

THE LIFE OF ST. MARY THE YOUNGER: AN UNUSUAL EXAMPLE OF FEMALE SANCTITY OF THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE PERIOD

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This paper presents a peculiar type of a female saint, a type of a married saint, which was rare and not so popular. The cult of St. Mary the Younger was a family cult that was promoted in spite of the strong opposition of the church hierarchy, and in contrast to the traditional ideal of sainthood. The appearance of this type of sanctity in that particular period (ninth-tenth century) reflects the changing attitudes toward female sanctity in the Byzantine hagiography and society. The emperor Leo the Wise (886–912) by no means influenced those hagiographic and social novelties by his unconventional and highly controversial views and practices regarding women and family relations.

The *vita* of St. Mary the Younger¹, composed by an anonymous author in the eleventh century², is one of the most intriguing examples of the Byzantine hagiography of the “Macedonian” period. It presents a new type of saintly woman – one who never entered the monastery, whose way of life was not ascetical, and who did not experience a martyr’s death. Mary was a married laywoman, who bore four children but nevertheless performed miracles, achieved sanctity, and was venerated as a holy woman. Thus, the *vita* reflects the social and religious transformations of the ninth-tenth century Byzantium with a strong emphasis on family values and the increased prominence of marriage in religious discourse. The *vita* also contains valuable information for the concept of sainthood, social history, and the history of mentalities, especially in regard to attitudes toward women and family relations. It is also an important source of evidence for the Tsar Simeon’s (893–927) military campaigns in Eastern Thrace during his wars with Byzantium.

¹ Vita S. Mariae Iunioris. Acta Sanctorum Novembris, IV. Société des Bollandistes, Bruxellis, 1925, 692–705; Engl. Translation with introduction by Angeliki Laiou in – Holy Women of Byzantium. Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation. Ed. Alice-Mary Talbot. Washington, D. C., 1996, 239–89.– [www.doaks.org/etexts.html]

² A. Laiou considers the composition of the *vita* in the eleventh century or later – Holy Women, p. 242. For an earlier date (tenth century) see Г. Баласчев. Новыя данныя для историі грекоболгарскихъ воинъ при Симеоне. На основаніи Житія Маріи Новой. Известия русскаго археологическаго института в Константинополе, IV, София, 1899, 202–5.

Marriage as a path to martyrdom and sainthood

St. Mary the Younger was a noble woman of Armenian descent, whose family migrated to Constantinople during the reign of Basil I the Macedonian (867–886). Her parents had five children – two sons and three daughters, of whom Mary was the youngest one. After her father's death Mary married a certain Nicephoros, *droungarios* (military commander) and a close friend of her brother-in-law, and eventually left the capital and followed him to the town of Kamarai in Eastern Thrace. Mary immediately attracted the local people's attention due to her inner and bodily beauty and became beloved and respected by everybody. The author defines his heroine as “the wonder of our generation”, “the image of meekness”, “the pillar of moderation”, “the exemplar of love of God” etc. The charity, however, was her prime virtue. She helped the needy, took care for the poor, and even released from prison the incorrect payers. The extreme asceticism and self-denial, however, could not be such an important issue for a married woman, and the author deliberately stresses on Mary's social virtues – philanthropy, charity, and generosity.³

Mary bore four sons, two of whom died shortly after the birth. After the death of their first child she and her husband moved to the city of Byza, who was bigger and more populous than Kamarai and she had to change some of her habits. Mary used to attend the church service every day while living in a small town but after moving to Byza she had to end with her daily journeys out of prudence and modesty, as she did not want to be watched by foreigners and strangers. She continued, however, to pray at home.

It is worth noting that in contrast to matrons of Late Antiquity like Paula, Melania, and Poimenia, who undertook extended pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Egypt, Mary the Younger had problems to go even to the local church. This drastic change in the female mentality and social behaviour was due to the fact that the mid-Byzantine society became more patriarchal than it was in the previous centuries. The relatively free women of Late Antiquity lost their independence and came under the strong control of their husbands. The life of the Byzantines became more secluded and private, and therefore the prominence of the family increased significantly.

