

# Female sanctity in the Greek calendar: the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople

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Women saints, holy women—mystics and pious ascetics spring first to mind: in the West, St Frideswide, St Theresa or even Augustine’s Monica; in the East the nun Macrina, the women pilgrims and settlers of the Holy Land, perhaps Chrysostom’s friend the deaconess Olympias. All women of whose lives we know a good deal. Yet this approach is unsystematic. Vaguely at the back of our minds are all those martyrs, St Catherine and her wheel, St Ursula and the 11,000 virgins, as Carpaccio painted them.

In the twentieth-century western world few celebrate saints on a daily basis. How then to assess female sanctity in cultures foreign to our own? How to avoid generalizing from a small and mis-leadingly famous sample? To digest all sixty-eight volumes of the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum* might deserve canonization in its own right, yet is not a practicable proposition. A comprehensive yet manageable dossier is required. Nor are female saints a special case; the same problems apply to the still more numerous male saints.

Church festal calendars may offer the best solution. Among the most helpful is the tenth-century Byzantine *Synaxarion* of the Church of Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> This compilation contains brief précis of the Lives or Passions of about three-quarters of its entries. Apart from the Bible and apocrypha, its main sources are saints’ Lives or Passions of mixed literary and historical merit, most dating originally from the fourth to sixth centuries. They are supplemented with material from encomia, from the church historians and the chroniclers of monasticism. Frequently the source can be dated by content, literary style and vocabulary, even when no longer extant. A few post-Iconoclastic saints have been added to those of earlier date and are usually identifiable by their sobriquet ‘the New’.<sup>2</sup>

The *Synaxarion* is a literary gathering of saints comparable with

the visual one on the walls of most Byzantine churches. In their serried ranks they march through the days of the Church's year, the major biblical characters and scenes, the prophets, patriarchs and apostles, the martyrs, the ascetics, the bishops, even the odd Imperial saint—and quite a few are women. Here is a body of information running into thousands of main entries, needing only a key or two to open its doors. Little is strictly historical; much is close to pure fiction, strained through half a dozen retellings with embellishments, as well as through the compiler's sieve. Yet it is highly informative about audience expectation, perception and taste, and about their manipulation across half a millenium.

I have tabulated data from the first two months of the ecclesiastical year, September and October.<sup>3</sup> Table 16.1 shows the numbers of male and female saints of different types whose names, individually or in groups, head their entries. To avoid distortion, anonymous groups of martyrs, whether of five or forty, are treated as single entries. Saints who qualify under more than one heading, such as martyred monastics, appear in both of the relevant columns, and duplicates of the same saint are included on the grounds that their impact is greater. Thus at least four women saints are counted twice. The group entitled 'Other' covers saints of unknown type (three women here), references to events in Christ's life and major religious phenomena such as ecumenical councils and earthquakes.

Women make up 22 per cent of the total, 25 per cent compared with the men, and martyrdom is the best route to sanctity for either sex. The biblical figures for the Old and New Testaments are predictable. In column 2, excluding brief Marian references to the celebrations of the Theotokos or her icon in this or that Constantinopolitan church, there are only five female entries, all drawing heavily on apocryphal material. One of these, St Thecla, also appears in both martyr and monastic columns. Her standing as female protomartyr and apostle is higher than that of most New Testament bishop martyrs; indeed she receives a whole day of the calendar to herself.<sup>4</sup> The female monastic entry, a third of those for men, is distorted in that six, including Thecla, are really there as martyrs.<sup>5</sup> Only five are purely monastic. The low figure accurately reflects the histories of monasticism, which include few women, sometimes confining them to a separate subsection.<sup>6</sup> In the male entries, the number of bishops is similarly inflated by the entries for martyrs. Women do comparatively well in the tiny Imperial category and the figure is roughly right for the year as a whole. From

Table 16.1 Main entries by gender and type for September and October

	<i>OT</i>	<i>NT &amp; Apocr.</i>	<i>Martyr (ma.)</i>	<i>Monastic (mon.)</i>	<i>Bishop (bp)</i>	<i>Imperial</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Female	-	11 (6 Marian, 1 ma.)	78 (6 mon.)	11 (6 ma. 1 NT)	-	3 (1 mon.)	-	103
Male	11	23 (8 ma., 6 bp)	296 (25 bp)	33 (1 ma.)	56 (6 NT, 25 ma.)	4	-	423
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	30 (3 fem.)	30
Total	11	34	374	44	56	7	30 (3 fem.)	556

Note: In this table double-counting is used for saints who occur under several types, but multiple anonymous martyrdoms have been treated as single entries. Four cases of duplicate female saints are included.

