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Constructing Gender: Female Architectural Patronage in Roman Asia Minor and Syria in the First through the Sixth Centuries CE

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Introduction

“Gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. . . There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.”¹

With the publication of *Gender Trouble* in 1990, Judith Butler revolutionized the field of gender studies. In the first chapter of the volume, “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire,” Butler argues that the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality are not coherent through any intrinsic or “natural” property. Rather, these categories are constructed by means of repeated performances, performances that are enacted within a power structure that places constraints on coherence. For this reason, a universal subject of “woman” who is united across time and place by common oppression is an oversimplification, even a myth. Not only does this model ignore cultural and historical context, claims Butler, it may even be harmful to the feminist movement.

In this study, I will use Butler’s theory of gender performativity to analyze the construction of gender over time in one particular milieu: the cities of Roman Asia Minor and Syria in the first through the sixth centuries. I will argue that the act of architectural patronage in these cities constitutes a “performance,” one that was played out upon the Roman urban landscape and often left long-lasting material remains upon that landscape. By analyzing the architectural benefactions of individuals who identified as female (or γυναῖκες, to use the language these individuals spoke), it is possible to gain a better understanding of how the categories of “female” and “male,” as well as the relationship of those categories to the spheres of empire, city, religious community, and home, were conceptualized and perpetuated in the Roman urban environment. These performances

¹ Butler 1990, 25.

did not occur in a vacuum. On the contrary, Butler describes performativity as being inherently citational – a performance is always to some degree a reference to the gender conventions that exist within a given society.² The examples in this paper illustrate how the architectural performances of female patrons reiterated and reinterpreted Roman gender norms. In some of the cases discussed below, female patrons also made reference to the architectural foundations of other female patrons in the same city. In this manner, gender was constituted by conversations or relationships between performances as well as by the individual performances themselves.

In some ways, archaeology is the discipline best equipped to tackle the problem of gender production in antiquity, since women³ in the ancient world were almost wholly excluded from the process of text manufacture. Many of the women discussed below, for example, are not included in the literary and legal documents of written history at all. Their names have been preserved solely as a result of their various contributions to the material culture of their cities – the dedicatory inscriptions, statuary programs, monuments, and houses of worship that they commissioned for the urban community. Even the women who are present in the literary evidence appear there as the subject of a male author. In their self-funded building projects, these women create a venue in which they represent themselves.

² Butler 1993, 12-13.

³ It may seem jarring to use terms such as “woman” and “man” so soon after citing Butler, who views the sex/gender binary as a cultural construction. For the sake of readability and efficiency of communication, however, I will employ these terms throughout the rest of this paper. The idea of a sex/gender binary, with *άνήρ* and *γυνή* forming distinct, coherent categories, did exist in the Greek-speaking eastern regions of the Roman Empire. Therefore, I feel somewhat justified in using the binary sex/gender distinction encoded into the English language to describe the inhabitants of that environment.

It would be disingenuous to claim that the archaeological record is wholly unbiased or that female architectural patrons are representative examples of women in Roman Asia Minor and Syria. Some of the women I will discuss were members of the imperial family and hence integrated into the highest social echelon of the Roman Empire. All of them must have controlled a certain amount of financial resources in order to perform large-scale donations. Nevertheless, these epigraphical and architectural remains are valuable for understanding how these women portrayed their own identity to the city and, by extension, how they contributed to the construction of the identity of “woman.” This identity was not a static one. Rather, each architectural foundation can be seen as a single contribution to an ongoing discourse about what it means to be “female” or “male” and what physical and theoretical spaces a “woman” or “man” is allowed to occupy within the urban environment. These spaces are often conceptualized as belonging to either the public or the private sphere.

Public and Private

Like the terms “woman” and “man,” the terms “public” and “private” are problematic to define. However, this does not mean that these terms are not a useful way to talk about the Roman world. As with the construction of the gender categories of “man” and “woman,” the construction of “public” and “private” is an ongoing act of cultural production, one that also finds expression in urban architecture.

That the concept of a dichotomy between the public and the private sphere existed in Roman society is clear partly because of the way that opposite genders were educated with a view to assignment to one of these spheres. As Kristina Milnor points out, “men were trained for and expected to participate in civic and military life, [while] ideals of

correct womanhood emphasized domesticity and the skills needed to run an efficient household.”⁴ One manifestation of the public sphere, then, is the political world of military and civil service, while one manifestation of the private sphere is the domestic world of household and family management. It seems that Butler’s idea of performativity is also applicable to the categories of public and private. The public or private sphere is constituted both by a space and by the activity performed in that space.

Another example of the distinction between public and private in the Roman world can be found in legal vocabulary. In the second century, the Roman grammarian Festus described a clear legal difference between two kinds of cult activity, *publica* and *privata*.

Publica sacra, quae publico sumptu pro populo fiunt, quaeque pro montibus pagis curis sacellis; at privata, quae pro singulis hominibus familiis gentibus fiunt.

Public rites are those which are performed at public expense on behalf of the [whole] people, and also those which are performed for the hills, villages, clans, and chapels, in contrast to private rites which are performed on behalf of individual persons, households, or family lineages.⁵

Here, the term *publica* is used to describe those rites funded by the public treasury and executed for the benefit of the state. Again, the *publica* are closely connected to politics. The *privata* are everything falling outside of that precisely defined category, especially (but not only) those rites related to the individual, the home, and the family.

It seems that the division between public and private was a functional idea in Roman society and that the construction of the categories of public and private was often implicated in the construction of gender. The act of female architectural patronage, however, resulted in the memorialization of the donor’s name and the creation of a public building highly visible to all the city’s residents. In this sense, women’s architectural

⁴ Milnor, 29.

⁵ Lindsay and Pirie, 350. Translation from Bowes, 20.

patronage was an act of transgression, one that pushed the boundaries of Roman ideas about where different genders belonged in the urban environment. Yet even as it questioned the constraints on gender identities, female architectural patronage could simultaneously reinforce and perpetuate them, especially when a woman framed her donation in a way that associated her with the private sphere.

This model of female architectural patronage as both transgressive and conservative may seem paradoxical at first. How can an architectural benefaction, which seems intrinsically to be a public action, be presented in a “private” way? The answer to this question lies in the highly politicized definition of “public” described above. When I describe the self-representation of women in architecture as “private” as opposed to “public,” I mean that female patrons distance themselves from civic titles and refrain from presenting themselves as political agents. Instead, they highlight their role within smaller religious communities not funded by the state or their position within their families. In the fifth and sixth centuries, the association of public benefactions with the private space of the *domus* becomes even more pronounced as women begin to link the physical structures of their buildings to their own residences.

In the following chapters, I will examine the architectural donations of nine women from five different cities in Asia Minor and Syria. The first chapter is devoted to the city of Perge, where the second-century renovation of the city gate by the donor Plancia Magna ignited an architectural dialogue that would continue for almost a century. The second chapter discusses women who made donations to synagogue communities in the cities of Akmonia, Phoecea, and Apamea in the first through fourth centuries. In the third and final chapter, I turn to the Christian churches and monasteries of fifth and sixth-

century Constantinople, the new imperial capital. These women lived in different time periods and identified with various religious groups. Yet through their architectural performances, they all contributed to the process of gender construction in the eastern Roman Empire.

Chapter One: Perge in the Second and Third Centuries

The first examples of female architectural patronage that I will focus on come from the city of Perge, which is located on the southern coast of Asia Minor in the region of Pamphylia. Like other Roman provincial cities, Perge's urban topography was shaped largely by wealthy citizens who funded construction projects in public areas. These local patrons were usually men, but Perge's most well-attested benefactor was a woman named Plancia Magna. Her renovation of Perge's southern gate in the early second century would attract attention and generate responses both during and after her lifetime. In this section, I will examine the archaeological and epigraphical evidence for Plancia Magna's building project as well as three reactions to it that are preserved in the archaeological record. Two of these reactions, a set of inscriptions and a portrait statue of Plancia Magna, were dedicated by Plancia Magna's male contemporaries. The third is a *hydreion*, or monumental fountain, which is located in close proximity to the renovated gate but was donated by a woman named Aurelia Paulina in the early third century.

I will argue that the evidence from second and third-century Perge bears witness to a subtle pressure directed at female architectural patrons in the city during that period. These women were encouraged to design their benefactions in a way that downplayed their civic titles and other elements of their public persona and identified them more strongly with the private spheres of family and personal history. In the inscriptions and statuary program that Plancia Magna commissioned for the gate, she presents herself as a public figure whose prominence rivals that of any male city administrator in Perge. She is the most important member of her family, and she operates as a link between Perge's local government and the world of the larger empire. Plancia Magna's male contemporaries, on

the other hand, commemorate her in a different way. While their monuments reinforce some aspects of the image Plancia Magna presents of herself at the Hellenistic gate, they also attempt to locate her within an androcentric family and civic structure. The effects of backlash such as this would be visible almost a century later, when Aurelia Paulina dedicated the *hydreion*. Although Aurelia Paulina drew on Plancia Magna's renovation project for inspiration in some ways, her monument focuses more on its founder's private identity and less on her public role than Plancia Magna's had.

Plancia Magna and the Renovation of the Hellenistic Gate

Few studies of the city of Perge during the Roman period fail to mention Plancia Magna, whose name appears in numerous inscriptions from many contexts in the city. Plancia Magna's major contribution to the urban landscape of Perge was her massive renovation of the city's Hellenistic southern entrance gate, a project dated to the reign of Hadrian (specifically 119-122 CE).⁶ Behind the two round towers of the original gate, Plancia Magna added a large, horseshoe-shaped courtyard with a monumental triple arch at its northern end (Figure 1).⁷ The courtyard's inner walls were fitted with niches that originally displayed statues of the Olympian gods, members of the imperial family, and the κτίσται ("city-founders"), both mythical and real, that featured prominently in Perge's history (Figure 2).⁸ Two of these κτίσται were members of Plancia Magna's immediate family – her father, M. Plancius Varus, and her brother, C. Plancius Varus.⁹

The choice to renovate the city's Hellenistic gate was a bold one. The gate was located in close proximity to some of Perge's most important engineering projects and

⁶ Van Bremen, 105-106.

⁷ Gates, 387.

⁸ Boatwright 1991, 251.

⁹ Merkelbach and Şahin, 28 a-b.

civic institutions and would have been highly visible to the city's residents on a daily basis, as well as to all visitors. In order to understand the importance attached to the various physical features of a Greco-Roman city, it is first necessary to know what institutions were considered most integral to a city's function. In his *Description of Greece*, written at roughly the same time that Plancia Magna wielded influence in Perge, the second-century geographer Pausanias provides one perspective on this question.

From Chaeroneia it is twenty stades to Panopeus, a city of the Phocians, if one can give the name of city to those who possess no government offices, no gymnasium, no theater, no market-place, no water descending to a fountain, but live in bare shelters just like mountain cabins, right on a ravine.¹⁰

By pointing out what Panopeus lacks, Pausanias simultaneously creates a list of what he (and probably many of his contemporaries) considered to be the crucial features of a city. These architectural structures were physical symbols of a city's function within a province and within the larger empire: cities fulfilled administrative and commercial needs, and they also provided a variety of amenities and entertainments for their citizens.

When viewed in light of Pausanias' criteria for important urban features, Plancia Magna's gate enjoys a prominent location within the urban plan of Perge. The gate is situated along the city's main colonnaded street, which ran from the northern *nymphaeum* at the base of the city's acropolis south to the entrance gates. This street included a stone-lined water channel built into its center,¹¹ and Perge's major sewage canal ran below the street's pavers.¹² Thus, the colonnaded street would have functioned not only as a major causeway for human traffic, but also as an important water source for Perge's citizens and as a means of maintaining the city's cleanliness. The Hellenistic gate is also located

¹⁰ Pausanias 10.4.1.

¹¹ Gates, 387.

¹² Özgür, 69.

directly to the east of the southern *thermae*, or public baths.¹³ These baths, along with the rest of Perge's water installations, were fed by an aqueduct that extended northwest of the city to the waterfalls of the Kalabakli Stream.¹⁴ This aqueduct was an impressive feat of engineering in itself -- a system of open and closed arches and canals that crossed miles of forested terrain before arriving at a water gauge outside of Perge's western city walls.¹⁵

Pausanius implies that one of the essential features of a city is a system of fountains and channels for the public distribution of water. Perge's water system, which was to develop even more during the Severan period, was already impressive at the time of Plancia Magna's building project. The southern bath complex, for example, is one of the largest ever documented or excavated in Pamphylia.¹⁶ The strong geographical link between the renovated gate and the main arteries of Perge's water-related infrastructure served multiple agendas. It showcased one of the most important urban features of Perge and a source of pride for the city, and it also established a subtle link between Plancia Magna and the well-being of Perge's citizens.

The association between Plancia Magna and her home city was made even stronger by the alignment of the gate with two prominent monuments honoring her. Visitors entering Perge from the south in the second century would have been immediately confronted with a host of visual information about its benefactress. Before reaching the gate itself, they would have had to pass between Plancia Magna's large tomb,

¹³ Abbasoglu, 180.

¹⁴ Özgür, 83.

¹⁵ Özgür, 83.

¹⁶ Özgür, 75. This large bath complex incorporated several gymnasium-like features, including an open-air *palaestra* where various physical exercises were practiced (Özgür, 61). The Hellenistic gate is therefore located next to a structure with elements of a gymnasium -- a building that features on Pausanius' list of essential urban institutions.

located directly outside and to the east of the city walls,¹⁷ and a display wall extending south of the western tower whose niches held two large statues of Plancia Magna.¹⁸ The inscriptions on the statue bases reveal that the statues, one of which survives, were donated by her freedmen M. Plancius Pius and M. Plancius Alexander.¹⁹ This display wall and the corresponding statue and inscriptions will be addressed in further detail below. Finally, after entering the city, visitors would have passed into the great courtyard at the north end of the gate, where every statue base bore Plancia Magna's name.

Besides inspiring these two monuments that honored her directly, Plancia Magna's restoration of the Hellenistic gate may have influenced future city benefactors for decades. Archaeological evidence indicates an increase in construction activity at the end of the second century CE in the southern part of Perge, in the near vicinity of the renovated gate. New structures erected in the area during the Severan period include a *propylon* leading to the southern city baths, additions to the baths themselves, two *nymphaea*, and an agora.²⁰ These foundations may well have been inspired (or, if an element of competition was at play, provoked) by Plancia Magna's lavish project. I will return to one of these *nymphaea*, the *hydreion* of Aurelia Paulina, later in this section.

Plancia Magna's ability to spearhead a major building project in such a geographically important area of the city implies that she exercised no small amount of authority among Perge's elite citizens. Epigraphical and archaeological evidence reveals that she held a wide array of public titles. The inscriptions on two bases found near the Hellenistic towers of the gate as well as one on an architrave found in secondary use in a

¹⁷ Gates, 387.

¹⁸ Boatwright 2000, 65.

¹⁹ Şahin, nos. 123 and 124.

