

# The Trier Ivory Reconsidered

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**I**N A RECENT ARTICLE Kenneth Holum and Gary Vikan have raised afresh the question of who and what is depicted in the celebrated Trier Ivory.<sup>1</sup> They have suggested, not implausibly, that it portrays the reception of the right hand of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr by the Augusta Pulcheria in (as Holum has shown elsewhere)<sup>2</sup> the year 421. They see this event as the culmination of a transaction between Constantinople and Jerusalem which is described by Theophanes:

In this year [A.M. 5920], following the example of the blessed Pulcheria, the devout Theodosius [II] sent much money to the bishop of Jerusalem [Juvenal] for distribution to those in need and a golden cross set with stones to be erected at the Place of the Skull. In return, the archbishop sent relics of the right hand of Stephen the Protomartyr by the saintly Passarion. When he [Passarion or Stephen?] came to Chalcedon, that night the blessed Pulcheria saw Saint Stephen in a dream saying to her: "Behold, your prayer has been heard, your request granted, and I am come to Chalcedon." Taking her brother with her, she rose up and went to meet the holy relics. She received them into the palace and built a glorious house in honour of the holy protomartyr in which she deposited the holy relics.<sup>3</sup>

It was this passage which led Bury to remark with unwonted asperity that "the Bishop of Jerusalem plied a trade in relics,"<sup>4</sup> a judgment on which it might be profitable to reflect for a moment before going further. It is reasonably certain that by Theophanes' time, at the beginning of the ninth century, it was known, and might even have become customary, for the Jerusalem church to pass out relics in return for various kinds of aid (or in the hope of

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth G. Holum and Gary Vikan, "The Trier Ivory, *Adventus* Ceremonial and the Relics of St. Stephen," *DOPapers* 33 (1979) 113–33.

<sup>2</sup> *GRBS* 18 (1977) 163 n.46.

<sup>3</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia* I 86.26–87.5 de Boor. It should be noted that it is less than certain that Passarion actually brought the relics all the way to Constantinople, and also that the text does not actually say that Pulcheria's 'glorious house' was built inside the Palace, though this seems to be implied.

<sup>4</sup> J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* I (London 1923) 227 n.3.

aid) from Constantinople, Aachen, and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> This is hardly surprising since, by Theophanes' time, Jerusalem had long been in alien territory, under a government which allowed Christianity to survive only by the grace of toleration and never in circumstances positively advantageous. Under those conditions, it is understandable that the Bishop of Jerusalem would have been reduced to trading off his most valuable resources, the holy relics, in return for support from Christian lands. But when the calendar is turned back to the fifth century, a completely different picture emerges of the fortunes of the Jerusalem church. Then did it not only enjoy the full protection of the Christian emperors in whose domains it lay, but also held a privileged position in their eyes as the guardian of the most holy city in Christendom. A tradition of imperial munificence towards Jerusalem had been established by Constantine the Great (through his mother) which was generously upheld by Theodosius II through his wife, the Empress Athenais-Eudocia, well into the middle of the fifth century. Churches and pious foundations multiplied; pilgrims poured in; in short, Jerusalem enjoyed great peace and prosperity. In such dignified and opulent circumstances, is it likely that the Bishop of Jerusalem would stoop, let alone need, to trade off the holy relics as he was compelled to do by adverse conditions in later years? That question is raised here because although the arguments of Holum and Vikan are undoubtedly subtle and attractive, it seems to me that what they have succeeded in doing is to recognize in the Trier Ivory a fictitious event; or at least something which is not likely to have happened, and which is not indicated to have taken place by any evidence of decisive authority.

The fact of the matter is that the earliest and almost the only evidence of a translation of the *dexia* of the Protomartyr (for subsequent statements manifestly derive from this one)<sup>6</sup> is the testimony of Theophanes quoted above. De Boor was unable to trace any source from which Theophanes might have derived his information, nor, as far as I am aware, has any been found since. Hence Theophanes is here describing an event four centuries before his time, with no demonstrable line of communication. This in

<sup>5</sup> Witness (for instance) the pathetic appeal of the Jerusalem Patriarch Theodosius to Photius in 869, accompanied by the gift of the hieratic vestments of Saint James the Apostle and other holy objects (Mansi 16.25–27).