Constantine's Helena on, charitable and pious empresses who spent their money on almshouses and churches and discovered holy relics got a good hagiographical press, and the process was self-perpetuating.

Excluding Table 16.1's double-counting and including its three unidentified women saints, there are 102 women's names and anonymous groups of women for the two-month period, a substantial figure. The picture is sharpened by examining the distribution of women between all-female and mixed-sex entries as shown in Tables 16.2 and 16.3. Table 16.2 gives eighty-one women in independent female entries. Less the anonymous groups and Marian entries, that figure drops to sixty-one, of whom only thirty-eight rate an individual entry. Again, a group of thirty-two anonymous women in the massive Armenian martyrdom celebrated on 30 September distorts the number of women in the mixed entries in Table 16.3. Only thirty-five women are named, and only eleven of these as part of a male-female pair. In group entries women usually come last. For example, in family martyrdoms the usual order is father, mother, sons, daughters.<sup>7</sup>

Tables 16.2 and 16.3 produce ninety-six women's names, including duplicates. Yet it is instructive that the twenty-eight individual women martyrs in Table 16.2 are half the number of bishops (who themselves divide roughly in half as to martyrs and non-martyrs) in Table 16.1. Thus female sanctity should not be exaggerated between the fifth and tenth centuries in eastern Christendom. Yet there is sufficient evidence to merit consideration. In line with male saints the main emphasis is on martyrdom.

The picture can be filled out a little by looking at the women who play subordinate roles in these short narratives and provide a backdrop to the women saints. These are summarized in Table 16.4. Some are anonymous: 'a certain woman/mother/daughter'. Brief references to empresses as wife or mother are found, but more usually they have an active role as patron of a saint,<sup>8</sup> or in Helena's case playing second fiddle to Constantine over the discovery of the relics of the True Cross in a lengthy entry.<sup>9</sup> Normally martyrdom guarantees a position at the head of the *Synaxarion* entry, not a subordinate reference, so female martyrs are few in this category. There is one example from an atypical summary which introduces extra male and female martyrs within its narrative<sup>10</sup> and an anonymous mother and daughter pair from a horrifying massacre in sixth-century Ethiopia.<sup>11</sup> The monastic four cover the leader, Sophia, and three

Table 16.2 Number of women heading all-female main entries

	<i>Individuals</i>	<i>Pairs</i>	<i>Larger groups</i>	<i>Anonymous groups</i>	<i>Total</i>
Imperial	3	—	—	—	3
Martyrs	28	6	11	10 (2 sets of 5)	55
Monastic	5	—	—	—	5
NT & Apocr.	7 (6 Marian)	4	—	4 (1 set of 4)	15 (6 Mar.)
Other	1	2	—	—	3
Totals	44 (6 Marian)	12	11	14	81

*Note:* No double-counting, although two individual duplicate references are included, one pair recurs as part of a mixed grouping in Table 16.3. Monastic martyrs are listed as martyrs here, but they comprise three individuals, one pair and both anonymous groups of five.

Table 16.3 Number of women jointly heading mixed entries

	<i>Pairs</i>	<i>Trios</i>	<i>Quartets</i>	<i>Larger groups</i>	<i>Anonymous groups</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Imperial	—	—	—	—	—	—
Martyrs	11 (11 pairs)	6 (4 grps)	7 (5 grps)	10 (3 grps)	32	66
Monastic	—	—	—	—	—	—
NT & Apocr.	1	—	—	—	—	1
Other	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	12	6	7	10	32	67

*Note:* No double-counting, but see Table 16.2 above for a duplicate pair. Here also a pair of monastic martyrs occurs within one particular trio, to which the group of 32 anonymous women is also linked.

