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Empress Eudoxia through the Prism of Fifth Century Ecclesiastical Histories²

The eastern Roman Empire had experienced in the beginning of the fifth century AD, a conflict between the episcopal and the imperial authorities over non-doctrinal issues. The quarrel between John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, and the imperial court appears to be all but a struggle for the *auctoritas principis*, or in other words, a struggle for spiritual, religious and indeed, moral primacy in the relations between the Roman state and the Church. The deteriorating relations between John Chrysostom and the imperial court resulted in the deposition and exile of the Constantinopolitan bishop. A question which still begs to be asked is: What exactly did John Chrysostom's downfall owe to the alleged involvement of the wife of the Eastern Roman emperor Arcadius (377-408), the empress, Aelia Eudoxia (d. 404)?³

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³ Neither Socrates and Sozomen nor Theodoret offer any information about Eudoxia's progeny, whereas Philostorgius does refer to it (*Historia Ecclesiastica* XI 6), indicating that she was the daughter of Bauto, a Roman General of Frankish origin who distinguished himself in the West under emperor Valentinian II. See: *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, v. 1, ed. A.H.M. Jones – J.R. Martindale – J. Morris, Cambridge 1971, p. 159-160 (further on: PLRE).

As the ecclesiastical historians Philostorgius of Borissus (368-ca. 430) Theodoret of Cyrrihus (393-466), Socrates of Constantinople (d. after 439) and Sozomen of Bethelia (ca. 370-ca. 450) are among our main sources of the period concerned, it would not go amiss to look at Eudoxia's portrayal by those ecclesiastical historians and see what image of the empress concerned emerges from their respective accounts of the feud in question⁴.

Especially Socrates and Sozomen devote considerable space in their Ecclesiastical histories to the aforementioned conflict between John Chrysostom and the imperial court. Despite the substantial dependence of Sozomen's account on the work of his predecessor Socrates, both historians seem to have presented Chrysostom's confrontation with the imperial court quite differently. Socrates's picture of John's episcopate seems to be rather critical, whereas Sozomen's portrayal of the very same episcopate appears to be more sympathetic towards the controversial Constantinopolitan bishop⁵. The present article also seeks to explore the

⁴ Hartmut Leppin has observed that there are many significant resemblances between the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, being commonly classified as "Synoptic Church Historians" in modern historiography. However, more recent studies have, highlighted the differences between them. Leppin inserts the term „synoptic” between inverted commas. See: H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Grossen zu Theodosius II. Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret*, Göttingen 1996. See also: H. Leppin, *The Church Historians (I): Socrates, Sozomenus, and Theodoretus*, in: *Greek and Roman historiography in late antiquity: fourth to sixth century A.D.*, ed. G. Marasco, Leiden, 2003, p. 219-220. For the differences between the ecclesiastical, see, e.g., T. Urbainczyk, *Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen*, "Historia" 46 (1997) p. 355-373; P. Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène*, Leuven – Paris – Dudley 2004.

⁵ John Chrysostom was depicted by Socrates and Sozomen in two different ways. The former displays an ambivalent attitude towards the Constantinopolitan bishop, not devoid of notable criticism, whereas the latter ecclesiastical historian appears to be more sympathetic towards John Chrysostom. On this issue, see: Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage de paix et de piété*, passim; S. Bralewski, *Rozbieżności w ocenie Jana Chryzostoma w relacjach Sokratesa i Hermiasza Sozomena*, in: *Cesarstwo Bizantyńskie. Dzieje, religia, kultura. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Waldemarowi Ceranowi przez uczniów na 70-lecie Jego urodzin*, ed. P. Krupczyński – M.J. Leszka, Łask – Łódź 2006, p. 9-24. According to

place which Eudoxia occupies in those ecclesiastical historians' accounts of the developments which led to Chrysostom's demise and consequently, it attempts to address the question of their respective personal sympathies and antipathies towards Eudoxia in the context of the dispute under discussion.

The work of Philostorgius is the earliest of the above-mentioned *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. However, Philostorgius's work has come down to us in a late epitomized version⁶. The extracts from the original text do not include an account of the conflict between Chrysostom and Eudoxia. Thus, it would be impossible to determine with certainty whether the author had dealt with the Chrysostom affair at all, or whether the portion of text which may have described this crisis in the first place, was actually lost. Be it as it may, in the surviving bits of Philostorgius's *Ecclesiastical History*, we do find an episode referring to the conflict between empress Eudoxia and the eunuch Eutropius, a *praepositus sacri cubiculi* (and later, a *consul*) who exercised at the time a great influence at the imperial court⁷. The image of the empress outlined in it is extremely interesting, although, curiously, her name did not appear in it. At first the ecclesiastical historian informs his readers about the marriage of Arcadius with

M. Wallraf, despite Sozomen's additional material on John Chrysostom's case, Sozomen had based most of his account on the work of his predecessor Socrates. See: M. Wallraf, *Le conflit de Jean Chrysostome avec la cour chez les historiens ecclésiastique grecs*, in: *L'Historiographie de l'Église des premiers siècles*, ed. B. Pouderon – Y.-M. Duval, Paris 2001, p. 363. Van Nuffelen (*Un heritage*, p. 441-443, 494-497) highlights the dependence of Sozomen on Pseudo-Martyrius's *Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom* in this matter. See also: *Oratio Funebris in Laudem Sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi: Epitaffio attributo a Martirio di Antiochia*, ed. M. Wallraff, trans. C. Ricci, BHG 871, Spoleto 2007, p. 17-20.