<sup>6</sup> E.g., George Cedrenus (1.592) and Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos, *HE* 14.9 (Migne, *PG* 146.1084ff).

itself is not of course sufficient grounds for rejecting Theophanes' testimony; there are after all other, though not many, cases in which his uncorroborated word on long-past events goes unchallenged. But it does give grounds for doubt, and there are many other considerations which fortify that doubt.

There are approximately twenty-five cases of alleged relic-acquisition by Constantinople (either by translation or invention) during the century 350–450. About two-thirds of those cases are attested in one or more of three early (before A.D. 600) authorities, mainly by Sozomen, Theodore the Lector, and Marcellinus Comes. Most, probably all, of these cases rest on more than the testimony of a single writer; some are corroborated by another kind of evidence, *e.g.*, liturgical or architectural. The remaining one-third consists of cases first attested in later writers who inspire little confidence, *e.g.*, George Cedrenus and the author(s) of the *Patria*, with no corroboration to be found. These are probably to be regarded in the same way as the many allegations of a Constantinian foundation for later ecclesiastical buildings in the *Patria*, *e.g.*, as attempts to provide a long history for a more recently arrived relic—and a history of little value.

Theophanes' story of Pulcheria and the right hand of Saint Stephen fits into neither category, appearing as it does in the second decade of the ninth century, but it looks very suspiciously like the first of the latter fictitious translations rather than the last of the historical ones, in view of the silence of earlier authorities.

The silence of Socrates is hardly surprising—he seems not to have been particularly interested in relics; but this was certainly not the case with Sozomen. One of the outstanding characteristics of his recension of Socrates' work is the inclusion of a number of 'independent' passages most of which are concerned with relics and more especially with the inventions of relics and their translations to Constantinople. As a contemporary and an admirer of Pulcheria, how could he have omitted one of her more outstanding triumphs in this respect, he who describes in such exquisite detail her invention of the relics of the Forty Martyrs?<sup>7</sup> His silence alone is disquieting, yet when it is considered together with the silence of Theodore the Lector and of Marcellinus Comes, both writers

<sup>7</sup> Soz. *HE* 9.2 (Migne, *PG* 67.1597–1601). See also his comments on the relics of Meletius of Antioch (7.10), John the Baptist (7.21), Martyrios and Marcion (7.29), John Chrysostom (7.45), and Zechariah (9.17).

with a marked interest in relic-importations, that silence becomes deafening.

This is all the more remarkable because, on the other hand, there is adequate early testimony of the importation of relics of Saint Stephen later in the reign of Theodosius II, in A.D. 439, and of their deposition in a church of Pulcheria's building. Thus Theodore the Lector:

In the same reign [of Theodosius II] the relics of Saints Stephen and Laurence and Agnes were deposited in the Martyrium of Saint Laurence, 21 September. Their memorial is celebrated there on that same date until this present day.<sup>8</sup>

The problem of how Constantinople came by relics of the two Roman saints is much too complex to be discussed here, but Marcellinus Comes gives precise information on the coming of the relics of the Protomartyr and it is he who supplies the date, 439:

[Athenais-] Eudocia, wife of the Emperor Theodosius, returned to the Imperial City from Jerusalem bringing with her relics of the most blessed martyr Stephen which, having been placed there, are venerated in the Basilica of Saint Laurence.<sup>9</sup>

(Sozomen says nothing of this, but this is hardly surprising as his *History* terminates *ca* 439.) That Athenais-Eudocia was in a position to gain possession of relics of Saint Stephen is very likely. As is well known, these had come to light at Jerusalem in 415, and had immediately begun to be dispersed to the four corners of Christendom.<sup>10</sup> When the empress went to Jerusalem on her first visit in 438–439, as a true second Helena, she endowed that city with many pious foundations, but above all, she built there a new church *splendore ac pulchritudine eximium* in honour of the Protomartyr and to house what remained of his relics; it was in this church that she was finally laid to rest herself.<sup>11</sup> In the wake of such munificence, she might well have been granted some portion of the martyr's relics. Certainly her travelling-companion, Saint Melania, obtained some for her personal use;<sup>12</sup> how much more likely then that the empress would? But then why were they deposited, not in

<sup>8</sup> Thdr.Lect. *HE* 2.64 (Migne, *PG* 86.216A).

