

Euphemia in the Late Roman Empire. A Case Study of Religious Identity Construction

Early Christians across the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire usually considered themselves as belonging to one faith. They were united in prayer, ritual and, through the early Christian councils, also in theological and Christological matters. Therefore, when the cults of saints arose, they could spread beyond their region of origin and into other parts of the empire without theological impediments. Saints' cults were strongly connected with the construction of religious identity, and the spread of a cult can, therefore, be regarded as a process of religious contact and exchange between different regions and identity constructions.

However, not all saints' cults travelled across the borders of their region of origin, and we must therefore ask which features allowed for or even supported the transfer of a saint's cult into other parts of the empire. This phenomenon is closely linked to whether particular, originally regional, religious identities based on a saint's cult existed.

In this paper, I will examine the cult of Euphemia of Chalcedon. I will ask which aspects of her cult made her attractive for a transfer into a different – in this case, the western – part of the Roman Empire. I trace the process of development and transfer of her cult using hagiographic literature, the veneration of saints and the corresponding material evidence of late antiquity. Based on this example, I will illustrate what specific features could support a specific religious identity construction to spread out of the borders of its region of origin.

In addition to her early veneration in both the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire, a specific peculiarity of Euphemia is that her veneration was very closely linked to the fourth ecumenical council of Chalcedon in 451. The close connection between pious Christian life practice, the veneration of saints, and the far-reaching dogmatic and Christological decisions of the council was an important factor for identity construction: it generated and strengthened the identity of the one unified Orthodox church in both parts

of the empire. Euphemia became a highly potent saint who could build religious identity. The factors that made this saint successful were geographical, infrastructural, as well as theological and political in nature.

Euphemia of Chalcedon was a virgin dedicated to God and she suffered her martyrdom under the Diocletian persecution. She was worshipped at the place where she died very soon after her death. The sanctuary was built over the saint's tomb and was situated about a mile outside of the town of Chalcedon¹.

Today nothing remains of the original sanctuary; not even the exact location is known. It has, though, been deduced from the detailed report by Evagrius Scholasticus (536/537–approx. 600) on the sanctuary of Euphemia in his work *historia ecclesiastica*. There, Evagrius depicts the site in the context of the council of Chalcedon in the year 451. He describes the picturesque position of the sanctuary on a hill, with a view of Constantinople opposite. Three large buildings formed a sacred complex: an atrium courtyard surrounded by a colonnade, the wooden-covered basilica and a two-storey rotunda on the north side. This rotunda housed the martyrion and was equipped with a gallery and a domed roof supported by pillars. From the gallery, one could look at the grave of the saint and follow the liturgy. On the east side of this architecture stood the silver-clad, elongated sarcophagus (μάκτρα)². Evagrius also reports miracles and apparitions of saints in this location. The blood miracle, which would happen at irregular intervals³ and in which emperors, bishops and high officials, but also the people could take part, is described in greater detail. At the behest of the saints, a sponge attached to an iron rod was inserted through an opening in the sarcophagus on the left side and pulled out again, soaked with blood. This blood, unchangeable in colour and consistency, was distributed among those present and even sent abroad. According to Evagrius, this blood miracle would only manifest itself in

1 Janin, *Églises* 32.

2 Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2,3: Τρεῖς δ' ὑπερμεγέθεις οἶκοι τὸ τέμενος· εἷς μὲν ὑπαιθριος, ἐπιμήκει τῇ αὐλῇ καὶ κίσει πάντοθεν κοσμοῦ μενος, ἕτερός τ' αὐτῷ μετὰ τοῦτον τό τε εὖρος τό τε μήκος τού τε κίονας μικροῦ παραπλήσιος, μόνω δὲ τῷ ἐπικειμένω ὀρόφω διαλλάττων· οὐ κατὰ τὴν βόρειον πλευρὰν πρὸς ἡλίον ἀνίσχοντα, οἶκος περιφερῆς ἐς θόλον, εὐ μάλα τεχνικῶς ἐξηρακμένους κίσις, ἴσοις τὴν ὕλην, ἴσοις τὰ μεγέθη καθεστῶσιν ἔνδοθεν κυκλοῦμενος. Ὑπὸ τούτοις ὑπερῶν τι μετεωρίζεται ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτὴν ὀροφῆν, ὡς ἂν κἀντεῦθεν ἐξῆι τοῖς βουλομένοις ἰκετεύειν τε

τὴν μάρτυρα καὶ τοῖς τελοῦμένοις παρεῖναι. Εἶσω δὲ τοῦ θόλου πρὸς τὰ ἑῶνα εὐπρεπῆς ἐστὶ σηκός, ἐνθα τὰ πανάγια τῆς μάρτυρος ἀπόκειται λειψάνα ἐν τινι σορῶ τῶν ἐπιμήκων μακρὰν ἐνίοι καλοῦσιν ἐξ ἀργύρου εὐ μάλα σοφῶς ἡσκημένη.