⁶ The surviving epitome of Philostorgius's ecclesiastical history is attributed to Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople from 858 to 867 and from 877 to 886. See *Philostorgios Kirchengeschichte*, v. 1, ed. B. Bleckmann – M. Stein, Paderborn 2015, p. 4-24. For a view which calls into question Photius's authorship of Philostorgius's epitome, see: E.I. Argov, *Giving the Heretic a Voice: Philostorgius of Borissus and Greek ecclesiastical historiography*, "Athenaeum" 89 (2001) p. 497-524.

⁷ Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* XI 6. See: K.G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1982, p. 52.

Eudoxia, pointing out that her father Bauto was a barbarian⁸. According to Philostorgius, she did not share her husband's innate idleness or torpor⁹, yet, she was insolent which the ecclesiastical historian ascribes to her barbarian origins¹⁰. Philostorgius does not conceal his low esteem of Eudoxia, calling her a little woman or a lass¹¹. Philostorgius also reports that Eudoxia, being already the mother of two of the emperor's children, was insulted by Eutropius, who even threatened her with immediate expulsion from the imperial palace¹². The empress, recouring to feminine skills, sought out her husband, crying loudly whilst carrying her two children in her arms. Appearing thus before Arcadius, Eudoxia complained to her imperial spouse about Eutropius's impertinence. Arcadius was at once filled with compassion for her which at the same time fueled his anger towards the influential Eutropius. The furious emperor went on to strip Eutropius of all his honours, confiscated his property and exiled him to Cyprus. Eutropius was later on executed by beheading. Philostorgius clearly suggests that although initially Eudoxia's position at the imperial court was quite shaky because of her barbarian progeny, nonetheless this empress astutely took advantage of her 'feminine skills' not only in order to protect her children and herself, but also in order to do away with a powerful adversary. As noted above, we will never know whether Philostorgius had patterned an account of Eudoxia's later feud with John

⁸ Bauto was, as mentioned above, of Frankish origin. He served as *magister militum* under Gratian and became a Consul under Theodosius I in 385 (together with Arcadius, Theodosius's son and heir). See: *PLRE* 1 s.v. *Flavius Bauto*, p. 159.

⁹ Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* XI 6: νόθεια.

¹⁰ Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* XI 6: ἐνήν ἀντή τοῦ βαρβαρικοῦ θράσους.

¹¹ Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* XI 6: γυναίον. See: K.G. Holum, *Theodosian Empress*, p. 52; W. Mayer, *Doing Violence to the Image of an Empress: The Destruction of Eudoxia's Reputation*, in: *Violence in Late Antiquity. Perceptions and Practice*, ed. H.A. Drake, Aldershot 2006, p. 205-213.

¹² According to Gabrielle Marasco (*The Church Historians (II): Philostorgius and Gelasius of Cyzicus*, in: *Greek and Roman historiography in late antiquity: fourth to sixth century A.D.*, ed. G. Marasco, Leiden 2003, p. 278), Philostorgius attitude towards Eutropius was that of sheer hatred.

Chrysostom on this unflattering characterisation of her personality, but it remains nonetheless a reasonable possibility which may be taken into consideration all the same.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus describes the Empress Eudoxia in a rather concise manner. In fact, his portrayal of her is limited to few references to the dealings of Eudoxia with John Chrysostom, in which her name is not even mentioned. The bishop of Cyrrhus chose to pay more attention to the person of her husband, emperor Arcadius, emphasizing, for example, his zeal in matters of faith, manifested in the election of John Chrysostom to the episcopal see of Constantinople. Chrysostom is described by Theodoret as a great luminary of the world¹³. In claiming John's greatness, the bishop of Cyrrhus pointed out that this bishop of Constantinople courageously stood up to wrong-doers and did not refrain of rebuking them. Theodoret also mentions Chrysostom's advice¹⁴ to the emperor and the empress and his demand that priest live according to the law¹⁵. It is interesting that Eudoxia appears for the first time in Theodoret's *Historia Ecclesiastica* in this passage albeit not on her own. It is true that there is no explicit suggestion in the text under discussion regarding any injustice on the part of the imperial couple, but Theodoret's choice to refer to Chrysostom as someone who offered advice to the emperor after a mention of John's intrepid rebuke of people who apparently were of no little importance may be very telling. At any rate, it should be borne in mind that, according to Theodoret, not only the ruler but also his wife was advised by John. This apparently testifies to Theodoret's assessment of Eudoxia's position in the imperial court as a significant one. Theodoret's *Historia Ecclesiastica* provides also a brief description of the injustices suffered by John¹⁶. At the very beginning of his account of John's plight, Theodoret remains discrete about the names of those who

¹³ Theodoretus, *Historia ecclesiastica* V 28.

¹⁴ Theodoretus, *Historia ecclesiastica* V 29: παρήνει τὰ πρόσφορα.

¹⁵ Theodoretus, *Historia ecclesiastica* V 29.