The transformation of the attitudes toward the family and the social role of women found expression in the legislation and especially in the *Novels* of Leo VI the Wise (886–912). The view on women and marriage that we find in Leo's *Novels* is generally very positive, and surely his laws aimed to strengthen the family, as it was viewed as the basic cell of the society. The Leo's marriage

³ A. Λαΐου. Η ιστορία ενός γάμου: Ο βίος της Αγίας Θωμαΐδος της Λεσβίας. [Η καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο]. Αθήνα, 1989, σ. 244.

legislation does not evaluate celibacy very high as well.⁴ Leo was the first emperor who issued a law establishing the religious celebration as an obligatory condition for a valid marriage.⁵ In so doing he placed the marriage among the religious sacraments and gave it a divine blessing.

We could find another affirmation of the increased prominence of marriage in the ninth-tenth century Byzantium in the *vita* of St. Thomais of Lesbos – another married woman, who was proclaimed saintly but whose sanctity is of completely different type. Thomais had a gift of healing and among the numerous people, whom she cured were two prostitutes. One of them suffered from breast cancer and Thomais advised her to end with her sinful life and to marry.⁶ By contrast, the repentant harlots of Late Antiquity, like St. Mary of Egypt and Pelagia of Antioch did not marry after their religious conversion but became female hermits.

The marriage, however, became the cause of Mary's sufferings and eventually led to her premature death. Her relatively happy and peaceful family life was disturbed by the intrigues of her husband's relatives, who accused her of adultery with one of her domestic slaves and of squandering of the family property. Instead of believing to his wife Nicephoros sided with his brother and sister. He started spying on Mary and humiliated her in every possible way. Provoked by jealousy and groundless suspicion Mary's "empty-headed husband" installed guards to her bedchamber in order to examine and control all her activities. In fact, Mary was imprisoned in her room and was not allowed to go anywhere or to see anybody. At the end Nicephoros severely beat his wife infuriated by the gossips of one of his friends. Mary died ten days later and immediately after her departure a sweet fragrance arose from her body and filled the entire place – that was the first sign of her sanctity.

Mary's posthumous miracles and the development of her cult.

Mary was buried in the Episcopal Church (καθολική εκκλησία), which according to Cyril Mango is the church of St. Sophia of Byza, now serving as a mosque.⁷ Four months after her death the first miracle occurred at her tomb and people started coming to her holy relics for help and healing. Significantly, most of them were demoniacs, who suffered from evil spirits. There were even priests and monks among those possessed by demons including a Bulgarian nun, who too was

⁴ K. Fledeluis. Woman's Position and Possibilities in Byzantine Society, with Particular Reference to the Novels of Leo VI. – *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 32/2, 1982, 425–32.

⁵ N. Oikonomides. Leo VI's Legislation of 907 Forbidding Fourth Marriages. An Interpolation in the *Procheiros Nomos* (IV, 25–27). *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 30, 1976, 187–188.

⁶ Vita S Thomaidis 14, Holy Women, 312–13; A. Λαΐου. Η ιστορία ενός γάμου, σ 245.

⁷ C. Mango. The Byzantine Church at Vize (Bizye) in Thrace and St. Mary the Younger. – *Зборник радова Византолошког института*, XI, 1968, 9–13.

healed by the saint. This is important information for the existing of female monasticism in Bulgaria few decades after the official adoption of Christianity and, to the best of my knowledge, it is the earliest one.⁸

Most of the sick people that visited Mary's grave were healed by touching her holy body or by anointing themselves with the oil from the lamp on the tomb. Her husband, who, in the meantime, realized that he was deceived by his relatives and blamed himself for what he had done, ordered the tomb to be opened. To everybody's amazement Mary's body was lying intact and a vital blood was issuing from it. Moreover, a sweet smell continued to issue from her uncorrupted remains.

At that time Mary appeared in her husband's dream and urged him to build a chapel for her and to transfer there her relics. He obeyed to her will but when the church was already ready he was attacked by some clerics, who opposed the translation of the body. As Cyril Mango has pointed out the priests simply did not want to give up the profitable relics.⁹ This, however, did not prevent them to express their doubts on Mary's sanctity. The archbishop Euthymios said: "God has granted the ability to perform miracles to chaste men, holy monks, and martyrs. She, on the other hand, lived with a man, and did not change her mode of life, nor did she ever do any great or extraordinary things. Whence her power to perform miracles?"¹⁰ Bishop Stephen of Vrysis, a town adjacent to Byza, expressed similar objections. He too insisted that a married wealthy woman like Mary could not attain sanctity and that her miracles were delusion.