3 Theophylactus Simocattes, *Historiae* 8, 14 reports that the blood miracle takes place annually on the day of the saint's death and the blood is fragrant. Emperor Mauricius (582-602) sealed the sarcophagus in 593 because he did not believe the blood miracle and wanted to suppress it, but blood spilled anyway.

correlation to the dignity and virtue of the bishop. Evagrius also interprets a supernaturally pleasant scent emanating from the relics of the saint⁴ as a particularly divine sign of the martyr's strength⁵.

The sanctuary of Euphemia was stately and could accommodate not only around 400 bishops but also the emperor and his household. The council acts frequently mention the sanctuary of Euphemia as the venue of the council of Chalcedon.

A pilgrim from Piacenza (approx. 570), who was lying sick in Jerusalem, had a vision of Euphemia and Anthony coming to him and healing him⁶. This miraculous healing in a vision and with its beneficiary still in Jerusalem, and therefore far away from the sanctuary of the saints, shows the fame and especially the high potential of the saint.

The veneration of martyrs began in the middle of the second century in Asia Minor⁷. Alongside the apostles' graves, places of pilgrimage sprang up at martyrs' graves, especially those of victims of the last persecution period in the fourth century. The martyrion of Euphemia was one of the early places of pilgrimage in antiquity⁸. These places benefited from the fact that the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which began in the fourth century, was not limited to biblical places and places where Jesus and his disciples were active. Instead, pilgrims would increasingly visit places of worship that were linked to martyrs and ascetics in the desert, eventually expanding their pilgrimage to the so-called »living saints« in Egypt, Palestine and Syria.

In her *itinerarium* to the Holy Land, a pilgrim as early as Egeria gives us two interesting pieces of information about Euphemia. The Galician pilgrim makes a stop in Chalcedon on her way back from her pilgrimage (presumably 381-384) via Constantinople because, firstly, the place of worship of Euphemia was already very famous in late antiquity, and secondly, the saint had long been known to Egeria beyond the regional borders⁹. This report proves the early existence of the place of worship and pilgrimage, but it also indicates that Euphemia's martyrdom and her veneration were probably known in the Western Roman Empire by the middle of the fourth century. Another indication of the persistence of the

place of pilgrimage and the pilgrimage of Western pilgrims is the visit of Roman aristocrat Melania the Younger to Chalcedon in 437/438¹⁰. Gerontius reports in the *Vita Melaniae Iunioris*, written after Melania's death (439), her pilgrimage to the Egyptian monasteries and the Holy Land. On the way to Constantinople, she first visits the sanctuary of Euphemia in Chalcedon, where she draws strength in prayer and prepares to confront the hustle and bustle of the imperial capital after a long ascetic life¹¹. Gerontius depicts Melania's lifelong devotion to the saints and their relics¹².

It cannot be determined whether Melania stopped on purpose at the church of the Blessed Virgin anyway on her journey or whether a stay there was due to its sudden popularity. However, this evidence of the existence and spread of the early cult of Euphemia in Chalcedon points to two important factors in the process of religious exchange. Firstly, the strategically fortunate geographic location of Chalcedon. Chalcedon, today's Kadiköy, a district of Istanbul, was a city opposite Constantinople on the Asian side of the Bosphorus¹³. The infrastructure around this place was likewise excellent in late antiquity, as a pilgrimage route led from Constantinople to Jerusalem via Ankyra, Tarsus and Antioch¹⁴. The road that belonged to the *cursus publicus* and continued to the royal seat of Nicomedia ran not far from Chalcedon, either¹⁵. The infrastructural connection plays a major role in the transfer process, as both pilgrims and users of the *cursus publicus* (e.g., civil servants, couriers and high-ranking military officials)¹⁶ could share their knowledge of the sanctuary in Chalcedon with others. The sanctuary received an additional upgrade due to its proximity to Nova Roma, Constantinople. Constantinople itself, as the new centre of the Eastern Roman Empire, had a major flaw compared to Rome and other famous ancient cities such as Alexandria: it had no local saint of its own. Therefore, the sanctuary of Euphemia was the closest in terms of space and, without competition from the capital, was able to boast a higher level of popularity and visitor frequency, if only by believers from Constantinople¹⁷.

The martyrion of Euphemia was probably damaged by the Persian invasions of 615 and 626. In this context, Emperor

4 Melania the Younger smelled the fragrance, too, while she visited the sanctuary (see Gerontius, *Vita Melaniae Iunioris* 53).

5 Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2,3.

6 Antoninus Placentinus, *Itinerarium* 46: *Iterum venientes in Hierusolima, ubi etiam aegrotus remansi per multum tempus. Evidenter oculata fide vidi beatam Euphemiam per visionem et beatum Antonium; quomodo venerunt, sanaverunt me.*

7 Cf. *Martyrium Polycarpi*.

8 Kötting, *Peregrinatio religiosa* 82.

9 Egeria, *Itinerarium* 23, 7: [...] *pervenit Calcedona, ubi propter famosissimum martyrium sanctae Eufimiae ab olim michi notum iam, quod ibi est, mansi loco.* Clark, *The Life* 134.