²⁰ Abbasoglu, 182.

mosque describe Plancia Magna as a gymnasiarch (γυμνασίαρχος), *demiourgos* (δημιουργός), priestess of Artemis (ἱέρεια τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος), and priestess of the Mother of the gods (ἱέρεια Μητρὸς θεῶν).²¹ Furthermore, the inscriptions from the two statue bases from the niches of the display wall donated by Plancia Magna's freedmen identify her as high priestess of the imperial cult (ἀρχιέρεια τῶν Σεβαστῶν).²² The marble statue of Plancia Magna that once stood on the left of these two bases depicts her in this role, wearing a crown decorated with imperial busts (Figure 3, image on the right).²³ As a gymnasiarch, she would have had authority over one of the institutions designated by Pausanias as highly important to urban life -- the gymnasium, where young male citizens received physical and intellectual training and where festivals were held.²⁴ The *demiourgos* was the eponymous magistrate whose name was used to identify all city documents from the year of their magistracy²⁵ and therefore had a considerable presence in the written records of the city.

Plancia Magna's case is situated within the context of a wider trend in Roman Asia Minor in the first and second centuries. During this period, women in Asia Minor attained an increased level of public prominence and came to hold both secular and religious offices.²⁶ The fact that Plancia Magna sponsored a building project is likewise not a singular occurrence. For women as for men, an architectural project could serve as a way

²¹ Merkelbach and Şahin 1988, nos. 35, 36, 37.

²² Şahin 1999, nos. 123 and 124.

²³ Abbasoglu, 179.

²⁴ Boatwright 1991, 250.

²⁵ Dmitriev, 180.

²⁶ Dmitriev, 178; MacMullen, 167. MacMullen also points out, however, that women were unlikely to hold civic offices that required public speaking.

to obtain appointment to an office or to legitimize an office that they held already.²⁷

There is some precedent for other powerful women in the vicinity of Perge dedicating buildings for this reason. In the late first century, several decades before Plancia Magna began her work on the Hellenistic gate, Arete, the daughter of the priestess of Demeter in Perge, paid for the construction of a building in a local village.²⁸ She pledged to dedicate the building to Domitian, presumably in the hope that she would be awarded a priesthood like her mother's.

The inscriptions from Plancia Magna's gate are unusual, however. They suggest that Plancia Magna was eager to present herself as an independent public figure who was prominent in her own right and not merely on account of her familial connections. First of all, the statues of Plancia Magna's father, M. Plancius Varus, and her brother, C. Plancius Varus, are both identified in terms of their relationship to Plancia Magna. The two men are referred to as "father of Plancia Magna" ([πα]τήρ Πλανκίας Μάγνης) and "brother of Plancia Magna" (ἀδελφὸς Πλανκίας Μάγνης),²⁹ while a more traditional formula would identify both Plancia Magna and C. Plancius Varus as the children of their father.³⁰

In fact, the identification of M. Plancius Varus and C. Plancius Varus as important by virtue of their connection to Plancia Magna is a direct reversal of the pattern found in many other inscriptions from Asian cities. These inscriptions, which are often donated by the council or the people of the city, confer official honors upon women based upon the prominence of their families. Instead of discussing the honored woman's own accomplishments, these inscriptions focus on the public offices and benefactions of her

²⁷ Dmitriev, 151.

²⁸ Dmitriev, 151.

²⁹ Merkelbach and Şahin 1988, nos. 28a, 28b.

³⁰ Boatwright 1991, 251.

male relatives. Dmitriev provides the examples of Claudia Paulina from Smyrna, Philotera from Pergamum, Neira Ammia from Aphrodisias, and Ulpia Saturnina from Synnada. The inscriptions honoring these women date from the first and second centuries, roughly around the time of Plancia Magna's renovation of the Hellenistic Gate. Claudia Paulina is honored as the daughter of Claudius Paulinus, who held eleven public titles in the city. Philotera is honored "for good services rendered [to the people] by her father Limnaios and for the virtue and goodwill toward the people of her husband Kinokos."³¹ In all four inscriptions, the female honoree is mentioned once at the beginning and never referred to again; the remainder of the inscription is subsumed by a discussion of the honoree's family. Plancia Magna's inscriptions, on the other hand, imply that her father and brother's role as city-founders (κτίσται) is not essential to Plancia Magna's own importance.

The surviving inscriptions commissioned by Plancia Magna for the gate are unusual in another way as well: none of them mention either her husband, C. Iulius Cornutus Tertullus, or her son, C. Iulius Plancius Varus Cornutus.³² As Riet Van Bremen has pointed out, this may be due to the fact that the Cornuti were also an eminent family in Perge and were probably architecturally commemorated elsewhere in the city.³³ At the very least, the omission implies that Plancia Magna was so well-known that her husband's name was not necessary as a secondary means of identification.

As a wealthy public office-holder in Perge, Plancia Magna faced the challenge that many other members of the urban elite in Roman Asia Minor faced: how to establish the

³¹ Dmitriev, 183-84.

³² Van Bremen, 105.

³³ Van Bremen, 107.

city as a legitimate part of the Roman Empire while still acknowledging the city's rich pre-Roman history and character. When the province of Asia came under Roman control, Rome was confronted with the problem of how to best administer a region that was already furnished with well-established urban infrastructure, commercial institutions, and religious traditions. In general, Rome allowed local governing bodies, many of which retained the names that they had held for centuries, to continue to function with only occasional intervention by the proconsuls and governors who represented the Roman state.³⁴ The powerful citizens of the eastern cities worked hard to please these state representatives, yet they also sought to maintain a vibrant local identity for their cities.³⁵ Plancia Magna's own personal history exemplified in miniature this hybrid culture of the Greek-speaking eastern urban centers. Her family most likely came to Perge from Italy as traders at the end of the Republic,³⁶ and she married a member of a prominent indigenous family who had achieved Roman citizenship, C. Iulius Cornutus Tertullus.³⁷ Their son, C. Iulius Plancius Varus Cornutus, bore the names of both of his parents' families: the western merchants and the new eastern elite.

Plancia Magna's dual role as priestess of Artemis and priestess of the imperial cult demonstrates one way in which her public image balanced local identity with larger imperial interests. One effect of the extension of Roman control over Asia Minor was the introduction of the imperial cult in Asian cities and the establishment of corresponding offices such as priesthoods.³⁸ By fulfilling the civic function of imperial cult priestess,

³⁴ Yegül, 134-36.

³⁵ Yegül, 136.

³⁶ Jameson, 56.

³⁷ Boatwright 1991, 254.

³⁸ Dmitriev, 4.

Plancia Magna served as a link between the imperial government in Rome and the local government in Perge. The statues that Plancia Magna dedicated to male and female members of the imperial house at the Hellenistic gate served to strengthen Plancia Magna's connection to the imperial family. Yet Plancia Magna's association with Artemis was a specifically Pergaian attribute. According to literary sources,³⁹ Artemis had special local significance at Perge, and Artemis Pergaea also appears on several coins from Perge.⁴⁰

Several physical features of the gate itself embody the mixture of local and imperial pride that Plancia Magna sought to foster. The most obvious of these is that the structure was not a new foundation, but rather a renovation of one that had ties to Perge's pre-Roman past. Furthermore, the inscriptions from the gate complex employ both Latin, the language of the imperial capital, and Greek, the *lingua franca* of the eastern provinces and the language of the vast majority of inscriptions in Perge.⁴¹ It is worth noting the contexts in which these different languages are used. The inscriptions on the statues of the κτίσται, or city founders, are written exclusively in Greek. However, the inscriptions on the statues of Artemis Pergaia, the Genius civitatis, Hadrian, Sabina, and the other members of the imperial family are bilingual, with Latin on the top lines in each case.⁴² Latin may also have been an important part of Plancia Magna's personal identity, since

³⁹ Callimachus, *Hymn 3 to Artemis* 183; Strabo, *Geography* 14.4.2; Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 1.30. The remains of the large Temple of Artemis Pergaea described in these sources, however, have yet to be found.

⁴⁰ Abbasoglu, 176.

⁴¹ Eck gives the figure of 475 Greek inscriptions from the Roman period through the end of the third century versus 39 Latin or bilingual ones (Eck, 29).

⁴² Eck, 31-32; Merkelbach and Sahin 120-121.

the original hometown of the Plancii was probably Latin-speaking Atina in central Italy.⁴³ Although the Plancii most likely arrived in Perge more than a century before Plancia Magna's renovation of the Hellenistic gate,⁴⁴ it is possible that Latin was preserved among the Plancii as a family language and was therefore expressive of Plancia Magna's lineage.

In addition to affording the persona of Plancia Magna a central geographical and ideological role in the city of Perge, the remodeled Hellenistic gate expressed Perge's dual identity as both an independent city and a member of the Roman Empire. Plancia Magna could have chosen no structure more appropriate to transmit this message than that of the city gate -- a structure falling neither within the city walls proper nor outside the walls in the larger Roman Empire, but in the liminal space that bridged the gap between the two. By constructing a monument that presented her as a liaison between the local and the imperial, Plancia Magna emphasized her political power, thereby placing herself decidedly in the public sphere.

Contemporary Reactions to Plancia Magna

The inscriptions and statuary program that Plancia Magna commissioned for the renovated Hellenistic gate portrayed her as an office-holder and benefactor equal in public influence to any elite male in Perge. Archaeological evidence from elsewhere in Perge, however, suggests that some factions in the city were uncomfortable with this representation. Several inscriptions mentioning Plancia Magna demonstrate a desire to reduce her associations with the public sphere and confine her more closely to a private

⁴³ Jameson, 55.

⁴⁴ Inscriptions show that a group of *negotiatores* arrived in Perge in the latter half of the first century BCE (Boatwright 1993, 191).

one. Although these inscriptions purport to honor Plancia Magna, they also subtly undermine the self-portrait she provides at the Hellenistic gate. A statue of Plancia Magna donated by one of her freedman, on the other hand, demonstrates that at least part of the image that Plancia Magna sought to foster at the Hellenistic Gate was accepted and perpetuated in the wider city.

As discussed previously, the inscriptions at the gate are unusual because they identify Plancia Magna's male relatives vis-à-vis their relationship to her. Four other surviving inscriptions from Perge, however, present Plancia Magna in a more conventional manner by describing her as the daughter of M. Plancius Varus (M. Πλανκίου Ούάρου). Two of these, nearly identical in their wording, were dedicated to Plancia Magna by various all-male administrative groups within the city, namely the βουλή, the δήμος, and the γεραιοί.⁴⁵ The other two are the inscriptions on the statue bases of Plancia Magna located in the niches in the display wall. These were dedicated by Plancia Magna's freedmen.⁴⁶

These inscriptions' attachment of the patronym to Plancia Magna's name constitutes another performance, one that responds to the unconventional self-representation of Plancia Magna at her own Hellenistic gate. While the inscriptions at Plancia Magna's gate question dominant Roman ideas about what spaces the gender of "woman" may occupy within a city, these inscriptions struggle to contain Plancia Magna's identity (and, by extension, the larger gender identity of "woman") within a patriarchal system. In *Bodies That Matter*, a book conceived in part as a further development of the concept of gender performativity introduced in *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler discusses

⁴⁵ Merkelbach and Sahin, nos. 36 and 37.

⁴⁶ Sahin, nos. 123 and 124.

the power of naming. Not only do names help to secure the identity of a named subject over time (and these inscriptions, carved into stone, were clearly intended to last long after Plancia Magna's death), but they can also serve as concise signifiers of the power structure within which the names are created. This is especially true of the patronym. As Butler notes, "once the proper name is elaborated as a patronym, then it can be read as an abbreviation for a social pact or symbolic order that structures the subjects named through their position in a patrilineal social structure."⁴⁷ This phenomenon is linguistically very pronounced in Greek, where a patronym that follows a proper name is declined in the genitive, the case used to denote origin or source. In Greek, therefore, the patronym implies reduced autonomy for Plancia Magna by identifying her as the product of a male progenitor. The genitive construction suggests that the source of Plancia Magna, and therefore the ultimate source of Plancia Magna's accomplishments, is her father and not Plancia Magna herself.

These four inscriptions "daughterize" Plancia Magna in another, more abstract way as well. Directly after naming her human father, the inscriptions describe her as the "daughter of the city" (πόλεως θυγατέρα). This honorific is not an unusual one. Multiple women in second and third-century Roman Asia were designated as "daughter of the city" or "mother of the city," and the title can be seen as a variant of the title "son of the city" that was sometimes conferred upon male benefactors.⁴⁸ Yet by describing Plancia Magna as both the daughter of a patrilineal family system and the daughter of a city governed by an all-male βουλή, δήμος, and γεραιοί, these inscriptions locate her safely within a male-dominated context. Although these inscriptions also mention several of Plancia Magna's

⁴⁷ Butler 1993, 154.

⁴⁸ Dmitriev, 178.

civic and religious titles, including priestess of Artemis, priestess of the Mother of the gods, *demiourgos*, and priestess of the imperial cult, these titles appear only in the latter part of the inscriptions, after she has already been established as the daughter of Plancius Varus and the daughter of the city. In these inscriptions, Plancia Magna is presented first and foremost as a daughter and only secondarily as an office-holder. These examples provide a stark contrast to the inscriptions from the Hellenistic gate that Plancia Magna herself commissioned, which identify her neither as the daughter of M. Plancius Varus nor as the daughter of the city and imply that she wished to portray herself as the central figure of her family and her community.

These inscriptions are not the only reaction that Plancia Magna elicited from her male contemporaries. Excavations in the vicinity of the gate have also uncovered one of the two portrait statues of Plancia Magna that were originally located in the niches in the display wall. Recall that this statue was commissioned by one of Plancia Magna's freedmen, not Plancia Magna herself. It would have stood atop a base bearing the patronymic Μ. Πλανκίου Ουάρου as well as the title πόλεως θυγατέρα, identifiers that Plancia Magna eschewed in her own building project. Interestingly, however, the statue visually reinforces the association with the imperial family that Plancia Magna claims at the gate.

As previously mentioned, the courtyard of Plancia Magna's renovated Hellenistic gate displayed statues of members of the imperial family, including many of the women of the Trajanic-Hadrianic court. Plotina, Marciana, Matidia, and Sabina were all featured as part of the statuary program. In fact, the number of imperial women represented at the

gate was at least equal to, and possibly greater than, the number of imperial men.⁴⁹ By including portrait statues of these women at the gate, Plancia Magna draws a parallel between herself and the women of the most powerful family in the empire. Out of these statues of imperial women, only the statue of Sabina appears to have survived. This statue was recovered from the area around the city gate, and it bears a striking resemblance to the portrait statue of Plancia Magna discussed above. The two statues are both made in the Large Herculaneum Woman style.⁵⁰ The women depicted wear similar hairstyles and stand in similar postures, and their clothing is draped in the same way (Figure 3). The main difference between the two statues is one of scale: while the statue of the empress is life-size, the statue of Plancia Magna is larger than life.⁵¹

The strong visual link that the statue creates between Plancia Magna and Sabina may seem somewhat confusing in light of the considerable differences between the two women. The increase in social status for women in Asia during the first and second centuries that Plancia Magna's career illustrates was not at all paralleled in the western part of the empire.⁵² Boatwright has argued that even the imperial women of the second century "enjoyed little power and autonomy," and they are infrequently attested in literary or epigraphical sources.⁵³ Sabina herself had only one definite benefaction to her name: a gift to the Roman *matronae*.⁵⁴ The comparison of Plancia Magna, a major benefactor and office-holder in Perge, to Sabina, whose public benefactions were so minimal, seems to

⁴⁹ Merkelbach and Sahin, nos. 32, 33, 34; Boatwright 2000, 64. Trajan, Hadrian, Nerva, and possibly Augustus had portrait statues at the gate.