<sup>9</sup> *Marcellini Comitis Chronicon*, ed. Theodor Mommsen (*MGH AA* 11.2) 80.

<sup>10</sup> See S. Vanderlinden, "Revelatio Sancti Stephani (BHL 7850–6)," *REByz* 4 (1946) 178–217.

<sup>11</sup> Evagr. *HE* 1.21, 22 (pp.29, 32 Bidez and Parmentier).

<sup>12</sup> Saint Melania junior died in 439; she is reported to have deposited relics of Saint

a church of Saint Stephen (of which there was already one in the capital by 400),<sup>13</sup> but of Saint Laurence? I would suggest that because work was just beginning on Saint Laurence's,<sup>14</sup> and the timely arrival of these relics provided exactly what was needed for the solemn inauguration of the work, the laying of the [altar-] foundation stone. It appears that the church was not completed until some years later. Thus Marcellinus Comes, *anno* 453 (85.38–40): *Pulcheria Augusta Marciani principis uxor beati Laurentii atrium inimitabili opere consummavit beatumque vivendi finem fecit.*

It is sometimes suggested that what Athenaïs-Eudocia brought to Constantinople in 439 was the balance of the relics remaining after the supposed translation of the *dexia* in 421, but clearly this was not so. They were deposited, as we have seen, in her church of Saint Laurence in the Pulcherianae and remained there until the end of the century, when a further translation took place which has left a significant mark in the records. Not, it must be admitted, so precise a mark as one finds in the *Chronicon* of Marcellinus Comes, but rather a highly fanciful legend, set in the days of Constantine the Great.<sup>15</sup> It concerns a certain widow Juliana who mistakenly brought the relics of Saint Stephen to Constantinople thinking them to be those of her husband, and it includes some well-worn hagiographical *topoi* such as mules which refuse to move and break into speech. The matter of this legend need not concern us here, its many forms and curious details (for it is one of the more interesting relic-documents)—except in one particu-

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Stephen in her own convent chapel, and to have spoken of another which possessed some of them. See her *Vita* in *AnalBoll* 22 (1903) 7–49, chapters 48 and 63.

<sup>13</sup> Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin* I.3<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1969) 472–73. The existence of this Church of Saint Stephen in the Aurelianae by the year 400 (which is well attested, both by Theodore the Lector [PG 86.221c–24b] and in the *Vita* of Isaac the Syrian, *Acta Sanctorum* maii vii:258E) provides important evidence that the foundation of the church does not necessarily imply the arrival of relics of its patron saint—that is, provided one can assume that no relics of the Protomartyr were in circulation prior to the invention of 415; this may not be a safe thing to assume.

<sup>14</sup> Saint Laurence's 'in the Pulcherianae' as it was known; Janin (*supra* n.13) 301–02 accepted the view that it was begun under Theodosius II (*i.e.*, by Pulcheria) and completed under Marcian.

<sup>15</sup> From the many recensions of this legend and the number of the extant MSS, it would appear to have been very popular. See François Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*<sup>3</sup> II (Brussels 1957) 249–50 no. 1650–51d. The most easily accessible texts are the Latin versions in Migne, *PL* 41.817–22, and the synopsis in *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. Hippolyte Delehaye (Brussels 1902) 861.76–864.35.

lar. There is little doubt that an historical person and event are concealed within the legend: that ‘the widow Juliana’ is in fact Juliana Anicia, daughter of Anicius Olybrius and of Placidia, granddaughter of Valentinian III and of Licinia Eudoxia, and therefore great-granddaughter of Theodosius II and of Athenais-Eudocia.<sup>16</sup> Therefore the church from which she ‘mistakenly’ removed the relics of Saint Stephen was that which her great-grandmother had built to house them—which may have given her some claim on them. According to the legend, the relics were deposited in an oratory in the Constantianae, which was in fact the ancestral plot of Juliana at Constantinople.<sup>17</sup>