11 Gerontius, *Vita Melaniae Iunioris* 53 (Latine *Vita* see P. Laurence, *La Vie latine* 258: *Pervenimus autem Constantinopolim et, priusquam introiret, sollicita erat quasi peregrina. Mox autem pervenit ad martyrium beatae Euphemiae velut tristis, et ingressa adoravit Dominum. Continuo fit odor suavitatis et recreata est magna consolatio.* Greek *Vita* see D. Gorce 228: *Καὶ ὅτε λοιπὸν πλησίον ἐγενόμεθα τῆς φιλοχρίστου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, ἠγωνίασεν ἡ ἄγια ἀπὸ*

πολλῆς ἀσκήσεώς τε καὶ ἡσυχίας εἰς τηλικαύτην βασιλεύουσαν πόλιν μέλουσα εἰσιέναι. Καὶ καταλαμβάνομεν τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς ἁγίας Εὐφημίας ἐν Χαλκηδόνι, ἔνθα ἡ ἀθλοφόρος σφόδρα παρεμυθήσατο τὴν ἁγίαν πολλὴν αὐτῇ ποιήσασα εὐωδίαν καὶ παράκλησιν.

12 Clark, *The Life* 136.

13 Strobel/Wirbelauer, *Kalchedon*.

14 Olshausen, *Straßen und Wege*.

15 Schneider, *Euphemia* 296.

16 Kolb, *Transport*.

17 Procession was an essential element of religious practice in the liturgy of the city of Constantinople. Especially with regard to the introduction of foreign saints and the associated institutionalization or establishment of a cult of saints, the procession was a good opportunity to welcome a saint into the local church community. A veneration of a local saint was the earliest development of the cult of saints and runs, among other things, on the path of identifying the common, local and religious identity. Pilgrimages to the local martyr in Chalcedon by the people of Constantinople are very likely to have taken place. See Baldovin, *Urban character* 167-213.

Heraclius¹⁸ may have had the relics moved to Constantinople to the church of the former palace of Antiochus, the later church of St Euphemia by the Hippodrome¹⁹. According to A. Berger, the relics may also have been transferred in 680 by Constantine IV (668-685)²⁰, but the date of transfer is left debatable²¹. The miracle of the effusion of blood still continued after the translation to Constantinople. However, the question of where the relics were deposited has yet to be resolved²².

A factor that should not be underestimated is that Euphemia was one of the oldest Christian martyrs. As such, she was rudimentarily known very early on in both East and West and was revered, albeit with varying degrees of intensity. One of the first mentions of Euphemia in the East is the homily of Asterius of Amasea²³, about whom we do not know much except that he was the bishop of Amasea, in a province called Helenopontus. He is also supposed to have been born sometime between 330 and 335 and he probably died after 415. Asterius' work on Euphemia is an ekphrasis, which was a popular literary technique in ancient rhetoric and was often written for publication. Asterius describes the painting in a portal of a church, which shows the martyrdom of the saint in four scenes. Asterius describes the painting vividly, referring emotionally to his own reactions. We should bear in mind, however, that this writing's purpose was to persuade a pagan readership that was to be won over to the Christian faith²⁴.

According to the account, citizens erected a tomb next to the church, probably in Chalcedon, where the coffin was placed. Ministers praised Euphemia to the worshipping people on the occasion of an annual festival. Asterius tells us about the martyrdom, depicting Euphemia standing fearlessly before the angry-looking judge on his rostrum. She is grabbed by a soldier, while another one knocks her teeth out, which are like pearls. After that she prays, stretching her hands to heaven, while a cross appears above her head. The scene Asterius describes next is Euphemia in the process of dying. She is standing in the middle of a burning funeral pyre, again stretching her hand towards heaven and looking

joyful. It is not possible to establish whether Asterius actually went to the martyrdom of Chalcedon and saw such a fresco.

The only early literary evidence in the West of Euphemia's martyrdom is an excerpt from the work *De laude sanctorum* by Victricius of Rouen. This short treatise was based on a kind of theology of relics and was written upon the arrival of new relics that had been given to Victricius of Rouen by the Milanese Bishop Ambrose in 396²⁵. This text, Victricius' only work, may have been intended as thanks for the gift of relics. In his work, Victricius names relics of Euphemia within a list of relics that already existed in Rouen. Regarding her martyrdom, he reports that the brave virgin was killed with the sword²⁶. On this list, Euphemia is unique: she is the only female saint, she does not make an appearance in the Bible and she is the only saint from the East excepting the apostles. The relics of the northern Italian saints can be attributed to Ambrose of Milan, who sent them to his correspondents. It is remarkable that Victricius characterised Euphemia as a resilient virgin, using topoi typical of holy virgins, e. g. the adoption of male features.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the two earliest reports on Euphemia, one from the East and one from the West, have her tortured and die in different ways. The reason for this is obscure.