*Table 16.4* Categories of women mentioned in subordinate roles in the summaries

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Additional information</i>
Imperial	6	Includes 1 parent
Martyr	3	Includes 2 anonymous Ethiopian women
Monastic	4	3 anonymous
OT	2	1 wife, 1 prophet
NT & Apocrypha	11	2 Marian references; all the rest drawing on apocryphal: material, and including 4 converts and 4 prophets
Convert	8	Includes several wives
Wife	2	—
Parent	8	Includes 1 adoptive mother, and 1 mother as part of a cross-reference to a different date
Villain	6	Includes 1 mother, stepmother and 1 nurse, as well as a noble lady who torments her saintly slave-girl
Other	1	Accompanies a tortured martyr driven from town to town and collects his blood as a relic
Total	51	

*Note:* The table is based on hierarchy of types and there is no double counting. To arrive at the full number of wives, for example, it is necessary to add those included under 'NT' and 'Convert'.

anonymous nuns of a community from within which St Anastasia's outspoken insults to the Roman establishment are said to have earned her martyrdom.<sup>12</sup> Biblical and apocryphal references are relatively frequent and emphasize conversion. Yet the four prophets come from a single entry on the four daughters of St Philip.<sup>13</sup> The whole category witnesses to the emphasis on men that we know from its source material. Converts are a significant group but most who are not also martyrs belong to the apocryphal tradition.

It is rare to find a woman named purely as wife. Wives are normally involved in the main entries for group martyrdoms or in group conversions, yet in two cases we know only of their marital status. Reference to women as parents, if less common than in full-scale

saints' lives, has survived the excerpting process quite well. Seven subordinate characters are supplemented by a considerable number among the main martyr lists.

The category that I have titled 'villain' is varied, and female examples are rather more individual than their numerous male equivalents. The major classes of male villain tend to be persecuting emperors and governors, occasionally jealous betrayers. The women come from exemplary tales with a certain zest to their brief treatments of evil women, stereotypical as in some sense they may be. An Isaurian stepmother betrays her five stepchildren's Christianity to get at their patrimony.<sup>14</sup> She receives a male counterpart in a pagan son's betrayal of his Christian mother who later adopts a new son in prison and is satisfactorily martyred with him.<sup>15</sup> In a highly romanticized tale, St Pelagia of Tarsus is let down badly by her mother and her former nurse. After sneaking out to receive baptism, Pelagia is turned from her nurse's door and rejected by her mother on account of her humble baptismal garb—she has deposited her costly veil at the bishop's feet.<sup>16</sup> One feels a sneaking sympathy for this pair of horrified villains. Their plans to marry her off to Diocletian's son have fallen apart and neither actually intends matters to end in martyrdom. Under Julian the Apostate, the rioting group of pagan women who wield their spindles against the martyrs of Gaza are distinguishable from the men in the mob only by their choice of weapons.<sup>17</sup> The adultery of the wife of Paul the Simple, Antony of Egypt's disciple, conveniently frees him from family responsibility to pursue his chequered ascetic career.<sup>18</sup> Such stories provide what little information on social status is available from the *Synaxarion*. Finally the devoted Lycaonian lady who accompanied St Pappas as he was driven from town to town and collected the blood pouring from his many wounds on a cloth defies categorization.<sup>19</sup> Her tale should be related to the cult of Pappas' relics. It is a rare variant on the common topos of Christian devotees who collect martyrs' remains by night and may link with stories like that of St Deborah and the face-cloth.

Table 16.5 draws on both main and subordinate entries. Explicit evidence of social status is uncommon and usually relates to martyrs. The higher classes predominate, and would do so still more if some of the more atmospheric evidence from the narratives had been admitted to the database. The only two women of low class who are not slaves or prostitutes are wives of Egyptian monks—one of them Paul the Simple's lady.<sup>20</sup> However, servile origins interest the

Table 16.5 Information on social status of women mentioned in the *Synaxarion*: approximate figures only

Category	Number	Additional information
Imperial family	8	Mostly fourth-century or later eastern, but includes fictitious daughter of Trajan
Foreign royalty	2	1 Armenian, 1 Persian
Roman race (explicitly)	2	This underestimates the number of martyrdoms set in Rome, but the inclusion of the phrase seems to indicate high birth
Senatorial	5	—
Well-born	11	—
Well-born and wealthy	4	1 of these, on being widowed, falls into servile poverty
Wealthy	3	—
Military family	2	The wives of the NT centurion and of St Eustathios
Pagan priestly family	1	—
Medical family	2	1 purports to be a doctor herself
Humble origins	3	Includes 2 wives of (subsequent) Egyptian anchorites. A rare motif for a female saint, where only elevated birth is regularly mentioned
Prostitute	4	1 <i>hetaira</i> , 2 <i>pornai</i> and one would-be <i>hetaira</i>
Nurse	1	—
Slave	5	2 as <i>doule</i> , 3 as <i>oiketis</i>
Total	53	This figure represents just under a third of the entries in the database; the relative rarity of such information in hagiography generally may be compounded by the excerpting process