¹⁶ Theodoretus, *Historia ecclesiastica* V 35.

had harmed John, expressing fear of tarnishing their good reputation. Theodoret remains likewise silent about the reasons for his choice to protect the individuals concerned. Nonetheless, the historian goes on to lay the responsibility for Chrysostom's sufferings at the clergy's doorstep, since, as Theodoret indicates, the emperor had trusted their judgement in Chrysostom's case and endorsed the outcome. Yet, when an earthquake struck Constantinople shortly afterwards, it was a terrified Eudoxia who sent a deputation to the banished bishop, calling on him to return from his exile and turn the tide. It seems fair to assume that even if the absence of the empress's name from Theodoret's account of John's downfall could be possibly interpreted as Eudoxia's irrelevance to the bishop's case, then Theodoret's claim that she was able to get her husband Arcadius to recall John in order to save the capital from God's wrath, appears to prove the strong influence she had exercised at the imperial court. Thus, Theodoret indirectly points to Eudoxia as one if not the only culprit. In this round-about way, In fact, Theodoret hints that the empress could save John later on but chose not to do so. This may be inferred from Theodoret's later reference to Arcadius who let himself to be persuaded that the verdict in John's case was rightly handed down. Arcadius thus sentenced the bishop for another exile¹⁷. It should be borne in mind that although Theodoret did not blame the imperial couple directly for Chrysostom's exile, he did make another oblique reference to their involvement in that tragic case. In his account of the return of Chrysostom's relics to Constantinople by their son Theodosius II, he pointed out that then emperor had asked God that his parents be forgiven for the injustice they had unknowingly committed against the deceased Constantinopolitan bishop¹⁸. It follows that, the historian thus admitted eventually that the imperial couple were to blame albeit unconsciously for John Chrysostom's fatal exile.

¹⁷ Theodoretus, *Historia ecclesiastica* V 35.

¹⁸ Theodoretus, *Historia ecclesiastica* V 39. On John's rehabilitation see: E.M. Synek, *Frauen als Akteurinnen von Kirchengeschichte. Eine Case-Study zu Sturz und Rehabilitation des Johannes Chrysostomus*, "Ostkirchliche Studien" 64 (2015) p. 167-169.

Much more information about Eudoxia is included in the Ecclesiastical Histories by Socrates from Constantinople and Sozomen from Bethelia. According to the former, Eudoxia was involved in the life of Church. Socrates notes that the empress financed events which were organised by John Chrysostom, the bishop of Constantinople, such as nocturnal processions, during which silver crosses lit with wax candles on their arms were carried to the sounds of hymns, praising the Son's consubstantiality with the Father, as part of the campaign against the Arians whose excellent hymns-singing proved to attract many people and thus was regarded by Chrysostom as posing a threat on Nicene Orthodoxy¹⁹. Sozomen indicates that Briso, one of the empress's eunuchs, was appointed as a special official, whose remit was the collection of financial resources for the organisation of the mentioned processions and the preparation of hymns to grace them²⁰.

In the accounts of both Socrates' and Sozomen, the empress Eudoxia had a keen interest in the affairs of the clergy²¹. According to Socrates, Severian,

¹⁹ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 8, 5-6. John Chrysostom had also arranged nocturnal masses (see Palladius, *Dialogus de vita s. Iohannis Chrysostomi* V 146-150). These should not be confused with the nocturnal anti-Arian processions accompanied by sung hymns (also arranged by Chrysostom as part of his campaign against the Arians in Constantinople). See J.N.D. Kelly, *Złote usta. Jan Chryzostom – asceta, kaznodzieja, biskup*, transl. K. Krakowczyk, Bydgoszcz 2001, p. 150-151; W. Schubert, *Musik in der christlichen Spätantike im Spiegel der Ekklesiastike historia des Sokrates von Konstantinopel*, in: *Die Welt des Sokrates von Konstantinopel. Studien zu Politik, Religion und Kultur im späten 4. und frühen 5. Jh. n. Chr. zu Ehren von Christoph Schäublin*, ed. B. Bähler – H.-G. Nesselrath, München – Leipzig 2001, p. 140-158; N. Andrade, *The Processions of John Chrysostom and the Contested Spaces of Constantinople*, *JECS* 18 (2010) p. 178-180.

²⁰ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 8, 4. For J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (*Barbarians and Bishops. Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom*, Oxford 1992, p. 167) „in all his efforts Chrysostom had the enthusiastic support of the empress Eudoxia”. C. Tiersch (*Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398-404). Weltsicht und Wirken eines Bischofs in der Hauptstadt des Oströmischen Reiches*, Tübingen 2002, p. 208) thought similarly, when she wrote about „überst plastisch das engagierte Zusammenwirken von Kaiserin und Bischof”. See also: E.M. Synek, *Frauen als Akteurinnen von Kirchengeschichte*, p. 160.

²¹ According to W. Mayer (*Doing Violence*, p. 205-213) the empress was excessively involved in the life of the Church and, consequently, fell victim to a negative campaign, which can be seen in sources.

the bishop of Gabala²², had drawn much public attention as a preacher during his sojourn in Constantinople. His growing reputation had reached the authorities including the emperor and his wife. According to Socrates, Eudoxia was angered by John Chrysostom's decision to banish Severian from the capital after his quarrel with Serapion, Chrysostom's *confidant* and chief administrator of the episcopal household²³. Sozomen, for his part, writes more explicitly about close relations between the bishop of Gabala, the emperor and his wife, yet Sozomen remains silent in relation to Eudoxia's indignation following Chrysostom's heavy-handed treatment of Severian and the ensuing expulsion of the bishop of Gabala from Constantinople²⁴.

However, both ecclesiastical historians report that, at the empress' command, Severian was not only recalled from Chalcedon in Bithynia, but Eudoxia herself had tried, as it were, to persuade John to reconcile with him, which she did in a spectacular way by putting her little son Theodosius in his lap in the church of the Apostles, as she was exhorting the bishop of Constantinople. Despite all the difficulties, she had her way and finally did manage to bring to an end the conflict between the two bishops²⁵.

An interesting characterisation of the empress' conduct was included in Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History*. Sozomen relates how on one occasion, the monks known as the Tall Brothers approached the empress on one of Constantinople's streets and submitted to her a complaint about a plot against them, masterminded allegedly by Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria²⁶.