It appears, then, that of the three alleged importations of relics of Saint Stephen to the Capital (421, 439, *ca* 500) the second is well attested in early historical sources, the last is rich in legendary material, but the first rests only on the late testimony of Theophanes. A similar imbalance is found in the liturgical evidence. From this evidence it is perfectly clear that the main focus of religious exercises at Constantinople in honour of Saint Stephen was his church in the Constantianae where the relics imported by Juliana Anicia lay. This was where the principal *synaxis* was held on the day of his *athlēsis* (27 December)<sup>18</sup> and this is where the *translatio* was celebrated on 2 August with a procession coming from the oratory of the same saint ‘in the Zeugma’ where the relics had temporarily lain whilst the main church was a-building.<sup>19</sup> There can be little doubt that the translation commemorated on 2 August was that of *ca* 500.

Of the translation of 439 there is a liturgical trace, but not quite what one might expect. Theodore the Lector says that the day of that translation, 21 September, was still commemorated at Saint Laurence’s in his time, but unfortunately we have no adequate service-books going back to his time. By the ninth century, when the Use of Constantinople begins to emerge in the extant MSS, there was no longer any mention of such a commemoration at that place on that day, but memory of it had not completely disappeared. The *Typicon* of the Great Church has the following entry for no less a day than the Wednesday in Easter Week: “The

<sup>16</sup> See J. Pargoire, “A propos de Boradion,” *BZ* 12 (1903) 449–93, esp. 486–90.

<sup>17</sup> Janin (*supra* n.13) 474–76.

<sup>18</sup> Juan Mateos, ed., *Le Typicon de la Grande Eglise I* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 165 [Rome 1962]) 162.20–22; *Synax. Ecc. CP ad diem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Typicon* 1.358.11–16 and 359 n.5; *Synax. Ecc. CP* 861.16–864.35.

same day, [the *synaxis*] of the holy Protomartyr Stephen is held at Saint Laurence's" (an appropriate reading, *Acts* 6.8, 5.47–60, is appointed).<sup>20</sup>

These of course are by no means the only references to Saint Stephen in the Use of Constantinople; there is also the *Invention* (15 or 16 September) and several lesser commemorations,<sup>21</sup> but not a single one of them makes any reference either to the *dexia*, or to any other translation, or to Pulcheria, or to a shrine of Saint Stephen 'in the Palace' or at Daphne. In short, there is not a trace of the translation of 421 in the liturgical evidence—which is all the more significant in view of the persistence of the commemorations of Saint Stephen at Saint Laurence's (*i.e.*, 439 Saint Stephen) under pressure no doubt from *ca* 500 Saint Stephen in the Constantianae. Since a translation in 421 would have been particularly significant because it was the first, and because it was due to imperial initiative, it is all the more likely that, had it ever taken place, some trace of it would have persisted in the liturgical tradition. (Yet *en revanche*, it must be admitted that certain well documented translations to the Capital did disappear without a trace, presumably because they were found to be 'ineffectual'. Such is the case with the First Head of Saint John the Baptist brought in by Theodosius I.)<sup>22</sup>

To turn now to the architectural evidence: the building of Saint Laurence's by Pulcheria has already been mentioned. The building of Saint Stephen's in the Constantianae *ca* 500 is fairly well authenticated, but the building of any church of Saint Stephen by Pulcheria (or by Theodosius II) is not. These emperors, sometimes Pulcheria and Marcian, are severally credited with a number of ecclesiastical buildings: three dedicated to the Theotokos, the one to Saint Laurence, one to Saint Menas (rebuilt), but nowhere (except in Theophanes and his derivatives), not even in the *Patria*, is there mention of a Saint Stephen's.

Yet the undoubted fact of the matter is that in later times there

<sup>20</sup> *Typicon* 2 (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 166 [Rome 1963]) 102.16–20.

<sup>21</sup> *E.g.*, in *Synax. Ecc. CP* on 29 October (at Saint Paul's in the Orphanage), on 19 November, on 8 January, and together with all the Apostles on 30 June, where the entry says that "his relics were transferred to Constantinople and deposited in the Constantianae" (784.15–19).