The relic system developed with pilgrimage. In the West, there is some evidence for the presence of Euphemia's relics. The above-mentioned account of Victricius of Rouen discusses them²⁷; Paulinus of Nola, too, possessed relics of the saint²⁸. One can only speculate about the origin of the relics, but there are indications that they came from Milan through the mediation of bishop Ambrose. This assumption is based on a very similar list of relics by Gaudentius of Brescia²⁹. However, we do not find any mention of Euphemia's relics on this list, which is striking, because all three authors belonged to the circle of recipients of the relics sent by Ambrose of Milan, who, despite the prohibition of translation, collection and distribution of relics in Roman law from 386³⁰, was involved in translations and in freely distributing relics to other west-

18 Konstantinus of Tios, *Encomium Euphemiae* (BHG 621).

19 Naumann/Belting, *Euphemia-Kirche*.

20 Berger, *Euphemia* 311-322.

21 Mango, *Euphemia* 85. For a closer look on the translation of Euphemia's relics from Chalcedon to Constantinople in the 7th c. see Goldfus, *St Euphemia's Church 178-197*. Effenberger gives a good overview of the research and pursues the question where the relics were deposited in Constantinople after the first translation from Chalcedon, Effenberger, *Stadtinterne Reliquientranslationen* 45-54.

22 Mango, *Euphemia* 83. 86. In the context of the translation of the relics to Constantinople is also the feast of July 11. The *Synaxarium of Constantinople* calls it ἡ συνάξις τῆς ἁγίας Εὐφημίας τοῦ ὄρου τῆς πίστεως (see *Synaxarium eccl. Cpl.* 811-813) and is celebrated especially in the Martyrion near the Hippodrome. It must be the day of consecration of the church or the day of translation, see also Schneider, *Euphemia* 301.

23 Asterius, *Homilia* 11.

24 Speyer, *Euphemia-Rede* 39-47.

25 Clark, *Victricius of Rouen* 365-366.

26 Victricius, *De laude sanctorum* 6: *Hic inuenietis Iohannem Baptistam, illum, inquam, qui in stadio communi cruentus stetit, sed ad caelum coronatus ascendit,*

quem Dominus ipse inter natos mulierum autumat potiore. Hic Andream, hic Thomam, hic Geruasium, hic Protasium, hic Agricolam, hic Eufemiam, quae quondam masculato animo sub percussore uirgo non palluit. See furthermore Victricius, *De laude sanctorum* 6.

27 List of relics which Victricius owned: John the Baptist, Andrew, Thomas, Gervasius, Protasius, Agricola, Euphemia, Luke. Herval suspects that Victricius received relics from Ambrose during his visit to Milan in 386 and is therefore on Ambrose's list of relics, see Herval, *Origines chrétiennes* 30-31.

28 Paulinus Nolanus, *Carmina* 27, 430f.: *et quae Chalcidicis Euphemia martyr in oris / signat uirgineo sacratum sanguine litus.* Paulinus also owns relics besides those of Euphemia from Andrew, John (apostle and evangelist), Thomas, Luke, Agricola and Vitalis, Proclus, Nazarius (cf. Paulinus Nolanus, *Carmina* 27, 400-439).

29 Gaudentius, *Tractus* 17. He has relics of John the Baptist, Andrew, Thomas, the evangelist Luke, Gervasius and Protasius, Nazarius (these 3 he received from Ambrose), then of the Ananlian Martyrs (Sisinnius, Martyrius, Alexander) and the forty martyrs of Sebaste, which he brought back as a gift from an assembly in Asia Minor.

30 *Codex Theodosianus* 9, 17, 6 and 7(-8). It was forbidden to transfer direct relics of one's martyrs, but contact relics were made and distributed.

ern churches³¹. In this way, Ambrose built and strengthened his network and relationships with other western churches, with Milan remaining at its centre³². Ambrose exercised a much more open attitude towards the handling of relics than was customary in the West at that time³³. In the Latin West, Ambrose can also be seen as a promoter of the veneration of female saints from the East. Ambrose was familiar with the eastern world, its thoughts, and theological questions, not least because of his knowledge of the Greek language.

Because the relics of Euphemia were widespread in the West³⁴, we are entitled to conclude that they were famous and popular. Relics of saints from the earliest times, such as those of apostles and martyrs, were in great demand because they were highly regarded and venerated as important witnesses of faith.

Similar patterns to those of Euphemia's relics and pilgrimages may be observed in the western liturgy. Euphemia seems to have had a prominent position in the late ancient *sacramentaria*; she was the only eastern saint included in the *Sacramentarium Veronense*, a combination of many Roman mass texts, which provides an insight into the veneration of martyrs in the Roman Church of the fifth and sixth centuries. In the lyrics, Euphemia was celebrated as the victor over diabolical persecution through her feminine strength as a virgin and a martyr³⁵. In yet another *praefatio*, her victory over the devil through her martyrdom was viewed as revenge for Eve's deception by the snake³⁶. This urban Roman source presents the inclusion of Euphemia in western liturgy and thus states a lively veneration of the saint in western, especially in Roman, religious life. As a firmly anchored feast of saints, it can be found with other *sacramentaria* on September 16³⁷. The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* also names September 16 as the feast day³⁸. The Carthaginian calendar, which was not created prior to 505, includes Euphemia in lists of martyrs and bishops from the mid-fourth century³⁹.

