The visibility of women in tenth-century Rome

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Women played a significant part in tenth-century Rome, and the documentation makes them visible in a way rarely seen in early medieval sources. First examining the political agency of the foremost among them, women like Marozia and the Theophylact family senatrices, *this paper also highlights the socio-economic, legal and cultural role of many women of lower status. As donors, buyers and lessees, able to acquire property as well as to dispose of it within Roman law, their impact as part of a family group or in their own name becomes far more visible than either earlier or later.*

Over the last thirty years, there has been a considerable amount of work published on the structures, role, and wealth of the Roman aristocracy in the tenth century. Especially important in English are the studies of Chris Wickham and Hendrik Dey, and in Italian those of Federico Marazzi, Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri and Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani, as well as the older but still essential work of Pierre Toubert.[1] In addition

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[1]   C. Wickham, '"The Romans according to their malign custom": Rome in Italy in the Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries', in J.M.H. Smith (ed.), *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 151–67; *idem*, *Medieval Rome: Stability and Crisis of a City, 900–1150* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 23–7, 190–7, 181–212. H. Dey, *The Afterlife of the Roman City* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 137–69; F. Marazzi, 'Aristocrazia e società (secoli VI–XI)', in A. Vauchez (ed.), *Storia di Roma dall'antichità a oggi, II. Roma medievale* (Roma, 2001), pp. 41–69; T. di Carpegna Falconieri, 'Appunti sull'onomastica femminile a Roma nel medioevo', in E. Caffarelli and P. Poccetti (eds), *L'onomastica di Roma [. . .] Quaderni italiani di RIOn 2* (Rome, 2009), pp. 261–8; *idem*, 'Le trasformazioni onomastiche e antroponimiche dei ceti dominanti a Roma nei secoli X–XII', *Mélanges de l'École Francaise de Rome. Moyen Age* 106 (1994), pp. 595–640; *idem*, 'La società romana nei secoli IX–XII e i rapporti patrimoniali fra conjugi', in J.-M. Martin *et al.* (eds), *L'Héritage byzantin en Italie (VIIIe–XIIe siècle) II. Les cadres*

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to these, and earlier studies,[2] there is now significant research on the importance of women in the west. Current work on the fundamental role played by early medieval women in the dynamics of family alliances, the transmission of family names, and the marshalling of bloodline and economic resources has been considerable, from the Frankish and Lombard/North Italian world scrutinized by Régine Le Jan and Cristina La Rocca, to the Italian Carolingian queens and their patrimonial and fiscal land, as explored by Tiziana Lazzari.[3] Such studies have focused largely on the considerable role of queens, abbesses, and other leading figures through the intermediary of monastic headship and administration, of which we will see some examples in tenth-century Rome too.[4]

The overall conclusions drawn by the authors who studied the Roman aristocracy focused on the gradual change from the ninth century – from a group whose power and role were closely linked with the papal

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juridiques et sociaux et les institutions publiques, Collection l'École Francaise de Rome 461 (Rome, 2012), pp. 75–10; idem*, 'Sistemi familiari a Roma in base ai cartari. Secoli X–XII', in E. Sonnino (ed.),* Popolazione e società a Roma dal medioevo all'età contemporanea *(Rome, 1998), pp. 199–219. R. Santangeli Valenzani, 'L'insediamento aristocratico a Roma nel IX–X secolo', in M. Royo, E. Hubert and A. Bérenger (eds),* Rome des quartiers: des vici aux rioni *(Paris, 2008), pp. 229–45. P. Toubert,* Les structures du Latium médiéval. Le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IXe siècle à la fin du XIIe siècle, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 221 *(Rome, 1973).*

[2] Classic work on aristocratic rule in Rome in the tenth century includes, in Italian: P. Fedele, 'Ricerche per la storia di Roma e del papato nel secolo X', *Annali della Società Romana di Storia Patria* [henceforth *ASRSP*] 32–4 (1910–11), pp. 177–247, 393–423 and 75–115; P. Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* (Bologna, 1947), pp. 113–25; and in German: O. Gerstenberg, *Die politische Entwicklung des römischen Adels im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1933); *idem*, 'Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Adels im Ausgang des 10. Jahrhunderts', *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 31 (1937), pp. 1–26; W. Kölmel, 'Beitragung zur Verfassungsgeschichte Roms im 10. Jahrhundert', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 55 (1935), pp. 521–46. H. Zimmermann, 'Parteiungen und Papstwahlen in Rom zur Zeit Kaiser Ottos der Grossen', *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 8–9 (1964–6), pp. 29–88. Recent work includes C. Wickham, 'Nobiltà romana e nobiltà italiana prima del Mille: parallelismi e contrasti', in S. Carocci (ed.), *La nobiltà romana nel Medioevo*, Collection l'École Francaise de Rome 359 (Rome, 2006), pp. 5–14, at pp. 5–9 and, in the same volume, A. Augenti, 'I ceti dirigenti romani nelle fonti archeologiche', pp. 71–96; and my own *Rome, Ravenna and Venice, 750–1000* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 125–46.

[3] R. Le Jan's bibliography in L. Jégou *et al.* (eds), *Splendor Reginae. Passions, genre et famille* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 15–22; C. La Rocca's in RI OPAC (https://opac.regesta-imperii.de/lang_en/autoren.php?name=La+Rocca%2C+Cristina), including her edited volume *Agire da donna* (Turnhout, 2007). For T. Lazzari, see *Le donne nell'alto Medioevo* (Milan, 2010).

[4] T. Lazzari, 'La rappresentazione dei legami di parentela e il ruolo delle donne nell'alta aristocrazia del regno italico (secc. ix–x): l'esempio di Berta di Toscana', in La Rocca (ed.), *Agire da donna*, pp. 129–49; *eadem*, 'Fondare una dinastia', in P. Galetti (ed.), *'Fondare' tra antichità e medioevo* (Spoleto, 2016), pp. 331–48. M. Betti, 'The Social Reproduction of the Roman Aristocracy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries. Liutprand of Cremona and the Women of the Pope', in I. Santos Salazar and C. Tente (eds), *The Tenth Century in Western Europe* (Oxford, 2023), pp. 90–8; *eadem*, 'Sull'uso del titolo di *senatrix*. Strategie di definizione e di rappresentazione di una parentela a Roma nel x secolo', *Nuova Rivista Storica* 104 (2020), pp. 627–60.

bureaucracy and its posts, clerical and lay, notably as palatine judges – to the elite of the tenth century. While even as the *primates* or *optimates* may have still used titles and official roles such as *vestararius* or *primicerius*, in reality this aristocracy had by then become increasingly detached from a papacy often dependent on them in terms of appointments. This led to the secular control of this aristocracy over the city in the form of political and military as well as administrative and judicial power, and to social pre-eminence. The terms may have changed little but control now rested with this group *as a secular elite* rather than as part of the Lateran papal administration, a change which may have been at least in part due to the defensive role it had exercised in repelling the Saracen attacks on the city. This pre-eminence, under the leadership of Theophylact, Marozia, Alberic, and then the Crescentii, was accompanied and supported by a vastly increased amount of economic wealth both in the city and in the Roman Campania, in Lazio, in Etruria and in the Roman Sabina. There this elite owned or leased land and settlements, sometimes brought together through different types of *incastellamento* and also through control of both patrimonial land and various rights, notably of justice.