<sup>22</sup> This is reported by Sozomen (*HE* 7.21 [*PG* 67.1481–84]) and in *Chronicon Paschale* (564) whence it is taken up by other writers, *e.g.*, Cedrenus (1.562), but the liturgical sources breathe not a word of it. But see *Typicon* 1.238.10–13 and *Synax. Ecc. CP* 485.29–487.9 for (?) an alternative version of the story.

was a *euktērion* of Saint Stephen described as being ‘in the palace’ and ‘at Daphne’. The earliest reference to it (by Theodore the Lector, writing not long after the event) dates it to the reign of Zeno, 476–491, when there was an ‘invention’ of the relics of the Apostle Barnabas in Cyprus, and on the chest of the corpse was found a copy of the Gospel according to Matthew, written in Barnabas’ own hand. This Gospel (says the Lector) Zeno deposited “in the Palace, in the Saint Stephen.”<sup>23</sup> It was here that the coronation of Heraclius took place and that of his daughter, and it was here that both the betrothal and the marriage of the future Emperor Leo IV and his Chazar bride Irene took place.<sup>24</sup> It is in the latter connection that Theophanes gives a valuable detail as to its location: *ἐν τῇ Δάφνῃ*.

Theophanes never actually claims that this is the Church of Saint Stephen which Pulcheria is supposed to have built. Such would seem to be an obvious conclusion, yet it may be that the building in question was in fact very much older than Pulcheria and that it was originally something other than a Christian place of worship. Since it is said to have been located both ‘in the palace’ and ‘at Daphne’, clearly it formed part of the group of buildings known as the Palace of Daphne, “la partie la plus ancienne du Grand Palais, construite par Constantin en même temps que la Chalcé et les Scholes.”<sup>25</sup> In Ebersolt’s reconstruction of the Great Palace this consists principally of two contingent halls immediately to the south of the Tribunal of the Nineteen Couches and directly adjacent to the eastern flank of the Hippodrome.<sup>26</sup> The more westerly of the two chambers is what undoubtedly came to be known as the church of Saint Stephen, whilst the other may well be the hall that is identified as *Stepsimon* in the *Patria* (where a Constantinian foundation is claimed for it)<sup>27</sup> but as *Augusteus* in *De Caerimoniis*, where there is no mention of any chamber known as *Stepsimon*.

How did this ancient foundation come to be known as ‘the

<sup>23</sup> Thdr.Lect. *HE* 2.2 (PG 86.184BC), reading *ἀγίω* for the editor’s suggestion *ἄλλω*; though *ἄλλω* is not impossible, given the existence already of Saint Stephen’s in the Aurelianae.

<sup>24</sup> Theophanes 1.299.9–10, 300.14, 444.21 and .24.

<sup>25</sup> Raymond Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1964) 113.

<sup>26</sup> J. Ebersolt, *Le grand palais de Constantinople et le livre des cérémonies* (Paris 1910) 51 n.1 and 52 n.2; see items 19, *d* and *a* in the fold-out plan.

<sup>27</sup> *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum* II, ed. Theodor Preger (Leipzig 1907) *Patria* 1.59 (p.144.17).



Daphne? In the *Patria* three possible answers to this question are given, the third of which merits careful attention: because each year on the first of January, the senators used to receive crowns of laurel (*στεφάνους ἀπὸ δάφνης*) there from the hand of the emperor.<sup>28</sup> But it was probably not by any means senators alone who were crowned at the Daphne. In a note on *De Caerimoniis* 1.2, J. J. Reiske pointed out that in every major city of the Roman Empire where competitions or games of any kind were held there would also be found a Daphne, “id est tribunalia, vel basilicae, in quibus laureae victoribus imponerentur.”<sup>29</sup> From this he concluded that the Daphne at Constantinople had originally been the hall in which victors were crowned (“nam procul ab Circo non aberat”). For this reason, he says, the *tribunalia vel basilicae* at the Daphne Palace in Constantinople came to be distinguished from the other buildings by such titles as *Stepsimon* and *ho Stephanos*, thus paving the way for its eventual transformation into a Christian oratory of Saint Stephen.