The Chalcedonian council can be regarded as a catalyst for the cult of the Blessed Virgin. In 451, Emperor Markian convened the council in order to put an end to the Christological

disputes that ruled in the first centuries of Christianity. The specific place of the negotiation was the already known and easily accessible sanctuary of Euphemia⁴⁰. Here the bishops agreed on the *definitio fidei*, which is still fully valid today in both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum⁴¹. Regarding Euphemia, the letter to Leo I (*epistula ad Leonem*) after the conclusion of the council is especially noteworthy. This document emphasizes the assistance of Euphemia in the council and in the decision-taking process; indeed, both her influence and significance to the proceedings are clearly stated in the *epistula ad Leonem*. She is noted as a source of inspiration for the decisions of the council. The members thank Euphemia for her assistance in bringing about a favourable process. The participants were assured of the saint's intercession as the deliberations ended⁴². The close connection between Euphemia and the Chalcedonian council is expressed by the participants' gratitude to the saint. In her honour, Emperor Markian nominally elevated Chalcedon to a metropolis⁴³. This council later came to be known as the fourth ecumenical council.

It can be assumed that as a result of the council (or shortly before it) a great epic passion was written that expanded the multifaceted and early hagiographic tradition in the East. It mentions even more types of torture for Euphemia than were previously customary.

In the *passio* Euphemia is broken on the wheel⁴⁴, excruciated in a stove, by stones⁴⁵, by saw and at last she dies being exposed to wild beasts in the arena, which gently kill her with mercy⁴⁶. It is remarkable that the *passio* exposes Euphemia to different kinds of torture, even though the application of various means was not uncommon in Antiquity⁴⁷. However, the *passio* does not mention the knocked-out teeth and the funeral pyre. This Greek passion was translated into Latin⁴⁸. The translation dates back to the sixth or seventh century or even to the fifth century, because Ennodius of Pavia († 521) already knew the Latin version of the *passio*. In his poem on Euphemia⁴⁹, he mentions all the tortures she endured except for the torment by saw.

31 Ambrosius, Epistula 77 (22). He built the Basilica Ambrosiana for the remains of the two Milanese martyrs Gervasius and Protasius, which he found, in order to make them accessible to the community and individuals. Ambrose contributed not only to the translation of Gervasius and Protasius in Milan, but also to the discovery of Agricola and Vitalis from Bologna 393 (see Paulinus, Vita Ambrosii 29).

32 Miller, *Differential Networks* 113-138.

33 Delehaye, *Les origines du culte* 65-66; Dassmann, *Märtyrer* 54; Roberts, *Poetry* 15-18.

34 In addition to the relics mentioned, there are more relics of Euphemia testified. Compare the inscription from Chirbet mâ el biad, ILCV 2069 from the year 474. In the Church of Stephan in Ravenna dedicated 550 Maximian deposited many relics of saints among them Euphemia's too. See Delehaye, *Loca Sanctorum* 22.

35 *Sacramentarium Veronense* 837: *Vere dignum: in hac celebritate gaudentes, qua sancti spiritus feruore praeclarus beatae martyris Eufymiae sexus fragilitate praetiosior sanguis effloruit, et virtute feminea rabiem diabolicae persecutionis elidens, geminatae gloriae triumphum virginitas implevit et passio.*

36 *Sacramentarium Veronense* 826: [...] *deceptionemque Evae matris ulciscens, de hoste generis humani, qui aditum per illam mortis invenerat, triumpharet [...].*

37 *Sacramentarium Gelasianum* 170, 339, 356; *Sacramentarium Gregorianum* 102; *Sacramentarium Mozarabicum* 425.

38 ActaSS Nov. 2,1 (1894) 61; ActaSS Nov. 2,2 (1931) 510.

39 *Kalendarium von Karthago* 5.

40 ACO II 1,1 (55,5): [...] ἐν τῇ ἀγιωτάτῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ τῆς ἀγίας μάρτυρος Εὐφημίας. The place of the Euphemia sanctuary is repeatedly expressed in the acts of the council.

41 Dünzl, *Geschichte* 136-144. It is even more about the specifications of the two natures, the human and the divine nature, in Jesus.

42 ACO II 1,3 (117, 35-40): Θεὸς γὰρ ἦν ὁ ἐνεργῶν καὶ ἡ τὸν σύλλογον τῷ νυμφῶνι στεφανοῦσα καλλίνικος Εὐφμία, ἡ ὡς περ οἰκείαν ὁμολογίαν τῆς πίστεως παρ' ἡμῶν δεξαμένη τὸν ὄρον τῷ ἑαυτῆς νυμφίῳ διὰ τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου βασιλέως καὶ τῆς φιλοχρίστου βασιλίδος προσήγαγεν, πάσαν μὲν τῶν ἀντικειμένων ταραχὴν κατευνάσσα, τὴν δὲ τῆς ἀληθείας ὡς φίλην ὁμολογίαν κρατῦνασα καὶ χειρὶ καὶ γλῶττι ταῖς πάντων ψήφοις ἐπισφραγίσασα πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν.

43 ACO II 1,2 (157, 35 f).

44 *Passio* 7.

45 *Passio* 8. 13.

46 *Passio* 17.