In this paper, I discuss what I see as the reasons for the considerable role played by women across the social spectrum in Rome, and for their increased presence in the written sources. Maddalena Betti has argued that the role of women in ninth-century Rome was heavily dependent on their association, through family connections, with the popes.[5] My contention is that, in the tenth century, this was no longer the case; if their agency is still often connected with a family group (a secular aristocratic one), increasingly their legal and economic freedom to exercise power and handle property is now the justification for their high visibility. This visibility centres notably on the importance of cognatic family descent, as seen through the anthroponymy, and on the rules of Roman law. My argument is thus twofold. In the first instance, I wish to foreground how women were able to reach a level of political, economic, and social independence that had seldom been possible previously, and that would no longer be possible from the mid-eleventh century onwards. Secondly, I wish to show how and why, beyond the sphere of the aristocratic elite, women more generally, aristocratic or not, were able to achieve such visibility.

Several key issues on which I am basing my understanding have been analysed by di Carpegna Falconieri for the tenth century, through the transmission of names and descent and through the legal background to the transmission of property – as a result of marriage exchanges, for

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[5] Betti, 'Social Reproduction', pp. 97–8.

instance, inheritance, and property disposal. He has shown how the socio-legal situation favoured women through the reuse of late Roman and Justinianic law codes, enabling a society in which they, and especially mothers, could become a channel for male upward mobility. His study of Roman anthroponymy (both female and male), of matrimonial strategies, and of property ownership has shown conclusively the overwhelming importance of matronymics and thus of the transmission of names and descent through women.[6] I fully agree that the transmission of property through maternal descent, with or without the husband's assent, as well as the role of the maternal family in the creation of the family self-consciousness, especially when the paternal family was less prestigious, was favoured by the use of Roman law. In tenth-century Rome this was most commonly known in the form of the *Summa Perusina*, a sylloge of the Justinianic Code.[7] This made it possible for women not only to dispose of their property, including their inheritance and dowry, but also, crucially, to acquire property, not theoretically possible under Lombard law.[8]

Roman 'female aristocrats [had an] exceptional role that they played personally by participating in the political and patrimonial strategies played out by the parental group to which they belong'.[9] More generally, I would suggest that economic power enabled women to have not only the management of the property, but also of the family group involved in its interests, e.g. siblings, children, and even aged parents and relatives. This was clearly an accepted fact not just at the level of the aristocracy but well into the lower social strata, as we can see from the most basic agrarian contracts and from the practices of Roman artisans.[10] When such women were part of an important family group with estates, public rights, and control of religious centres – as were the Theophylact women and also, for example, the daughter of Stephen de Imiza, or the abbesses of S. Ciriaco – their ability to control the ruling elite in its political and social choices through family pressure is clearly evident.

[6]   Di Carpegna, 'Appunti sull'onomastica femminile', pp. 267–9; *idem*, 'Le trasformazioni onomastiche', pp. 595–640; and E. Hubert, 'Structures urbaines et système anthroponymique (à propos de l'Italie centro-septentrionale, Xe–XIIIe siècle)', in *L'anthroponymie document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux*, Publications de l'École Francaise de Rome 226 (Rome, 1996), pp. 313–47, at pp. 324–9.
[7]   Di Carpegna, 'Società romana', pp. 83–7; *idem*, 'Sposarsi a Roma. Alcuni aspetti del matrimonio tra VIII e XIII secolo', *Ricerche Storiche* 25 (1995), pp. 3–34 on the Roman and Lombard systems of dowry, in particular pp. 8–10 and 15, and note 9 on the implications of Roman law; for the *Summa Perusina*, on matrimonial and property law in Rome, P. Patetta, 'Adnotationes codicum domini Justiniani (Summa Perusina)', *Bullettino dell'Istituto di diritto romano* 12 (1900).
[8]   Di Carpegna, 'Società romana', pp. 83–95.
[9]   Betti, 'The Social Reproduction', p. 95.
[10] Di Carpegna, 'Sistemi', pp. 209–17.

I would go further. Such a social and economic trajectory was supported not simply by custom and law, but also by the revival in confidence of a secular aristocratic elite wielding actual power in the city – as opposed to one dependent on the papal court. This elite, with its renewed awareness of its secular Roman traditions in the past, did not feel that female authority and agency were irreconcilable with the traditional model of female roles. The idea that power might be exercised by women, notably through control or disposal of family resources, was accepted from Late Antiquity onwards. That it should have been exercised by dowager queens and empresses for a man unable to do so himself, especially within recent memory in Italy – in the case of Angelberga or Bertha of Tuscany – was also not unusual. That it should have been so widespread to a much lower social level, to Roman women from the lofty rank of Theodora to the wives of artisans and agricultural workers, is a key difference and a novelty in Rome.

The issue is not simply one of sources. There are certainly more of them in this period, not male-centred narratives like the *Liber Pontificalis* but instead charters and documents of immediate practical use guaranteeing legal rights. It is unsurprising that laymen and women should have need of such practical documents and thus, in an age of diminished top ecclesiastical production in the city, we find an increased number of these. Understandably too, their survival would be more easily guaranteed by their collection into monastic cartularies, as numerous transactions included monastic institutions as one of the parties. The well-documented change in Rome from the use of fragile papyrus to vellum also helped.[11] But the fact remains that we have such documents in much larger quantities than in the preceding centuries, when either the imperial service or the papal administration in Rome might have conceivably produced examples of individual transactions by individual Romans, but rarely did so.

The family of Theophylact and Alberic

We are used to a long tradition of Liutprandian misogyny carried out over centuries of traditional historiography in relation to the women of the Theophylact family.[12] This misogyny was not simply on account of

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[11]   C. Carbonetti Vendittelli, 'I supporti scrittorii della documentazione: l'uso del papiro' and *eadem*, 'Il sistema documentario romano tra VII e XI secolo : prassi, forme, tipologie della documentazione privata', both in Martin, *L'Héritage byzantin*, pp. 38–48 and pp. 88–115 respectively (esp. pp. 93–5 and 111–15).