hagiographer and affect the narrative. The slave's role is always positive, sometimes sentimental. For example, the devoted slave (*oiketis*) of Severianus of Sebasteia resurrects her own slave-husband's corpse so that he may serve at his martyred master's tomb.<sup>21</sup> Eroteis is freed by her free-speaking mistress Capitolina only to follow her mistress' example and join her in martyrdom.<sup>22</sup> Most sentimental of all is the tale of the heart-broken senator Claudianus, to whom Domitian writes demanding that he hand over his slave-girl Charitine for punishment.<sup>23</sup> In an inversion of their normal social roles, it is she who comforts her master. Perhaps not coincidentally, Charitine's martyrdom is one of the most grotesque and involved.<sup>24</sup> The motif can be reversed. St Ariadne is turned in by her master Tertylus<sup>25</sup> and St Agathoclea suffers repeated torment and eventually death at the hands of her Christian master's spiteful pagan wife in a horrific *ménage à trois*.<sup>26</sup>

In monastic stories sex is overtly at issue as battered slave-girls are replaced by their generic equivalent, reformed dancing girls and prostitutes, here the high-class Pelagia of Antioch<sup>27</sup> and the rather humbler Taesia who was born into her mother's business.<sup>28</sup> These share their feast-day with the two martyred Pelagias, one of Antioch and one of Tarsos, along with Peter's daughter Petronia and an unnamed group of certain other female martyrs. Two men, the elderly martyrs Artemon and Nicodemus, look distinctly uncomfortable in this company, and such a grouping is rare.<sup>29</sup> Women ascetics' favoured disguise, as eunuchs in male monasteries, receives its due attention. When all goes well, the secret is usually revealed only once risk of child-bearing is over, or indeed at death. Euphrosyne on 25 September is a good example of both. After thirty-eight years of searching for his lost daughter, her father consults the saintly 'eunuch' Smaragdus. *She* answers 'Don't grieve, father, or seek your child. I am she' and gives up the ghost.<sup>30</sup> Odder and potentially nastier variants can be found: a woman betrays the monk Susanna's sex and so precipitates her ordination as a deaconess and indirectly her martyrdom.<sup>31</sup>

In their different ways these monastic accounts reflect on the perilous nature of women from the perspective of the early desert fathers, none more so than two curiosities dealing with anonymous women. In the first, a girl is brought to the anchorite Jacob (because she continually cries out his name) to have the assumed demon cast out.<sup>32</sup> Then her naive parents leave her with him to make sure that the cure has taken. Jacob struggles in vain against the devil and then

rapes and kills her. Yet this narrative is less concerned with Jacob's sin than with the temptation posed by the girl, for the monk repents and ascends to great heights of asceticism. In the second story Abraamius is faced with caring for his orphaned niece's education.<sup>33</sup> An enclosed hermit himself, he very naturally walls her up too in the cell next door. All goes well until at the age of twenty she departs to the bright lights of the nearest brothel. Nothing daunted, her uncle puts on his armour and rides off to hale her back to her cell again. She too later achieves marvels of asceticism, yet her uncle's sanctity is what interests the excerptor.

A certain even-handedness here does not obscure the fact that in both tales the women are viewed as threatening and suspect. Such stories began as cautionary tales dealing with the desirability and the perils of monasticism for both men and women, particularly when there was any contact between the sexes. Their fairy-tale equivalent of living happily ever after is not marriage but the attainment of chastity. To a twentieth-century mind concerned with the most basic psychology or with the horrors of abused women, the *Synaxarion's* summaries seem by turns naive—how could they have left the girl there given her symptoms, and where did Abraamios get the horse and armour<sup>34</sup>—or downright horrific, one girl raped and murdered, the other reduced to viewing a brothel as a women's refuge. Clearly neither reaction matches that assumed in the original written context or in that of its reuse and repetition down to the tenth century. Yet were those one and the same? As time went by this sort of monastic story pattern became fixed. The ideal may have remained chastity and withdrawal from the world and these were a recognizable if increasingly organized reality throughout the period, yet in time it may be correct to think more in terms of the glamourizing of a model or pattern by hagiographical association.