47 Vergote, *Folterwerkzeuge*.

48 BHL 2708.

49 Ennodius, *Carmen* 1, 17.

After the council of Chalcedon in 451, the worship of Euphemia spread throughout the Oikumene. An obvious consequence of the council was the consecration of some churches to the saint. Thus, she became known to a wider population. Churches consecrated to her are documented in Constantinople⁵⁰, Jerusalem and Oxyrrhynchos⁵¹. In the western area there was one church consecrated in Grado⁵², and four in Ravenna⁵³ and in Rome⁵⁴. This is a trend reversal because, initially, it was mostly Biblical figures who became church patrons, partly because of their coveted relics. This development strongly promoted Euphemia's importance as a council saint and increased her value as a church patron.

Some late antique images of Euphemia in the Western Roman Empire show her importance for religious identity construction after the council of Chalcedon. First, mosaic pictures of Euphemia exist in the sixth-century churches Sant'Apollinare Nuovo and in the Capella Arcivescovile in Ravenna⁵⁵. In the 560s, Theoderic's palace church, later called Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, was converted to Orthodox Christian worship. The historian Agnellus referred the decoration of Sant'Apollinare to his namesake the Archbishop Agnellus in the *Liber pontificalis*⁵⁶. A procession of twenty-two female martyrs was located on the north wall and on the other side twenty-six male martyrs are shown. The order of the saints follows their origin from east to west. All saints are separated from one another by palm trees and most female saints are carrying dates in baskets. The figures are united by uniformity of pose, expression, costume, tilt of the head and hairstyle. The row is led by Euphemia, labelled by an inscription as are the other saints. Her front position makes her a prominent figure and shows her significance⁵⁷ because it is interpreted as an affirmative statement to the anti-Arian council of Chalcedon of 451 during the Three Chapters Controversy⁵⁸. Thus, Euphemia is used as a symbol of Orthodoxy in the way defined by the Chalcedonian council.

The other mosaic picture of Euphemia in Ravenna is found in the Capella Arcivescovile built by Bishop Peter II (494-520), during the reign of the Arian emperor Theoderic. The late antique chapel is cruciform and the arms are covered by barrel vaults. Each vault contains a row of medallions of same-looking, holy people. On the southeast arch of the chapel inscribed images of male martyrs are depicted and on the north-west arch a row of female martyrs is located, with Euphemia's picture being one of them. The saints named are the same as those from Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, which illustrates their popularity in the early sixth century. Surely, Euphemia here represents again the Chalcedonian Orthodoxy, as she does in Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. Bishop Peter but also his successors may have demonstrated their theological point of view against an Arian ruler by this special program of mosaic images. It was likely meant to remind the clergy of the Orthodox faith and to rejoin them to it⁵⁹.

The Basilica Eufasiana, built in the mid-sixth century at Poreč in Croatia (ancient Parentium), is also decorated with mosaics⁶⁰: twelve medallions of female saints are collected in a row on the underside of the apse arch. The names of the saints are inscribed above the images, ascertaining their identity⁶¹. Among them on the right (south) side of the apse arch there is one portrait labelled by the authentic inscription »EVFYMIA«⁶². All figures share the same pose, format and costume. The bust-length portraits of the female saints with golden haloes contrast with the blue background of the soffits (of medallions). The inscription marks are the only identification of the saints, because all of them wear the same hairstyles, the same golden robes as well as jewelled collars and white veils falling over their left shoulders. The location of the row of the saintly images represent their position, as intercessors, between the Christians on earth and the heavenly sphere of God in the apse⁶³. The typical mosaic art of the sixth century shows no more attributes or provides information about Eu-

50 See Janin, *Les églises Sainte-Euphémie* 270-283; Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique* 126-137. The sanctuary in the Petron is considered the oldest one in Constantinople from the 6th c., see Patria Konstantinupoleos III, 67.

51 Schneider, *Euphemia* 300.

52 In the late sixth-century pavement of S. Euphemia in Grado an inscription named four individuals as patrons for building the pavement. They called themselves as *famuli* of the martyr Euphemia, and they prayed to Euphemia as an *intercessor* for their salvation. See Caillet, *L'évergétisme* 224-225.

53 Deichmann, *Ravenna* 2/2, 323-325; Deichmann, *Ravenna* 2/3, 177: *Ecclesia Beatae Euphemiae* q.v. *Ad Arietem*; *Monasterium Sanctae Euphemiae* in *Sancto Calinico*; *Monasterium S. Euphemiae foris Portam Auream*; *Monasterium S. Euphemiae foris Portam S. Laurentii*.

54 Deichmann, *Ravenna* 2/2, 324; Croquison, *Le mémoire* 168-182.

55 Deichmann, *Ravenna*; Dresken-Weiland, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken*; Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, esp. 146-174. 188-196.

56 *Liber pontificalis* 86: [...] *tribunal et utrasque parietes de imaginibus martirum virginumque incedentium tessellis decoravit* [...].

57 The depicted saints in the processions appear in early church litanies, which emphasize their ancient veneration. Otto von Simson made a comparing list of the saints named in litanies for Ravenna, Rome and Milan. There is some accordance between the worshipped saints, but the sections of litanies that were compared are different and most of them are from the 7th c. and later. See Simson, *Sacred Fortress* 84-85.