⁵⁰ Boatwright 2000, 65.

⁵¹ Boatwright 2000, 67.

⁵² Dmitriev, 243.

⁵³ Boatwright 1991, 513.

⁵⁴ Boatwright 1991, 524-525.

have little to do with any true similarity between them. However, as Boatwright has pointed out, it is unlikely that citizens and visitors in Perge would have known much about Sabina's lack of public donations.⁵⁵ Rather, by modeling his statue of Plancia Magna after the one of Sabina, the statue's donor acknowledges and preserves the connection to the imperial family that Plancia Magna proclaimed at the Hellenistic gate. He also takes this connection one step further by suggesting that Plancia Magna represents the empress in the local context of Perge. She is like the empress, but of more immediate local importance, as is suggested both by the size difference between the two statues (Plancia Magna's is larger) and their relative positioning (anyone entering the city would encounter the statue of Plancia Magna before seeing the statue of Sabina).

Taken together, the portrait statue and the "daughterizing" inscription on its base create an interesting ensemble, one that exemplifies the complex responses to Plancia Magna's architectural project among her male contemporaries. While some aspects of her self-representation at the gate (such as her connection to the imperial family) were affirmed or even amplified, others (such as her refusal to fit herself within a patriarchal social system) were resisted. These reactions are a testament to the provocative nature of the renovation project immediately after its completion. Plancia Magna's remodeled gate, however, would continue to elicit responses in the city of Perge for decades after her death.

The Hydreion of Aurelia Paulina

Eighty to ninety years after Plancia Magna's renovation of the Hellenistic gate, another prominent woman in Perge dedicated a monumental structure whose design and

⁵⁵ Boatwright 2000, 66.

location referenced Planica Magna's earlier benefaction. Excavations at Perge in 1968 and 1969 uncovered a *hydreion*, or monumental fountain, that abutted the eastern wall of the southern bath complex and was supplied by water from the bath behind it.⁵⁶ The fountain was built in the Severan period between 198 and 211 CE.⁵⁷ The inscription corresponding to the *hydreion* reveals that the project was funded by a woman named Aurelia Paulina out of her own personal finances (ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων).⁵⁸

Like Plancia Magna, Aurelia Paulina was the priestess for life of Artemis Pergaia, or [ἱέρει]α θεᾶς Ἀρτέ[μ]ιδος [Πε]ργαίας. At one point, she had also served as the priestess of the imperial cult in the nearby city of Silyum, although by the time the inscription was commissioned she seems to have no longer held this position.⁵⁹ In contrast to Plancia Magna, however, who appears to have held the office of imperial priestess by herself, Aurelia Paulina fulfilled the role μετὰ τοῦ γενο[μέν]ου ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς Ἀκου[λίου]: together with her then-husband Aquilius.⁶⁰ Such joint office-holding by husbands and wives is attested in epigraphy from the first century CE onward in Roman Asia.⁶¹ It was by no means an uncommon occurrence, although the power and responsibilities delegated to each partner in the joint office remains unclear.

⁵⁶ Özgür, 51.

⁵⁷ Longfellow, 185.

⁵⁸ Şahin 1999, no. 195.

⁵⁹ Şahin 1999, no. 195. The participle in the clause that refers to Aurelia Paulina's tenure in this position, [ἀρχ]ιερασαμένη τῶν [Σεβ]αστῶν, is in the aorist, which seems to imply that this action was completed before the construction of the *hydreion*. The editor's German translation of the inscription also interprets the aorist in this way. Şahin provides "Aurelia Paulina...die ehemals Oberpriesterin des Kaiserkultes," or "Aurelia Paulina...formerly the high priestess of the imperial cult" (Şahin, 229).

⁶⁰ Şahin 1999, no. 195.

⁶¹ Dmitriev, 184-85.

The mention of Aquilius draws attention to an important difference in the way that Aurelia Paulina and Plancia Magna chose to present themselves to the city. Unlike the inscriptions Plancia Magna commissioned for the Hellenistic gate, the inscription at Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion* places Aurelia Paulina within a familial context by referring to her husband and her ancestors. However, it does so in a slightly unconventional way. As might be expected, the inscription names Aurelia Paulina's father, Appellas, and her paternal grandfather, Dionysos, thereby emphasizing her patrilineage. Yet these family identifications are placed not at the beginning of the inscription directly after Aurelia Paulina's name, but rather in the middle, after the lines that identify her as a priestess of Artemis and a former priestess of the imperial cult. In this way, her identity as priestess is given precedence over her familial relationships. Furthermore, the inscription mentions one of Aurelia Paulina's female forebears as well: it includes the name of her paternal grandmother, Aelia Tertulla.

The dedicatory inscription from the *hydreion* reveals one other major distinction between the two women. Unlike Plancia Magna, who came from a long line of Roman citizens, Aurelia Paulina was from a local family, probably of Syrian origin. According to the inscription, she had been presented with Roman citizenship by the emperor Commodus a decade before the construction of the *hydreion*.⁶² This difference between Plancia Magna and Aurelia Paulina's backgrounds is suggested by the nature of the inscriptions from their monuments. In contrast to the bilingual Latin and Greek inscriptions present at the Hellenistic gate, the inscriptions associated with Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion* are in Greek only.

⁶² Fejfer, 362.

Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion* is asymmetrical, an unusual design for a Roman monumental fountain (Figure 4). The southern section is built around a pre-existing structure: an ancient well from which a statue of Artemis was recovered during excavations and which was probably sacred to that goddess.⁶³ As mentioned above, Artemis was an especially important deity at Perge, and the incorporation of the well into the new structure can be seen as a nod to Perge's local, pre-Roman traditions. The relief sculpture on the pediment above the well depicts Artemis, who is flanked on the left by the three Graces and an Eros and on the right by another Eros, Aphrodite, and a priestess (Figure 5).⁶⁴ The priestess is dressed in Syrian costume with a veil and heavy jewelry, including the shell pendant that symbolizes Artemis.⁶⁵ In all likelihood, this figure represents Aurelia Paulina herself.

While the southern part of the *hydreion* was focused almost wholly on Artemis, she was not the only honoree at the structure. A second inscription attributed to the *hydreion* names the other personalities that the *hydreion* commemorates. First on the list is Artemis Pergaia, but her name is followed by the emperors Septimius Severus and Marcus Aurelius, the empress Julia Domna, the imperial family, and the fatherland.⁶⁶ The mention of Julia Domna by name is reminiscent of Plancia Magna's commemoration of a multitude of imperial women in the courtyard of the Hellenistic gate. Aurelia Paulina may have had a special reason for honoring Julia Domna in particular. Like Aurelia Paulina herself, the empress was Syrian by birth.

⁶³ Longfellow, 187.

⁶⁴ Longfellow, 187.

⁶⁵ Fejfer, 362.

⁶⁶ Sahin, no. 196.

Aurelia Paulina's choice of location for the *hydreion* was hardly arbitrary. Rather, it created a strong architectural connection between Aurelia Paulina and Plancia Magna, her powerful female predecessor and precursor in the priesthood of Artemis.⁶⁷ The *hydreion* is positioned directly south of the display wall holding statues of Plancia Magna and the western tower of Plancia Magna's renovated Hellenistic gate. Since both the display wall and the *hydreion* abut the east wall of the southern bath complex, of which the western tower of the Hellenistic gate forms the northeast corner, the overall visual effect is one of a continuum of monuments funded by or commemorating women (Figure 6).

In fact, the monuments created by or honoring Plancia Magna and Aurelia Paulina are arranged symmetrically around the eastern *propylon* that leads into the baths. If we re-envision the experience of a visitor entering Perge, this time in the third rather than the second century, the first monument he or she passed on the left would be the *hydreion* of Aurelia Paulina. Directly north of the *hydreion* was a display wall with three niches, each of which held a statue⁶⁸ -- an arrangement strikingly similar to the display wall that housed the statues of Plancia Magna. Only one of the statues survives in entirety, a woman wearing Syrian costume and a shell pendant who resembles the woman on the pediment (Figure 7).⁶⁹ None of the inscriptions from this display wall survive, and so it is impossible to determine whether the wall and statues were commissioned by Aurelia Paulina or by another group within the city. The wall has been linked to the inscriptions

⁶⁷ In this way, Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion* also serves as an indication of the enduring importance of Plancia Magna's Hellenistic gate into the Severan period. No builder takes pains to associate his or her edifice with an unpopular or trivial one.

⁶⁸ Fejfer, 362-363.

⁶⁹ Fejfer, 363.

from the *hydreion*, however, and it was probably constructed at the same time.⁷⁰ Fejfer proposes that the woman in Syrian dress is Aurelia Paulina herself, in which case the statue may represent a further strengthening of the connection between Aurelia Paulina and the Syrian-born empress Julia Domna.⁷¹ To the north of this display wall lies the *propylon* of the baths, then the display wall with the statues of Plancia Magna, and then Plancia Magna's Hellenistic gate. The whole eastern façade of the baths, then, is arranged concentrically (Figure 6). The *propylon* is flanked on each side first by a portrait statue of a prominent local woman (both of which reference the reigning empress at the time of that woman's benefaction -- Sabina for Plancia Magna and Julia Domna for Aurelia Paulina), then by the project funded by that woman (Plancia Magna's renovation of the Hellenistic gate and Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion*).

Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion* consciously associates itself with Plancia Magna's gate, and the two monuments are similar in many ways. Yet the message that each structure conveys about the identity of its founder is slightly different. While Plancia Magna presents herself as a politically active civic official with connections to the capital of the empire, Aurelia Paulina places herself within the domains of family, birthplace, and local cult. As mentioned above, the main inscription from the *hydreion* describes Aurelia Paulina in relation to her ancestors and mentions her husband, while Plancia Magna omits her husband entirely and describes her father and brother in relation to herself. Unlike Plancia Magna, who is described in inscriptions as a *demiourgos* and gymnasiarch as well as a priestess, there is no evidence for Aurelia Paulina holding any public titles unrelated to cult activity. The position that is highlighted the most in the inscriptions and sculpture

⁷⁰ Fejfer, 363.

⁷¹ Fejfer, 363.

from the *hydreion* is that of priestess of Artemis, the deity with the most local importance at Perge.

In contrast to Plancia Magna, Aurelia Paulina defines her sphere of influence at the local rather than the imperial level. Although the inscription mentions that she once held the office of imperial cult priestess, a position with much significance in an empire-wide setting, it also states that the position was shared with her husband and that she no longer holds it. In the visual depictions of Aurelia Paulina at the *hydreion*, it is her Syrian origin and her associations with Artemis that are emphasized rather than her associations with the imperial cult. Even the references to the imperial family at the monument are tied in part to Aurelia Paulina's own personal history and place of origin: like the empress, Aurelia Paulina is Syrian. Based on the evidence from the monument, a tie to the greater empire does not appear to be one of Aurelia Paulina's major priorities. As the dedicatory inscription informs the reader, Aurelia Paulina was not born a Roman citizen, and Greek rather than Latin is the language of choice for all inscriptions related to the *hydreion*.

Conclusion

The architectural projects, dedicatory inscriptions, and statuary programs discussed above comprise a series of performances that were enacted upon the urban landscape of Perge in the second and third centuries. These monuments were established by citizens from many different backgrounds and social classes, including freedmen, city administrators, and cult officials. Yet they all contributed to an ongoing discourse about where the gender identities of "male" and "female" belonged in the city and how these genders could be represented in the urban landscape. Plancia Magna's renovation of the Hellenistic gate challenged several of the operative conventions in Roman society relating

to these issues. Her performance provoked a mixed reaction from her male contemporaries, whose monuments to her upheld some aspects of her self-representation and rejected others. With the dedication of the *hydreion* in the early third century, Aurelia Paulina made another major addition to the architectural dialogue at Perge. Aurelia Paulina took care to associate the *hydreion* with Plancia Magna's impressive earlier benefaction. Yet the inscriptions and statuary at the *hydreion* demonstrate how she also worked within the constraints on femaleness that had been imposed upon Plancia Magna's public image, partially reinforcing the legitimacy of those constraints.

In Perge, architectural construction was closely entangled with gender construction. This same phenomenon is discernible in many other eastern provincial cities in the Roman Empire. Although none of these cities have yielded evidence of a female patron quite as unusual as Plancia Magna, they exhibit a similar process to the one that took place in Perge: the elaboration of gender categories by way of displays of architectural patronage. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, this process was realized not only in the construction of civic monuments like those of Plancia Magna and Aurelia Paulina, but also in the construction of houses of worship.

Chapter Two: Synagogues of Asia Minor and Syria in the First through the Fourth Centuries

In the previous chapter, I discussed how female architectural patrons who served as priestesses of the imperial cult and the cult of Artemis and whose building projects employed imagery from those cults presented themselves in their own monuments. In contrast to the renovation project of her predecessor Plancia Magna, which stressed its founder's connection to the wider Roman Empire, Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion* placed its patron more firmly within a local and familial context. A similar series of negotiations about where the gender identity of "woman" belonged in the urban environment is also visible in examples of women's donations to synagogues in Asia Minor and Syria. As in the case of the monuments at Perge, the architectural performances of female synagogue donors, as well as the subsequent responses to or commemorations of those performances by other members of the urban community, contributed to the process of gender construction in the eastern cities of the Roman Empire.

Before I move into a discussion of specific synagogues, it will be helpful to provide some background information about the phenomenon of synagogue patronage in Asia Minor and the status of Jewish communities in eastern Roman cities. A statistical analysis of donor inscriptions indicates that female patronage of synagogues occurred more commonly in Asia Minor than it did elsewhere in the Roman world. As Trebilco explains, "40 percent of women donors known to us (either by themselves or jointly with husbands) come from Asia Minor even though the region only accounts for about 8.5 percent of inscriptions."⁷² An examination of the fifty-three synagogue donor inscriptions from within Asia Minor reveals that nearly 7.5 percent of the donations were made by

⁷² Trebilco, 112.

women acting alone, while about 28 percent were made by women together with their husbands.⁷³ As I will discuss in more detail later, the inscriptions from the synagogue at Apamea in Syria also give evidence for a very high proportion of independent economic contributions made by women to a synagogue community. Nine out of nineteen, or nearly one-half, of the mosaic inscriptions at the Apamean synagogue were commissioned by women acting alone.

