is "probable" that the murder of two candidates for the tribunate and consulate is not to be attributed to Saturninus, but to overzealous followers (136). The *populares* in Perelli's view act with a consciousness and foresight which their opponents lacked miserably. The settling of veterans should not be seen as the creation of personal *clientelae* by popular leaders, but as the conscious strengthening of the class of smallholders which they realized was the basis of "il partito democratico" (130). Especially the artisans were the part of the *plebs urbana* which possessed a "maggior coscienza democratica" (124).

The saving of reputations goes astray in this kind of doubtful or even faulty remarks (Aristonicus did *not* stir "le masse popolari e gli schiavi"). What remains is an endearing attempt to come to the rescue of the democratic brothers in the past, but: *non tali auxilio*.


"Throughout the whole space of the fifth and sixth centuries we meet remarkable ladies of the imperial houses playing prominent parts". Since Bury wrote these words some sixty years ago (J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian* (New York 1958 = 1923) I, 214) the fifth- and sixth-century empresses, despite their importance, received little attention from analytical scholarship. Moreover, study of *Theodosian* women has mainly concentrated on the West, on Galla Placidia, the mother of Valentinian III and on Justa Grata Honoria, the princess who was said to be responsible for Attila's invasion of the Empire in 451. Holum's book, therefore, exploring the domination of women in the court of Constantinople and the eastern Roman Empire (A.D. 379-453) under the Theodosian dynasty, is most welcome. It is a very interesting book at that.

The emperors of the Theodosian family were notoriously effete, the women by contrast intelligent and ambitious. In a characteristic anecdote Theophanes (a.m. 5941, p. 101 De Boor) relates that Theodosius II (408-450) often signed documents that had not been read to him first. Once his sister Pulcheria placed before him a con-

tract of gift granting her his wife Eudocia to be sold into slavery. He signed it unread, whereafter Pulcheria gave him a mighty scolding. The story is no doubt apocryphal (cf. Holum, p. 130), but very well illustrates the difference in personality which marked most of the male and female members of the Theodosian dynasty. Accidents of personality, however, Holum claims, cannot account for the dominant part played by Flacilla and Eudoxia, Pulcheria and Eudocia in the history of their times. There was more to it than that. Hence his book does not merely consist of a series of biographies of fascinating political personalities who, paradoxically and interestingly enough, happened to be women. It is more, it is a study about female basileia, the imperial dominion of women. “It concerns a major creative impulse of Late Antiquity, that which produced the Byzantine notion of basileia and through it the European ideology of sacral kingship. It suggests that this impulse may be traced in part to a previously unsuspected origin: to the dynastic proclivities of Theodosius the Great and their manifestation in the careers of Theodosian empresses who reigned in the East” (p. 3).

Holum’s attempt to find a fundamental explanation for the extraordinary position of imperial women in the eastern Empire is both the strong and the weak point of his study. Strong, because he convincingly shows that the Theodosian court deliberately enhanced empresses for dynastic reasons, to reinforce the notion that the entire family, females as well as males, possessed unique qualifications for rule. Weak, because in his zeal to demonstrate the correctness of the central thesis of his study, the author more than once falls victim to the danger of special pleading, or wants to prove too much.

For my part at any rate I doubt if it is as obvious as H. assumes that in the oratio consolatoria delivered on the occasion of Flacilla’s death, Gregory of Nyssa “articulated a new official ideology for imperial women” (p. 44). I find it difficult to accept the view (p. 69) that the coronation of Eudoxia, January 9, 400 (D. Missiou, in an article apparently not yet accessible to H., Ueber die institutionelle Rolle der byzantinischen Kaiserin, JOEByz 32 (1982), 489-496 on p. 490, wrongly dates Eudokia’s (sic) coronation in 408) may best be interpreted as the court’s response to the Gaïnas revolt, because, “as an Augusta (my italics, HCT), Eudoxia would bring new resources to the struggle from the domestic side of the basileia”. (Cf. now for the Gothic occupation of Constantinople G. Albert, Goten in Konstantinopol. Untersuchungen zur oströmischen Geschichte um das Jahr