[12]   Liutprand, *Antapodosis*, ed. P. Chiesa, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 156 (Turnhout, 1998) and trans. P. Squatriti, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (Washington, DC, 2007), Bk II chs 47–8; Bk III, chs 18, 43–6; Bk IV, chs 1–3 on the

his being a clergyman who disliked women, especially powerful ones. The point Liutprand bishop of Cremona makes when dealing with the women around Alberic is not primarily that they are powerful, but that they owe their power to being dissolute, using their sexual appeal to control men. This putting down of Theophylact and Alberic's family, rulers of Rome for over fifty years – which is his main purpose – was in order to exalt the restored order of Otto I, whom he served, and whom, as emperor, Liutprand regarded as the rightful leader of Italy and of Rome. But for him to make his point, he had to direct his rhetoric at the right people: Alberic himself naturally, but also the vast family through which he gained his rule and continued to exercise it, notably its female members.[13] I shall return to Liutprand in the conclusion of this paper. Here, I wish to highlight the high level of visibility of the women around Alberic,[14] and of the family's presence in the sources.[15]

Alberic grew up with grandmother Theodora I *vestararissa*, mother Marozia *senatrix*, and aunt Theodora II *senatrix*. He also had two

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Theophylact women and Alberic. For Liutprand on women, P. Buc, 'Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995), pp. 207–25 and C. La Rocca, 'Liutprando da Cremona e il paradigma femminile di dissoluzione dei Carolingi', in *eadem* (ed.), *Agire da donna*, pp. 291–307. To make the point further, he also tarred Alberic's son, Pope John XII, with the same brush, A. Grabowski, 'Liudprand of Cremona's *papa monstrum*: The Image of Pope John XII in the *Historia Ottonis*', *Early Medieval Europe* 23.1 (2015), pp. 67–92.

[13] Liutprand, *Antapodosis* and *Historia Ottonis* in the same edition. G. Arnaldi, 'Liutprando e l'idea di Roma nell'alto medioevo', *ASRSP* 79 (1956), pp. 23–34; *idem*, 'Liutprando di Cremona: un detrattore di Roma o dei Romani?', *Studi romani* 53 (2005), pp. 12–50.

[14] On Theophylact, F. Marazzi, 'Teofilatto (senatore romano)' and 'Teodora la Vecchia e Teodora la Giovane', in *Dizionario Enciclopedico del Medioevo* vol. 3, pp. 1897 and 1890; on Alberic, L. Halphen, 'Note sulle famiglie romane fra il IXe e il XII secolo', *ASRSP* 58 (1935), pp. 69–95; A. Arnaldi, 'Alberico di Roma', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* [henceforth *DBI*], vol. 1 (Rome, 1960), pp. 646–56; A. von Sickel, 'Alberich II und der Kirchenstaat', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 33 (1902) pp. 50–126; Toubert, *Structures*, pp. 24–46, esp. pp. 968–73; Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 190–7 and 'The Romans', pp. 159–66.

[15] The written sources about the family are very limited. Several key documents are found in cartularies of the monasteries associated with Alberic's monastic reform, especially Subiaco, SS Andrea e Gregorio, and SS Cosma e Damiano. On the Italian side, we have the letter of Archbishop John VIII of Ravenna to Theophylact, ed. S. Löwenfeld, 'Acht Briefe aus der Zeit König Berengars', in *Il rotolo epigrafico del Principe Antonio Pio di Savoia*, ed. A. Ceriani and G. Porro, in *Archivio storico lombardo* 11 (1884), pp. 1–34, at p. 00 and the 'Epistola Eugenii ad Theodoram', ed. P. de Winterfeld, Monumenta Germania Historica, Poetae latini aevi carolini 4.1 (Berlin, 1899), p. 419; and the entries in the necrology of S. Ciriaco, in *Necrologi e libri affini della Provincia Romana*, ed. P. Egidi (Rome, 1908–14). Narrative sources are Benedict of Soracte (henceforth BenSor) and the *Libellus de imperatoria potestate*, both in *Il Chronicon di Benedetto monaco di S. Andrea del Soratte e il Libellus de imperatoria potestate in urbe Roma*, ed. G. Zucchetti, Fonti per la storia d'Italia pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano 55 (Rome, 1920), pp. 1–187 and 191–210; and John the Deacon of Venice in the *Istoria Veneticorum*, ed. L.A. Berto (Bologna, 1999), Bk 4, no. 44. The main non-Italian source is Flodoard: *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. P. Lauer (Reims, 1905), trans. B. Bachrach and S. Fanning, *The 'Annals' of Flodoard of Reims, 919–966* (Toronto, 2004), esp. at 8D and 15A.
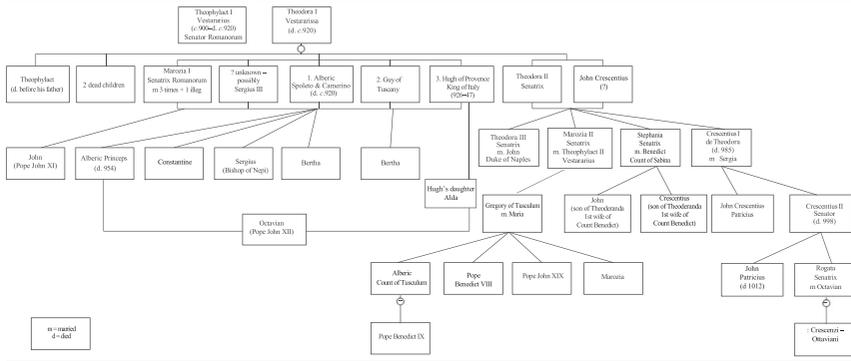
Fig. 1 Genealogy of the Theophylact/Alberic family

sisters, both called Bertha, from his mother Marozia's first two marriages (Fig. 1). His own wife was Alda, King Hugh's daughter. From his aunt Theodora II *senatrix* were descended three female cousins: Theodora III, Marozia II *senatrix*, and Stephania *senatrix*.