How can this discrepancy between the situation in Asia Minor and the situation in the other parts of the Roman Empire be explained? Both Trebilco and Hachlili view the prevalence of women in synagogue inscriptions from Asia Minor as related to a larger trend of increased prominence for women in Asia Minor in general.⁷⁴ The idea that the position of women in Jewish communities could be influenced by the position of women in the larger city is reasonable considering the many ways that the urban Jewish population in Asia Minor participated in city life. Although Jewish communities as a whole do not appear to have possessed the citizenship of their cities, literary sources and inscriptions describe individual Jews who held local or Roman citizenship and also Jews who held civic offices. The general attitude of city governments toward their Jewish inhabitants appears to have been tolerant; after 2 CE, there are no literary references to hostility directed towards Jewish communities in Asian cities.⁷⁵ Furthermore, inscriptions from Miletus and Aphrodisias prove that Jews attended the theater, the *odeum* and the gymnasium, three institutions that were central to the cultural life of Greek cities and

⁷³ Trebilco, 112.

⁷⁴ Hachlili, 7; Trebilco 126. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of Plancia Magna of Perge, the prominence of women in Asia Minor can be inferred from the large number of civic titles held by female citizens in the first through the third centuries CE.

⁷⁵ Trebilco, 184.

where interactions with non-Jewish residents of the city would undoubtedly have occurred.⁷⁶ Given this high level of integration of Jewish populations into Roman urban society, it is not surprising that women who were affiliated with Jewish communities would participate in architectural patronage just as their counterparts who were affiliated with civic and imperial cults did.

At Perge, the monuments of Plancia Magna and Aurelia Paulina are well-preserved in the archaeological record and have been extensively excavated. This abundance of evidence allows for a detailed investigation of performances of gender over time in one specific city in Asia Minor. The surviving evidence for synagogue buildings constructed by female patrons in the eastern provinces is much more sparse. Many of these structures no longer survive, making it impossible to analyze their architectural characteristics or their spatial relationship to other urban features. Therefore, in order to have enough data to formulate a substantial discussion, I will focus on synagogues from three different cities: the first-century synagogue at Akmonia in west-central Asia Minor, the third-century synagogue at Phocaea on the west coast of Asia Minor, and the late fourth-century synagogue at Apamea in Syria. Out of these three examples, only the synagogue at Apamea is present in the archeological record. The synagogue buildings at Akmonia and Phocaea are attested solely in inscriptions.

I have selected these examples because the synagogue inscriptions from these cities describe women who made donations independently of their husbands or other male relatives, and autonomous female patronage of architectural projects is the main focus of this study. When women and their husbands are attested as making joint donations, it is

⁷⁶ Trebilco, 175-77.

difficult to ascertain the importance of the contribution of the female donor. Did she take an active role in initiating and funding the donation, or is she listed merely as an accessory to the identity of the male donor? In many inscriptions describing joint donations, for example, the female donor is not mentioned by name and is identified only as the wife of the male donor. This criterion for selection explains my choice not to include several important and well-excavated synagogues in the Roman East, such as the third-century synagogue at Sardis – the largest surviving synagogue from antiquity, but one where women are mentioned only as co-donors with their husbands.⁷⁷

Akmonia, Phrygia

The first-century synagogue of Akmonia in Phrygia does not survive in the archaeological record, and it is not mentioned in any known literary sources.⁷⁸ The only evidence for its existence is a single inscription that commemorates the restoration and redecoration of the synagogue by three title-holding men: P. Tyrranios Klados (head of the synagogue for life, or ὁ διὰ βίου ἀρχισυνάγωγος), Lucius son of Lucius (head of the synagogue, or ἀρχισυνάγωγος), and Poblius Zotikos (leader, or ἄρχων).⁷⁹ In return, the synagogue community has honored them with a golden shield (ἡ συναγωγή ἐτείμησεν ὄπλῳ ἐπιχρύσῳ). The first line of the inscription, however, reveals that a woman named Julia Severa erected the original building: τὸν κατασκευασθέντα οἶκον ὑπὸ Ἰουλίας Σεουήρας. Since the inscription describes a restoration, it must have been made after Julia Severa's original donation. As Brooten has pointed out, this implies that Julia Severa's

⁷⁷ Trebilco, 40; Trebilco, n. 42, 231.

⁷⁸ Richardson, 209.

⁷⁹ Lifshitz, no. 33.

name remained connected with the synagogue for some time after her initial contribution.⁸⁰

Unfortunately, there is no dedicatory inscription that survives from the initial construction of the synagogue building, and so there is no way to know how Julia Severa would have represented herself or her donation in her own words. Yet the renovation inscription can still provide some information about how the synagogue community portrayed her after her donation had been made. In the surviving inscription, Julia Severa's name appears alone, unconnected to the name of a family member or spouse and unattached to any official title. However, several other sources suggest that she played anything but a diminutive role in the public affairs of Akmonia. Another inscription from the city names her as both high priestess of the imperial cult (ἀρχιέρεια τῶν Σεβαστῶν) and a judge of athletic contests (ἀγωνοθέτις).⁸¹ Moreover, numismatic evidence attests that Julia Severa was magistrate at Akmonia during the time of Nero.⁸² On many coins, as well as in public records, her name is linked to that of Lucius Servenius Capito, almost certainly her husband and a man with whom she held several public offices jointly.⁸³

This multitude of references to Julia Severa has provoked scholarly debate about her personal religious affiliation. Ramsay insists that Julia Severa must have been Jewish and sees her role as priestess of the imperial cult as a concession to the conventions of public office-holding in the Roman Empire.⁸⁴ However, his argument is based almost solely upon Julia Severa's inclusion in the synagogue inscription: "it may be inferred that

⁸⁰ Brooten, 144.

⁸¹ MAMA 6.263.

⁸² Kraabel, 74.

⁸³ Kraabel, 74-75; Kraemer 1992, 120.

⁸⁴ Ramsay, 650, 673.

all persons mentioned in this inscription are Jews.”⁸⁵ Kraabel and Lifshitz, on the other hand, flatly dismiss the possibility that Julia Severa was Jewish by birth, mostly on the basis of her titles as imperial cult priestess and magistrate (although no sources from Diaspora Jewish communities prohibit Jews from fulfilling such a civic role).⁸⁶ They instead claim that she was a non-Jewish woman sympathetic to the Jewish cause who provided economic and political support to a Jewish community just as other prominent Roman women, such as Nero’s mistress Poppea, did.⁸⁷

It is impossible to determine Julia Severa’s personal religious beliefs with certainty, and the question is in some ways irrelevant. Regardless of Julia Severa’s religion, the epigraphic and numismatic evidence suggests that she enjoyed the esteem of both the Jewish community of Akmonia and the larger imperial administration. In the case of the Jewish community, she initiated or maintained this good relationship by means of the construction of a building for that community to use. The donation can be seen as originating from political or social motives as much as religious ones. It is worth noting, however, that none of the titles used to describe Julia Severa’s civic or religious roles elsewhere in the city appear in the synagogue inscription. It is probable that the inscription’s donor considered these titles, some of which were associated with non-Jewish religious practice, inappropriate to mention within the context of a synagogue inscription. The omission of any titles or family information such as a patronymic could also be interpreted as an indication of Julia Severa’s public prominence. Perhaps Julia

⁸⁵ Ramsay, 650.

⁸⁶ Kraemer 1992, 120.

⁸⁷ Lifshitz, 37-38; Kraabel, 77-79.

Severa's name was so well-known to the population of Akmonia that any secondary identifiers were considered unnecessary.

In the synagogue inscription, the Greek word οἶκος is used to describe the structure that Julia Severa has built. The use of the term οἶκος to mean “a religious edifice” is fairly common, but also somewhat ambiguous in nature. The word appears in Greek translations of the Bible in reference to the Temple of Jerusalem, but many Greek inscriptions also use οἶκος to designate non-Jewish sanctuaries.⁸⁸ The use of the word οἶκος specifically in conjunction with Julia Severa is interesting in light of the fact that a more specific term, συναγωγή, is used later in the inscription in connection with the male restorers of the synagogue. They will be honored “on account of...their favor and zeal towards the synagogue” (διὰ...τὴν πρὸς τὴν συναγωγὴν εὐνοϊάν τε καὶ σπουδήν). Perhaps the use of οἶκος instead of the more specific term συναγωγή is a muted reference to Julia Severa's multiple alliances -- an attempt to stress that, although she donated the structure that the synagogue community used, she was not involved in the daily affairs of that community. White goes so far as to claim that the building as Julia Severa donated it was not fit to be a synagogue at all and that it was necessary for the male synagogue officials to carry out their renovations before the Jewish community could use the building as such.⁸⁹ Since the material remains of the synagogue do not survive, it is impossible to either substantiate or dismiss this hypothesis. At any rate, there is no further evidence of

⁸⁸ Lifshitz, 35.

⁸⁹ White, 81. White also strips Julia Severa of her agency in construction of the building, positing that “the edifice was already standing, and [Julia Severa's] bequest simply made it the property of the Jewish congregation” (White, 81). This hardly seems to be substantiated by the inscription, which uses the phrase κατασκευασθέντα ὑπὸ Ἰουλίας Σεουήρας, “built by Julia Severa,” to describe the οἶκος.

Julia Severa's involvement with the Jewish community of Akmonia. In some situations, however, a female donor to a synagogue was also an important member of the synagogue's congregation, as the case of Tation of Phoecea illustrates.

Phocaea, Ionia

An inscription from Phocaea in western Asia Minor, dated by Lifshitz to the third century CE, provides another example of a woman donating an entire building to a Jewish community.⁹⁰ Tation is credited with constructing both the synagogue building (τὸν οἶκον) and the enclosure of the courtyard in front of it (τὸν περιβόλον τοῦ ὑπαίθρου) with her own money (ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων). In gratitude for her benefaction, the synagogue honored her with a golden crown and the προεδρία, or the privilege of sitting at the front of the synagogue in a seat of honor.⁹¹ The conferring of the προεδρία implies not only that Tation herself attended synagogue functions with some degree of regularity, but also that the seating arrangements in ancient synagogues did not necessarily segregate men and women during religious gatherings as many Orthodox Jewish communities do today.⁹²

The inscription does not attach any titles to Tation's name. However, her award of a golden crown (στέφανος χρυσοῦς) is suggestive of the conferring of the title of στεφανηφόρος, literally "crown-wearer," an honor bestowed upon important citizens in Asia Minor between the second century BCE and the third century CE.⁹³ The στεφανηφόρος was not involved in the affairs of city government, but he or she did make

⁹⁰ Lifshitz, no. 13.

⁹¹ Brooten, 143-144.

⁹² Kraemer 1992, 106.

⁹³ Trebilco, 121. The honor is also reminiscent of the golden shield (ὄπλῳ ἐπιχρύσῳ) awarded to the three male restorers of the Akmonian synagogue in the first inscription discussed in this chapter.

public appearances and fund public banquets and entertainments.⁹⁴ Furthermore, there is evidence for the presence of female στεφανηφόροι in the very same city where Tation made her donation. An inscription from Phocaea indicates that a woman named Flavia Ammon held the position twice.⁹⁵ Although there is no indication that Tation ever served as a στεφανηφόρος for the city of Phocaea, it is interesting that her position within the synagogue community so closely echoes a title bestowed upon prominent citizens in the larger city. The inscription does not describe Tation as holding an official title in the city of Phocaea, but it does assign her an important role within the religious domain of the synagogue. This emphasis on the importance of a female donor within the context of a religious community rather than an entire city is reminiscent of Aurelia Paulina's strong self-identification with the cult of Artemis at the *hydreion* in Perge -- a building project roughly contemporaneous with Tation's.

In addition to defining Tation's position within a religious community, the inscription places her within a family setting. In the synagogue inscription from first-century Akmonia, Julia Severa's name stands alone. In the inscription from Phocaea, on the other hand, Tation's name is mentioned twice, and it is followed both times by the name of her father Straton and her paternal grandfather Empedon. She is always Τάτιον Στράτωνος τοῦ Ἐμπέδωνος, never simply Τάτιον. This repeated use of the double patronymic connects Tation to the spheres of home and family and also links her architectural accomplishment to her patrilineage.

Tation's donation provides an interesting counterpoint to those of Plancia Magna and Aurelia Paulina of Perge, whose building projects were either strategically aligned

⁹⁴ Trebilco, 121.

⁹⁵ *IGR* 4.1325; Trebilco 119.

with water installations or were in themselves water installations. Although the physical remains of the synagogue of Phocaea have not been located or excavated, the inscription indicates the existence of an open-air courtyard (ὑπαίθρος) in front of the synagogue building. This courtyard was closed off from the surrounding areas when Tation constructed an enclosure wall (τὸν περίβολον). Lifshitz points out that the courtyard of a synagogue was an important fixture of community life precisely because it was the location of a water supply: “La cour jouait un rôle important dans la vie de la communauté: la fontaine et le bassin y étaient toujours placés.”⁹⁶ Therefore, both Plancia Magna and Aurelia Paulina’s monuments at Perge and Tation’s synagogue associated themselves with water sources. Instead of linking her architectural project to the larger water system of the surrounding city as the Pergean women did, however, Tation created a walled space set apart from the city outside. This space housed a separate water supply for the use of the synagogue community. Tation’s separation of the private from the public is hinted at by the wording of the donor inscription. She constructed the enclosure of the synagogue’s courtyard (τὸν περίβολον τοῦ ὑπαίθρου κατασκευάσασα). Although ὑπαίθριος can be used to describe something “under the sky” or “in the open air,” it can also have the sense “in public.”⁹⁷ In this way, the very language used to describe Tation’s action implies the sequestering and privatization of a formerly public area.

Apamea, Syria

Both Julia Severa of Akmonia and Tation of Phoecea are examples of a lone female donor who made, as far as we know, a single large donation to the Jewish community in her city. The mosaic floor of the synagogue at Apamea in Syria, on the

⁹⁶ Lifshitz, 22

⁹⁷ LSJ: *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, ὑπαίθριος.

other hand, provides evidence for a thriving community of female donors in that city towards the end of the fourth century CE. The Apamean synagogue was excavated in 1934 and 1937 by the Brussels Musée de Cinquantenaire under the direction of M.F. Mayence. Because the synagogue was discovered beneath the remains of a later Christian church, it is difficult to reconstruct its original plan.⁹⁸ The synagogue's floor, however, is large (over one hundred and twenty square meters) and well-preserved. It is divided into mosaic panels of different sizes, which are decorated with various geometric and floral designs (Figure 8). The inscriptions are integrated into the spaces between and within these panels.⁹⁹

Nineteen mosaic inscriptions from the floor survive, two of which are dated to 391 CE.¹⁰⁰ Out of these nineteen, nine were donated by women acting alone, with no husband or other family member mentioned by name in the inscription.¹⁰¹ Seven of the remaining ten inscriptions mention women in some capacity, either as the spouse of the male donor or as the person on whose behalf the donation is being made.¹⁰² This woman is most commonly the wife of the male donor, but in some cases is a mother-in-law (πενθερά) or female ancestor (προγόννη).¹⁰³ In five of these cases, the woman is mentioned by name.¹⁰⁴ Thus, not only were a certain number of women in Apamea possessed of wealth that they were free to use independently, but even women who were not donors themselves were

⁹⁸ Sukenik, 542.

⁹⁹ Sukenik, 543.

¹⁰⁰ Lifshitz, nos. 38 and 40.

¹⁰¹ Lifshitz, nos. 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 51, 54, and 55.

¹⁰² Lifshitz, nos. 39, 40, 48, 50, 52, 53, and 56.

