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Ioannis Spatharakis
Byzantine Portraits, Volume Two
From the Justinian to the Macedonian Dynasty (518-1056)

This volume is introduced with the ivory diptych of Flavius Areobindus Dagalaifus and Anicia Juliana in the Dioscurides manuscript in Vienna. Justin I, an illiterate swineherd, and his wife Eudocia, a barbarian slave whom he had bought, established the Justinian Dynasty. His nephew, Justinian I, expanded his empire and enriched his reign with economic, judicial, and military achievements. He undertook numerous building projects, restored and founded cities, and fortified the frontiers, including the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai (548-565). I calculated the exact date of construction of the mosaic in the Transfiguration Basilica of the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai to 551/552 based on Indiction 14, inscribed in white letters on the mosaic (Fig. 45.3). The mosaic also depicts Longinus and John, the abbot and the deacon of this church.

Portraits of Justinian, his wife Theodora, and their entourage appear in the splendid mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna (540-548). Regarding the other portraits of Justinian examined in this book, despite the thorough study of them and of those of the other emperors, I was able to make the following observation on the Barberini Ivory in the Louvre (535-540): Kitzinger's description and interpretation of Justinian's *Adventus* are unexpectedly prosaic, and no later colleagues have objected. This ivory panel does not depict the emperor dismounting by striking his spear into the ground, as he suggests; instead, Justinian holds his inverted spear as a symbol of peace following military victories. Similarly, the figure of Tellus does not function as a groom assisting the emperor in dismounting by holding his foot; she supports the good reign of Justinian on behalf of his subjects, who benefit from the abundance she carries, provided by him. (Figs. 11-14). The precious ivory panel was not spoiled to depict how the emperor dismounts, but it was made to show that Justinian regained the support of his subjects after the Nika riot through victories, peace, welfare and divine protection.

Leo VI (886-912) depicted himself prostrate in a great mosaic in St. Sophia in Constantinople, not in prayer but to thank Christ for the birth of his son and successor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, born in 905. This theory contrasts with that of other colleagues, who argue that the mosaic was made by Romanus I (920-944).

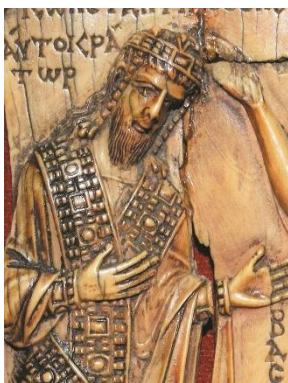
The Ivory Comb of Leo VI shows the Mother of God placing a pearl on the bejewelled Basil's crown, which is an iconographic hapax (Fig. 82b). In addition to the various interpretations of the inscription and the pearl placed by the Mother of God, I would suggest that the pearl on the crown of Leo VI symbolises the long yearning birth of his son Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in 908.

The arrangement of the saints in the lower row of the icon depicting Constantine Porphyrogenitus as Abgar may indicate that it was made for a monastery, specifically the monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, where it is currently kept (Fig. 90). However, I would suggest that it is less likely to have been painted there, because the idea of using the portrait of Constantine Porphyrogenitus for Abgar is Constantinopolitan, not Sinaitic.

It was in Rossano that John Philagathos ordered the Cluny Ivory depicting Otto II with Theophano in Byzantine attire and with the new title Imperator Romanorum Augustus, which he adopted in 982 (Fig. 93).

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BOUND, 24x17cm. 252 pages (130 Illustrations, mostly in Colour) 2026. ISBN: 978-94-903871-5-0



Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Pushkin Museum, Moscow.