MAKING A NAME: REPUTATION AND IMPERIAL FOUNDING AND REFOUNDING IN CONSTANTINOPLE

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How could the building of churches influence the reputation of an empress and how could reputation play a part in the associations made between empresses and churches? Work on women patrons in the 1990s established that women's patronage of the arts, like men's, could be seen on two levels, the personal and the political. In the case of the former, the reasons behind patronage were as individual and varied as the patrons themselves. On the political level, however, women's patronage was understood as having a more urgent purpose than men's. The political and symbolic benefits for men in terms of the patriarchal power structures of the medieval and Byzantine worlds have been widely discussed. In the case of female patrons, founding buildings and paying for the arts offered a space for those disempowered to greater or lesser extents by "the system" to assert their own political agenda. It became clear that cultural authority in the Middle Ages and Byzantium functioned in a socially sanctioned way for women in particular to achieve political goals, to gain spiritual benefits, to enhance their own positions and their own families, perhaps in dynastic terms, and to accrue symbolic credit for themselves, as learned, as pious, as virtuous. This symbolic credit could then be transferred to other spheres, including political power. A cycle developed in which it becomes apparent that the building of a church could lead to a reputation for piety and virtue and that in turn could lead to the ascription of more churches to the individual. Founding and refounding therefore became one element in the establishment of reputation and the commemoration of certain individuals ahead of others. Matronage, to borrow Leslie Brubaker's term, was never simply art for art's sake.

Reputation in the context of founding and, more particularly, refounding buildings is a central issue. It is well-known that a "good reputation" played an important role in establishing standing and authority in Imperial Rome and Renaissance Italy, one that could be both gained

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3 Brubaker, Memories of Helena (cit. n. 1).
and enhanced by patronage of the arts; the same was true in Byzantium. The concept of “reputation” itself derived from Aristotle, one of the most influential of philosophers in Byzantium, and his definition of it against a background of qualities of honour, magnificence and liberality, all perceived as qualities made manifest through a patronage of the arts. These virtues were highly rated in Roman times, but they are just as relevant for Byzantium. They featured among the qualities of a good ruler, recast to some extent to incorporate philanthropy and piety. Because building was a large-scale, expensive, highly visible activity, an act of public display and a claim to some form of public recognition, it was a significant act in Byzantium, whoever the patron. As such, it was a political action, as many emperors recognised. Theodosios II is supposed to have banished his city prefect, Kyros, after the crowd cheered that Constantine built, Kyros rebuilt, ignoring the emperor altogether.

Building a church was especially significant for it established one’s piety in public and for an emperor or empress, displayed the key imperial qualities of piety and philanthropia, whilst establishing intimacy with God. The epigram from St Polyeuktos hailed Anicia Juliana as pious, righteous, a doer of good works; that from Sts Sergios and Bacchos described Justinian and Theodora as fostering piety and bright with piety respectively, and praised Theodora for nourishing the destitute. For some Byzantine authors, one claim to reputation for the good emperor was that he built churches, whilst bad emperors demolished them. The Iconophile Theophanes claimed that Constantine the Great, Pulcheria, Justinian and Theodora, Justin II, Tiberios, and Irene, the mother of Constantine VI, all imperial figures he approves of, were all builders, whilst Justinian II (castigated for demanding a prayer from the patriarch to initiate the demolition of a church) and the iconoclast emperors, were all destroyers.

As a result, refounding and rebuilding had the potential to be as significant, and perhaps more significant, than building in the first instance. Refounding offered patrons a chance to associate themselves with the original patron. That might allow them to inherit the lustre of the earlier founder or to be seen to out-do them publicly, or, better, both. In the epigram on the church of St Polyeuktos, Anicia Juliana is hailed as refounder, in the footsteps of Eudokia the empress, but as surpassing her. Once a reputation was established for honour, magnificence, piety, philanthropy and other virtues, then other benefits inevitably accrued to the individual. Anicia Juliana may well have wished to suggest her

6 For proper imperial behaviour see S. McCormack, Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity, Berkeley 1981, pp. 263–265; James, Empresses and Power (cit. n. 1), ch. 2.
8 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, e.g. AM 5901 (Pulcheria), AM 6042 (Justinian), AM 6064 (Justin II), AM 6073 (Tiberios); AM 6186 (prayer for the demolition of a church); AM 6259 (Constantine V), ed. C. de Boor, Theophanes, Chronographia, Leipzig 1883–5, tr. C. Mango/R. Scott, The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813, Oxford 1997.
possession of appropriate imperial virtues. And as reputations changed over time, so too did the founders and refounders of buildings. Not all were as extreme as the case of St Polyeuktos which was abandoned by the twelfth century, not even warranting a refounding, but, as we shall see, several churches had founders who were affected by refounders.