¹⁰³ Lifshitz, nos. 39 and 48.

¹⁰⁴ Lifshitz, nos. 39, 48, 52, 53, and 56.

prominent enough members of the synagogue community to be mentioned by name in inscriptions.

With the exception of the mosaics that are described by their specific location in the synagogue, such as the two mosaics at the entrance or the mosaic on the porch in front of the sanctuary, almost all of the inscriptions follow a similar formula. Each donor, male or female, is described as having made a certain amount of feet of mosaic (ἐποίησεν πόδας). The greater the number of feet, the greater the expense to the donor, and so the inscriptions provide a way to estimate the relative size of each donation. In inscriptions where the number of feet is specified, there is no significant difference between the average number of feet donated by women acting alone and the amount donated by men acting alone or with their wives. Women acting alone are attested as donating between 50 and 150 feet of mosaic, while men acting alone or with their wives donated between 35 and 140 feet. Not only did women contribute funds to the synagogue, but they contributed roughly the same amount of money as their male counterparts.

One characteristic, however, is common to the nine inscriptions dedicated solely by women. All state that they were made praying for the salvation (εὐξαμένη ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας) of various members of their families. In contrast, not all of the inscriptions commissioned by men or by men and women together are dedicated to members of the donor's family. Some of them do pray for the health of family members, but others simply state that the pavement was laid without denoting a specific purpose.¹⁰⁵ It appears that all of the female donors to the synagogue at Apamea who donated alone chose to indicate, using exactly the same three-word phrase, that their action explicitly benefited their

¹⁰⁵ Lifshitz, nos. 47, 48, 49, 52, 53.

family. Men acting alone or men and women acting in tandem did not necessarily frame their benefaction in this way.

The exact family members whose salvation was to be guaranteed by the dedications vary across the nine inscriptions. Only one of them, dedicated by a woman named Eupithis, mentions her husband specifically (Figure 9).¹⁰⁶ Two others mention children and grandchildren.¹⁰⁷ The six remaining inscriptions, identical except for the name of the donor, are interesting on account of their vague nature. The intended beneficiaries of these six inscriptions are πάντων τῶν ἰδίων, or “all [of the donor’s] relatives” (Figure 10). The term ἴδιοι can have a variety of different meanings. The root definition of ἴδιος is adjectival and denotes something that is personal, private, or one’s own, in opposition to something that is public.¹⁰⁸ However, the term can also be used in the neuter plural as a substantive to mean “one’s own resources,” as it does in the Tation inscription from Phocaea, or “one’s own relatives,” as it does here. In the context of the synagogue at Apamea, the term ἴδιοι does not appear in any of the inscriptions dedicated by men or by men and women jointly. Although women are contributing funds to a community building, their donation is presented as being performed for private reasons.

As Brooten has pointed out, none of the women mentioned in the synagogue inscriptions at Apamea hold an official title.¹⁰⁹ The mosaic paving in the most noticeable or sacred places in the synagogue, namely the two mosaics at the entrance and the mosaic on the porch in front of the sanctuary, mentions male officeholders such as the heads of

¹⁰⁶ Lifshitz, no. 55.

¹⁰⁷ Lifshitz, nos. 51 and 54.

¹⁰⁸ *LSJ: The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, ἴδιος.

¹⁰⁹ Brooten, 143.

the synagogue (ἀρχισυνάγωγος), the elders (πρεσβύτεροι), and the deacon (διάκονος),¹¹⁰ but all female donors are referred to simply by a first name. At Apamea, therefore, an economic contribution to the synagogue did not necessarily lead to an administrative position in synagogue leadership or any special honors from the synagogue community.

The inscriptions at the synagogue from Apamea differ from the earlier inscriptions at Akmonia and Phoecea in one very basic way. The mosaic inscriptions at Apamea were certainly inside the synagogue, since they made up part of the building's floor. The inscriptions mentioning Julia Severa and Tation, however, were carved into monoliths and were not necessarily integrated into the interior of the synagogue. Although the lack of archaeological evidence makes it impossible to tell for sure, it seems likely that these inscriptions would have been mounted somewhere outside of the synagogue building in public view. The Julia Severa inscription from Phocaea, for example, mentions "the Jews" (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) several times, a formulation that makes more sense if the inscription were located on the outside of the synagogue.¹¹¹ The patronage of the Apamean women is less visible than that of Julia Severa or Tation by virtue of the more hidden location of the inscriptions. Only a member of the synagogue community or someone entering with the permission of the synagogue community would be able to see the names of the women who had contributed to its construction.

Conclusion

Like the monuments of Plancia Magna and Aurelia Paulina at Perge, the synagogues at Akmonia, Phocaea, and Apamea illustrate how acts of female architectural patronage and the responses to these acts shaped gender identity in eastern cities. In these

¹¹⁰ Lifshitz, nos. 38, 39, and 40.

¹¹¹ Trebilco 230, n. 34.

three synagogues, female patrons are dissociated from the public world of city politics. Instead, they are described by way of their relationship to the religious community of the synagogue or the domestic world of their own family. In the donor inscription from first-century Akmonia, none of Julia Severa's multiple civic titles are mentioned, even those not directly related to non-Jewish cult activity. Two centuries later, the inscription from Phocaea defines Tation based on her position within the synagogue community (her seating privileges and crown) and her family (her patronym) rather than the wider city, and her donation of an assembly hall and walled courtyard creates a semi-private space set apart from the larger world of the city. At the late fourth-century synagogue at Apamea, a site that allows for a comparison of the behavior of male and female donors at the same building, all female donors present their economic contribution to the synagogue as a prayer for the wellbeing of their family members. The concept of where the Apamean women belong in space is physicalized in the architectural plan of the synagogue. These women place their names inside the building itself, further from the entrances than the names of the male synagogue leaders. This floor plan restricts knowledge of their donation – rather than broadcasting their patronage to the entire city, these women perform for the smaller synagogue community.

In the next and final chapter, I will consider women's patronage of four more religious foundations: three Christian churches and one Christian monastery. The donors of these buildings faced many of the same constraints on gender identity as their predecessors had, as well as several new ones introduced in the writings of prominent members of the early Church. Yet they also made their donations at a time when the nature of Roman urbanism, especially in regard to the allocation of urban space, was

undergoing significant change. The implications of this change for the performance of gender through architecture will be considered in detail below.

Chapter Three: Constantinople in the Fourth through the Sixth Centuries

In the previous chapters, I discussed examples of female architectural patronage from four different cities in Asia Minor and Syria. The women who funded these building projects were associated with many different religious communities, and the dates of construction range from the first to the fourth centuries. So far, however, I have not referred to several major changes that occurred in the Roman Empire during the fourth century. One of these was the movement of the imperial capital eastward in 330 CE to a Greek-speaking city in Asia Minor: the city of Byzantium, or, as it would later become known, Constantinople. Another was the rise of Christianity over the course of the fourth century, culminating in the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the empire in 380 CE under Theodosius I. This final installment of my argument will discuss the architectural patronage of Christian women in the new imperial capital in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. In accordance with the trend evinced by their pagan and Jewish predecessors, these women located themselves firmly in the spheres of religious community, home, and family. Yet the changing nature of urbanism in Late Antiquity allowed them to inhabit these spheres in a publicly visible way.

In recent years, Late Antiquity has increasingly been conceptualized as a period characterized not by “decline” (as in Gibbon’s traditional rhetoric), but rather by transformation or change. One transformation of particular interest to this study is the increasing prioritization of private spaces and private enterprises over public ones, especially in Late Antique urban environments.¹¹² This shift in values is illustrated by the changing nature of urban topography over the course of Late Antiquity. The

¹¹² Cameron 1993, 159-156 and 198-199.

“soukification” of colonnaded urban streets, the practice of burying the dead within a city rather than on its outskirts, and the construction of domestic or industrial structures within areas that had served a civic function during earlier periods¹¹³ are all examples of this trend. In a society where female influence was chiefly limited to the private sphere, the encroachment of private institutions into the public domain provided an opportunity for the elite women of fifth and sixth-century Constantinople to contribute to the city’s urban landscape. I will examine four instances of elite women converting or expanding upon private residential spaces to create foundations that became important features of Late Antique Constantinople: the chapel of St. Stephen, the Church of St. Polyeuktos, the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, and the Olympiades Monastery.

One of the central tenants of Byzantine gender ideology was that a woman’s activities should be limited to the protected space of the home.¹¹⁴ According to the Early Church Father John Chrysostom, who was appointed Archbishop of Constantinople in 397, this delegation of women to the domestic sphere was a divine mandate. Consider the following excerpt from one of Chrysostom’s homilies about how to choose a wife.

Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὸν βίον τὸν ἡμέτερον δύο ταῦτα συγκροτεῖν εἴωθε, τὰ πολιτικὰ καὶ ιδιωτικὰ πράγματα, διελὼν ἀμφότερα ταῦτα ὁ Θεὸς, αὐτὴ μὲν τῆς οἰκίας προστασίαν ἀπένειμε, τοῖς δὲ ἀνδράσι τὰ τῆς πόλεως ἅπαντα πράγματα, τὰ τε ἐπὶ τῆς ἀγορᾶς, δικαστήρια, βουλευτήρια, στρατηγίας, τὰ ἄλλα πάντα.

Our life is composed of two spheres of activity, the public and the private. When God divided these two He assigned the management of the household to the

¹¹³ Two examples are the construction of limekilns within the classical *agora* at Hierapolis and the building of domestic dwellings inside the Gymnasium of Vedus at Ephesus in the sixth-century (Ladstätter and Pülz 2007, 402).

¹¹⁴ Laiou, 24-29.

woman, but to the man He assigned all the affairs of the city, all the business of the marketplace, courts, council-chambers, armies, and all the rest.¹¹⁵

Chrysostom even encouraged the virgins of Constantinople to leave their houses only a few times each year, a directive which would seem to exclude them from attending church services regularly.¹¹⁶ It appears that, for Chrysostom, any moral benefit that a woman might gain from church attendance would be outweighed by the evil of her venturing outside of her home.

Occasionally, the church could even prove to be a dangerous place for women. Book VII of Sozomen's *Church History* recounts an incident where a noblewoman accused a deacon of raping her inside a church after hearing her confession. The resulting scandal prompted a shift in church policy. Nectarius, See of Constantinople, "abolished the office of the presbyter presiding over penance," an act which Sozomen saw as contributing to moral laxity within the city.¹¹⁷ Judging from Sozomen's attitude toward this incident, he appears to believe that women cause problems in churches. Directly after relating the story about the deacon, he references with approval the Theodosian laws that

¹¹⁵ PG 51.230-231. Translation from Chrysostom, Roth, and Anderson, 96. In this passage, Chrysostom uses the Greek words *ιδιωτικά* and *πολιτικά* to refer to the dichotomy between the female affairs of the household and the male affairs of city government and military life. For Chrysostom, these words approximate the distinction that is expressed by the terms *privata* and *publica* in Latin or the terms "private" and "public" in English. The term *ιδιωτικά*, which Chrysostom uses to signify female space and female activity, is closely linguistically related to *ἴδιος*. As mentioned in the earlier chapters of this paper, a form of the word *ἴδιος* appears in the dedicatory inscriptions at both Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion* and Tation's synagogue (*ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων*, or "out of [her] own resources"). The female donors at the Apamean synagogue also use *ἴδιος* in their inscriptions to refer to the members of their own families (*πάντοι τῶν ἰδίων*, or "all of [her] own relatives"). It is interesting that these female architectural patrons use a word closely related to one that was sometimes associated with private, female space, at least by the late fourth century. By the very word choice in their inscriptions, these female patrons suggest an association with private space.

¹¹⁶ Bowes, 207.

¹¹⁷ Sozomen, *Church History* VII, 16.

limited women's access to churches and their role in Church ministry.¹¹⁸ When Byzantine women did attend church, they were segregated from men during services and were usually placed in second-story galleries.¹¹⁹ That limitations on access to holy space applied even to imperial women is made clear by the Augusta Pulcheria's thwarted attempt to receive communion inside the Holy of Holies on Easter, a right that was allowed under canon law to male emperors. Although she succeeded the first time she tried to claim this privilege, she was driven away from the sanctuary by the patriarch Nestorius on the subsequent Easter in 428 CE.¹²⁰

Restrictions like these placed imperial and elite women of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries in a difficult position. If they were to serve as models of correct female behavior, every cultural standard mandated that they should not leave their home, and their wealth placed them in a position where working outside of the home was not necessary. Yet, in Byzantine society, architectural patronage was an important way for prominent citizens to demonstrate their authority, philanthropy, and piety to the larger city.¹²¹ Building and worshipping within a church closely linked to a personal residence was one way for elite women to circumvent this problem. It resulted in visible and impressive public displays of patronage, yet it still maintained a close connection to the protected private space of the home.

The conversion of the female zone of the domestic sphere into a holy space was not unprecedented in the history of Christianity. Some of the earliest examples of female leadership in the Christian church in the New Testament involve women hosting meetings

¹¹⁸ Sozomen, *Church History* VII, 16.

¹¹⁹ Taft, 31.

¹²⁰ Taft, 70.

¹²¹ McClanan, 50-51; Connor, 95-96.

of Christians within their private homes.¹²² Elite women in Constantinople certainly had the property and the resources to enact such transformations. The *Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae* indicates the presence of homes belonging to female members of the Theodosian dynasty in five of the city's fourteen regions,¹²³ proving that these private estates were considered to be major urban features in the late fourth and early fifth centuries.

Augusta Pulcheria and the Chapel of Saint Stephen

One eminent fifth-century Constantinopolitan instance of the sanctification of private space is the Augusta Pulcheria's foundation of the chapel of Saint Stephen within the Great Palace of Constantinople itself. Archaeological evidence for the Great Palace is slim, and many of its remains now lie hidden under later structures. In particular, the remains of the early Byzantine palace, also known as the Palace of Daphne, were probably located in the area now occupied by the Sultan Ahmet Mosque complex.¹²⁴ The construction of the Palace of Daphne began under Constantine I and continued into the fourth and the fifth centuries. Although the palace has not been excavated, later Byzantine literary sources describe a central palatial complex made up of reception areas, dining halls, and residential apartments.¹²⁵ Based on the description provided in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*, the private apartments appear to have been arranged around an open courtyard, which was located to the south of the throne room and ceremonial

¹²² Clark 1990, 23. Clark lists Aphia in Colossae, Priscilla in Epheusus, Nympha in Laodicea, and Lydia in Philippi as specific examples.

¹²³ Matthews, 85-115.

¹²⁴ Westbrook, 2007.