Nevertheless, Nicephoros carried out the translation of Mary's relics accompanied by a heavy guard of forty men. The church was decorated with a portrait of a saint after she appeared in a dream to a painter from Rhaidestos and asked him to paint an icon of her. In the new chapel the sequence of miracles continued and it attracted pilgrims from as far as Bulgaria, Arkadioupolis (modern Luleburgas) and Rhaidestos (modern Tekirdag).

The second translation of Mary's relics was undertaken by her sons twenty-five years later. At that time her husband was already dead and was buried in a marble sarcophagus in the same chapel he was build for Mary. The two brothers placed their father's remains into a tomb outside the church and at their place laid down the uncorrupted body of their mother, who for the twenty-five years did not suffer any deterioration. Eventually, they transformed the church into a monastery and donated to it their share of the inheritance.

It has been pointed out, that Mary the Younger together with Thomais of Lesbos and the Empress Theophano (the first wife of Leo the Wise), constitute a

⁸ Another evidence for the existing of female monasticism in Bulgaria during the same period is a Cyrillic inscription "ANNA MONAXHN[A]" written on a cross-enkolpion from Drastar (Silistra). The founding, however, is not datable with certainty. – Г. Атанасов. Кръст-енколпион на Анна монахиня от Дръстър (Силистра) – Добруджа, 11, 1994, 43–51.

⁹ Ibid. p. 12.

¹⁰ Vita S. Mariae Iunioris 12, Holy Women, p. 268.

new type of saintly woman: a pious housewife, who remains married throughout her lifetime, never becomes a widow or a nun, but nevertheless attains sanctity.¹¹ The three married female saints lived in the same period – the late ninth to the first half of the tenth century and their sanctification has been taken as an affirmation of the importance of marriage for the social stability and the religious morality.

I fail to see any similarities between the lives of Mary the Younger and Thomais of Lesbos. Thomais resembles a holy fool rather than a pious housewife.¹² Just the fact that she was walking around naked is enough to classify her as a holy fool. It was said that both Mary the Younger and Thomais of Lesbos were victims of domestic violence and suffered terribly at the hands of their abusive husbands.¹³ There is a big difference; however, in the way the two women endured the beating. St. Mary was beaten only once by her husband and evidently could not cope with this and eventually died. By contrast, Thomais received heavy blows almost every day but bore them “with good grace, like a martyr rejoicing in Christ, and clung to them to an even greater degree”.¹⁴ We could observe the similar behavior also in the holy fools, who just like Thomais bore the blows patiently and “for the sake of Christ”.

The *vita* of Empress Theophano¹⁵, however, resembles the Mary's *vita* to a great extent and we may suppose a probable connection between the two *vitae*. From beauty queen of the year 882 Theophano became a Christian saint due to the efforts of her imperial husband and the Marthinakes family. Her Uncle Michael not only ordered the composition of her *vita* but also even forced the anonymous hagiographer to write down the account of lady's life.¹⁶ Surely the Mary's *vita* was composed by her husband's request, as he was the main promoter of her cult.¹⁷ Similar with the Mary's case the canonization of Leo's late wife encountered opposition from some bishops who claimed that the Empress is not worthy of sanctity. After Theophano's death Leo built a church in her honour and named it “St. Theophano” but due to the strong objections on the site of the clergy he changed the name to “All Saints”.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the clerics subjected to the

¹¹ E. Patlagean. L'histoire de la femme déguisée en moine et l'évolution de la sainteté féminine à Byzance. – Studi Medievali 17, 1976, 620–23.

¹² For the holy fools see: Kallistos. The Fool in Christ as Prophet and Apostle. – Sobornost 5.1, 1983, 6-27; Π. Μαρτίνη. Ο σαλός Αγ. Ανδρέας και η σαλότητα στην ορθόδοξη εκκλησία. Αθήνα, 1988; L. Rydén. The Holy Fool. – The Byzantine Saint. Ed. S. Hackel, London, 1981, 106-13; C. Иванов. Византийское юродство. Москва, 1994.

¹³ Α. Λαΐου. Η ιστορία ενός γάμου, σ 244.