58 After the council of Chalcedon, efforts were made to reach an agreement with the Monophysites. The attempts culminated in the Three Chapters Controversy

under Emperor Justinian I, who wanted to consolidate the religious unity of the empire. The aim was to achieve unity with the Monophysites by condemning the so-called Three Chapters. These were texts by three Antiochian theologians (Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa), who were a problem for the Monophysites but had been recognized as Orthodox in Chalcedon. In 543/544, Justinian I initially condemned the Three Chapters in an edict. Justinian obviously hoped that this condemnation would make the council of Chalcedon acceptable to the Monophysites and clear it of the accusation of being a »Nestorian« synod. The western episcopacy firmly adhered to the decisions of the council of Chalcedon in the sense of the irreformability of ecumenical councils. After long disputes, Justinian I enforced his course at the second council of Constantinople (553), although no agreement was reached with the Monophysites. Western Opposition to the second council of Constantinople persisted until the 7th c. See in detail Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus* 431-484.

59 Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna* 196. She mentions also anti-Arian elements in the decoration, especially which express the trinitarian doctrine.

60 Terry/Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor* I, 59f.

61 The female saints are Felicitas, Basilissa, Eugenia, Cicilia, Agnes, Agathe, Iustina, Susanna, Perpetua, Valeria, Tecla, and Euphemia, see Terry/Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor* I, 85-87.

62 Terry/Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor* I, 167.

63 The apse mosaic shows the angel-flanked Virgin with Child and from either side three other partially nimbed figures, see Terry/Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor* II, 3.

phemia and her kind of martyrdom. Only an identification by inscription reveals who her figure represents⁶⁴.

Still, the composition suggests that Euphemia was highly venerated in this region during the sixth century because she is depicted in a prominent architectural position at the top of the intrados of the apse arch. In the middle of the vault, a central medallion shows a lamb with a halo, directly followed by the portrait of Euphemia as the head of the six female saints on the right side. As a start, this top position of Euphemia in the intrados is closely connected to the council of Chalcedon of 451, just like the interpretation of the mosaics in Ravenna⁶⁵. But this distinguished location can also relate her significance to the Three Chapters Controversy⁶⁶. In 551, Pope Vigilius (537-555) from Constantinople took refuge in the sanctuary of Euphemia⁶⁷ in Chalcedon because of the Orthodoxy of the council of Chalcedon. He feared the approval of the Three Chapters⁶⁸. In this context, it should be mentioned that in the late sixth century Archbishop Helias of Aquileia erected or restored the basilica at Grado dedicated to Euphemia. A synod was held there between 577 and 582, confirming the faith principles of the council of Chalcedon all over again⁶⁹.

Therefore, the image of Euphemia in the basilicas mentioned is a vital and public sign of the relation between Euphemia and the affirmed religious decisions of the council of Chalcedon. In the sixth century Euphemia is presented as a symbol of Orthodoxy against Arianism. She is held to be a guardian of Orthodoxy.

The sanctuary of Euphemia was also visited for political purposes. The disputes between Emperor Arkadios and the Goth leader Gainas were settled at the saint's grave by an oath of the two rulers in the spring of 400⁷⁰. Something similar happened during the Akakian Schism. Emperor Anastasios (491-518), who adhered to Monophysitism, and the *magister militum* Vitalian, an opponent of the Monophysites, agreed in the Euphemia's church in Chalcedon to reorganize religious policy in 518⁷¹.

These political meetings are also conditioned by theological disagreements. Again and again, it came to pass that Euphemia's church was visited as a place for political decisions that were supposed to lead to peace between the parties. Those involved placed themselves and their negotiations under the mighty protection of the saint.

These patterns make it very clear that the saint and her place of worship enjoyed great authority in late antiquity. Her powers of negotiations, whether political or theological, based on God's favour, were emphasized and the decision made in connection to Euphemia were placed under the special protection of the saint.

Conclusion

Using the example of the Euphemia, in whose church the council of Chalcedon met in 451, this paper sheds light on how an ecclesiastical event contributed to the revival of an entire cult of saints and spread it far beyond regional borders. However, the cult of this virgin was also ideally suited to this process. On the one hand, the martyrion was very old and well known in both East and West, as the pilgrimage reports show us. The proximity to the imperial capital Constantinople guaranteed both a good infrastructure and the attention of the emperor as well as theological and cultic life in the capital. The large pilgrimage centre was able to receive this attention all the more easily, since it had no genuine Constantinopolitan saint as a competitor. Moreover, Euphemia was identified by the members of the council of Chalcedon as an overriding divine power and heavenly source of inspiration. The decisions that apply to all of Christianity found their expression in this martyr. She becomes the guarantor of the correct faith. In this, Euphemia displayed her unifying power: all people who identified with the council's resolutions also identified with this virgin – regardless of whether the believers lived in the eastern or western part of the empire. It was precisely the increasing number of traditional church patronage and the pictorial representations of Euphemia that also made the church people vividly aware of her significance. Especially in Ravenna, where the tensions with the followers of Arius were very intense, this ecumenical saint was repeatedly conjured up in pictures in order to distinguish the Orthodox from the Arians. The council of Chalcedon gave an already known saint an enormous boost in veneration by adding the extremely specific aspect as guarantor of Orthodoxy. Euphemia was an important figure for religious unity in the late-antique Roman Empire religious unity.