¹²⁵ Kosteneec, 2007.

dining hall.¹²⁶ It was in this courtyard, near the least publicly accessible areas of the palace, that Pulcheria located her chapel of St. Stephen (Figure 11). According to the ninth-century writings of Theophanes Confessor, Pulcheria built the chapel to house the right arm of Saint Stephen, a relic that she was instrumental in obtaining for Constantinople from the archbishop of Jerusalem in 427- 428 CE.¹²⁷

The lack of surviving archaeological or epigraphical evidence for the chapel of Saint Stephen ensures that Pulcheria's own performance at the building remains obscure. We cannot know how she portrayed her identity, her relationship to her male relatives, or the relationship of her chapel to the surrounding city in the inscriptions and architectural features that she commissioned herself. However, Pulcheria's decision to locate the chapel in such close proximity to the private residential apartments of the Great Palace constitutes a statement in itself. It spatially associates the chapel with a domestic area. In the absence of more concrete evidence for Pulcheria's own act of church-building, we can also examine the literary and artistic reactions to it. Pulcheria's construction of the chapel of Saint Stephen was described in two Byzantine literary sources and portrayed in a carved ivory plaque. Although these depictions cannot provide a substitute for Pulcheria's own performance, they can be seen as responses to her performance. These responses illustrate both how Pulcheria's act of patronage was received shortly after it was accomplished and how it was commemorated nearly four centuries later.

The earliest of these responses dates from only a few years after the chapel's foundation. A fifth-century encomium of St. Stephen, attributed to John Chrysostom but probably delivered by Proclus, a later bishop of Constantinople, mentions Pulcheria's

¹²⁶ Kosteneč, 2007.

¹²⁷ *Chronographia* AM 5920; Theophanes Confessor and Mango, 135-36.

retrieval of the relic of Saint Stephen and its deposition within the palace.¹²⁸ According to this text, ἐν βασιλείοις στέφανος· ἐθαλάμεισε γὰρ αὐτὸν ἡ βασιλὶς καὶ Παρθένος: “St. Stephen is in the palace, for the Virgin empress has brought him even into her chamber.”¹²⁹ Here, the relic’s association with private female space is highly pronounced. Not only is the relic within the imperial residence, but the chapel that houses the relic is described as a θάλαμος, a woman’s apartment or the innermost chamber of a house -- the most private domestic space of all. Holum and Vikan translate θάλαμος as “bridechamber,” another possible sense of the word. They also remark that Proclus used the verb θαλαμείειν in another sermon to describe Mary’s “enchamberment” of the spirit of God within her womb, which connects the verb to the most private recesses of the body as well as the most private parts of a building.¹³⁰ An association between the chapel of Saint Stephen and Pulcheria’s bridechamber is interesting in light of the fact that the chapel was featured in imperial wedding ceremonies from the time of its construction up until the ninth century.¹³¹ This use of the chapel transforms it into a place where family and domestic units are created – a domestic space that catalyzes more domestic space.

A later, more detailed literary account of the events surrounding the construction of Pulcheria’s chapel comes from the ninth-century *Chronographia* of Theophanes Confessor. Theophanes portrays Pulcheria as an authoritative figure at the imperial court, someone who is able to influence the actions of her brother, the emperor Theodosius II. According to Theophanes, Theodosius first sent money to the archbishop of Jerusalem κατὰ μίμησιν τῆς μακαρίας Πουλχερίας: in imitation of the blessed Pulcheria. When the

¹²⁸ Holum and Vikan, 131.

¹²⁹ PG 63, col. 933. Cited in Holum and Vikan, 131.

¹³⁰ Holum and Vikan, 131-32.

¹³¹ Kosteneč 2007.

relics of Saint Stephen arrived in Constantinople, Pulcheria went out to meet them, taking Theodosius with her (*ἡ δὲ ἀναστᾶσα καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτῆς λαβοῦσα ἐξῆλθεν εἰς συνάντησιν τῶν ἁγίων λειψάνων*). These excerpts imply that Pulcheria is the driving force behind the relic-retrieval project, yet they also suggest that she allows her brother, the emperor, to participate in all steps of the process. Although Pulcheria operates fairly autonomously in Theophanes' account, she engineers her action of church-building so that it includes a male relative. Theophanes' language creates a distinction between the worlds of public and private and marks when Pulcheria moves between them. Pulcheria "went out" (*ἐξῆλθεν*) into public in order to bring the relics "into the palace" (*εἰς τὸ παλάτιον*), the place where she will build the chapel. Theophanes refers to the building that Pulcheria will construct as an οἶκος, a word that can be used to describe either a public building or a private residence.¹³²

In this account, Theophanes depicts Pulcheria as a careful negotiator of cultural constraints on gender. By helping to obtain a precious relic from Jerusalem for the imperial capital and then receiving that relic upon its arrival, she plays a powerful role in empire-wide affairs. Yet she includes her male relative, the emperor, at every stage of the process during which she must interact with the world outside the palace. At the end of the account, she retreats back into the palace, her domestic residence, and she performs her construction activities inside that space.

One final depiction of Pulcheria's patronage of the chapel of Saint Stephen is artistic rather than literary. Holum and Vikan have associated the Translation of Relics Ivory from the Trier Cathedral treasure with Theophanes' description of Pulcheria

¹³² *LSJ: The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, οἶκος.

receiving the arm of St. Stephen.¹³³ The Trier Ivory, as it is more commonly known, measures approximately 13 × 26 × 2.5 centimeters and probably once decorated the side of a reliquary box.¹³⁴ The Trier Cathedral in Germany acquired the ivory in 1844, but the original date and provenance of the piece remains a point of debate. Although Egypt and Syro-Palestine have been proposed as possible places of origin, the majority of scholars believe that the ivory was manufactured in sixth-century Constantinople.¹³⁵ If this interpretation is correct, then the ivory was created roughly a century after the construction of the chapel and about three centuries before Theophanes' historical account of the event was written.

The iconography of the Trier Ivory agrees well with Late Antique literary descriptions of the translation of relics.¹³⁶ Relics that arrived in Roman cities during the Early Byzantine period were greeted with an *adventus* ceremony similar to the one used to welcome important figures such as emperors or bishops. This ceremony can be divided into three main phases. The first of these was the *synantesis*, or the lively greeting of the relic by the urban population at the city gate. This was followed by the *propompe*, or the escorting of the relic throughout the streets of the city, and the *apothesis*, or the installment of the relic in a church.¹³⁷ The Trier Ivory appears to depict the very end of the *propompe*, directly before the *apothesis*. On the far left of the image, a horse-drawn wagon carries two bishops who hold the relic, housed inside a gabled box, in between them (Figure 12). The wagon is led forward by four cloaked escorts, each holding a

¹³³ Holum and Vikan, 127.

¹³⁴ Spain, 281; Holum and Vikan, 133.

¹³⁵ Holum and Vikan, 115; Spain, 281.

¹³⁶ Holum and Vikan, 116.

¹³⁷ Holum and Vikan, 116-120.

candle. The escort at the head of the procession is recognizable by his costume as an emperor.¹³⁸ The procession's destination lies at the far right of the ivory – a church that appears to have been recently constructed for the purpose of receiving the relic. Several workmen are applying finishing touches to the church's roof. In front of the church stands an empress, also recognizable by her costume. She holds out her right hand to welcome the relic into the building. As Holum and Vikan point out, this empress is the “focus of movement and attention” on the ivory.¹³⁹ All the members of the procession look at and move towards her, and her extended arm and location directly in front of the church set her apart from the other figures. In this way, the ivory's creator visually accords the empress an important role in both the acquisition of the relic and the construction of the church that will house it.

Multiple architectural historians have identified the two-story *tetrapylon* on the left-hand side of the Trier Ivory as the Chalke gate, the main entrance of the Great Palace of Constantinople.¹⁴⁰ Like the gate depicted on the ivory, the Chalke gate was surmounted by a lunette bearing an icon of Christ. If the relic-bearing wagon has just entered the Chalke gate, then the scene depicted on the Trier Ivory takes place within the Great Palace complex, the location of the chapel of Saint Stephen. This palatial context for the scene, together with the prominent role of an empress as recipient of the relic and church-builder, evoke Theophanes' account of Pulcheria and the relics of Saint Stephen. Holum and Vikan convincingly argue that the passage from the *Chronographia* and the

¹³⁸ Holum and Vikan, 121.

¹³⁹ Holum and Vikan, 122.

¹⁴⁰ Holum and Vikan, 125; Spain, 282-83.

scene on the Trier ivory represent the same event and that the empress depicted on the ivory is Pulcheria.¹⁴¹

These three responses to Pulcheria's foundation of the chapel of Saint Stephen all emphasize the fact that Pulcheria received the relic and constructed the chapel inside the Great Palace of Constantinople, the domestic residence of the imperial family. The responses differ, however, in the manner in which they involve Pulcheria's brother, the emperor Theodosius II. The fifth-century encomium of Saint Stephen, the response chronologically closest to Pulcheria's actual donation, does not mention Theodosius at all and assigns Pulcheria full responsibility for the movement of the relic into the Great Palace. In contrast, the later visual narrative of the ivory and textual narrative of Theophanes both incorporate the emperor Theodosius II, albeit in slightly different ways. In the Trier Ivory, Theodosius brings the relic to Pulcheria, who does not leave the palace complex at all. In *Chronographia*, Pulcheria takes Theodosius with her to welcome the relic, then returns to the palace. The authors of these two responses choose to include Theodosius II, even if only peripherally. In doing so, they portray Pulcheria's performance as sanctioned by both her male family member and a male emperor.

Anicia Juliana and the Church of Saint Polyeuktos

Architectural performance through the founding of churches could also function as a form of competition between members of Constantinople's elite, male or female. An example of this phenomenon is Anicia Juliana's construction of the church of St. Polyeuktos from 524 to 527, which coincided with Justinian's rise to sole *Augustus* in 527

¹⁴¹ Holum and Vikan, 131.

and the installment of Theodora as empress.¹⁴² Anicia Juliana would have had reason to feel somewhat sour on this occasion, since her imperially-pedigreed son Flavius Anicius had been beaten to the throne by Justinian's uncle Justin I, an illiterate soldier.¹⁴³

St. Polyeuktos' very size and splendor would have posed a challenge to Justinian. At one hundred cubits square (with one cubit corresponding to 0.518 meters), it was the largest church in Constantinople at the time of its construction.¹⁴⁴ Excavation of the church has revealed that it was elaborately decorated with mosaics, wall revetments of imported porphyries and marbles, and, most notably, richly painted stone carvings of peacocks, vines, and cornucopias.¹⁴⁵ The church also enjoyed a prominent location in the city. Its situation on the northern fork of the Mese between the Church of the Holy Apostles and the Forum Tauri would have made it nearly impossible to avoid during imperial processions -- the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* lists it as one of the stations where the emperor was acclaimed by the circus factions on his Easter Monday procession from the Great Palace to the Church of the Holy Apostles,¹⁴⁶ and Justinian would have also had to pass St. Polyeuktos during his 559 *adventus* into Constantinople after the restoration of the Thracian Long Wall.¹⁴⁷ An anecdote about the church's founding stresses the defiance expressed by its construction. According to Gregory of Tours, Justinian asked Juliana to donate some of her immense wealth to the public treasury. Instead, she melted her gold down into plaques to decorate the roof of St. Polyeuktos and

¹⁴² McClanan, 53.

¹⁴³ Harrison, 36.

¹⁴⁴ McClanan, 54. This measurement matches the measurement of Solomon's Temple.

¹⁴⁵ Harrison, 77-81.

¹⁴⁶ Mango and Ševčenko, 244.

¹⁴⁷ Croke 2005, 64.

then invited the emperor to view the church.¹⁴⁸ Cameron has characterized Justinian's order that any building or restoration of churches in the empire be performed with imperial funds (described in *Buildings* I.8.5) as a direct response to Anicia Juliana's construction of St. Polyeuktos.¹⁴⁹

Anicia Juliana's bold enterprise was most likely connected to a domestic living space. In his *Libri miraculorum*, Gregory of Tours describes Juliana's private residence as being located directly next to the church. Archaeological excavations of St. Polyeuktos have revealed the foundations of an apsed square structure in the vicinity of the church. This structure is located directly north of the atrium preceding the church proper, and it allows for direct access into the church (Figure 13).¹⁵⁰ Although Harrison suggested that this building might be a baptistery because of its sunken floor and the presence of a shaft in the ground connected to the drainage system,¹⁵¹ Mathews associates it with Anicia Juliana's palace per Tours' account.¹⁵² One of the most interesting aspects of St. Polyeuktos is its long dedicatory inscription, comprised of a 76-line hexameter poem carved into the marble blocks of the church's entablature (Figure 14). The inscription was recovered in fragments during excavation, but the text is preserved in its entirety in the *Greek Anthology*, a compilation of antique inscriptions dating from circa 1000.

Although the inscription discusses Juliana's family extensively, it devotes more attention to her female relatives than to her male ones. Her parents (τοκεῖς) are mentioned several times, but always as a unit – the male parent is not prioritized over the

¹⁴⁸ Mango and Ševčenko, 245.

¹⁴⁹ Cameron 1985, 104, n. 151.

¹⁵⁰ Mathews, 52.

¹⁵¹ Harrison, 64.

¹⁵² Mathews, 52.

female parent, and no patronymic is attached to Juliana's name. In fact, the only other person besides Juliana herself who is named in the inscription is the empress Eudokia, wife of Theodosius II and the ancestor of Juliana, who first established the church to Polyeuktos on the site in the mid-5th century. Juliana devotes the entire opening section of the inscription to Eudokia and presents her own reconstruction of the church as the glorious fulfillment of the work that Eudokia began.¹⁵³ In addition to looking back in time to her female predecessors (and, in the case of Eudokia, her predecessor as empress as well), Juliana mentions her female descendants. She asks the servants of the ruler in heaven to deliver her together with her son and his daughters: τοῦνεκά μιν θεράποντες ἐπουρανίου βασιλῆος ... ἐρύεσθε σὺν υἱεῖ, τοῖό τε κόυραις. The inscription's references to female ancestors and descendants are in keeping with the nature of family churches constructed by women on private estates, which were often "treated as family heirlooms, passed from mother to daughter."¹⁵⁴

Theodora and the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus

If Anicia Juliana's spectacular church of St. Polyeuktos was conceived as a challenge to Justinian and Theodora's imperial authority, then the imperial couple soon met that challenge with a rash of new building projects. The Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus was one such project. This church was located within the Hormisdas Palace, the palace inhabited by Theodora and Justinian prior to Justinian's accession to sole emperor in 527, and was probably constructed in the early 530s.¹⁵⁵ Although inscriptions from the

¹⁵³ Paton, no. 10.

¹⁵⁴ Bowes, 114.

¹⁵⁵ Bardill, 10.

church mention both Justinian and Theodora as donors, there is reason to believe that Theodora played an instrumental role in its construction.

Mango in particular has argued that the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus was primarily Theodora's project and that she constructed it for the use of a community of Monophysite monks and ascetics who were housed in the Hormisdas Palace.¹⁵⁶ In his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, the Syrian church historian John of Ephesus describes how Theodora allowed more than five hundred Monophysite refugees "from all quarters of the east and of the west, and Syria and Armenia, Cappadocia and Cilicia, Isauria and Lycaonia, and Asia and Alexandria and Byzantium" to live and worship in Hormisdas.¹⁵⁷ The empress financed the construction of cells and booths for the holy men to live in, and "in one of the great halls...there was also a martyrs' chapel."¹⁵⁸ Mango identifies the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus as the martyrion mentioned in John of Ephesus' account, claiming that the dedication of the church to Syrian saints makes it particularly appropriate for the use of a Monophysite community.¹⁵⁹ Although Justinian famously persecuted the Monophysites and other groups who deviated from Chalcedonian Christian orthodoxy, Theodora is described in multiple sources as a protector of the Monophysites.¹⁶⁰ If the church were primarily constructed for the use of a Monophysite community, then, it would imply that Theodora and not Justinian provided the major impetus for the project.