¹⁴ Vita S Thomaidis 8, Holy Women p. 306.

¹⁵ Zwei griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano; die Gemahlin Kaisers Leo VI, ed. E. Kurtz – Записки Императорской Академии Наук 8, St. Petersburg, 1898. - [// www.doaks.org/hagio.html.]

¹⁶ C. Mango. Eudocia Ingerina, the Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty. – Сборник радова Византолошког института, XIV/XV, 1973, p. 21.

¹⁷ The author of her *vita* was not contemporary and used earlier texts but it's very likely that the saint's husband ordered the texts.

¹⁸ G. P. Majeska. The Body of St. Theophano the Empress and the Convent of St. Constantine. – Byzantinoslavica, 38, 1977, 14–15.

emperor's will and Theophano was canonized as a saint. She was enlisted in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* and was commemorated on 16 December.¹⁹

Theophano was not the only Leo's wife who was immortalized by the construction of a church dedicated to her as a saint. Leo chose to remember also his second wife – Zoe Zautzena – in a similar manner. He built a church dedicated to St. Zoe and placed her coffin inside. There is no mention of Leo's constructing a church in the name of his third wife – Eudokia Baiane. Nevertheless, an unofficial sainthood was granted to her as well and she was represented in an inlaid marble icon in the church dedicated to Theothokos and constricted by Constantine Lips, a high official in the court of Leo VI.²⁰ Evidently, Leo the Wise established a pattern of making all his wives saints. Surely, it was an expression of his personal devotion as well as an obvious attempt to evaluate the dignity of the Macedonian dynasty by creating family saints.²¹ Only the cult of St. Theophano, however, succeeded.

The husbands of Mary the Younger and empress Theophano promoted their cults in spite that they did not respect them during their lifetime. Leo the Wise repudiated Theophano, while Mary was humiliated and eventually beaten to death by Nicephoros. Certainly, the two women were far more valuable to their husbands after death, as saints, rather than as spouses.

Both St. Mary the Younger and Empress Theophano performed posthumous miracles and their shrines became sites of pilgrimage. Thirty miracles are attested to St. Mary the Younger and only five – to Empress Theophano.²² The performance of miracles was by no means essential for the attainment of sanctity and, in the case of Mary; it became the main reason for her veneration. Theophano's miracles, however, were restricted to a close circle of friends and family members and most of the contemporaries considered them suspicious.²³ Among them was also her hagiographer, who expresses his doubts on Empress' sanctity in a more than tactless manner.²⁴

It is worth noting that the evidence of miraculous healing on saint's tombs is especially abundant for the new saints of the ninth and tenth centuries.²⁵ Surely, the revival of the faith in the miraculous power of saint's relics in the post-iconoclastic period was a result of the restoration of the icons, as the veneration of the saints, their relics, and their images were closely related. The Byzantines, however, did

¹⁹ *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, col. 313, ed. H Delehaye, Brussels, 1902.

²⁰ Sharon Gerstel. St. Eudokia and the Imperial Household of Leo VI. – *The Art Bulletin*, 12/01/1997 – [<http://encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-20824279.html>]

²¹ Ж. Дагрон. Императорът и свещеникът. Етюди върху византийския “цезаропапизъм”. София, 2006, 225–29.

²² A.-M. Talbot. Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts. – *Pilgrimage in the Byzantine Empire: 7th–15th Centuries*. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, № 56, 2002, Appendix 1, p. 170. – [www.doaks.org/etexts.html]

²³ *Vita Euthymii*, 167. Ed. P. Karlin-Hayter, Brussels, 1970. – [<http://www.doaks.org/hagio.html>].

²⁴ Α. Λαΐου. Η ιστορία ενός γάμου, σ 247.

²⁵ A.-M. Talbot. *Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines*, p. 155.

not treat the icons and the relics in the same way. In contrast to the Latin West, which had no theory of the icons, in the Orthodox tradition icons were more significant, more powerful, and greatly venerated than the relics.²⁶ They were referred as the true mediators between the divine and the human. In the case of Mary the Younger we have all the main conditions for the promotion of a cult – popular veneration, occurrence of miracles, painting of an icon, and commissioning of a *vita*. Although the church hierarchy opposed Mary's sanctification, her family, and especially her husband strongly supported her cult. In fact, it was a family cult.