Precisely when that transformation took place it may never be possible to say,<sup>30</sup> but then it may have been a protracted process over the centuries. With the progressive Christianisation of the City, it must have lost something of its original prestige, particularly during the more sober years when Pulcheria was in the ascendant, but one would hesitate to say that the transformation process was complete even by the time of Theodore the Lector. His somewhat abrupt reference to it as *ho hagnos stephanos* is only a little removed from *ho stephanos* and still has nothing to confirm that the reference is to Saint Stephen rather than to crowning; the same curiously foreshortened appellation is found even in the tenth century, so hard did traditions die at Byzantium.<sup>31</sup> Long before then of course Theophanes had placed it beyond reasonable doubt that by his time the building in question had become an oratory dedicated in honour of the Protomartyr, and had acquired a relic of his *dexia*, which would probably not have been too difficult during the turmoil of the mid-eighth century.

Yet many practices and traditions lived on, harmless survivors

<sup>28</sup> *Patria* 3.128 (p.256 and notes).

<sup>29</sup> In Migne, *PG* 112.110f n.45.

<sup>30</sup> There is a possibility that the Christianisation of *ho Stephanos* may have already begun in Pulcheria's time, thus furnishing the germ of the legend of the translation of 421. See Holum (*supra* n.2) 164 and nn.47, 48.

<sup>31</sup> *De Caerimoniis* 1.3 (*PG* 112.120A). To refer to a church merely as ‘Saint N---’ (or even merely as ‘N---’s’ under the iconoclast emperors) was by no means uncommon.

of the time when *ho stephanos* was primarily a secular crowning place. Though the evidence is slight, it seems to have been the scene of imperial coronations from when they began in the mid-fifth century well into the seventh.<sup>32</sup> As noted above, in the eighth century we see it being used (as it probably always had been) for the imposition of betrothal and nuptial crowns on members of the imperial family. In the tenth century it emerges that Saint Stephen's housed the regalia, presumably the coronation regalia, and that the Great Cross of Constantine was housed there too. There is a possibility that the same building may have been the original lodging-place of the Wood of the True Cross when it was first brought to the City by Heraclius in 629 or in 634 and before it was installed at the Lighthouse Church (Theotokos tou Pharou), for twice in the course of the year, says Constantine Porphyrogenitus, once on the third Sunday in Lent and again on 1 August, that most holy of relics was brought and solemnly deposited (probably for an over-night *agrypnia*) at the Church of Saint Stephen, Daphne.<sup>33</sup> That Zeno chose to lay up the Barnabas manuscript there (which, like the Cross of Constantine, may have been regarded as a great curiosity or an *objet d'art*, rather than as a relic to be deposited in a church) probably indicates that the building had long served as an imperial depository—as well it might, for it may have contained since earliest times a wealth of ceremonial crowns. Subsequently, its contents formed the nucleus of the vast hoard of relics and holy objects which was conserved in the adjacent Church of the Theotokos at the Pharos, the Lighthouse Church, built by Constantine V, conceivably to house what of value was taken from the disaffected monasteries.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See on *De Caerim.* 1.38 PG 112.441 n.88. See also *De Caerim.* 1.39, .40, and 2.27. It is clear that the Augusteus was particularly associated with the coronations of *Augustae* by the tenth century, which may conceivably account for the apparently new name. Liutprand speaks of it by yet another name which is of considerable interest in the context of the present discussion: *Septimo autem Idus . . . in domo quae dicitur Σεπτάνα, id est Coronaria, ante Nicephorum [Phocam] sum deductus . . . (Legatio 3: MGH Script. 3.347.33–34).*

<sup>33</sup> *De Caerim.* 1.3, 2.8, 2.10 (PG 112.120A, 539, 550).

<sup>34</sup> There are more reasons than can be here discussed for believing that the Lighthouse Church may have been the successor to Saint Stephen's, Daphne, as the repository of the imperial memorabilia and relic collection, but one piece of evidence is particularly relevant here. Of the twelfth-century visitors to Constantinople who mention Saint Stephen's hand, only one, Anon. Mercati, gives its location: it was *in magno palacio in templo Sanctae Mariae Dei genetricis (i.e., the Lighthouse Church)* that he saw *manus sancti Stephani prothomartiris*. See Krijnie N. Cigaar, "Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlerin anglais," *REByz* 34 (1976) 245 chap. 1 lines 1–2 and 22.