Theodora I, the wife of Theophylact *vestararius*, probably like her husband belonged to one of the Roman aristocratic families already in place in the ninth century. She was regarded by many men, for example the poet Eugenius Volgarius, as a wise and pious matron.[16] Both she and her husband were close to Pope Sergius III (904–11), then to John IX archbishop of Ravenna, whom Theophylact helped gain the papacy as John X[17] – a fact which was presumably at the root of Liutprand's later calumny that Theodora had been his mistress. Theophylact had gradually taken the titles of *magister militum*, *vestararius* and eventually *senator Romanorum*, a title that would remain closely associated with the family throughout the tenth century, for both men and women.[18] Theophylact and Theodora had five children,

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[16] As above notes 14 and 15, and a charter *c.*900 with a grant to SS Maria in Campo Marzio by Theodora and her husband for the souls of their two dead children, ed. A. Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio* 5 (Rome, 1831), p. 215. See also Marazzi, 'Teodora la Vecchia', and B. Hamilton, 'The House of Theophylact and the Promotion of Religious Life among Women in Tenth-Century Rome', *Studia Monastica* 12 (1970), pp. 195–217.

[17] BenSor, pp. 156–7; R. Savigni, 'Sacerdozio e regno in età post-carolingia: l'episcopato di Giovanni X, Arcivescovo di Ravenna (905–914) e papa (914–928)', *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 46 (1992), pp. 2–29, at pp. 13–14; and M. Rozein, 'Die acht Briefe der Rückseite des "Rotulus von Ravenna". Eine Briefsammlung zu Erzbischof Johannes von Ravenna (905–914)', *Archiv für Kirchengeschichte* 19 (2022), pp. 269–300.

[18] 927, in *Liber Largitorius vel notaries monasterii Pharphensis*, ed. G. Zucchetti, 2 vols (Rome, 1913–32), p. 82; and 927 in *Il Regesto Sublacense del secolo XI*, ed. L. Allodi and G. Levi (Rome, 1885) [henceforth *RS*], 62.

including a son also named Theophylact, who died before his father; the only daughters to survive were Marozia and Theodora II.

Marozia was condemned by Liutprand (again) for having had an affair with Pope Sergius III, and of allegedly having had with him a son, whom she later made pope under the name of John XI.[19] Whether this paternity was true or not, in 915 she married, with her father's support, the returning hero of the battle of Garigliano, Alberic duke of Spoleto and marquis of Camerino. With him she had at least four children: Alberic, Constantine, Sergius future bishop of Nepi, and a daughter Bertha. It is interesting that Marozia had been in a non-conventional relationship with someone from whom she had a son, the future John XI, and that Benedict of Soracte claims that Alberic took her 'not as a wife but according to the evil custom',[20] though her children's legitimacy was never questioned. As di Carpegna has shown, concubinage, as well as serial marriages, were as much part of the alliance strategies of the aristocracy in Rome as official marriages, and represented a chance for women to exercise political power since they were the carriers of the bloodline.[21]

In the early 920s, both Marozia's parents and her husband Alberic of Spoleto died. One immediate consequence was that in 926, Pope John X, changing sides, offered the crown of Italy to Hugh of Provence.[22] The risk to both Marozia's inheritance and the Roman aristocracy's autonomy was immediately countered by her decision to marry Guy marquis of Tuscany, Hugh's half-brother and enemy, thus clearly demonstrating the key political role that could be played by a woman's matrimonial alliances. Warfare erupted in Rome and its vicinity, with Marozia and Guy on the one hand and John X and his brother Peter, a major player in Roman politics, on the other. The latter was besieged in Rome and killed in the Lateran, while his brother Pope John X was imprisoned and possibly later killed. Guy died in 929 and thereafter Marozia ruled

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[19] For Marozia, apart from Liutprand, the main source is BenSor, pp. 158–66. T. Di Carpegna Falconieri, 'Marozia', *DBI*, vol. 78 (Rome, 2008), pp. 681–5; Fedele, 'Ricerche per la storia di Roma e del papato nel secolo X', pp. 200–6 and 215–18; Gerstenberg, *Die politische Entwicklung*, pp. 13–21 and 120–23; Wickham, 'The Romans', pp. 159–60. For the Theophylact women, Betti, 'The Social Reproduction', pp. 90–8 and 'Sull'uso del titolo di *senatrix*', pp. 627–60. On aristocratic consciousness, also V. West-Harling, 'The Roman Past in the Consciousness of the Roman Elites in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', in W. Pohl and C. Gantner (eds), *Transformation of Romanness* (Berlin, 2017), pp. 173–94.

[20] BenSor, pp. 158–9, 'non quasi uxor sed in consuetudine malignam'.

[21] T. di Carpegna Falconieri, 'Sposarsi a Roma. Alcuni aspetti del matrimonio tra VIII e XIII secolo', *Ricerche Storiche* 25 (1995), pp. 3–34; idem, 'Il matrimonio e il concubinato presso il clero romano (secoli VIII–XII)', *Studi storici* 41 (2000), pp. 943–71.

[22] Liutprand, *Antapodosis*, Bk III ch. 43; BenSor, pp. 159–60; Di Carpegna, 'Marozia'; C. Venni, 'Giovanni X', *Archivio della Reale Deputazione Romana di Storia Patria* 59 (1936), pp. 1–136, at pp. 71–2.

Rome as *senatrix Romanorum* and *patricia*. A 'woman of great power', Flodoard called her,[23] she was the mover and shaker in Roman politics, and she placed three popes on the pontifical seat, the third being her own son John XI, having forced the imprisoned John X to renounce the papacy. She had one child with Guy, another Bertha – perhaps significantly named after Guy's mother, the powerful Bertha of Tuscany. At this point, Marozia attempted an alliance with the Byzantine emperor, aimed at marrying off her daughter Bertha to Lecapenos' son – this took rather a long time and when the Byzantine ambassadors came to Rome in 933, she herself had lost power. Before this, however, she had attempted one last political move, another king-making alliance, which was to offer her hand to King Hugh, who naturally immediately accepted so as to gain control of Rome through her. In 932 they were married in Rome. By doing so, she embarked on a course which was deeply unpopular both with the Roman aristocracy, who prized their independent control over Rome above all, and with her son Alberic. Hugh was thrown out of Rome, and Alberic imprisoned both his mother and his brother Pope John XI. We lose trace of Marozia at this point, except for knowing that she was buried in S. Ciriaco, the Theophylacts' family monastery, where she was commemorated in the necrology.[24]

Marozia's sister Theodora II (d. before 945) was less controversial, and even Liutprand has nothing bad to say about her. She was traditionally thought to have married John Crescentius, with whom she had a son, Crescentius, who called himself, significantly, by his mother's name: Crescentius de Theodora.[25] He too married a forceful woman, Sergia.

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[23] Flodoard, ed. Lauer, 11C.