Anti-monastic attitudes

Not only the bishops but also the monks objected to Mary's veneration. They claimed that she is not worthy to be treated like a saint because of her marital status: "It is not possible for someone who lives a secular life, eats meat, and enjoys the pleasures of marriage to receive from God the grace of working miracles, while monks, who deprive themselves of every pleasure, who are mortified and distressed in everything, who, on top of that, devote themselves to singing hymns day and night, are not deemed worthy of such grace".²⁷ The author remarks that the monks opposed to Mary's sanctity because of the envy they had at the miracles she performed, and even accuses them of incapacity. He says that monks are people who failed to their first profession (*επάγγελμα*), and due to the failure in secular matters they choose to enter a monastery. We could find such disrespectful attitudes toward monks in the writings of some intellectuals of the eleventh and twelfth centuries but they are curious for a hagiographical text. Eusthathius of Thessalonica, for example, blames the monks for their ignorance, hypocrisy, avarice, and laziness²⁸. Simeon the New Theologian, one of the most prominent critics of the Byzantine church and monasticism, also claims that the corrupted monks had to be despised and will be treated as adulterers by God. On the other hand, those who live virtuous and devout life in the world will be blessed.²⁹ Clearly, the anonymous author of Mary's *vita* shares nearly the same convictions and he openly expresses them, making a strong juxtaposition of secular and monastic life.

The author expresses his skeptical attitude toward monastic asceticism also in the description of the careers of Mary's twin sons – Vaanes and Stephen – the first of whom became a soldier and the latter – a monk. He depicts Vaanes as a holy man foully worthy to his holy mother. He emulated her in all things, especially in

²⁶ Liz James. *Dry Bones and Painted Pictures: Relics and Icons in Byzantium*. – In: *Eastern Christian Relics*. Ed. Alexei Lidov. Moscow, 2003, 51–3.

²⁷ *Vita S. Mariae Iunioris* 19, *Holy Women*, p. 273.

²⁸ A. Kazhdan. *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*. Cambridge, 1984, 150–53.

²⁹ *Holy Women*, p. 243.

charitable activities, and was “above material things and desire of profit”³⁰ in spite his secular life. Vaanes’s extreme religious devotion, his kindness, and gentleness made him beloved and highly respected by everybody. By contrast to this detailed and praising description of Vaanes’s virtues nothing concrete is mentioned of his brother Stephen, who embraced the monastic name of Simeon after receiving the habit. Instead, the hagiographer relegates to “holy men” to decide if Stephen merits sainthood or not.

Byzantine-Bulgarian reconciliation

At the end of his narrative the hagiographer deliberately draws parallels between Mary the Younger and Theothokos – the mother of God. He defines his heroine as “revered mother Mary”, “venerable Mary”, “the ornament of all women”, “the delight of the righteous”, “the receptacle of virtue”, “the vessel of the graces” etc. These titles for Mary the Younger are reminiscent of the Akathistos Hymn and other Marian hymns and along with the very name of the saint are indications of her likening to the Virgin Mary. Like Theothokos, the patron saint of Constantinople, Mary the Younger is represented as protector and divine intercessor of the town of Byza: “And may you remain the protector of this best of all cities, Byza, to which God has granted your most sacred and holy body to be the succor of all its inhabitants, to defend them and avert all manner of disease and the enemies who oppose them openly or in secret”.³¹ In contrast to Theothokos Mary the Younger was not able to save her city from the Bulgarian capture. She, however, succeeded in establishing friendly relationships, and even a sense of brotherhood between the Byzantines and the Bulgarians.

Byza suffered severely during the Bulgaro-Byzantine wars under Tsar Simeon, who is described by the hagiographer as “a savage man” possessing “a miserable soul” and “in name a Christian but fully a bloody man”. The entire area of Eastern Thrace up to the very walls of Constantinople was devastated by the Bulgarians, and Byza itself was under Bulgarian siege for five years. The *vita* presents a vivid description of the sufferings of the inhabitants who had to abandon their town and properties and to leave for a safety in Medeia on the Black Sea coast. The citizens of Byza left their besieged town, after burning all the houses to the ground. Only the churches were spared and among them was the church of the city saint – St. Mary the Younger.