In such ways did *ho stephanos* retain echoes of its pre-Christian origins long after men had learnt to believe that it was built by Pulcheria to house a newly arrived relic. It is not difficult to imagine how that story came into existence, nor is it by any means the only suspect story handed down by Theophanes. Pulcheria figures very conspicuously in the legendary and devotional traditions of Constantinople, both as a provider of relics and as a builder of churches.<sup>35</sup> An odour of sanctity hovers around ‘the blessed Pulcheria’, who was held to have been largely responsible for the calling and the success of the Fourth Ecumenical Council.<sup>36</sup> She (together with Marcian) was known to have solicited relics from Jerusalem,<sup>37</sup> and relics of Saint Stephen did in fact arrive at Constantinople in her time. All the elements were there to justify her nomination as the founder of a church which undoubtedly existed (but whose builder was unknown, though it may well have been Constantine the Great) and to credit her with the provision of the patronal relic which it now housed.

Yet there still remains the mention of Passarion as the agent of the supposed translation of 421. This is certainly an authentic touch which seems to add credence to Theophanes’ story. (Incidentally, it also adds support to the adjustment of Theophanes’ dating, for Passarion died in November 428.)<sup>38</sup> Passarion was no ordinary *chorepiscopus*. Far from being a mere rural bishop (as the word implies), he occupied the authoritative position of Archimandrite of the Monks. He was an assistant bishop to the Patriarch, charged with supervising the many monks then living in Palestine. Nothing that he wrote, nor any *Life* of him has survived; what little is known of him is found in the Palestinian monastic literature, mainly in Cyril of Scythopolis’ *Vita Euthymii* (cf. BHG no. 647).

It appears that in addition to the high position that he held,

<sup>35</sup> She was celebrated three times in the ecclesiastical year, a distinction shared (I think) only by Constantine the Great amongst emperors: once in her own right (11 September), once in conjunction with Marcian (18 February), and once, rather curiously, in conjunction with the Empress Irene (the Chazar? surely not the Athenian) on 7 August. Three of the major shrines of the Theotokos claimed her as their founder (Blachernae, Chalcoprateia, and Hodegetria, the last built to house an icon sent by Athenais-Eudocia from Jerusalem: Thdr.Lect. HE 1.1 [PG 86.165A]), not counting lesser sanctuaries.

<sup>36</sup> See her *logos* at 11 September in *Synax. Ecc. CP*.

<sup>37</sup> Witness the celebrated case recorded in the ‘Euthymiac History’: see John Damascene, *Hom.* 9.18 (Migne, PG 96.748–52).

<sup>38</sup> Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Oxford 1964) 86 n.27.

Passarion also distinguished himself by pious foundations (a *koinobion* in Jerusalem and a *ptochotropheion* outside the East Gate) and by leaving behind a number of disciples who were proud to imitate his good works and to claim him as their master, including a successor, the Chorepiscopus Anastasius, with whom Athenais-Eudocia was in contact in 455.<sup>39</sup> If Juvenal did send relics to Constantinople, if he were not to bring them himself, Passarion, his important lieutenant, would have been an obvious choice, and anybody familiar with the state of affairs in *ca* 421 would have known that; *i.e.*, anybody who had read Cyril's *Vita Euthymii*. Since there was good precedent for the employment of episcopal emissaries to bring relics to Constantinople—so the translation of Samuel in 406<sup>40</sup> and of Joseph and Zachariah in 415<sup>41</sup>—it was a short step to assume a similar agent in 421 and to give him an obvious name: Passarion. Such a hypothetical reconstruction of the past is an hagiographical commonplace; yet if there were any truth in this detail, it would raise a further complication. As a famous ascetic of Palestine, would Passarion really have lingered at Constantinople long enough for a church to be built? There seems to have been a space of no less than four years between the arrival of Samuel's relics and their deposition in the newly-built church.<sup>42</sup> If Passarion really did participate in the deposition of the *dexia* of Saint Stephen, the church in which they were deposed must have been already standing when he arrived. Otherwise he would surely have returned as quickly as possible to the natural element of ascetics, *ho erēmos*.