64 For more information see L'Orange/Nordhagen, *Mosaics*, esp. Part II, »The Development of Mosaic Technique« 43-65; Rossi, *Mosaics*, esp. 8-11.

65 Terry/Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor I*, 67-69.

66 Lange, *Mia Energeia 447-457*; Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus 431-484*.

67 Franke, *Kirchenasyl*.

68 See Sotinel, *Pontifical Authority 1-25*; Bratož, *Il cristianesimo 98-99*: Euphemia is turned into a symbol of rejection to the religious policies of Emperor Justinian.

69 Cf. *Chronica patriarcharum gradensium I*, 393.

70 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6,6; Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 8,4.

71 Schneider, *Euphemia 299*; Meier, *Anastasios I. 295-310*.

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Summary / Zusammenfassung / Résumé

Euphemia in the Late Roman Empire.

A Case Study of Religious Identity Construction

Saints' cults were strongly connected with the construction of religious identity, and the spread of a cult can, therefore, be regarded as a process of religious contact and exchange between different regions and identity constructions. In this paper, I examine the cult of Euphemia of Chalcedon and aspects of her cult which made her attractive for a transfer into a different – in this case, the western – part of the Roman Empire by using hagiographic literature, the veneration of saints and the corresponding material evidence of late antiquity. The factors that made this saint successful were the geographical location and the good infrastructure of her martyrion, near Constantinople, especially for pilgrims. An important theological feature in addition to the pilgrimage is her early veneration as a martyr and as a virgin dedicated to God in both the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire. A specific peculiarity of Euphemia is that her veneration was very closely linked to the decisions of the fourth ecumenical council of Chalcedon in 451. This generated and strengthened the identity of the one unified Orthodox church in both parts of the empire. Euphemia became a highly potent saint who built a religious identity in late antiquity.

Euphemia im spätrömischen Reich.

Eine Fallstudie zu religiöser Identitätskonstruktion

Heiligenkulte waren eng mit der Konstruktion religiöser Identitäten verbunden. Dementsprechend kann die Ausbreitung eines Kults gleichzeitig als religiöser Kontakt und Austausch zwischen verschiedenen Regionen und Identitätskonstruktionen angesehen werden. In diesem Aufsatz wird der Kult der Euphemia von Chalcedon untersucht. Es wird gefragt, welche Aspekte ihren Kult für einen Transfer in andere (in diesem Fall westliche) Teile des römischen Reiches attraktiv machten. Als Quellen werden die hagiographische Literatur und andere Texte sowie materielle Zeugen der Heiligenverehrung in der Spätantike genutzt. Erfolgreich machten den Euphemia-Kult zum einen die geographische Lage und die gut ausgebaute

Infrastruktur ihres Heiligtums in der Nähe von Konstantinopel. Dies spielte vor allem für Pilger eine große Rolle. Ein wichtiges theologisches Kriterium ist, dass Euphemia schon früh in beiden Reichsteilen als jungfräuliche Märtyrerin verehrt wurde. Eine Besonderheit ihres Kultes ist auch, dass er eng mit den Entscheidungen des vierten ökumenischen Konzils von Chalcedon (451) verbunden war. Dadurch trug er zur Entstehung und Festigung der geeinten orthodoxen Kirche in beiden Teilen des Reiches bei. Euphemia wurde so eine wichtige Heilige, die die Konstruktion einer bestimmten religiösen Identität in der Spätantike mit ermöglichte.

Euphemia dans l'Empire romain tardif. Une étude de cas sur la construction de l'identité religieuse

Les cultes des saints étaient étroitement liés à la construction d'identités religieuses. Par conséquent, la propagation d'un culte peut être considérée comme un contact et un échange religieux entre différentes régions, mais aussi comme un échange entre différentes constructions identitaires. Cet article examine le culte d'Euphémie de Chalcédoine. Il tente de déterminer les facteurs qui ont rendu son culte attractif pour un transfert vers d'autres régions de l'Empire romain (en l'occurrence, l'Occident). Les sources utilisées sont les hagiographies, ainsi que d'autres textes et témoins matériels du culte des saints dans l'Antiquité tardive. La situation géographique du sanctuaire d'Euphémie, à proximité de Constantinople, et son infrastructure bien développée ont contribué à la réussite de son culte. Cela jouait un rôle important, notamment pour les pèlerins. Un critère théologique important est qu'Euphémie a été vénérée très tôt dans les deux parties de l'Empire comme une martyre vierge. Une particularité de son culte est également qu'il était étroitement lié aux décisions du quatrième concile œcuménique de Chalcédoine (451). Il a ainsi contribué à la naissance et à la consolidation de l'Église orthodoxe unifiée dans les deux parties de l'Empire. Euphémie devint ainsi une sainte importante qui contribua à la construction d'une certaine identité religieuse dans l'Antiquité tardive.