¹⁵⁶ Mango 1972, 192.

¹⁵⁷ John of Ephesus, 677.

¹⁵⁸ John of Ephesus, 682.

¹⁵⁹ Mango 1972, 192. There was a large Monophysite community in Syria, and, as mentioned above, some of the refugees in Hormisdas were of Syrian origin.

¹⁶⁰ McClanan, 59.

The connection between the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus and the Monophysite community at Hormisdas is a controversial one and has been the focus of much scholarly debate since it was first proposed.¹⁶¹ Regardless of the merits of the Monophysite hypothesis, the fact remains that Theodora features prominently in the surviving evidence from the church. Her monogram appears on several column capitals from the interior,¹⁶² and an inscription recovered from the upper level of the frieze at the church eulogizes her in terms comparable to those used for other female architectural patrons. Van Millengen includes an image of this inscription, the last few lines of which he renders as “may He [Christ]...increase the power of the God-crowned Theodora, whose mind is adorned with piety, whose constant toil lies in efforts to nourish the destitute.”¹⁶³ As Bardill points out, these qualities are not dissimilar to those attributed to the female church-builder Juliana in the Polyeuktos inscription.¹⁶⁴ While Theodora has a “mind made bright with piety,” (Θεοδώρης ἥς νοός εὐσεβίη φαιδρύνεται), Juliana has “pious hands” (χειρῶν...εὐσεβέων) and an “eager desire full of piety” (μενοινήν εὐσεβίης πλήθουσσαν). This similarity of language may be related to the competitive nature of the two building projects, which in turn reflected the competitive relationship between Theodora and Juliana.

¹⁶¹ See Croke 2006 for a particularly vehement refutation of Mango’s argument. Croke insists that responsibility for the project lies almost wholly with Justinian rather than Theodora and argues that the building was motivated by “Justinian’s political rivalry with Anicia Juliana in the early to mid-520s” (Croke 2006, 26). Croke fails to consider the possibility that Theodora may well have been engaged in her own political rivalry with Anicia Juliana. Rivalry between imperial women in Late Antique Constantinople was not unprecedented – the competitive relationship between Pulcheria and Eudocia, sister and wife of Theodosius II, is one example of the phenomenon (Holum, 131).

¹⁶² Van Millengen, 73.

¹⁶³ Van Millingen, 73-74.

¹⁶⁴ Bardill, 4.

The final words of the frieze inscription at Sergius and Bacchus also contain language reminiscent of the domestic world of the home. According to the inscription, “[Theodora’s] struggles are unsparing nourishers of the poor” (ἀκτεάνων θρεπτήρες ἀφειδέες εἰσὶν ἀγῶνες). The word *θρεπτήρ* refers one who nourishes, feeds, or rears, and it is often used in the context of a family to describe a parent or a foster parent. Instead of fulfilling this function within her own household, however, Theodora performs it for the destitute within the city of Constantinople. In this way, the domestic sphere is expanded to encompass the entire urban community.

One final point worthy of note is the location of the church inside the Hormisdas Palace, Theodora and Justinian’s former residence. Like Augusta Pulcheria’s chapel of Saint Stephen, which was housed inside the Great Palace, and Anicia Juliana’s church of Saint Polyeuktos, which was connected to Juliana’s private home, the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus was closely associated with a domestic space. The area of the Hormisdas was connected to the Great Palace later in Justinian’s reign,¹⁶⁵ further strengthening Sergius and Bacchus’ tie to the imperial dwelling-place.

Olympias and the Olympiades Monastery

The monastery constructed and run by Olympias, friend of John Chrysostom and deaconess of Constantinople during the reign of Theodosius I, differs from the previous three examples in that it is a monastery rather than a church and was founded by a woman without imperial connections. The ward of the prefect of Constantinople, Olympias married the high-ranking senator Nebridius in 385. His death left her with enormous financial assets, part of which she used to build and run a monastery that allegedly housed

¹⁶⁵ Bardill, 10.

two hundred and fifty nuns.¹⁶⁶ The Olympiades Monastery stands out from other fifth-century Constantinopolitan monasteries in several respects. First of all, it was built in the very center of the city, next to the Hagia Sophia,¹⁶⁷ while most mid-fifth century monasteries were built in the more remote belt of land between the Constantinian and Theodosian walls. Although it was not uncommon for Constantinopolitan monasteries to be founded by members of the city's elite, the monks themselves were generally outsiders from Egypt, Asia Minor, and Syria. This was not the case at the Olympiades, where the inhabitants were members of Olympias' own family or other wealthy Constantinopolitan women.¹⁶⁸ Olympias ensured that her monastery remained closely connected to the domestic ideals of home and family. The monastery was built on a portion of her family's property, and leadership of the monastery was passed on to Olympias' female relatives. In this way, Olympias was able to found a major religious institution without breaking out of the private sphere to an extent that could compromise her womanly virtue. She even maintained a close friendship and written correspondence with John Chrysostom, who, as described earlier, promulgated extreme views about the role of women in society and the necessity of limiting female activity to the domestic sphere. Chrysostom wrote Olympias seventeen letters after he was exiled from Constantinople.¹⁶⁹

The Olympiades monastery provides evidence for an expansion of domestic space into the greater city. Consider this passage from the anonymous fifth-century biography entitled the *Life of Olympias*, which seems to imply that Olympias' estate included not only the monastery itself, but a section of the city surrounding it, to the point where she

¹⁶⁶ Clark 1990, 28.

¹⁶⁷ Hatlie, 72.

¹⁶⁸ Bowes, 121.

¹⁶⁹ Clark 1979, 46.

felt compelled to maintain it by connecting certain areas with public walkways. “All the houses lying near the holy church and all the shops which were at the southern angle mentioned were torn down for the project. She constructed a path from the monastery up to the narthex of the holy church...”¹⁷⁰ Elite homes in Constantinople have not been extensively excavated, but textual sources and comparisons with excavated domestic spaces in other eastern Mediterranean cities such as Ephesus and Pergamon suggest that they may have appeared similar to “miniature neighborhoods” which included central courtyards, residential spaces, and workshops.¹⁷¹ In this way, Olympias’ monastic complex resembled a wealthy citizen’s home.

Conclusion

The idea of the private sphere of the *domus* consuming part of the city is apparent in Constantinople’s early urban development. In the first few centuries of its life, the city was often presented as an entity that nourished, sheltered, and promoted the physical and spiritual health (or *hygeia*) of its citizens -- the very same services that the ideal Byzantine woman was supposed to provide to the members of her household.¹⁷² Large works of infrastructure such as the Constantinian and Theodosian walls and the aqueduct of Valens protected and watered the city, the imperial bread dole fed it, and the construction of churches ensured its spiritual welfare. Like many other cities in the ancient world, Constantinople itself was sometimes personified as feminine: coins struck to commemorate Constantinople’s founding in 330 depicted Constantinopolis as a female

¹⁷⁰ *Life of Olympias* 6, translation Clark 1979, 131.

¹⁷¹ Bowes, 104.

¹⁷² Kalavrezou, 13-14.

figure.¹⁷³ Images of empresses and noblewomen located in strategic places throughout the city could give the abstract concepts of shelter and nurture a specific female face. Statues of the fifth-century empress Verina, wife of Leo I, and of the noblewoman Arkadia, wife of Zeno, presided over the *gradus* where citizens received state-distributed bread rations,¹⁷⁴ and the weights used to measure those rations often took the form of empresses' busts.¹⁷⁵ In this way, elite women symbolically supervised the feeding of the city.

The churches and monasteries founded by imperial and aristocratic women in domestic spaces are a further example of the Late Antique redrawing of the line between public and private. These female donors took advantage of the shifting prioritization of urban space in order to make influential architectural statements in the urban environment. Their foundations helped to redefine the urban character of Constantinople. These buildings can also be characterized as architectural performances, performances that contributed to the construction of gender within the new imperial capital. The delegation of women to the domestic sphere was a long-standing concept in Roman society and had been reinforced by several early Christian writings. By linking their donations to domestic residences, the four women discussed in this chapter acknowledged this dominant ideology regarding gender roles. Yet by creating prominent features in the urban landscape, they also questioned the limitations that this ideology imposed upon female activity.

¹⁷³ Gittings, 45.

¹⁷⁴ Gittings, 42, n. 36.

¹⁷⁵ Gittings, 38-39, 42.

Constructing Gender: Final Thoughts

The patronage of architectural projects was a major way that prominent citizens of Asia Minor and Syria shaped urban landscapes in the first through sixth centuries. These acts of patronage involved construction in the conceptual as well as the physical sense. Besides adding a new monument or house of worship to the city, architectural patronage allowed for a powerful and visually striking expression of identity – a performance, to use Judith Butler’s terminology. Through the inscriptions and statuary associated with the donation and even the donation’s position relative to other urban features, donors represented themselves to their entire urban community. These individual acts of self-representation, however, had larger implications. In accordance with the binary sex/gender system operative in, and encoded into the very language of, the Greek-speaking Roman East, individual donors were classified as belonging to either the category of “man” (άνήρ) or the category of “woman” (γυνή), and they attached themselves to corresponding masculine or feminine participles and adjectives in their own inscriptions. In this way, the gender identities of “woman” and “man” were continually defined and located within the urban environment through the medium of architectural patronage.

Women who aspired to act as architectural patrons lived and functioned under the constraints of a patriarchal Greco-Roman tradition, one that often defined women based on their familial or marital relationships to men. Under this tradition, women and men were trained to occupy distinct geographical and social spaces. Masculinity was associated with the military and with political or civic life, while femininity was associated with the domestic zone of home and family. For a woman to donate a building

in a city involved a pronounced step outside of the prescribed female sphere of influence. It therefore always posed somewhat of a challenge to prevalent Roman ideas about gender categories and the places where those categories belonged in the city.

As the examples above illustrate, female architectural patrons from different religious traditions and time periods negotiated these constraints in many different ways. In second-century Perge, Plancia Magna defied cultural expectations for female self-representation by portraying herself as both the most important member of her family and as an autonomous political agent. Her male contemporaries set up a series of monuments that sought to contain Plancia Magna's transgression against gender norms by "daughterizing" her. Nearly a century later in the same city, Aurelia Paulina simultaneously connected her monument to Plancia Magna's earlier project and portrayed herself in a less provocative way, associating herself more closely with a local religious community and a patriarchal familial structure. In the synagogues from Akmonia, Phocaea, and Apamea, a similar pattern is evident. The civic titles of female patrons are not mentioned in inscriptions, while their role within the synagogue community and within their families is emphasized. At Apamea, the very reason for the donation is framed in gender-appropriate terms. The women donate in order to preserve the well-being of their families, an important domestic task for the organizer of a household.

The delegation of men and women to separate spheres, a concept already prevalent in Roman society, was reinforced by early Christian writings, some of which encouraged women barely to leave their homes at all. In Christian Constantinople, however, the changing nature of the Late Antique urban environment and the expansion of private homes and private enterprises into formerly public areas provided a new opportunity for

female architectural patrons to construct buildings in a culturally appropriate way. By building elaborate churches and monasteries that were connected to their private residences, the empresses and elite women of fourth, fifth, and sixth-century Constantinople could contribute to the urban environment without necessarily sabotaging their image as models of correct womanhood. Their performances simultaneously circumvented the operant strictures on gender identity and reinforced them. It made these women publicly visible to the city, yet also maintained their connection to the prescribed female space of the home.

The public visibility and prominence of elite women in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire did not always correspond to the situation further to the west. For instance, female magistrates and liturgy payers are attested only in the Greek-speaking eastern provinces, not in the Latin-speaking western ones.¹⁷⁶ As the example of Plancia Magna demonstrates, some locally powerful women in the Greek East were making large donations to their cities during periods when even the imperial women of Rome had few public benefactions to their names. Many centuries after the architectural projects discussed in this paper were reduced to ruins, historiographers would begin to remark upon the evidence for the public prominence of women in the Greek East. They would incorporate this evidence into their own interpretations of the interplay between gender and space in the Roman Empire.

One of the very first discussions of the status of women in the Greek East was Pierre Paris' 1891 Latin monograph, entitled *Quatenus feminae res publicas in Asia Minore, Romantibus imperantibus, attigerent*. In this study, Paris remarks upon the public

¹⁷⁶ Boatwright 1991, 262.

visibility of women in Asia Minor as implied by the appointment of women to civic offices and the many monetary and architectural benefactions of female donors. Paris is unwilling to accept the idea of Roman women exercising political power. Rather, he maintains that “any magistracies attained by women retained only ceremonial and religious duties” and that all civic duties attached to these positions were performed by a male associate.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, he views the public visibility of women as indicative of an economic and political decline in the Greek-speaking eastern provinces -- a “decline” that is not entirely borne out by numismatic or other archaeological evidence.¹⁷⁸ Paris’ connection of women’s prominence to “decline” belies several underlying nineteenth-century assumptions about gender roles: namely, that women are incapable of functioning effectively in the public sphere and that the presence of women in public is a symptom of a troubled society.

The idea of decline is a long-standing concept in the discipline of Classics, and it owes much of its popularity to Edward Gibbon’s late eighteenth-century study *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Interestingly, this influential work also draws a parallel between decline and the feminine. When talking about the Roman Empire, Gibbon frequently distinguishes between the West (epitomized by Rome, specifically Republican Rome) and the East (described variously as “Asia,” “the Orient,” and, later, “Byzantium”). Although he does not specifically discuss the role of women in the West versus the East, he passes significant value judgments on the two regions, judgments that are often expressed in gendered vocabulary. For Gibbon, the West represents civic virtue, simplicity, and “manliness,” while the East represents moral dissolution, decadence, and

¹⁷⁷ Marshall, 124.

¹⁷⁸ Boatwright 1991, 258.

“effeminacy” – the very qualities that, he claims, precipitated the empire’s fall. In Chapter 31 of the work, Gibbon expounds on a variety of negative regional stereotypes.

As early as the time of Hadrian it was the just complaint of the ingenuous natives that the capital had attracted the vices of the universe and the manners of the most opposite nations. The intemperance of the Gauls, the cunning and levity of the Greeks, the savage obstinacy of the Egyptians and Jews, the servile temper of the Asiatics, and the dissolute, effeminate prostitution of the Syrians, were mingled in the various multitude, which, under the proud and false denomination of Romans, presumed to despise their fellow-subjects, and even their sovereigns, who dwelt beyond the precincts of the ETERNAL CITY.¹⁷⁹

In this passage, Gibbon associates the Roman provinces of Asia Minor and Syria in particular with the gendered “vices” of servility and effeminacy.

Not only are Asia Minor and Syria bad in their own right, but the inclusion of these “effeminate” provinces in the empire also has negative consequences for the virtue of the empire as a whole. In Chapter 17, Gibbon describes the movement of the imperial capital to the Asian city of Constantinople. In Gibbon’s mind, this transition is little short of a disaster.