Such, then, are the reasons for suspecting that the relic-importation of 421 is a legendary, not an historical event. This does not rule out the possibility that it is nevertheless the event depicted in the Trier Ivory. Artists are not historians, nor have they ever considered themselves obliged only to portray those scenes which they believed to be 'factual', still less so those whose factual basis is beyond reasonable doubt. Yet if the artist of the Trier Ivory has given us the representation of a fictitious event, it follows that he

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 89, 91, 93, 98.

<sup>40</sup> Jerome, *Contra Vigilantium* 5 (Migne, PL 23.358), speaks of several bishops in this instance.

<sup>41</sup> *Marcellini Comitis Chronicon* 72; cf. *Chron.Pasch.* 572.15–573.2, which repeats the error of 6 nones, and places the *encaenia* a little later, 25 October.

<sup>42</sup> According to *Chron.Pasch.* (*sub annis*), Samuel's relics arrived at Constantinople on 18 May 406, but were not definitively deposited until 7 October 410. Theodore the Lector implies only a two-year delay (PG 86.213).

must have lived and worked at a date sufficiently removed from the date of the supposed event for the fiction to have emerged and to have won acceptance. How far removed it is difficult to say, for legends concerning relics sometimes materialised surprisingly quickly. Theophanes provides a *terminus ante quem* of ca 800; the disturbance of relics in the time of Constantine V Copronymus (741–775)—which has sometimes been over-estimated—could account for the arrival of the *dexia* at Saint Stephen's, Daphne. These considerations point to the latter part of the eighth century for the materialisation of the legend of the translation of 421, but at all events we have to allow for the passage of time—perhaps substantial time—before the artist put chisel to ivory.

Now the date of the Trier Ivory has been the subject of a considerable amount of scholarly discussion, the results of which have been not so much a consensus as a vigorous proliferation of hypotheses. For one scholar, it represents the importation of the relics of Joseph and Zachariah on 2 October 415,<sup>43</sup> whilst another sees in it the translation of relics of the Forty Martyrs on the occasion of the dedication of the rebuilt Church of Saint Irene-in-the-fig-trees (*en Sykais*) in 552.<sup>44</sup> More recently there has been a spirited attempt to identify it with the restoration of the Holy Wood of the True Cross to Jerusalem by Heraclius after its recovery from the Persians (630),<sup>45</sup> and now we have the Saint Stephen hypothesis. The possibilities are by no means exhausted; one might consider also the reception of the First Head of Saint John the Baptist by Theodosius I,<sup>46</sup> or Arcadius receiving Samuel,<sup>47</sup> or even Leo Makelles and Gennadius bringing in the relics of Saint Anastasia,<sup>48</sup> to mention only a few alternatives. In a word, the Ivory has shown itself to be a particularly elusive piece of work in both content and date, and this point should be given its due weight.

If, as I have tried to suggest, the Ivory was executed not decades, but centuries after the event, and, what is more, portrays something which never really happened, then, with little more than the

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *supra* n.41. See S. Pelekanides, "Date et interprétation de la plaque en ivoire de Trèves," *Mélanges Henri Grégoire IV* (AIPhO 12: 1952) 361–71.

<sup>44</sup> Thus for example Jean Ebersolt, *Sanctuaires de Byzance* (Paris 1921) 13–15.

<sup>45</sup> Suzanne Spain, "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," *DOP* 31 (1977) 281–304.

<sup>46</sup> Soz. *HE* 7.21 (PG 67.1481c–84A); Cedrenus 1.562.16ff.

<sup>47</sup> Jerome, *Contra Vigilantium* 5 (PL 23.358); Thdr.Lect. 2.63 (PG 86.213); *Chronicon Paschale* 586 (anno 406).

<sup>48</sup> Thdr.Lect. 2.65 (PG 86.216B); Theophanes 1.111.7–9.

tissue of legend to guide him (and, in our evidence, no artistic model), the artist must perforce have relied to a very great extent on his native imagination. In such circumstances, his creation could hardly be other than ambivalent, a hotch-potch perhaps of details borrowed from other, better documented events; hence the diversity of opinion about it on the part of modern scholars, each of whom sees in it what he will. Therefore, somewhat paradoxically, I conclude that *because* the translation of the *dexia* of Saint Stephen in 421 probably never happened, that may well be the most satisfactory explanation (to date) of what the Ivory's creator meant it to represent.

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