²² About him see: M. Aubineau, *Un traité inédit de christologie de Sévérien de Gabala in "Centurionem et contra Manichaeos et Apollinaristas". Exploitation par Sévère d'Antioche (519) et le synode de latran (649)*, Cahiers d'Orientalisme 5, Genève 1983, p. 11-24.

²³ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 11, 20.

²⁴ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 10, 2.

²⁵ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 11, 20; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 10, 6. About the conflict between John Chrysostom and Severian and Eudoxia's involvement in it, see: K.G. Holum, *Theodosian Empress*, p. 70-71.

²⁶ According to Socrates (*Historia ecclesiastica* VI 16, 3) Theophilus was also blamed for instigating the intrigue, to which the historian refers as a 'despicable job' and

The empress, having been informed about their predicament, stopped in order to show them respect. She looked out of her carriage, bowed her head and asked for their blessing and prayers for the emperor, herself, her children and the empire, promising that she will urge a council to be convened to deal with their case²⁷. All in all, Sozomen does picture Eudoxia as a pious and humble empress, who was reverent towards monks and cared not only for her family but also for the state.

In Sozomen's account, the empress had opposed unfounded accusations of heresy, brought up against the Tall Brothers. She did not surrender to the exhortations of Epiphanius, the bishop of Salamis in Cyprus²⁸, whom she asked to pray for her ill son. The bishop assured her that her son would stay alive if the empress were to disown the Tall Brothers, who, in his opinion, were mere heretics. In response, Eudoxia entrusted herself to God, ready to accept the death of her child if that were to be God's will²⁹. The empress also sparked up a confrontation between the Tall Brothers and Epiphanius, in which they were to prove, on the one hand, their orthodoxy and, on the other, nonchalance and aloofness while their piety and the righteousness of their beliefs was being judgementally scrutinised by Epiphanius³⁰.

According to Socrates, certain unnamed people from among John's and the empress' closest circle were said to have led to a conflict between her and

which led to the first exile of John Chrysostom. Palladius (*Dialogus* III 152-155) cites a letter from the Western emperor Honorius to his brother the Eastern emperor Arcadius, whereby Honorius puts the blame on Theophilus. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (*The Fall of John Chrysostom*, „Nottingham Medieval Studies” 29 (1985) p. 2) rightly concludes that in the case of Palladius, Theophilus was *the villain of his history*. M. Wallraff (*Le conflit de Jean Chrysostome*, p. 365) points out that Theophilus was portrayed by Church historians from the Constantinopolitan circles in a very negative light.

²⁷ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 13, 4-5.

²⁸ On Epiphanius's contacts with Eudoxia against the background of his quarrel with the Tall Brothers See: A.S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cyprus: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity*, Oakland 2016, p. 232-234.

²⁹ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 15, 1-2.

³⁰ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 15, 3-4.

the bishop of Constantinople³¹. And thus, from *some people*³² John learnt that empress Eudoxia had turned bishop Epiphanius against him and, when the bishop, as Socrates puts it, quick-tempered by nature, delivered a sermon reproving women, it was largely interpreted as an attack on no other than the

³¹ In the opinion of Ps. Martyrius (*Oratio funebris in laudem sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi* 35) the Devil's machinations set John at variance with the court. Out of all the authors close in terms of time to the events in question, only – Ps. Martirius treats Eudoxia as John's chief tormentor, while Palladius (*Dialogus* VIII 244-255; IX 10-16) clearly suggest that this role was played by John's enemies, members of clergy, especially Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria. In general, much later sources made the conflict with Eudoxia the main reason for John's fall; see: F. van Ommeslaeghe, *Jean Chrysostome en conflit avec l'imperatrice Eudoxie. Le dossier et les origines d'une legende*, AnBol 97 (1979) p. 134-139. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (*The Fall of John Chrysostom*, p. 1-31; *Barbarians and Bishops*, p. 198-202) claims that Eudoxia did not play the leading role in the campaign against John. Rather, it was played by his opponents i.e. court dignitaries who were in conflict with him and who plotted against him together with Constantinople's clergymen and monks who were hostile towards him as well. He also alleged that Chrysostom don't attacked the political role of the empress in any of the very numerous surviving sermons. Ch. Baur (*Der heilige Johannes Chrysostomus und seine Zeit*, v. 2, Munich 1930, p. 144-145) suggested, drawing on chronologically later sources (primarily Marcus Diaconus, *Vita Porphyrii* 37) that Eudoxia seized properties of a certain widow. She was condemned by bishop John, who, dubbing her Jezebel after the idolatrous Phoenician wife of Ahab, the biblical king of Israel. See: 1 Kings 16,31. The feud is discussed in its entirety in Baur, *Der heilige Johannes*, p. 142-253; Kelly (*Złote usta*, p. 184-185) considered it to be very likely. He also points out that the empress' favourite and close friend, the *comes* John (PLRE I, s.v. Ioannes I, p. 593-594) incited her against John, regarding the bishop as a supporter of Gainas' Goths (see: M. Salamon, *Jan Chryzostom i Goci w Konstantynopolu*, in: *Czasy Jana Chryzostoma i jego pasterska pedagogia*, ed. N. Widok, Opole 2008, p. 245-266). According to G. Dagron (*Naissance d'une capitale. Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Paris 1974, p. 498-509) the depletion of the state's revenues due to the growing fortune of the Church (apparently the result of John's influence on wealthy women who made considerable donations to the Church) was the fundamental cause of the conflict. In the opinion of K. Stebnicka (*Jezebel i Eudoksja. Dwie królowe. Przyczynek do dziejów Jana Chryzostoma z cesarzową Eudoksją*, „U schyłku starożytności” 8 (2009) p. 168-172) John's first and second exiles were caused by his conflict with Eudoxia. According to Stebnicka, the reason for the bishop's antipathy towards Eudoxia was the new ideology of the empress' power based on elements of God's endowment and the presentation of the empress as equal to the emperor, the *glory of Rome*. On this theme see also Synek, *Frauen als Akteurinnen von Kirchengeschichte*, p. 163-164.

³² Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 15, 1: παρά τινῶν.

empress³³. Certain *wicked people*³⁴ hastened to bring this to the attention of the imperial couple³⁵. According to Sozomen Chrysostom's detractors³⁶ reported his sermon to the empress³⁷, having interpreted it suitably. Sozomen, however, was not able to say whether John accidentally came up with the idea for this sermon, or, as certain people claimed, was triggered to do so by suspecting the empress of turning Epiphanius against him³⁸. Both Socrates and Sozomen share an opinion whereby Eudoxia, feeling offended, complained to her husband and tried to prove that the offence against her was likewise an insult to the emperor. Consequently, according to both ecclesiastical historians, Eudoxia began soliciting for a council to be convened against John, in which she was supported by Severian, the bishop of Gabala. The organisation of the council was to be entrusted to with Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria³⁹.

When John Chrysostom was eventually deposed and sentenced to banishment⁴⁰ on the emperor's command⁴¹, violent protests erupted in

³³ Ch. Baur (*Der heilige*, p. 229) regarded this sermon as a breakthrough, whose effects were disastrous to John's further career.

³⁴ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 15, 4: κακουργοῦντες.

³⁵ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 15, 1-3.

³⁶ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 16, 1: δυσμενεῖς.

³⁷ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 16, 1.

³⁸ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 16, 2.

³⁹ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 15, 4-5; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 16, 1-2. See P. Van Nuffelen, *Theophilus against John Chrysostom: the fragments of a lost liber and the reasons for John's deposition*, „Adamantus” 19 (2013) p. 139-155; I. Milewski, *Jan Chryzostom i jego stronnicy w starciu z patriarchą aleksandryjskim Teofilem*, in: *Czasy Jana Chryzostoma i jego pasterska pedagogia*, ed. N. Widok, Opole 2008, p. 87-114. The main executor of her will, though, was Anthemius, magister officiorum between 398 and 405, connected to the circle of sophist Troilus; see Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage*, p. 14, 21-22.

⁴⁰ Cf. Palladius, *Dialogus* IX 1-4; Ps. Martyrius, *Oratio funebris in laudem sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi* 57. About the first exile of John see: Baur, *Der heilige*, p. 202-222; Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, p. 166-222; Kelly, *Zlote usta*, p. 195-240; Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, p. 135-182, 327-353; Milewski, *Jan Chryzostom*, p. 87-94; P. Filipczak, *Prefekci Konstantynopola wobec niepokojów społecznych związanych z wygnaniem Jana Chryzostoma (403 i 404 r.)*, „Acta Universitatis Lodziensis, Folia Historica” 87 (2011) p. 57-62.

⁴¹ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 15, 20: βασιλέως πρόσταγμα. According to Palladius (*Dialogus* VIII 230-255) the prosecutors demanded John's death accusing him of *crimen maiestatis*, but the emperor in his gentleness sentenced him to exile. According

Constantinople⁴². During them, protesters inveighed not only against the council but also against the emperor himself. Then, according to Socrates, Arcadius ordered to recall the exiled bishop to the capital. This was supposed to be carried out by the empress' eunuch Brison⁴³. In Sozomen's account, on the other hand, when the loud cries and persistent supplications to bring John back from exile reached the imperial palace, the empress persuaded her husband to give his consent. Moreover, she sent Brison, her trusted servant, to turn John back from his way⁴⁴. Sozomen pointed out that Eudoxia had intimated to John that the unfavourable outcome was not her fault, and that she respected him as a cleric, especially as it was him who introduced her children to the mysteries of the Holy Faith⁴⁵. Apparently, Eudoxia was profoundly committed to the Christian

to Ps. Martyrius (*Oratio funebris in laudem sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi* 57) John's detractors were not satisfied by ousting him from his see and demanded his banishment. Cf. Wallraff, *Le conflit de Jean Chrysostome*, p. 366.

⁴² These protests were described by Zosimus (*Historia nova* V 23, 4). See T.E. Gregory, *Zosimus 5, 23 and the People of Constantinople*, "Byzantion" 43 (1973) p. 61-83. John Chrysostom himself mentions them in a letter to pope Innocent I (Ioannes Chrysostomos, *Epistula ad Innocentium papam* 105-110, in: Palladius, *Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*, t. 2, ed. A.-M. Malingrey – Ph. Leclercque, Paris 1988, p. 78-80). See also Ps. Martyrius, *Oratio funebris in laudem sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi* 79.

⁴³ Socrates VI 16, 6. Palladius (*Dialogus* IX 5) pointed to an accident (θραῦσις) in the emperor's bedroom as the underlying reason for John's instant dismissal. Ps. Martyrius (*Oratio funebris in laudem sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi* 66) wrote directly about the empress' miscarriage, interpreting it as God's punishment. In this way, as highlighted by M. Wallraff (*Le conflit de Jean Chrysostome*, p. 367), he blamed the empress, on the main, for John's downfall. P. van Nuffelen (*Playing the Ritual Game in Constantinople (379-457)*, in: *Two Romes. Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Grig – G. Kelly, Oxford 2012, p. 198) is convinced that „Before his exile, John seems to have been prudent in his dealings with the empress, and all bridges had not been burned: the driving force behind John's deposition was clearly Theophilus, not Eudoxia”.