For women, there was an added dimension in both founding and refounding. In late antique and Byzantine society, women had no public roles. However, as Anicia Juliana’s St Polyeuktos showed, in building a church, a woman gained access to a public space and was able to make a legitimate statement and civic display of her piety and, consequently, of her wealth and standing. This was particularly useful for empresses whose access to the public world was also limited. They, as much as, or even more than, emperors, could benefit from establishing a reputation for piety and philanthropy as a result of their building activities, and in some cases, these reputations outlasted them. It was Helena whose building activities seem to have led to a belief that church building was what empresses did, and empresses from then on could earn themselves the title of a “new” Helena in part through their construction works. The fifth-century Theodosian empresses, Eudoxia, Eudokia and Pulcheria, were all keen builders and all earned various reputations for piety, linked in part with major construction projects: the Eudoxiana in Gaza for Eudoxia; churches in the Holy Land for Eudokia; churches in Constantinople for Pulcheria. Their successor, Verina, was another empress whose reputation as pious and faithful, beloved of God and as a new Helena derived, at least in part, from her church-building activities. Even Justinian’s Theodora established a potentially-lasting reputation for virtue through her church building, for the inscription inside the church of Sts Sergios and Bacchos talks of God-crowned Theodora, whose mind is adorned with piety, whose constant toil lies in efforts to nourish the destitute, and both this church and Hagia Sophia display her monogram prominently. It is no surprise, therefore, that building churches became a standard female imperial activity between the fifth and seventh centuries. From Eudoxia, wife of the emperor Arkadios, building in the early fifth century, down to Constantina, the wife of Maurice, every Eastern empress is credited somewhere in the written sources with some form of building activity.

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10 James, Empresses and Power (cit. n. 1); J. Herrin, The Imperial Feminine in Byzantium, in: Past and Present, 169, 2000, pp. 3–35.
12 James, Empresses and Power (cit. n. 1), ch. 9.
14 The reputations of these women are all linked to their versions of Orthodoxy and that version of Orthodoxy practiced by the particular author. For example, Eudokia was revered in the monophysite tradition, which had only censure for Pulcheria, see James, Empresses and Power (cit. n. 1), pp. 16–20; R. Scott, Text and Context in Byzantine Historiography, in: L. James (ed.), A Companion to Byzantium, Oxford 2010, pp. 251–262.
16 Greek text and tr. in: A. van Millingen, Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture, London 1912, pp. 73–74.
In Constantinople, building empresses tended also to be associated with emperors who built. Constantine I, son of Helena, is ascribed at least eighteen churches; Marcian five alone, and four with his wife Pulchera; Leo I six, and one with his wife, Verina; Anastasios at least eight, and three more in association with Ariadne, together with the rebuilding of a Constantinian church; Justinian at least ten as builder and seventeen more as a refounder; Justin II seven and three with Sophia. Other emperors such as Theodosios I, Theodosios II, Zeno, Justin I are all also credited with church building, but to a lesser extent. Underlining an impression that church building developed into an action performed by the imperial couple together, on many occasions, as the figures above make clear, emperor and empress were credited together: Marcian and Pulchera; Anastasios and Ariadne; Justinian and Theodora; Justin and Sophia. It may be that, in building, the empress’s patronage complemented that of her husband for elsewhere when emperor and empress are credited together:

18 My calculations in this paragraph, with the exception of Justinian, where the details given by Prokopios in his Buildings were added in, are all drawn from Janin’s Églises. Since it is generally accepted that Janin’s work, though valuable, is in need of updating, these figures should not be taken as including every church built. They do, however, provide a sense of who was and was not a church builder. For Constantinian churches, also see G. Dagron, Naisance d’une capitale, Paris 1974, pp. 391–409, and G. Dagron, Constantinople imaginaire. Études sur le receuil des “Patria”, Paris 1984, pp. 78–97, on Constantinian’s role as a founder in the city. For Justinian’s churches, Prokopios’s Buildings serve as a unique source; and see G. Downey, Justinian as a Builder, in: Art Bulletin, 32, 1950, pp. 262–266.