[24] Egidi, *Necrologi*; on S. Ciriaco, F. Martinelli, *Primo trofeo della S.ma Croce eretta in Roma nella Via Lata* (Rome, 1655), pp. 57–71; L. Cavazzi, *La diaconia di S. Maria in Via Lata e il monastero di S. Ciriaco* (Rome, 1908); *eadem*, 'Un monastero benedettino medievale in Roma: S. Ciriaco nella via Lata', *Rivista storico-critica delle scienze teologiche* 3 (1907), pp. 283–94; Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 68–78, 129–30, 210–12; A. Pazienza, 'Le donne di San Ciriaco e l'agire femminile a Roma nel X e XI secolo', in V. West-Harling (ed.), *Il monachesimo femminile in Italia nei secoli VIII–XI: famiglia, potere, memoria*, *Reti Medievali Rivista* 20.1 (2019), pp. 475–515; and F. Lazzari, 'I Teofilatti nel necrologio del sec. XI del monastero dei SS. Ciriaco e Nicola in via Lata', *Annali del Lazio Meridionale* 28 (2014), pp. 7–19. For the women's association with Alberic's monastic reform, Hamilton, 'The House of Theophylact'; I. Rosé, 'La présence "clunisienne" à Rome et dans sa region au 10. siècle: réformes et ecclésiologie monastiques d'Odon à Maïeul', in G. Spinelli (ed.), *Il monachesimo italiano dall'età longobarda all'età ottoniana, secc. VIII–X* (Nonantola, 2003), pp. 231–71.

[25] C. Romeo, 'Crescentius de Theodora', *DBI*, vol. 30 (Rome, 1984), p. 0; T. de Carpegna Falconieri, 'Giovanni di Crescenzio', *DBI*, vol. 56 (Rome, 2001), pp. 1–4; G. Bossi, 'I Crescenzî', *Dissertazioni della Pontificia Accademia romana di archeologia*, ser. 2, 12 (1905), pp. 49–126, at pp. 65–9; W. Kölmel, 'Rom und der Kirchenstaat im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert bis an die Angange der Reform', *Abhandlungen zur mittleren und neueren Geschichte* 78 (1935), pp. 28–9, 167; Toubert, *Structures*, pp. 1016, 1027, 1085–7; Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero*, pp. 149–70; Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 197–204; Lazzari, 'I Teofilatti', pp. 7–19, have all attempted to establish a genealogy of the family into the eleventh century.

Crescentius later rebelled, deposed a pope and replaced him, and fell out with Otto I, then became a monk at Sant'Alessio and died there.[26] He produced two sons, who were to be the masters of the city from the 970s onwards, John and Crescentius II, and a grandson likewise.[27]

Theodora II *senatrix* had three daughters, all three called *senatrices*: Marozia II, Stephania, and Theodora III.[28] The last married the duke of Naples John III and left Rome before 945. Marozia II married another Theophylact *vestararius*, with whom she had a son, Gregory of Tusculum, the ancestor of the Tuscolani family that ruled Rome in the early eleventh century, including giving it three popes.[29] Stephania married Count Benedict of Sabina and was given the city of Palestrina by Pope John XIII with *publica datione et functione*, becoming its ruler in 970. She seems to have been her husband's second wife, after Theoderanda. Stephania left Palestrina to her two stepsons, John and Crescentius, the children of Theoderanda.[30]

Another two women around Alberic were his half-sister the first Bertha, and King Hugh's daughter Alda. Bertha appears as a grantor to SS Andrea e Gregorio in a family grant of land in Lazio and on the Janiculum, together with her brothers Alberic and Constantine, and their two nieces Marozia II and Stephania (Theodora had left for Naples by then).[31] Alda was the presumed mother of Alberic's son Octavian, later Pope John XII.[32]

The first point to make is that, of course, these were women of property, which they leased, gave, or received in their own name. A sale of 949 has two Roman nobles sell land which they had originally bought from Marozia II.[33] She owned, for example, vineyards in

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[26] Epitaph in *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duschesne, 2nd edn (Paris, 1981), vol. 2, p. 256; photograph in Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero*, facing p. 160.

[27] 988, *Regesta Honorii Papae III*, ed. P. Pressutti (Hildesheim, 1978), pp. cxx–cxxi. Wickham has challenged this interpretation, claiming that there is no evidence to suggest that she was the Theodora who married John Crescentius, suggesting instead another woman of the same name – there seems to be no unequivocal evidence for a direct relation between the Theophylacts and the Crescentii through this branch.

[28] For Theodora (d. 969), see the Prologue of the Latin translation of the *Romanzo di Alessandro*, edited by the Archpriest Leo in Naples in the tenth century: ed. R. Pilone, *Monumenta ad Neapolitani Ducatus historiam pertinentia, Bartolomeo Capasso*, 1 and 2.1 (Salerno, 2008), 1, pp. 339–40. Theodora last appears in the *Monumenta*, 2.1, pp. 61–2. On the duchy of Naples, C. Russo Mailler, 'Il ducato di Napoli', in G. Galasso and R. Romeo (eds), *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, 2.1 (Rome, 1994), p. 369.

[29] Marozia II 949, RS 126; 959, RS 64; 961, RS 124.

[30] 1010, RS 199. V. Beolchini, *Tusculum II* (Rome, 2006).

[31] A. Bartola (ed.), *Il Regesto del monastero dei SS Andrea e Gregorio Ad Clivum Scauri*, Codice Diplomatico di Roma e della regione romana 7, Società Romana di Storia Patria [henceforth *SRSP*] 2 vols (Rome, 2003), vol. 1 [henceforth SSAG]: 945, SSAG 68.

[32] Liutprand, *Antapodosis*, Bk IV, ch. 3.

[33] 949, RS 126.

[34] 959, RS 64.

Albano, and a saltpan in Porto (which she gave to Subiaco in 959).[34] Stephania *senatrix* had been granted Palestrina, but she also had other properties, for example the *fundus* which she gave, together with her husband, to SS Alessio e Bonifazio in 987.[35] Alberic's cousins founded the monastery of S. Ciriaco near Alberic's *curtis* on the Via Lata, and granted it property both in the city itself and in the *suburbium*. This included land on the Isola Tiberina, a mill on the Tiber, and the nucleus of the monastery's wealth in South Etruria and the Agro Romano, notably in the areas of Sutri and Ariccia.[36]

Most of these women were also the wives of powerful men: Theodora I was *vestararissa* (a new title given to her on the model of her husband's); Marozia was the wife of Alberic I of Spoleto, Guy of Tuscany, and King Hugh; Marozia II married the *vestararius* Theophylact II; Theodora III wed the duke of Naples John III; and Stephania married Count Benedict of Sabina. They were therefore powerful both as wives of powerful men, and as owners and managers of vast properties. One could argue, therefore, that the Romans were used to women being in charge, at least of property, as well as bearing the highest title, that of *senatrix*. Women throughout the medieval period have always ruled as representatives of husbands and children, as widows and regents – but what made some of the women of the tenth-century Theophylact family special was the power they held in their own right. Marozia, especially, ruled not as her husband's wife or as regent for her son Alberic, but was acknowledged by her peers as the legitimate ruler of the city, which is presumably why King Hugh wanted to marry her – she was the ruler-maker in this alliance.[37] When Alberic moved her

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aside, he may have done so not because he did not accept her as a female ruler, but rather because he did not want control of Rome to go to an outsider. I would suggest that his problem was not with her being a woman, but with her endangering the family's power base.