⁴⁴ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 18, 5.

⁴⁵ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 18, 5. It was probably about the religious education of the children of the imperial couple and not only about their baptism. Although when it comes to the celebrant of the liturgy of baptism, scholars' views on that matter are divided. Especially the circumstances of the baptism of Theodosius II are a controversial issue. The thesis that it was administered by John Chrysostom was supported by H. Grégoire – M.A. Kugener, *Quand est né l'empereur Théodose II?*, "Byzantion" 4 (1927-

upbringing of her children, paying much attention, as it were, to her motherly duties. This is another attribute of Eudoxia's figure, emphasised by the ecclesiastical historian⁴⁶. Sozomen, unlike Socrates, indicates that before John had reached Constantinople, he stopped at an estate near Anopolus. This estate, according to Sozomen, belonged to the empress herself, which seems to have highlighted more markedly her role in his return and reinstatement⁴⁷.

Both historians pay attention to the fact that John Chrysostom was reluctant to enter the capital as long as the council's announcement of the outcome of his trial had not been made. Growing anti-imperial sentiments among the impatient public, caused by this delay, forced him to return to the episcopal throne⁴⁸. Sozomen had complemented Socrates' account by relating that when John delivered after his return an impromptu sermon, praising the sovereigns for their kindness, it prompted such a huge burst of applause that he was not able to finish his preaching⁴⁹.

Socrates of Constantinople tends to focus on Eudoxia's vanity, which manifested itself through having a silver statue of hers, erected on a porphyry column in proximity to the church of Hagia Sophia. The statue was attired in a delicate feminine robe and popular festivities were often

1928) p. 337-348; A. Lippold, *Theodosius II*, in: *Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Supplementband XIII, Stuttgart 1973, p. 962-963 (further on: RE). A contrary opinion was expressed by M. Aubineau (*Un traité inédit*, p. 12-13), in whose opinion the daughters were baptised by John Chrysostom, whereas Theodosius II was baptised by Severian during John's absence from Constantinople. According to K. Ilski (*Sprowadzenie relikwii Jana Chryzostoma do Konstantynopola*, in: *Czasy Jana Chryzostoma i jego pasterska pedagogia*, ed. N. Widok, Opole 2008, p. 150) had John baptised Theodosius II, he would have written about it explicitly. See also T.D. Barnes, *The Baptism of Theodose II*, *StPatr* 19 (1989) p. 8-12.

⁴⁶ Cf. L. Brottier, *L'impératrice Eudoxie et ses enfants*, *RevSR* 70 (1996) p. 313-332.

⁴⁷ Sozomen (*Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 18, 6) does not name the estate concerned. He only indicates that it was located near Anopolus, a suburb on the European bank of the Bosphorus, whereas Socrates reports that John stopped at Marianai (VI 16, 7), but does not mention Eudoxia's estate.

⁴⁸ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 16, 7-8; Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 18, 6-7.

⁴⁹ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 18, 7-8.

organized near it, which John had regarded as indecent and offensive to the Church⁵⁰. Sozomen points out that these were public performances of dancers and mimes, receiving grand ovations, which, according to Sozomen, was customary whenever statues in honour of rulers were ceremonially dedicated⁵¹. Thus, Sozomen states that, although Eudoxia's silver statue was a typical monument honouring the wife of the emperor, the celebrations accompanying its dedication, in John's view, brought disgrace upon the holy shrine nearby⁵².

According to Socrates, the bishop sneered at those responsible for the celebrations⁵³, what was presented by Sozomen in a more delicate way, only by mentioning the accusations levelled by John against them⁵⁴. Socrates claimed that the empress related these incriminations to herself, taking them as a personal insult and, consequently, stood out against John once again⁵⁵. Remembering very well the previous offences, she lost her temper because of the alleged affront and set out to seek an appropriate punishment for the prelate once again⁵⁶. Sozomen's report, just like Socrates' account, portrays the empress as an oversensitive woman, Both historians, however, diminished her responsibility by highlighting the role of her informers who slandered John in her eyes.

Both ecclesiastical historians agree that in response to Eudoxia's actions, John Chrysostom delivered one of his best-known sermons, start-

⁵⁰ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 18, 1-2.

⁵¹ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 20, 1.

⁵² Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 20, 2.

⁵³ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 18, 3: ἔσκωπτε.

⁵⁴ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 20, 2. According to Zosimus (V 23, 2) John had a habit of mocking the empress in publically delivered sermons. P. van Nuffelen (*Playing the Ritual Game*, p. 195) believes "that the conflict of authority between John and the imperial couple was in particular shaped through John's perception that Eudoxia was undermining his authority by her ceremonial actions".

⁵⁵ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 18, 4.

⁵⁶ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 20, 2.

ing with the words „Herodias⁵⁷ is again enraged, again she dances; once again she seeks to have the head of John in a basin”⁵⁸. Both Socrates and Sozomen do not fail to highlight the anger which this sermon had provoked in the empress. Socrates reports that this time the empress’s anger was much stronger than previously⁵⁹. Sozomen, in a paragraph about the empress’s rage, indicates in addition that John’s allegations against the empress were raised in his homily more overtly and consequently, this provided the reason for his banishment⁶⁰. Thus, in both ecclesiastical historians’ accounts, Eudoxia’s persistent rage led to the exile of the bishop⁶¹ and, this time, public protests and riots were not able to prevent it⁶².