19 For why Anastasios might have been regarded as a good thing see P. Magdalino, The Distance of the Past in Early Medieval Byzantium, in: Ideologie e pratiche del reimpiego nell’alto medioevo (Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 46), Spoleto 1999, p. 137.

Such a case of complementarity is apparent, though not in the context of building, in Corippus’s poem celebrating the accession of Justin II, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris, ed. and tr. A.M. Cameron, Corippus, Flavius Cresconius, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris libri IV, London 1976, section II, lines 10–84. As far as I am aware, there are no empresses renowned for building in Constantinople when their husbands were not. Eudoxia’s church in Gaza was commemorated locally and neither she nor Arkadios have much of a building record in Constantinople. Further afield, Galla Placidia was a notable builder in Ravenna, again seemingly divorced from male influence.

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1953, church of St Paul, p. 393. For fuller details of empresses’ building activities see James, Empresses and Power (cit. n. 1), ch. 9, esp. pp. 150–151.

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the cause of the monophysites. Some Byzantine sources suggest that Theodora and Justinian balanced out Orthodox and monophysite claims; if that was the case, then this church offered a concrete demonstration of their collaboration. 22

The effect of a reputation for piety and correct Christian behaviour offered an empress an additional level of authority and prestige beyond that of her office alone. 23 The building activities, real and otherwise, of the Augustae Pulcheria and Eudokia reveal something of the importance that such status could have for an empress. 24 If the view of the two as rivals is accepted, then their building of churches can be seen as something of a competition for the better standing and renown.

Pulcheria is said to have built the church of St Lawrence, the church of the Forty Martyrs, to have begun the church of the Prophet Isaiah and the chapel of St Stephen, and, together with her husband Marcian, to have built the churches of St Menas and of St Mokios. 25 She is also credited with building the church of the Virgin Chalkoprateia and the church of the Virgin at Blachernai. 26 Eudokia built churches in the Levant, notably of St Stephen and of St Peter in Jerusalem. Her building work in Constantinople itself, the centre of imperial power, appears to have been restricted, perhaps only to St Polyeuktos. 27 Almost all of Pulcheria's recorded building work was in Constantinople, thus establishing her buildings as public monuments at the heart of empire and herself as both powerful enough to be able to build in this fashion, and worthy enough of any good reputation that might develop from these works. In contrast, Eudokia's foundations were in Jerusalem but these, coupled with her pilgrimages to the Holy Land, allowed her to be hailed as a new Helena and to gain a standing for holiness and piety. Such a reputation for imperial virtue placed her sanctity on a level with that publicly pious virgin, Pulcheria. The rivalry is also potentially visible in the timings of building work. Sozomenos claims that Pulcheria discovered and housed the relics of the Forty Martyrs at some point between 434 and 446. 28 This period coincided with the return of Eudokia from Jerusalem in a blaze of saintliness after her building activities there, activities that might demand a well-considered pious riposte on the part of Pulcheria. Interestingly, a later text, the Chronicon Paschale, dates the discovery of the relics to 451. 29 This was the year in which Pulcheria and Marcian were married and crowned, and so was also a suitable moment for a divine revelation, in this instance to establish

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23 Argued in James, Empresses and Power (cit. n. 1).
24 K. Holm, Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1982; C. Angelidi, Pulcheria. La castita al potere, Milan 1996, especially on Pulcheria’s later reputation; James, Empresses and Power (cit. n. 1).
25 For Pulcheria’s building in Constantinople, both religious and secular, see Dagron, Naissance (cit. n. 18), pp. 97, 400–401; C. Mango, Le developpment urbain de Constantinople, Paris 1990.
that, despite apparently breaking her vow of virginity, Pulcheria was still blessed by God.  

If the two empresses were in competition during their lives, then the struggle continued with their reputations after death. The monophysite Eudokia became increasingly overlooked, her reputation distorted by allegations of adultery and marital dispute. Theophanes, writing in the ninth century, omitted any mention of her building work, though he allowed that she made donations to churches in Jerusalem. Instead, he described her provincial birth, dubious Orthodoxy and dysfunctional marital relations, and established Pulcheria as the winner in any power struggle. The tenth-century Patria, a text concerned with buildings in Constantinople and their founders, telling us what some of the inhabitants of Constantinople believed or found plausible about their city, makes no mention of her building activities, focusing again on her birth, her dubious Orthodoxy and her unhappy relationship with Theodosios II. The Orthodox Pulcheria, however, is celebrated by both Theophanes and the Patria for her building works, in company with her illustrious birth, pious virginity and successful control of imperial affairs.  

