philostorgius mentions the women of the palace without naming Eusebia). | Philostorgius, Historia ecclesiastica 4.8 |
| Domnica, wife of Valens, d. after 378 | Meletius of Antioch, Pelagius of Laodicea, Eusebius of Samosata, | 373-8 | Converts her husband to 'Arianism' upon which he banishes the bishops. | Theodoret, Historia ecclesiastica, 4.12-13 |
| Eudoxia, wife of Arcadius, d. 404 | John Chrysostom | 403, 404 | John is accused of having insulted her and preached against erection of her statue; induces her husband to banish John. | Ps-Martyrius, Funerary Oration 36, 66, 87, 121<br>Palladius, Dialogus 8-9<br>Joh. Chrys. ante ir. in ex. 4 ; cum ir. in ex. 2<br>Socrates, Historia ecclesiastica 6.15, 16, 19<br>Sozomen, Historia ecclesiastica 8.16, 18, 20, 28<br>Vita Epiphanii 61 |
| Galla Placidia, mother of Valentinian III, d. 450 | Flavian of Constantinople | 450 | Writes letter to Pulcheria and Theodosius to plead for Flavian's return. | Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum 2.1.1, p. 5-6, n. 3; p. 49-50, n. 14 |
| Pulcheria, sister of Theodosius II, d. 453 | Nestorius | 431 | Conflict over the cult of the Virgin Mary and Pulcheria's involvement in liturgy and insult (Nestorius accused Pulcheria of incest with her brother). | Wilhelm Kraatz, *Koptische Akten zum Ephesinischen Konzil vom Jahre 431* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904), 49-55<br>Nestorius, Heracleides 470<br>Elias, Letter to Cosmas 5-8<br>John Rufus, Plerophories 1, 3<br>Theodore Lector, epit 340<br>Barhadbshabba `Arbaya 27-30<br>Chronicle of Seert 70<br>Nicephorus Callistus, Historia ecclesiastica 14.37 |

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| | | | | Sliba, Hymnos (PO 13: 303, 305) |
| | Theodoret of Cyrrhus | 450 | Theodoret appeals to Anatolius *patricius* to intervene with Marcian and Pulcheria to call a council that will allow him to return to Cyrus. | Theodoret, ep. 138 |
| | John Chrysostom | 438 | Arranges for John's relic translation. | Theophanes, AM 5930 |
| | Flavian of Constantinople | 449-450 | Written to by pope Leo and Western imperial family to intercede with Theodosius on Flavian's behalf. | Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum 2.1.1, p. 49-50, n. 14; Leo epp. 31, 45, 60 |
| | | 450 | Arranges for translation of Flavian's relics. | Theodore Lector, epit. 357, 532<br>Theophanes, AM 5941 |
| | Bishops exiled after council of Ephesus II | 450 | Announces imperial order that bishops can return. | Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum 2.1.1, ep. 9, p. 10. |
| Eudocia, widow of Theodosius II, d. 460 | Peter the Iberian | 455 | Eudocia tries to prevent his banishment. For identification of Eudocia in this text see n. 88. | Zachariah of Mytilene, chron. 3.5 |
| | Abba Romanus and all other banished monks | c. 458 | Eudocia secures their return from exile. | John Rufus, De ob. 8-9. |
| Licinia Eudoxia, wife of Valentinian III, d. c. 493 | Flavian of Constantinople | 450 | Writes letter to Theodosius to plead for Flavian's return. | Acta Conciliorum Oecomenicorum 2.1.1, p. 7, n. 4 |
| Magna, sister-in-law of Anastasius, d. after 509 | Dorotheus | 509 | Magna passes Dorotheus' book on the council of Chalcedon to emperor Anastasius, who banishes him. | Theodore Lector, epit. 481<br>Theophanes, AM 6002<br>Severus, *L'apologie du Philatele*, 14-15/12-13 |
| Caesaria, sister (?) of Anastasius | Severus of Antioch | 518-538 | Correspondent of Severus. On her possible identification as | Severus of Antioch, epp. n. 53, 54, 55, 56, 97, 98, 99, 101, 105, 117; possibly also n. |

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| | | | sister of Anastasius see PLRE II, Caesaria 1 and 2. | 63, 100, 103, 104, 106 |
| Euphemia, wife of Justin I, d. 523 | 54 bishops, names are recorded by the source, but not listed here. | | Euphemia forces the bishop of Constantinople to inscribe the council of Chalcedon into the diptychs upon which resistance breaks out and these bishops are banished. | Chronicle of Zuqnin, Third part, 517-518 |
| Theodora, wife of Justinian, d. 548 | Mare of Amida, Isidore of Quenneshrin | 521-529 | Theodora arranges for their relocation from Petra to Alexandria and for return of Mare's relics to Amida. | John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 13<br>Pseudo-Dionysius, chronicon 3.32 = Chronicle of Zuqnin, Third part, 517-518, 525-526 |
| | Anthimus of Constantinople | 536 | Hides Anthimus in the palace after his deposition. | John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 48 |
| | Gaianus of Alexandria | 536 | Theodora intervenes for his deposition and banishment. | Liberatus, Breviarium 20 |
| | Theodosius of Alexandria and three-hundred of his clergy, and the holy man Z'ura | 536 | Theodora provides sustenance for the banished Theodosius and three-hundred of his clergy. | John of Ephesus, Life of Z'ura (PO 17:35)<br>John of Ephesus, Life of John of Hephaistopolis (PO 18:528-529) |
| | John of Hephaistopolis | 536 and after | Theodora provides sustenance and hosts him in the palace and an imperial villa in Sykai. | John of Ephesus, Life of John of Hephaistopolis (PO 18:528-537) |
| | Severus of Antioch | 536 and after | Theodora hosts Severus in Constantinople and helps him to escape. She possibly already had hosted him in 531 (Cyril). On his way back to Egypt in 536 Severus sends her a book. | Cyril, V. Saba 71<br>Life of Severus 76<br>Ps. Zachariah, chron. 9.19<br>Severus of Antioch, ep. 63 |
| | Silverius of Rome | 537 | Theodora intervenes for his | Liber Pontificalis I:293 |

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| | | | deposition and banishment. | Victor of Tunnuna, chronica 542<br>Liberatus, Breviarium 22 |
| Sophia, wife of Justin II, d. c. 601 | Elias of Sardis, Stephen of Cyprus, Paul of Antioch | 571-2 | Visits the bishops in prison and invites them to the palace to try and change their minds, but in vain. They are banished. | John of Ephesus, Historia ecclesiastica 3.1.11 and 26. |

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