The strong influence of monastic example upon Imperial women is a case in point. September and October include Pulcheria, the Emperor Marcian's 'wife' in name alone,<sup>35</sup> and the sixth-century Febronia, princess and ascetic,<sup>36</sup> both of whom receive low-key entries, although Pulcheria certainly exploited her lifestyle to political ends. However, among the January entries, Apollinaria, granddaughter of Leo the Great,<sup>37</sup> runs away to Egypt, disguises herself as a monk and ends up with a complexion shrivelled like a tortoise shell. Under 18 April, Anthousa, the determinedly and irritatingly virginal daughter of Constantine Copronymous,<sup>38</sup>

provides another example of an Imperial monastic lady whose story rivals the most novelistic of the humbler versions.

We come back to all those martyrs. The stories are straightforward enough: persecution by pagan emperor or foreign ruler, trial, refusal to recant, imprisonment, torture, eventually death. The basic format is historical—many Christians died in this way—yet many surviving passions are largely fiction built merely on a name. The *Syriac Martyrology*<sup>39</sup> of 411's format of name, place, occasionally status and method of execution, testifies to the determination of the early church to record and remember. Yet its compiler would have been astounded at some of the lengthy accounts developed and embroidered between the fourth and sixth centuries. The function of such writings is likely to have been repeatedly and sometimes drastically modified, affecting not only their content but their impact. With few exceptions they exploit the church's history, not its present, and the process of rewriting is very clear. If some martyrdoms under Decius, Valerius and during the Great Persecution of the first decade of the fourth century are grounded in sound historical sources, little else is so certain. Increasingly it was on the very early years of the church that the most fantastical constructs were focused and some of the activities attributed to Trajan are quite extraordinary.<sup>40</sup>

For women martyrs the emphasis on threatened virginity is increasingly stressed. For all martyrs the emphasis on torture, particularly multiple and horrific torture, is increased. At certain stages this may have been linked to rivalry between cult centres, a desire to stress the miraculous and to claim the local hero or heroine as an alpha-class saint through an elaborate account. Later on one should perhaps think more in terms of literary and liturgical competition.<sup>41</sup> Certainly in the East, the proliferation, survival and repeated recompilation of the passions of the martyrs is in some sense a commentary on the history of Byzantium and the continual renewal of their relevance would repay further study. Iconoclasm is one case in point. Rather than viewing its existence as a barrier to the survival and continuity of the veneration of martyrs, it might be better to view its removal as a spur to subsequent revival and to the tenth-century vogue of which the *Synaxarion* is only one example.<sup>42</sup>

Within such a context the *Synaxarion's* heavy emphasis on the details of torture requires comment. So emphatic is it that a specialist Greek vocabulary is required in order to follow. Whatever else the excerptor omits, the gory, grisly and revolting details are impassively charted one by one. Recently the sexual aspects of some longer

hagiographical accounts of the torture of women have been receiving scholarly attention.<sup>43</sup> Yet this aspect does not appear to be central to the excerptor's concerns.

Take the elaborate sufferings of Charitine, her of the grieving master Claudianus.<sup>44</sup> She was beaten and thrown into the sea with a millstone chained to her neck; the chains parted and she walked on the water. She was confined in an iron dog collar, had coals heaped on her head and then vinegar poured over her, yet was released by prayer. Her breasts were branded, the skin scraped from her ribs which were then cauterized; she was fixed naked on a wheel over hot coals but an angel quenched the coals and prevented the torturers from rolling the wheel. Her finger- and toe-nails were torn out, also her teeth. Finally, like many an unkillable martyr she prayed for death and had her prayer granted. Her body was put into a sack full of sand and thrown into the sea, only to be washed up miraculously three days later unharmed for secret burial.