A similar story around reputation can be seen to play out over the foundation of the churches of the Virgin Chalkoprateia and the Virgin Blachernitissa. It has been widely accepted, from the ninth century almost to the present, that Pulcheria built both. However, as Cyril Mango has argued convincingly, it is almost certain that these two churches were the foundation of the later fifth-century empress, Verina, wife of Leo I, and Verina has been gradually replaced in the historical record by Pulcheria. This seems a case of reputation influencing histories of founding and refounding. That both churches were founded by Verina and Leo makes religious and political sense. Verina and Leo were the first rulers actively to promote a cult of Mary after the Council of Ephesos. An additional political motive may be supplied by the circumstances of Leo's accession. He was originally raised to power by Aspar,
who as an Alan and more especially as an Ar-ian Christian, could not hope to hold imperial power himself. Leo made himself increasingly independent of Aspar and it is not unreasonable that, in seeking to establish both his independence and his Orthodoxy, he and Verina founded churches. Faith and politics come together in the inscription Leo and Verina are recorded by a tenth-century text as writing on the costly chest in which they housed the Virgin’s robe: *By showing reverence here to the Theotokos, they secured the power of their basileia*, their imperial power.\(^{37}\) In demonstrating especial imperial devotion to the Mother of God for the first time, they perhaps sought to establish her as their special protector and patron; in building for the glory of God and the benefit of the subjects of the empire, Leo and Verina could be seen as displaying their fitness to rule and their harmonious relationship with the deity who protected their empire, asserting that both God and his Mother were on their side. But, by the ninth century, Verina, Leo and their particular political and personal motives seem to have been forgotten. Instead, as Theophanes tells us, Pulcheria was the founder of the churches of the Virgin Chalkoprateia and the Blachernai.\(^{38}\)

Here, I suggest, reputation played a part in Byzantine perceptions. By the ninth century, Verina was established in the majority of surviving textual sources as a troublesome figure, an over-mighty female with ideas above her standing, a woman of uncertain Orthodoxy, a witch and the *Whore of Babylon*.\(^{39}\) Pulcheria, on the other hand, with the defeat of Nestorius and the establishment of Mary as Theotokos at the Council of Ephesos, was a heroine of Orthodox believers. For Theophanes, she was a pious empress first and foremost.\(^{40}\) The *Souda* records that *she managed the kingdom very well, being most wise and having a god-like mind and that having herself founded many churches and poorhouses and hostels and monasteries she appropriated the revenues [from them] and by other numerous successes God often appeared through her.*\(^{41}\) Who then had the better reputation? And who was the more likely founder of two of the great Marian churches of Constantinople? And, indeed, with whom was it better for those churches to be associated? It is also unsurprising that the Hodegoi, which is first mentioned in the ninth century, should also appear as a Pulcherian foundation: whom better to ascribe it to?

What all of this suggests is that issues of founding and refounding in Constantinople introduce concerns beyond the “simple” question of who “really” had the work carried out and why. Rather, founding and refounding work on both “real” and “imaginary” levels. Indeed, even the Blachernai and Chalkoprateia are not quite as straightforward as my account implies. An anonymous tenth-century text describes the foundation of a church of the Virgin by the pious and faithful Verina, *beloved of God*.\(^{42}\) This is an important reminder that different traditions could and did co-exist and that the same church could be simultaneously linked to more than one founder. The *Patria*, where churches are overwhelmingly ascribed imperial founders of either sex, perhaps gives us a sense of who the “wrong” people to associate with churches were, and who the “right”, whether they be “genuine” founders, “fake” founders, imaginary founders or even use-

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\(^{38}\) Theophanes, *Chronographia* (cit. n. 8), AM 5942, 5943, 5945.

\(^{39}\) *Witch is Parastaseis* (cit. n. 32), ch. 89; *where of Babylon* is the Oracle of Baalbek: P.J. Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbek*, Washington, DC 1967.

\(^{40}\) Angelidi, *Pulcheria* (cit. n. 24).


\(^{42}\) Wenger, Notes inédites (cit. n. 15), pp. 54–59, tr. in: Mango, Art of the Byzantine Empire (cit. n. 15), pp. 34–35.
ful founders. The Patria credits Helena, for one, with founding at least four churches in Constantinople. Since her death is dated to ca. 330, before Constantine established the city as his capital, these claims are usually dismissed as pious myths. Nevertheless, because empresses clearly did build in Constantinople, and because Helena was the mother of all female imperial church builders, her reputation was such that the patriarchs knew she must have founded churches in the city.