Alberic used a whole range of people – major aristocrats with properties in the city and in Lazio, such as Benedict *Campaninus* and the de Imiza (incidentally also descended from a woman, Imiza, who gave her name to the family) – who constituted his court and his government agents in the city. There is only one official document as such from Alberic's rule, the *placitum* of 942 – his chosen methods of governing seemed to have been more personal.[38] He consistently used members of his family, like his brother Sergius the bishop of Nepi, and his three female cousins, to pursue his policies, notably that of monastic reform. This latter was one of his preferred tools for aristocratic control in Rome and its environs, with the implementation of a new aristocratic topography of power through reformed monasteries like S. Ciriaco, S. Biagio at Nepi, and Subiaco.[39] He turned what had been his birth home – the house where Theodora *vestararissa* and then her daughter Marozia had lived on the Aventine – into his first reformed monastery, Sta Maria de Aventino.[40] He did so by moving his own residence closer to what had been the imperial, then aristocratic, centre of power, the area at the beginning of the Via Lata, and establishing his *curtis* there.

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[38] *RS* 155.

[39] On Alberic's government and 'court', Arnaldi, 'Alberico di Roma' and Sickel, 'Alberich II'; Marazzi, 'Aristocrazia', pp. 119–25; Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 190–5 and 'The Romans', pp. 159–66; Toubert, *Structures*, pp. 974–98 and 1221–3. On Alberic's monastic reform, G. Antonelli, 'L'opera di Oddone di Cluny in Italia', *Benedictina* 4 (1950), pp. 19–40; A. Rota, 'La riforma monastica del princeps', *ASRSP* 79 (1956), pp. 12–22; Rosé, 'La présence "clunisienne" à Rome', pp. 231–71 and G. Barone, 'Gorze e Cluny a Roma', in S. Gouguenheim (ed.), *Retour aux sources* (Paris, 2004), pp. 583–90. For the increasing property development and influence of Subiaco and Farfa in Rome, I. Lori Sanfilippo, 'I possessi romani di Farfa, Montecassino e Subiaco, secoli IX–XII', *ASRSP* 103 (1980), pp. 13–89.

[40] On Sta Maria del Aventino, D. Gallavotti Cavallero and R.U. Montini, *S. Maria in Aventino (S. Maria del Priorato)* (Rome, 1984); A. Peroni and S. Riccioni, 'The Reliquary Altar of Sta Maria del Priorato', in Smith, *Early Medieval Rome*, pp. 135–50 at pp. 140, 148–50; R. Santangeli Valenzani, 'L'iscrizione di Teodora da Santa Sabina', in E. Mangani and A. Pellegrino (eds), *Scritti in ricordo di Gaetano Messineo* (Rome, 2016), pp. 345–54, at p. 353, demonstrates the importance of the family's investment as patrons of churches close to their own *curtes* already in Theophylact's time. On Alberic's encouragement of his aristocratic peers to invest in the monastic reform as a power tool, see B. Hamilton, 'The Monastic Revival in Tenth-Century Rome', repr. in *idem*, *Monastic Reform, Catharism and the Crusades, 900–1300* (London, 1979), pp. 25–67; Santangeli Valenzani, 'L'insediamento aristocratico', pp. 229–393; *idem*, 'Topographia del potere a Roma nel X secolo', in V. West-Harling (ed.), *Three Empires, Three Cities* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 135–55; *idem*, 'Aristocratic Euergetism and Urban Monasteries in Tenth-Century Rome', in E. Fentress and H. Dey (eds), *Western Monasticism Ante Litteram* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 273–87.

With little chance of it being a coincidence, Alberic's three cousins Marozia II, Stephania, and Theodora III chose the church of St Stephen near the *diaconia* of Sta Maria in Via Lata as the site of their female monastery. The church of the *diaconia* had itself been patronized by Theophylact and Theodora. The three sisters brought the relic of St Ciriacus from the cemetery of that name, to this new monastery, which was called S. Ciriaco at first, then SS Ciriaco e Nicola when the powerful Abbess Pretia at the end of the tenth century forced Otto III to give her a relic of St Nicholas. The monastery would become not only one of the most powerful, and in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the richest in Rome, but also the family monastery of the Theophylacts. Its original endowment came from family lands, granted by the three women. The foundation story of S. Ciriaco is most revealing. If not contemporary with the foundation in the 940s, I believe it to date in its fundamentals at the very least from no later than the end of the tenth century.[41] In the story, the route taken by the cart carrying the relics from the cemetery outside Rome to the site of the new monastery is an extremely tortuous one, with the cart taking a long time to cover a distance which could be travelled much more quickly in a direct line. The point of this circuitous route, the oxen plodding over land which is then promised by the three women to the new foundation, is that all the land they traverse belongs to the Theophylact family. Therefore, not only did the women who made the donations act both together and for the family, but they also acted as the creators, and later keepers, of the family memory by creating a necrology among whose entries were the names of Theophylact, Theodora, Marozia, and Alberic. The strength of the association between a vast monastic patrimony, a family group, and a monastery founded by them offers a clear demonstration of the family's power and influence in Rome.

The main reason that we know so much, relatively speaking, about the women around Alberic is also because, even when they acted with their husbands, their social status was sometimes superior. They were the *senatrices*, and Count Benedict or the *vestararius* Theophylact II were their social inferiors, so that it was the women's names which were highlighted. Alberic used all the tools at his disposal to control and rule Rome: this included his family, both male and female – and there were more of the latter. Men other than Alberic accepted women in positions of power, as wives, mothers, or abbesses. But the prestige of the

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[41] Santangeli Valenzani, 'Aristocratic Euergetism', pp. 282–5 thinks it may be contemporary with the late tenth-century foundation, while Wickham, 'La struttura', pp. 210–13 places it firmly in the twelfth century. I believe that, even if it may have only been redacted later, the core is based on a hagiographical memory dating from the foundation period.