⁵⁷ None of the charges levelled against John Chrysostom at the Synod of the Oak, was concerned with allegations about insulting the Empress and indeed, calling her “Herodias”. See: Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 59. However, according to Palladius (*Dialogus* VIII 247) enemies of the Bishop of Constantinople accused him of comparing the empress with the biblical queen Jezebel. J.N.D. Kelly (*Złote usta*, p. 184) regards this biblical comparison as an adequate proof of probability. A diametrically opposed opinion was expressed by Ommeslaeghe, *Jean Chrysostome en conflict*, p. 131-159. About other sources for this issue cf. Stebnicka, *Jezabel and Eudoxia*, p. 143-154.

⁵⁸ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 18, 5; Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 20, 3. English transl. A.C. Zenos in: *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus*, New York – London 1997, s. 339-340. This sermon survived (Ioannes Chrysostomos, *In decollationem Iochannis*, PG 59, 485-490), but seems to be spurious. According to Palladius (*Dialogus* VI 1-7) people specially recruited for this purpose fabricated homilies under John’s name, maligning him in the eyes of the empress and other figures in the court. See: van Ommeslaeghe, *Jean Chrysostome en conflict*, p. 159; van Nuffelen, *Un Héritage*, p. 28.

⁵⁹ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 18, 5: πλέον ὀργή.

⁶⁰ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 20, 2.

⁶¹ About the second exile of John Chrysostom see Baur, *Der heilige Johannes Chrysostomus*, t. 2, p. 233-253; Kelly, *Złote usta*, p. 250-256; Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, p. 364-378; M. Stachura, *Zwolennicy zesłanego biskupa Jana Chryzostoma w oczach rzymskiego wymiaru sprawiedliwości*, in: *Czasy Jana Chryzostoma i jego pasterska pedagogia*, ed. N. Widok, Opole 2008, p. 121-123.

⁶² Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 18, 6-19; Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 20, 4-6, 21-22. About civil unrest caused by the exile of John Chrysostom cf. Filipczak, *Prefekci Konstantynopola*, p. 62-75. The Supporters of John could not resign themselves to his exile for a long time; see P. van Nuffelen, *Palladius and the Johannite Schism*, *JEH* 64 (2013) p. 1-19. In the opinion of M. Stachura (*Zwolennicy*, p. 128-135) the supporters of John were treated as heretics.

According to Socrates, when John was exiled, Constantinople and the surrounding suburban areas suffered a terrible hailstorm, which was interpreted as a sign of God's wrath over John Chrysostom's unjust removal from the See of Constantinople. Socrates argues that the spread of that conviction was increased by the sudden death of the empress, as rumour had it, back then, that John was the cause of her death⁶³. Socrates, however, seems to have distanced himself from such an interpretation as he hastens to remark that the true reasons were known only to God, given that there were people who believed that John's deposition was a due punishment⁶⁴. This attitude was not shared by Sozomen, who argues that almost everyone was convinced that the aforementioned calamities were inflicted by God, enraged on John's account⁶⁵.

In his *Ecclesiastical history*, Socrates presents the empress Eudoxia as being closely involved in ecclesiastical affairs, supporting it financially, maintaining contacts with clerics and with popular preachers – in particular. In Socrates's account, Eudoxia comes across as a very emotional and indeed, irritable person, a characterisation which emerges to the surface *inter alia* when she solicited for reconciliation between John and Severian, when she put her little son Theodosius in the bishop's lap while imploring him to give way and when she was led to believe that John insulted her in his preaching which consequently led her to complain to her husband Arcadius about the bishop of Constantinople. However, Socrates seems to ascribe to Eudoxia diminished responsibility for the eventualities that led to John's final banishment by pointing to his enemies who set the empress against him. Socrates also seems reluctant to be explicit on Divine wrath as a response to John's ban-

⁶³ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 19, 5-6.

⁶⁴ Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 19, 7-8.

⁶⁵ Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 27, 2. G. Marasco (*The Church Historians*, p. 276) pointed out that "there is no similar interpretation in Philostorgius. According to him, the strange hailstorm followed Divine wrath, incurred by Arcadius's religious policies against the Arians and the Eunomians".

ishment and restricts himself to offer it as one optional interpretation among others.

Sozomen, for his part, augments the picture of Eudoxia, drawn previously by his predecessor Socrates. In his narration he introduces the theme of the Tall Brothers, which helps him highlight the empress' piety, as she reverently stopped her carriage when unexpectedly approached by those monks. Sozomen homes on the respect Eudoxia had for ascetics and her devotion to her family and the empire. These sentiments were reflected, according to Sozomen, in the request of blessing and prayer for both. Moreover, bowing down her head before the monks had demonstrated, from Sozomen's point of view, her humility. Sozomen also emphasises Eudoxia's maternal virtues by indicating how she cared for the religious upbringing of her children. Both Piety and indomitableness, were in tandem personal features of the empress according to Sozomen – and both were well reflected in Eudoxia's pleadings for her sick son before bishop Epiphanius of Salamis during his sojourn in Constantinople. Eudoxia did not yield to the pressure exerted by the bishop of Salamis, who had insisted on proclaiming the Tall Brothers heretics before young Theodosius, Eudoxia's son, could recover. The empress had exhibited an unshakeable trust in God when, in response to Epiphanius's demands, she relied solely on God's will. Eudoxia also initiated a confrontation between the Tall Brothers and Epiphanius, during which they demonstrated their orthodoxy. Sozomen, however, does accept Socrates's view of the empress's highly emotional personality, yet, although he describes her involvement in both Chrysostom's banishments very cautiously, he depicts her role in recalling John from the first exile as a key one. When the people's outcry and supplications for John had reached the imperial palace, the empress acquiesced and persuaded her husband to recall the exiled bishop. Moreover, she reportedly assured the bishop that she was not to blame for the decisions made against him and she went on to express her deep respect for his clerical authority, especially as it was

him who took care of her children's spiritual guidance. Sozomen tends to minimise Eudoxia's responsibility for the feud with John by putting the blame on the bishop's enemies. Sozomen argues that it was they who had besmirched Chrysostom before the empress. As for her death, Sozomen draws on the opinions of „almost” all his contemporaries, who were inclined to interpret Eudoxia's passing as God's punishment for banishing John.