Certainly there are sexual aspects to such an account. Yet the genre, particularly in this excerpted form, presents it as all very much *par* for the course. Apart from the mutilation of Charitine's breasts, most of the tortures are found often identically excerpted in comparable lengthy accounts of male martyrdom. Women's breasts are mutilated by torturers.<sup>45</sup> Again the threat of rape, not usually its execution, is found in female martyrdoms. Stripping naked is used to humiliate men and women alike. This happens in life, not just in hagiography. Hagiography deals with sexual insult to women as one aspect of the personal violation of either sex by means of violence and its chief concern is with the failure of violence against the defiance of a saint. When a long account of torture is written or excerpted, a particular worst-case scenario may be chosen or handed down that matches the sex of the victim. Charitine does not give in and so she wins her crown, dies happily ever after. Had she been rescued and carried off to safety, she would have failed. Because she returns repeatedly of her own free will to face martyrdom, she wins. The worst-case scenario for a woman functions in hagiography primarily to vindicate her triumph—in this example both as a woman and as a slave-girl, an outsider in earthly society turned into the ultimate insider in the ranks of the saints.

From the safety of western Europe it has sometimes been possible to view torture as a thing of the past or of far-distant places, although rather less so in the light of recent events. While I have stressed the fictitious nature of many of these compilations, martyrs, torture and

violence were realities, as in some places they still are; the techniques described in the *Synaxarion* were in use. To celebrate not merely the martyr but the desire for martyrdom may be a concept foreign, even repugnant, to the western nature, yet there is little doubt that this response has a long history. If the *Synaxarion* is not entirely immune from the tendency to dwell on the sufferings of women, it makes violence against either sex one of its chief concerns. Neither Late Antiquity nor Byzantium was a stranger to violence, at home or abroad. Down the centuries martyr passions and works like the *Synaxarion* may often have served to focus strong responses to the threats of a hostile world, responses that may have varied at different times and in different places. Yet the primacy of martyrdom as a road to sanctity remains an important constant and the disturbing questions that this provokes cannot be escaped. The authors and excerptors of martyr acts do not merely record—they both glamourize and trivialize. In their insistence on the enumeration of ever more horrific detail, whether historical or not, they end by conniving at brutality. Even as they condemn the torturers, they elicit from their audience acceptance and admiration for the unacceptable until more and worse horrors are required before that admiration is forthcoming. Any single act of torture or cruelty lies or should lie beyond the pale. Ultimately the issue does not concern gender but the perverted morality of a literary genre that celebrates human suffering in a manner repugnant to the religion that it claims to serve.

## NOTES

- 1 Ed. Delehaye 1902. References to saints in this work are given by month, day and entry number. Where material from Delehaye's apparatus drawn from other manuscripts is used (*Synaxaria Selecta*), column and line number are given. Note the following abbreviations: *AASS: Acta Sanctorum... quae collegit J. Bollandus*, Antwerp and Brussels 1643-; *PG: J.-P. Migne* (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeco-Latina* 1-166, Paris 1844-1864; *PO: R. Graffin and F. Nau* (eds) *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1-, Paris 1903-.
- 2 The first point can be checked where a comparison is possible, for example, between Mart. 11.3 (Pionius) and the early *Acta Pionii* (Musurillo 1972:136-166). On the same day the style, vocabulary and rather sophisticated tone of the entry on Sophronios of Jerusalem (*ob.* 638, Mart. 11.2) match its period, as do the more jejeune and circumstantial language and information on George the 'Newly-appearing' (Mart. 11.4) the very late date of his entry.
- 3 Information for all the following tables was drawn from Delehaye 1902:2-184. Table 16.1 is based on a straightforward count of the entries