Theophylact family, even more than its wealth, meant that anyone connected with it held the highest title in the city – women as well as men, as *senator/senatrix*, a title increasingly reserved to them. Children within the lineage, especially when the mother's was more elevated than the father's, associated themselves with her.[42] The sons called themselves *de Theodora* or *de Maroza*. Examples of filiation and naming after the mother were not limited to the people around Alberic, such as Stephen de Imiza, Crescentius de Theodora, and John de Miccina;[43] it was a fairly common practice in Roman society, including further down the social scale. Across the century, we have Benedict de Iulia, Sergius de Eufimia, and many others.[44] And let us not forget Gregory de Maroza de Theodora in 985 (who also appears in a charter of 980 as Gregorius *illustrissimus vir*, son of Marozia *senatrix*, i.e. Gregory of Tusculum) – note how he defines himself by both his prestigious mother *and* grandmother – and, as late as 1002, the John *urbis Romae prefectus qv de Benedicta* (son of Crescentius II and presumably his wife).[45]

If we only had the evidence of the women at the top of the tree, associated directly and indirectly with the Theophylacts, Alberic, and the Crescentii, we might not have been able to gain a similar insight into the visibility and role of women in tenth-century Rome in general. The second part of this paper, therefore, looks at the phenomenon more generally through a study of the conspicuous presence of women engaged in the life of the city.

The other women in the documentation

A very rough estimate of the documentation for Rome between about *c.*700 and *c.*1000, gives us about 256 texts (charters, placita, records in

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[42] Di Carpegna, 'Appunti sull'onomastica femminile', pp. 261–8 and *idem*, 'Le trasformazioni onomastiche', pp. 595–640; West-Harling, *Rome, Ravenna*, pp. 208–9 and 475–7.

[43] 966, RS 118; P. Fedele (ed.), 'Tabularium S. Mariae Novae ab an. 982 ad an. 1200', *ASRSP* 23 (1904), pp. 171–237; L.M. Hartmann (ed.), *Ecclesiae S. Maria in Via Lata Tabularium*, 2 vols (Vienna, 1895–1913), vol. 1 [henceforth SMVL]. 981, SMVL 10A (de Miccina). 975, SSAG 151. 981, RS 75 (Stephanus de Imiza). 979, C. Re (ed.), *Statuti della città di Roma* (Rome, 1880), pp. 3–9 (Crescentius de Theodora). On the de Imiza, K. Görich, 'Die de Imiza. Versuch über einer römische Adelsfamilie zur Zeit Ottos III', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* [henceforth QFIAB] 74 (1994), pp. 1–41.

[44] 901, RS 129 (Benedict de Iulia). 915, ed. in O. Vehse, 'Das Bündnis gegen de Sarazenen vom Jahre 915', *QFIAB* 19 (1927), pp. 181–204, at pp. 202–4 (Sergius de Eufimia). 947, RS 70 (Rozo de Imiza). 966, RS 118 (Theodore son of Rufina). 989, SMVL 17 (John de Constantia). 983, SMVL 11 (Leo de Sergia). 988, ed. G. Ferri 'Le carte dell'archivio Liberiano dal secolo X al XV', *ASRSP* 27 (1904) [henceforth Liberiano] 2 (Iohannes de Sergia). 1000, ed. L. Bruzza, *Regesto della Chiesa di Tivoli* (Rome, 1880) [henceforth Tivoli], 9 (Benedict de Pretia).

[45] 985, RS 138 (Gregorius de Maroza de Theodora) and Gregorius *illustrissimus vir*, son of Marozia *senatrix* in 980, RS 109. 1002, SSAB 1 (*Iohannes urbis Romae prefectus qv de Benedicta*)

narratives, and letters).[46] The great majority, 239, are for the period between 900 and the death of Otto III in 1002 (only 17 are pre-900). Of these 239, at least 146 include one or more female names.

Women with their male family

By far the most common documents – 82 of the 146 – are grants, leases, or sales in which husband and wife are involved, both named. Variations of this pattern include a transaction of one spouse with the consent of the other, or of a widow/widower mentioning themselves and the dead spouse. It is not always a wife transacting with the husband's consent – which happens when the property belongs to both, otherwise it is the wife alone who is named – but equally a husband who transacts with his wife's consent. For example Franco, a sub-deacon, in 989 sells property with the consent of his wife Cecilia, who witnesses the act, though she cannot write.[47]

   Such examples cover the whole social spectrum. At the highest end, Ingebald *dux*, rector of Sabina, and his wife Theodoranda, in 939 grant the castle of Bocchigniano in Sabina to Farfa.[48] Likewise Benedictus *comes* and his wife Stephania *illustrissima femina comitissa senatrix*, daughter of Theophylact II, make a large grant to the abbey of Sant'Alessio all'Aventino (henceforth SSAB) in 987.[49] We also have Imilga *gloriosa comitissa* and only second her husband Rainerius, who, in 968, grant a *casale* to SS Cosma e Damiano (henceforth SCD).[50] At the other end of the scale from these eminent aristocrats, there is Leo *sartor* (a tailor) and his wife Ada selling a vineyard in Sutri to SCD in 958,[51] and Gregorius *calzulario* (a shoemaker) and his wife Deodata making a sale to Subiaco in 974.[52]

   Another common occurrence is the granting to, or leasing by or to, several couples, such as the 919 lease granted to Mercus archpriest and his wife Petronia *and* to Andreas and his wife Stephania. This lease the same Mercus and Petronia, still with Andrea and Stephania, sell in

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[46]   This estimate is based on the personal database created by Chris Wickham, to whom I am very grateful for having granted me access.

[47]   989, in L. Schiaparelli, ed., 'Le carte antiche dell'Archivio Capitolare di S. Pietro in Vaticano', *Annali della Societa Romana di Storia Patria*, XXIV (1901), 5, pp. 393–496.

[48]   939, in *Il Regesto di Farfa*, ed. I. Giorgi and U. Balzani, 5 vols (Rome, 1879–1916), vol. I [henceforth RF], 372.

[49]   987, SSAB 3.

[50]   968, ed. P. Fedele, 'Carte del monastero dei SS Cosma e Damiano in Mica Aurea, X e XI', *ASRSP* 21 (1898), pp. 459–534 and *ASRSP* 22 (1899), pp. 25–107, 383–447 [henceforth SCD] and J. Barclay Lloyd and K.B. Einaudi (eds), *SS Cosma e Damiano in Mica Aurea* (Rome, 1998), SCD 93A

[51]   958, SCD, vol. 21, 6.