In conclusion, it should be borne in mind that Philostorgius clearly suggests that although initially Eudoxia's position at the imperial court was not particularly strong because of her barbarian origin, the empress, exploiting her femininity, not only managed to fend for herself, but also gained more ground at court by manoeuvring her opponents into complete powerlessness. As for Theodoret, this ecclesiastical historian (who was himself a bishop), refused to disclose the names of the culprits in the sordid affair of John Chrysostom's demise. Theodoret did not attribute intentional culpability to Eudoxia and Arcadius, considering their blame merely as incognisance. He did nonetheless suggest, that Eudoxia's influence at the imperial court had been of such extent that had she so wished, she could have brought to John's safe return from exile. In the case of Socrates and Sozomen, both ecclesiastical historians, although differing significantly in their assessment of John Chrysostom, they do show a remarkable convergence of views on empress Eudoxia's personality. Both describe her with clear restraint, pointing to her distinctive high-strung character, yet they consistently lay the responsibility for the conflict, at the bishop's detractors' doorstep. These sworn enemies of the beleaguered Constantinopolitan bishop became the main culprits in the dispute by inciting the emperor against him. It should be also noted that Eudoxia was the mother of emperor Theodosius II who sat on the imperial throne when the ecclesiastical histories under discussion were penned. This appears to be the reason for treating the late empress very gingerly by our ecclesiastical historians. Finally, it would be fair to say that both Socrates

and Sozomen share a mutual recognition of the pettiness and meanness of the circles in which empress Eudoxia and bishop John Chrysostom were moving, as main causes of the conflict between the ill-fated bishop of Constantinople and the Eastern Roman imperial court.

Empress Eudoxia through the Prism of Fifth Century Ecclesiastical Histories

(summary)

In the dispute between John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople and the imperial court, the main role is often attributed to empress Eudoxia. It is alleged that it was the empress who proactively masterminded Chrysostom's exile. How did the authors of the *Ecclesiastical histories*, who were writing in the first half of the 5th century, portray this empress? First came Philostorgius of Borissus who clearly suggested that although initially the status of Eudoxia at imperial court was not quite firm because of her barbarian origins, the empress, relying on her femininity, not only managed to fend for herself, but actually had strengthened her position in the court environment by maneuvering her opponents into utter powerlessness. As for Theodoret, this ecclesiastical historian (who was also a bishop), had refused to disclose the names of the culprits who were to his mind responsible of John Chrysostom's downfall. Indeed, Theodoret, did not attach deliberate culpability to the imperial couple, considering their actions largely as the result of unawareness. Theodoret does suggest, however, that Eudoxia's influence at the imperial court had grown to such an extent that had she so wished, she could have led to John's return from his exile. In Socrates's and Sozomen's case, both ecclesiastical historians, despite essential differences in their respective assessments of John Chrysostom, do display a remarkable convergence of views in the case of empress Eudoxia. Both describe her with clear restraint, pointing to her great emotionality, yet in the main, both ecclesiastical historians put the blame for the imperial court's conflict with John Chrysostom on his enemies, who incited the empress against the bishop of Constantinople.

Keywords: empress Eudoxia; John Chrysostom; ecclesiastical historiography; Socrates of Constantinople; Sozomen of Bethelia; Theodoret of Cyrhus; Philostorgius of Borissus

Cesarzowa Eudoksja w świetle *Historii kościelnych piątego wieku*

(streszczenie)

Na ogół zasadniczą rolę w sporze Jana Chryzostoma z dworem cesarskim przypisuje się cesarzowej Eudoksji, winiąc ją za jego wygnanie. W jaki sposób postępowanie cesarzowej oceniali piszący w pierwszej połowie V wieku autorzy historii kościelnych? Pierwszy z nich, Filostorgiusz wyraźnie zasugerował, że chociaż początkowo status Eudoksji na

dworze cesarskim nie był silny z powodu jej barbarzyńskiego pochodzenia, cesarzowa używająca swej kobiecości, jak potężnej broni, nie tylko potrafiła się obronić, ale także umocniła swoją pozycję w środowisku dworskim, pogrążając przeciwników w całkowitej bezsilności. Jeśli chodzi o Teodoretę, historyk (który był również biskupem) ów odmówił ujawnienia imion winnych tragicznego losu Jana Chryzostoma. Nie przypisywał też umyślnej winy cesarskiej parze, uznając jej przewinienie za nieświadome. Zasugerował jednak, że wpływ Eudoksji na cesarski dwór był tak duży, że gdyby chciała, mogłaby doprowadzić do powrotu Jana z wygnania. W przypadku Sokratesa i Sozomena obaj historycy, choć różnili się oceną Jana Chryzostoma, wykazali niezwykłą zbieżność poglądów w przypadku cesarzowej Eudoksji. Obaj opisali władczynię z wyraźną powściągliwością, wskazując na jej wielką emocjonalność, ale odpowiedzialność za konflikt z Janem składali na wrogów biskupa podlegających przeciwko niemu cesarzowej.

Słowa kluczowe: cesarzowa Eudoksja; Jan Chryzostom; historiografia kościelna; Sokrates z Konstantynopola; Sozomen; Teodoret z Cyru; Filostorgiusz

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