The manly pride of the Romans, content with substantial power, had left to the vanity of the East the forms and ceremonies of ostentatious greatness. But when they lost even the semblance of those virtues which were derived from their ancient freedom, the simplicity of Roman manners was insensibly corrupted by the stately affectation of the courts of Asia.¹⁸⁰

Again, the difference between East and West is expressed in gendered terms. The “ostentatious” nature and “affectation” of Asia are placed in opposition to the “simplicity” and “manly pride” of Roman Republican values. Given this gendered vocabulary, one wonders what Gibbon would make of the examples of female patronage described in this paper and the claims upon eastern Roman urban space that those acts of patronage

¹⁷⁹ Gibbon, 501.

¹⁸⁰ Gibbon, 240.

entailed. It seems probable that, like his successor Pierre Paris, he would consider these architectural performances as further evidence of the “effeminacy,” and hence the degeneracy, of the Roman East.

Paris’ analysis of women’s roles in Asia Minor and Gibbon’s description of the Roman East and West in terms of effeminacy and manliness are similar in one major way: they both use the authors’ preexisting ideas about gender categories to interpret the past. These texts are as much a testament to the prevalent gender ideologies of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe as they are to the historical situation during the Roman period. In this study, I have tried to reverse this process. By examining the archaeological, epigraphical, and literary evidence related to nine specific instances of female architectural patronage, I have attempted to understand how gender categories were conceptualized, reinforced, and sometimes challenged within the cultural context of Roman Asia Minor and Syria in the first through sixth centuries. What spaces may the gender of “woman” occupy? What roles may a woman perform? How should a woman represent herself to a city or to a religious community? What is a woman’s position in relation to the other members of her family? Through their architectural projects, female patrons supplied a variety of answers to these questions.

Appendix: Images and Figures



Figure 1: Round towers of the Hellenistic gate renovated by Plancia Magna, Perge. Image from www.vroma.org.



Figure 2: Statue niches in the courtyard of the renovated Hellenistic gate at Perge. Image from www.vroma.org.

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Figure 3: Statues of Sabina (left) and Plancia Magna (right) excavated at Perge. Image from Boatwright 2000, 67.

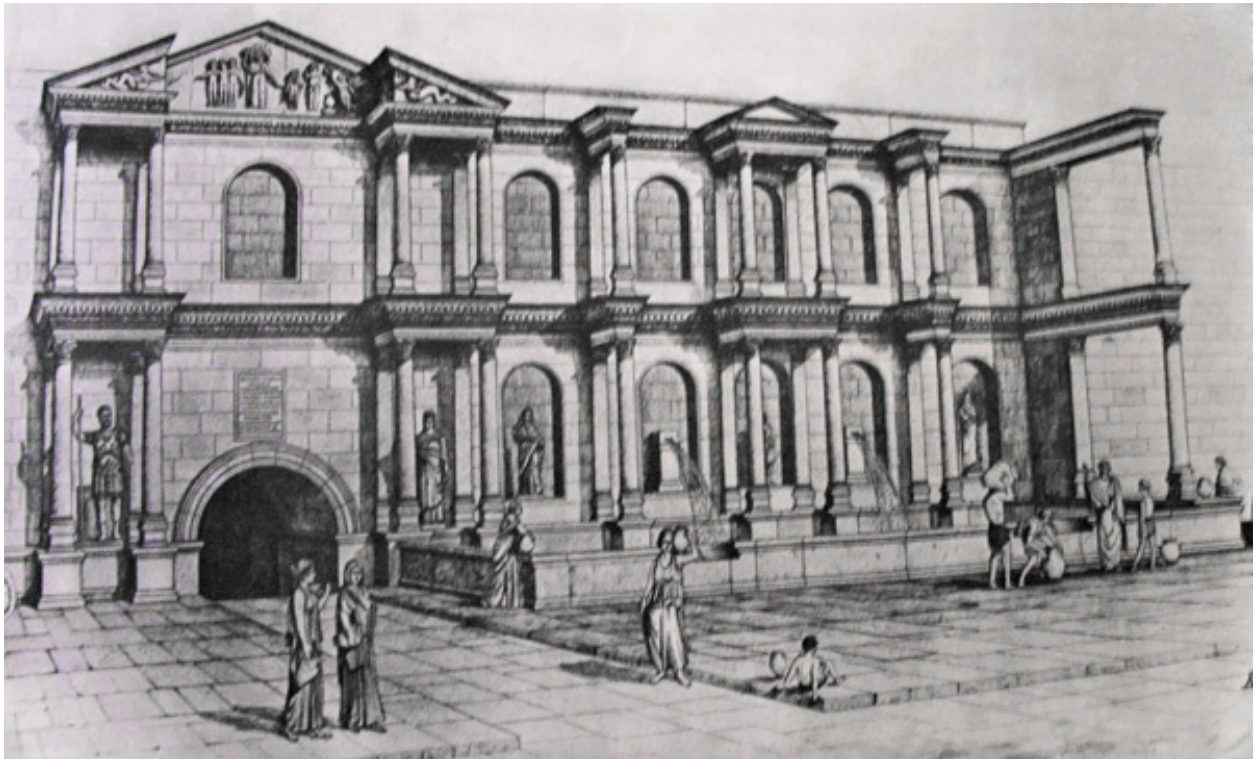


Figure 4: Reconstruction of the *hydreion* of Aurelia Paulina at Perge. Image from www.vroma.org.



Figure 5: Relief sculpture from the pediment above the well at the *hydreion* of Aurelia Paulina. Image from www.vroma.org.

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Figure 6: Plan of the city gate complex at Perge demonstrating the alignment of Plancia Magna's and Aurelia Paulina's monuments. A and B represent Plancia Magna's renovated Hellenistic gate, C is the location of the display wall with statues of Plancia Magna, D is the *propylon* leading to the baths, the space between D and E is the display wall with the statue of Aurelia Paulina, and E is Aurelia Paulina's *hydreion*.
Image from Özgür, 62.

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Figure 7: Statue of Aurelia Paulina from display wall north of the *hydreion*. Image from Fefjer, 366.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS. SEE PRINT COPY.

Figure 8: Mosaic floor of the synagogue at Apamea. Image from Hachili, 201.

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Figure 9: Mosaic inscription from the floor of the synagogue at Apamea, donated by Eupithis as a prayer for her own salvation, as well as that of her husband, children, and entire household (εὐξαμένη ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ τῶν τέκνων καὶ παντὸς τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῆς). Image from Sukenik, Plate VII.

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Figure 10: Two mosaic inscriptions from the floor of the synagogue at Apamea, donated by Alexandra and Ambrosia as a prayer for the salvation of all their relatives (εὐξαμένη ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας πάντων τῶν ἰδίων). Image from Sukenik, Plate VI.

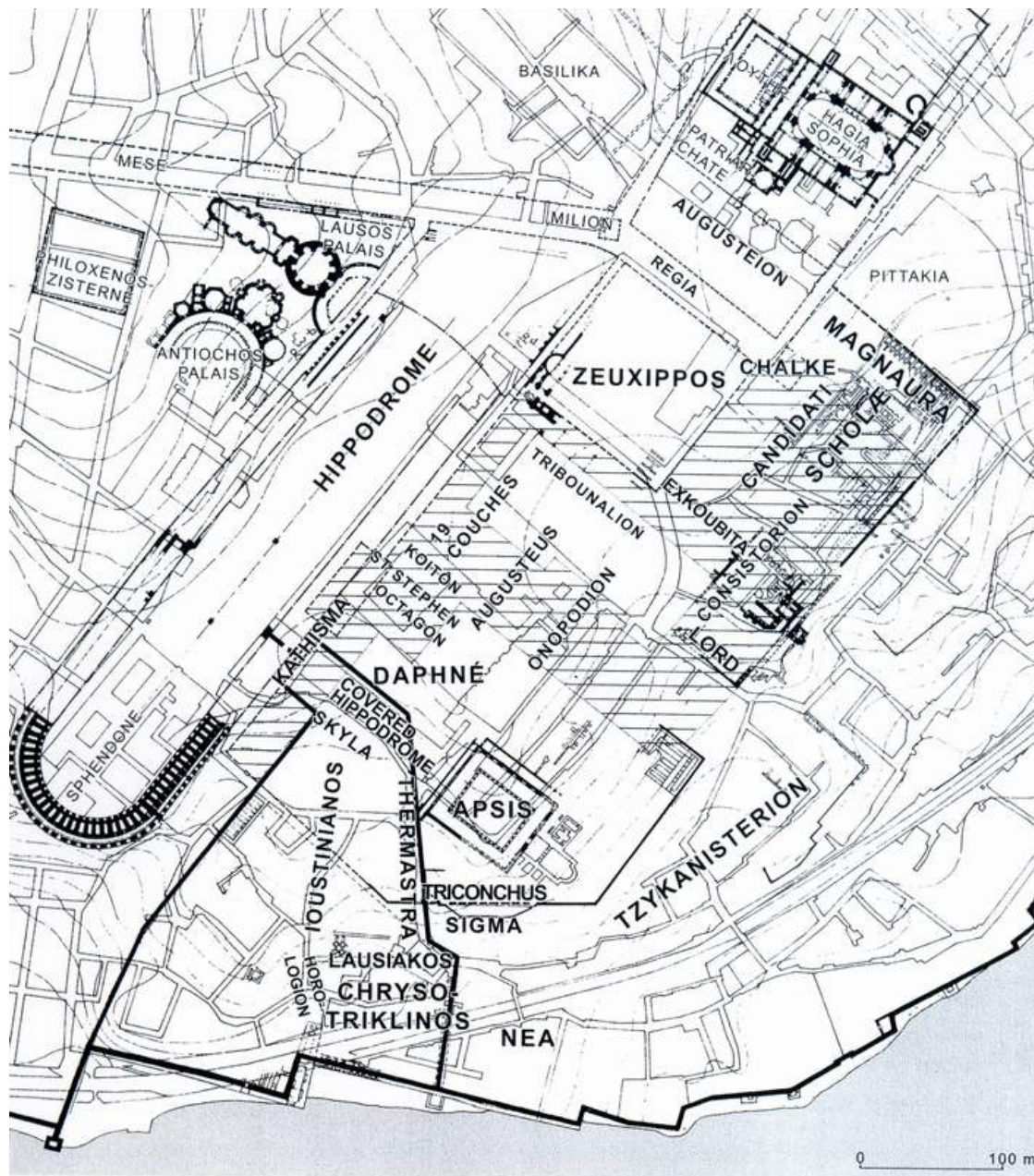


Figure 11: Plan of the Great Palace and environs during the tenth century, based on archaeological evidence and descriptions from the *Book of Ceremonies*. The proposed location of the Palace of Daphne and the chapel of Saint Stephen is near the center of the image. Image from *Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Constantinople*.

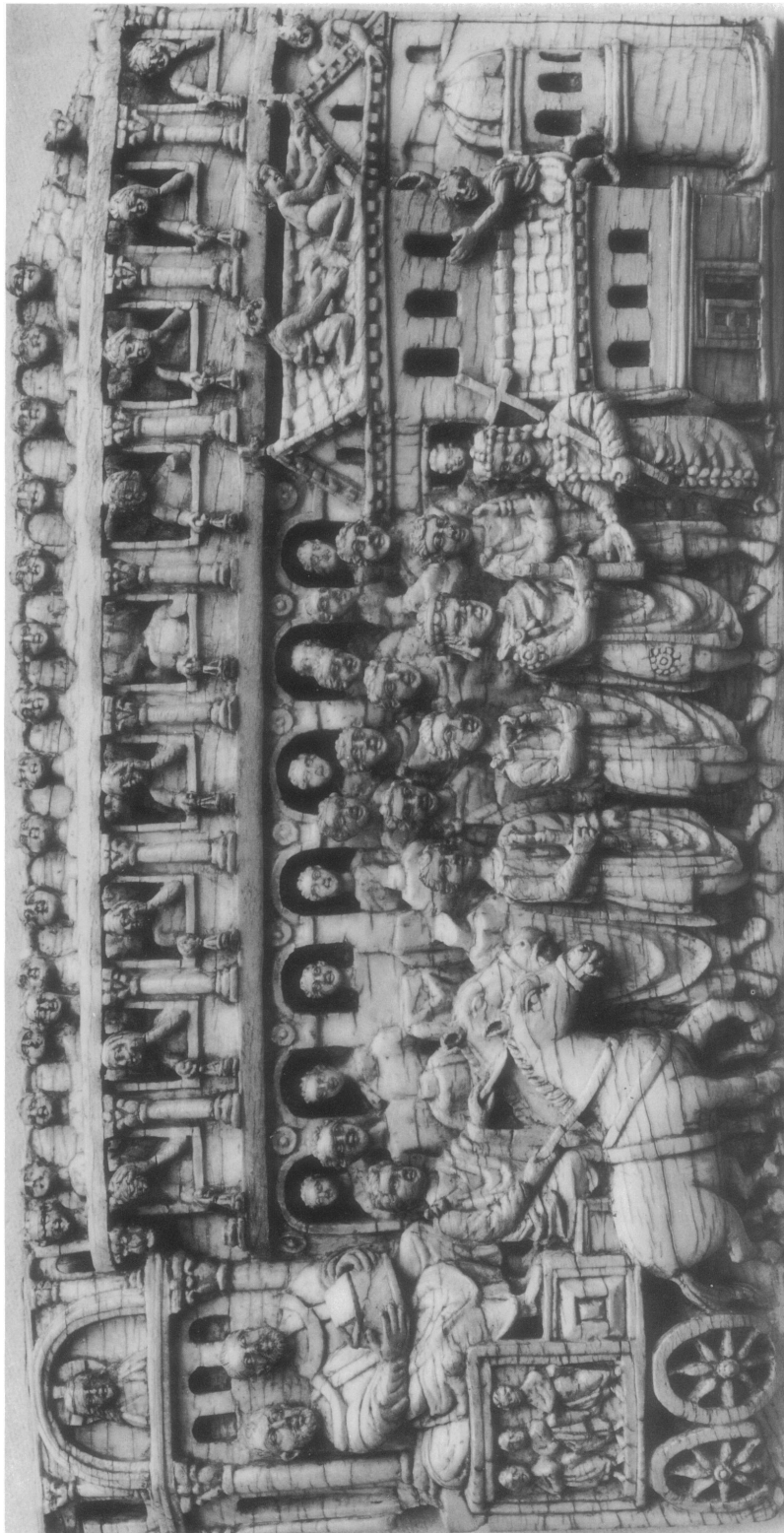


Figure 12: The Translation of Relics Ivory from the Trier Cathedral treasure. On the right, an empress (possibly Pulcheria) holds out her hand, welcoming the relic into the church. Image from Holum and Vikan, 129.

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Figure 13: Plan of the Church of Saint Polyuktos, showing the remains of Anicia Juliana's palace in the upper left. Image from Mathews, 53.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS. SEE PRINT COPY.

Figure 14: Entablature blocks from Saint Polyuktos inscribed with lines of a hexameter poem preserved in the *Greek Anthology*. Image from Harrison, 128.

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