Mary’s church became a site of admiration not only for the Byzantines but also for the Bulgarians as the miracles at her tomb continued after the latter captured the city. Amazed by the miraculous power of the saint Tsar Simeon ordered his man not to touch the church and allowed the priest to celebrate the

³⁰ Vita S. Mariae Iunioris 30, Holy Women, p. 284.

³¹ Vita S. Mariae Iunioris 33, Holy Women, p. 289.

liturgy every day. Moreover, Voulias, the head of the Bulgarian garrison in Byza, called the priest “father”, received him with great honour, and wished to learn about the life of the saint and her miracles. After leaving Byza Voulias, along with his soldiers, went to Silivria and found out that at the head of the Byzantine army stationed there was Vaanes – Mary’s son. Instead of confronting the enemy the Bulgarian commander went to the Byzantine camp with peaceful intent in order to pay his respects to the saint’s son. The two men engaged themselves in a friendly conversation praising Mary’s virtue and her miraculous gift. At the end they parted peacefully although the war was still going on.

This intriguing passage of the *vita* is a rare example of presenting the Bulgarians in a positive light. They are depicted as devoted Christians, who venerate the holy relics of the saints and have fear of God. It is also an important evidence of the rapid Christianization of the Bulgarian society only few decades after the adoption of Christianity. Evidently, the Bulgarians and the Byzantines shared the same values and the same religious convictions, which turned them from enemies into friends, and even – into brothers in Christ.

Conclusion

The new saints canonized during the middle Byzantine era never achieved the widespread recognition and the same degree of popular devotion as their early Christian predecessors. The most popular female saints of Byzantium were those of the first to the sixth centuries. Many of them were legendary personages especially the martyr saints, the nuns who adopted male monastic habit, and the repentant harlots. The women who were recognized as holy in the middle Byzantine period almost never developed full-blown cults. Their veneration remained at the local level and was generally short-lived.³² Their *vitae* are preserved in only one or two manuscripts and the iconographic images of these holy women are extremely rare.³³

St. Mary the Younger is not an exception to this pattern. She was a local saint, in whose sanctification her family played a leading role. In spite of the countless miracles ascribed to her relics her shrine did not become a major site of pilgrimage. Mary is absent from the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, although, she was commemorated up to the time of the fall of the Empire. The Orthodox Church celebrates her feastday on the 16 February. What makes the *vita* of Mary unique is that it describes the person and the activity of a simple housewife who nevertheless attained sanctity. Her cult was promoted under particular conditions in a time when

³² A.-M Talbot. *Female Sanctity in Byzantium*. – In: *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium*. Ashgate, 2001, p. 15.

³³ By comparison, the *vita* of St. Mary of Egypt, a famous repentant fifth-century prostitute, was preserved in a great number of manuscripts in several languages.

the creation of new saints was possible. The reign of Leo the Wise, marked by political, ecclesiastical, and marital turmoil, was clearly such a time. The example he set by making his wife a saint surely influenced the creation of a saint out of Mary. We could not, whoever, claim that there was a type of married saintly woman in the Byzantine hagiography. The two cases we have (St. Mary the Younger and St. Theophano) can not constitute a distinct hagiographic model of female sanctity.³⁴ Moreover, St. Theophano was an empress and her sanctification was a case of imperial canonization. It is remarkable that in contrast to the short-lived veneration of St. Mary the Younger the cult of St. Theophano existed in later centuries, and the popular devotion to her seems to have waned only with the passing of the Macedonian dynasty.³⁵

The story of St. Mary the Younger reflects the changing attitudes toward female sanctity in the ninth and tenth – century Byzantium. In contrast to the early Christian centuries marriage was no longer an obstacle to sanctity. Nevertheless, a constant suspicion of the possibility of holiness for a married woman remains and it is expressed several times in the *vita*. May be that is the reason for the lack of other holy women like St. Mary the Younger.

³⁴ As I have indicated above, St. Thomais of Lesbos fits better to the image of a holy fool rather than to that of a pious housewife, so I completely exclude her from this category, if category existed at all, of saintly women.

³⁵ G. P. Majeska. *The Body of St. Theophano the Empress and the Convent of St. Constantine*. – *Byzantinoslavica*, 38, 1977, p. 16, n. 16.