Not only do founders and refounders change in the written sources, so too do the churches they built. Eusebios’s church of the Holy Apostles, Prokopios’s, Constantine of Rhodes’s and Nicholas Mesarites’s are all different, not simply in their constructions and their decoration, but also in the roles of the different founders and refounders, all of which tell us as much about these authors’ programmes as about the church. For Eusebios, Constantine the Great was the founder and Constantine had his own coffin placed in the middle of the apostles. Prokopios, however, claimed that the church was the foundation of Constantius but that Constantius left no intimation that there were such relics within the church. Rather, Justinian in his rebuilding rediscovered and identified these remains. Constantine of Rhodes, writing for Constantine VII and eager to associate that emperor with great imperial figures of the past, associated Constantius and Justinian specifically with the building and rebuilding of the Holy Apostles and asserted that it was Constantius who placed the apostolic relics there. Nicholas Mesarites stated that the founder was Constantius and that Justinian refounded it, but he identified the same relics as Constantine of Rhodes. The question of who we should believe is only part of the story; almost as interesting is tracing the ways in which attributions of founding and refounding might change to suit the interests and concerns both of particular writers at particular times.

What the Holy Apostles and the fifth-century Marian churches also suggest is that founding and refounding were not viewed as different activities. Indeed, refounding does not seem to have been treated as a lesser activity than building from scratch. It certainly does not seem to have created lesser reputations for either emperors or empresses. According to the Patria, the church of St Euphemia was built by Constantine the Great, destroyed by Constantine V during Iconoclasm and restored by Irene. Whether or not Constantine was the actual founder, such an ascription might render Irene’s pious refoundation all the more valuable and Constantine V’s destruction even more reprehensible. Nor does it seem to have been the case that churches built by particularly godly emperors or empresses were singled out for rebuilding. Although there was some refounding of the churches of Constantine and of Justinian, notably by Basil I, there

43 On the Patria see Magdalino, Distance of the Past (cit. n. 19), pp. 115–146.
44 As Janin, Églises (cit. n. 17), pp. 63 (Monastery of Bethlehem), p. 67 (Gastria) does.
49 See also M. Mullett (ed.), Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries (Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 6.3), Belfast 2007.
50 Patria Constantinopolos (cit. n. 33), III, pp. 216–217; Janin, Églises (cit. n. 17), pp. 120–121; A. Berger, Untersuchungen zu den Patria Constantinopolos (Pikila Byzantina, 8), Bonn 1988, pp. 536–539. Also see Parastaseis, ch. 5 (cit. n. 32), for the arrival of St Euphemia’s relics in Constantinople.
was also considerable refounding of small and even apparently insignificant churches. Prokopios describes how Justinian rebuilt a church of St Michael (the original founder is simply called “a patrician”) because it was small and very badly lighted, utterly unworthy to be dedicated to the archangel. Refounding may have depended in large part on what needed refounding. Justinian was forced to carry out a great deal of rebuilding after the Nika riots; and he refounded a sanctuary dedicated from ancient times to Sts Kosmas and Damian after an illness and in response to a vision of the holy healers. Such rebuildings established, as well as any foundation might, imperial claims for piety and philanthropy, even a more abstract philanthropy (restoring a small church because it was in poor condition), and a chance to show the emperor’s blessings from God (thanks for divine healing). In the case of Justinian’s building work, Prokopios carefully constructed a pattern that makes it appear that Justinian built churches for every level of the heavenly hierarchy, from Hagia Sophia and Hagia Irene, through the Virgin, St Michael, the Apostles, the saints and the martyrs; he also claimed that Justinian built throughout Constantinople, including the suburbs and shore. The refoundation work of Basil I forms a distinct contrast to this dispersed building. Written sources make it very clear that Basil’s refoundations were overwhelmingly of former imperial churches (or churches identified by Basil as such), an emphasis that might relate to Basil’s own circumstances as a usurping emperor and own desire to assert his legitimacy and relationship with previous rulers. Basil’s actions again underlie the idea that memories of the early founders had some resonance in later Byzantium.