- for all categories of saint across the first two months. For the remaining tables a database was constructed using Locoscript's *Locofile*.
- 4 Sept. 24.1.
  - 5 Characteristically, the *Synaxarion* opts for the doubtful Greek variant in which Thecla is martyred rather than dies in old age (Sept. 24.1).
  - 6 For example, Palladius *HL* 54–61 (Butler 1904).
  - 7 For example Oct. 28.1, Terentius, Neonilla and their children Nitas, Sarbelus, Theodulus, Hierax, Bele, Photas, Euneice, of whom only Photas is out of place. Occasionally the narrative order will affect the order of the names. The New Testament pairing of Joachim and Anna, parents of the Virgin, of course reverses the emphasis when it comes to the actual narrative.
  - 8 Oct. 23.3 (Procopia and Michael as parents of Ignatius, future patriarch of Constantinople, and Theodora, Empress at the time of his elevation). Oct. 4.4 (Constantine's sister and Callisthene); Oct. 6.2 (Irene and the exiled Nicetas).
  - 9 Sept. 14.1. At Oct. 28.10 she figures again in a subordinate role to Cyriacus, martyred Bishop of Jerusalem, who revealed the true cross to her. She is celebrated in her own right at Mai 22.1.
  - 10 Sept. 21.3 (Philippa, mother of the military martyr Theodore of Perge).
  - 11 Oct. 24.1. The whole entry is unusual, an account of the wartime massacre of 1,250 Christians at Nagran when the city was taken by the Himyarites in 523.
  - 12 Oct. 12.2.
  - 13 Oct. 11.1 as an anonymous group, but at Sept. 4.4 one is named as Hermione.
  - 14 Oct. 30.3.
  - 15 Sept. 17.3.
  - 16 Oct. 8.2.
  - 17 Sept. 21.4. Cf. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5.9.
  - 18 Oct. 5.6.
  - 19 Sept. 14.2.
  - 20 Oct. 5.6.
  - 21 Sept. 9.2.
  - 22 Oct. 27.2.
  - 23 Oct. 5.1.
  - 24 Below, p. 244.
  - 25 Sept. 18.5.
  - 26 Sept. 17.2. The motif is an expanded doublet of the treatment of Sabina (later Theodote) at the hands of the wicked Politta at *Acta Pionii* 9 (Musurillo 1972:147).
  - 27 Oct. 8.1.
  - 28 Oct. 8.4.
  - 29 Oct. 8.2, 8.3, 8.7, 8.8; the two men at 8.4, 8.5. The grouping of the three Pelagias, for once reasonably well sorted out, looks deliberate, yet the procedure is slightly at odds with the efforts at Oct. 17.2, Nov. 1.1 to deal with the various sets of Cosmas and Damian one at a time on their relevant day. Taesia certainly seems to have been attracted to Oct. 8 by the presence of Pelagia the *hetaira*. Theoretically, saints are celebrated

- on the anniversary of their death, but occasionally one finds evidence of more systematic grouping. The two groups of martyrs from Marcianopolis, for example, are unlikely to have died on the same day several centuries apart. Monks too show a general tendency to clump: the precise day of their deaths may have lacked the traditional significance of that of martyrs and the monastic sources are not always informative about dates of death. Yet the main reason is probably the use by the compilers of collections of monastic lives or anecdotes. There is interesting work to be done on the evidence for several hands at work in the editorial process.
- 30 Sept. 25.3.  
 31 Sept. 19.2.  
 32 Oct. 10.3.  
 33 Oct. 29.2.  
 34 The latter point is in fact explained in the full length version of the *Life of Abraamios*, Brock and Harvey 1987:27–39. A comparison of the full account with the *Synaxarion*'s summary reveals particularly clearly the distortions of emphasis as well as of simple facts that result from this process.  
 35 Sept. 10.3.  
 36 Oct. 27.3. This is the daughter of Heraclius, not the martyred nun of Jun. 25.1, for whom she was most probably named.  
 37 Jan. 5.1.  
 38 Apr. 18.5.  
 39 *AASS* Nov II ii; F.Nau *PO* x.1 1–163. The work draws on mid- or late fourth-century sources.  
 40 Drusilla's martyrdom is a prime example: Sept. 22.2 with Mart. 22, *Synax. Select.* 553.11–556.47.  
 41 The latter aspect was still operating at Constantinople itself when the *Synaxarion* was compiled, and is clearly visible in its handling of the many sanctuaries throughout the city in which the different saints were celebrated. Yet it has a history going back to the fourth-century traffic in relics.  
 42 Symeon Metaphrastes' painstaking rewriting of full-scale passions for each month of the ecclesiastical calendar is another major example, *PG* 114–116.  
 43 See Brock and Harvey 1987 for the Syriac tradition; Malamud 1989:149–180 on Prudentius *Peristephanon* 13, as an explicitly erotic treatment of the martyrdom of St Agnes. In an unpublished paper, 'Blood wedding, Prudentius on the martyrdoms', delivered at the University of Keele in May 1993, Gillian Clark put forward interesting insights on the topic with regard to both Syriac and Latin texts.  
 44 Oct. 5.1.  
 45 Mastectomy is not uncommon. Occasional horrifying references to bleeding milk rather than blood are more complex. They describe the same torture applied to nursing mothers, but this is not usually made explicit in the *Synaxarion*; instead the phrase's miraculous overtones suggest a female equivalent of the water and blood of the Crucifixion.