Of course, confusion could also play a part in attributions of founding and refounding. The church and monastery of the Augusta are said to have been built by Euphemia and her husband Justin I or by Justin II and his wife Sophia, suggesting an uncertainty over the Justins. That Euphemia is also said to have built the church of St Euphemia is an example of the very typical eponymous way in which the Byzantines thought about names; Byzantium itself was said to have been founded by Byzas and Antes. The trend of creating eponymic founders is apparent in countless other examples. In the case of the church of St Euphrosyne, the Patria claimed it was built by Irene, but that Michael III closed up his mother and sisters in it, and that it took its name from one of Michael’s sisters. Michael, however, did not have a sister called Euphrosyne. Nikephoros Kallistos, writing in the thirteenth/fourteenth century, employed the same technique when he ascribed the church to Leo VI in the context of an apparently legendary saint, Euphrosyne the Younger. Elsewhere in the Patria, the monastery of Kallistratos is seen as

51 Prokopios, Buildings (cit. n. 46), 1, 3, 14. Also see the twin shrines of St Michael at 1, 8, 2–20, and Theophanes, Chronographia (cit. n. 8), AM 5816, for Constantine as the founder of these.
52 Prokopios, Buildings (cit. n. 46), 1, 6, 5.
53 Downey, Justinian as a Builder (cit. n. 18), p. 264.
55 Patria Constantinopoleos (cit. n. 33), III, 273; Constantine Porphyrogenetos, The Book of Ceremonies, II, 42, ed. J.J. Reiske, De Cerimoniiis, Bonn 1829; Cedrenos, Synopsis historion, ed. I. Bekker, Georgius Cedrenus, Ioannis Sclitizae opera, Bonn 1838, p. 642, says that Justus and Euphemia were buried in the Augusta and Justin and Sophia in Justinian’s heroon. Janin, Églises (cit. n. 17), p. 54, takes this as reason to accept the Patria over the Book of Ceremonies. Also see Berger, Untersuchungen (cit. n. 50), p. 655.
56 See Parastaseis (cit. n. 32), ch. 34 and p. 34 of Cameron and Herrin’s introduction.
57 Patria Constantinopoleos (cit. n. 33), III, 243; Janin, Églises (cit. n. 17), pp. 130–131; Berger, Untersuchungen (cit. n. 50), pp. 646–648.
a monastery founded by one Kallistratos and Justin II’s church of St Zoticus was apparently built for the holy man Zoticus. A further legendary founder is apparent in the Patria’s mention of the empress Anna, wife of Leo III, as founder of the monastery of St Anna. It was Leo’s daughter who was Anna; his wife was Maria. How true, as opposed to convenient, these ascriptions might be is difficult to determine. Sometimes, church and founder appear to match in terms of their date and what is known from other sources, as is the case with the church of the Virgin tou Kyrou, and sometimes they do not: witness the church of St Theodore ta Klaudio. What these ascriptions might say about private foundations as opposed to imperial ones is another key issue.

The potential gaps and differences between the written sources also offer a chance to look at the changing geographies of the city. One aspect of this that I have not had space to deal with here is that of the founding and refounding of types of church: did it make a difference to found, or be seen as founder of a monastery, a nunnery, or simply a church? Do churches become monasteries part way through their lives and at whose behest? Do the patriographic sources describe churches as monasteries because in the tenth century the trend was to found monasteries rather than churches? Is this a contrast between Justinian I and Basil I for instance? And how far was the gender of the founder or refounder an issue? So far, this does not seem to have been a problem: when sources record different founders or refounders for churches, these tend to be of the same sex (for example, Verina and Pulcheria). Perhaps most frustrating is the numbers of churches that still survive within the city, such as the Kalenderhane Camii, where we have no certain knowledge of the founders or refounders.

By looking at the construction of the history of a building by different authors, we can gain access to the different ways in which different figures, most notably imperial figures, could be mobilised. When monuments and sites drop out of the record and are apparently removed from memory, or when the people associated with monuments change and are reconfigured, this offers a means of tracing discontinuities in remembrance and in thinking about social change. Founding and refounding, and its relation to reputation, also offers insights into the Byzantines’ perceptions and constructions of their own past, for both founders and reputations appear to be contingent on time. There is the question of the reputation of individuals in their own time, a reputation created or enhanced by their patronage. There is also the issue of reputations changing over the years, and how this shift could have a knock-on effect on the status of a building or an object, enhancing or diminishing it in accordance with the perception of its founder. Pulcheria offers an example of a reputation enhanced over several centuries. In considering empresses as founders and refounders, it is apparent that sex and gender were not automatic barriers to gaining a good reputation.


59 Patria Constantinopoleos (cit. n. 33), III, 251, and Janin, Églises (cit. n. 17), p. 38; Berger, Untersuchungen (cit. n. 50), pp. 524–525.