[52]   974, RS 66.

936.[53] In 927 Theodora and Anastasia, with her husband Leo, sell some saltpans to Theophilactus and his wife Christoduli *and* another couple.[54] Most spectacular and complex is the cession to Subiaco of lands at Mt Bulturella near Tivoli by a group of twenty-seven grantors, of whom sixteen are women: wives, sisters, and a grandmother.[55] Like the couples' transactions, this too might be seen as a typical situation reflecting the role of women in the family group, where they control several generations and sets of relatives in the way that they would no longer do once the dominance passes to the agnatic family from the mid-eleventh century onwards.[56]

The last example leads us to examine the kinds of relationship that the women named have with the men. The most common is as a wife, many mentioned *first* as the donors, lessees or buyers, before their husbands. Imilga *comitissa* is one such, in 968 listed before her husband Ranierius.[57] Similarly, Theodora and her husband Gratianus *consul et dux*, in the same year granted pasture to SCD.[58] Lower down socially are Rosa and her husband Benedict, who grant to Subiaco in 967,[59] while in 978 Mirandis and her husband Maurinus, with the consent of the Abbess Agatha, sell to John de Peroncio and his wife Sergia a piece of vineyard and other land, presumably originally belonging to S. Ciriaco.[60] Occasionally, we have widows too. In 913 Domnina, widow of Adrianus *dux*, sells to John *eminentissimus consul* land for development outside the Porta Flaminia.[61] Several grants of land are made to monasteries by various not otherwise known women: in 973 Marozia widow of Ursus;[62] and in 999 two women both called Theodora, one the widow of a Peter, who gives land next to Piazza Navona to Farfa,[63] and the other, widow of a Franco, who grants property to SCD.[64]

If many women define themselves as wives or widows, others also present themselves as daughters, sisters, and mothers. Daughters of famous parents in the grant of 945 by Alberic and his family to SS Andrea e Gregorio (henceforth SSAG) include Bertha his half-sister,

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[53]   919, RS 112 and 936, RS 43.
[54]   927, RS 62.
[55]   965, RS 149.
[56]   Lazzari, 'Fondare', pp. 342–8.
[57]   See note 50.
[58]   968, RS 52.
[59]   967, RS 42.
[60]   978, SMVL 8.
[61]   913, RS 115.
[62]   973, SSAG 74.
[63]   999, RF 441.
[64]   1000, SCD, vol. 21, 16–17.

and Marozia and Stephania, daughters of Theodora *Romanorum senatrix*.[65] In 991 and 992, Constantia *nobilissima*, daughter of Stephen de Imiza, and her husband John, grant lands outside the Porta S. Giovanni and Porta Portuense to SSAG.[66] Daughters of far less exalted people also define themselves through their filiation, most of the time as descendants of both a father and mother mentioned by name, like Theodora and Anastasia in 927, daughters of Leo prior of S. Paolo and his wife Pretiosa.[67] In 929, Stephania *diacona*, daughter of Stephen and Sarra, sells land in Regio III.[68] Other women also make reference to their kin as part of their identity. In 954 a lease in Tivoli is granted by the bishop to one Peter and his daughters Gregoria, Rosa, Bonofilia, and Benedicta;[69] and in 984 the lease of a *casale* outside Porta Maggiore is granted by Subiaco to a Leo *arcarius* and his wife Theodora *illustrissima femina*, as well as to their daughters Marozia, Adria, and Maria Rogata *illustrissime puelle*.[70] The complex cession to Subiaco in 965 by John son of Gottifrida, and numerous sisters of his along with other donors, is the best example of how these women perceive themselves.[71] Already mentioned as daughters in 927 are the sisters Theodora, Anastasia, and Lea, their father being Leo prior of S. Paolo;[72] likewise, the sisters Constantia and Theodora obtain a Subiaco lease in 981.[73] Filiation also comes into play when children define themselves as sons or daughters of a specific mother. At the top, in 988 we have again John and Crescentius *illustrissimi*, sons of Crescentius *consul et dux de Theodora* and his wife Sergia their mother,[74] and in 985 Crescentius *illustrissimus puer* and his brothers, defined as sons of Stephania.[75] Across the social scale, in 963 a Maroza *diacona*, together with Leo and his wife Iorga (Maroza's son-in-law and daughter), buy some vineyards, which ten years later Maroza gives to Subiaco and S. Erasmo for the souls of Leo and Iorga, obviously by then dead.[76] Benedict and Cecilia, children of Iannia, grant to Subiaco in 989 the port of the *fundus* Samponiano, in the Tiburtino, as Petronax got from 'our' kin – from Iannia? – for the soul of Petronax, who was their patron.[77]

[65] 945, SSAG 68.
[66] 991, SSAG 127 and 992, SSAG 128–9.
[67] 927, RS 62.
[68] 929, RS 92.
[69] 954, Tivoli 3.
[70] 984, RS 81.
[71] See note 53.
[72] See note 66.
[73] 981, RS 137.
[74] 988, *Regesta Hon. III*, pp. cxx–cxxi.
[75] 985, SCD, vol. 21, 10.
[76] 953, RS 117. 963, RS 123.
[77] 989, RS 163.

The above examples are ones where we have possession or tenancy of land by women in conjunction or by association with male members of the family. This is by far the most common pattern in tenth-century Rome. But it is not the only one. We need to add to these a sizeable proportion of transactions that show property given or received by women on their own.

Women transacting on their own

Of women as sole actors, many, understandably, are in a monastic environment as nuns or abbesses. The abbesses control the transactions of their nunneries, granting, selling, leasing, and appearing in court when these monastic properties are challenged. We have two abbesses of Sta Maria in Tempuli; five of SS Maria and Biagio in Nepi; one each for S. Bibiana ad Ursum Pileatum, SS Maria e Gregorio in Campo Marzio, and SS Maria e Nicola ad Aquas Salvias. Last but not least, there are the two great abbesses of SS Ciriaco and Nicola, Agatha and Sergia. While most of these women record one or two transactions each, Agatha undertakes nine and Sergia seven – far more than most other people involved in our documented land and property transactions in Rome. These transactions also all belong to the second half or even the end of the tenth century, which may therefore be a question of survival of the sources or a reflection of the takeover of some smaller female monasteries by larger ones, especially by S. Ciraco, which from the end of the tenth century becomes one of the richest monastery in Rome.

S. Ciraco's wealth is reflected in the growing role of its abbesses. Agatha is mentioned in nine transactions between 972 and 985 – grants, sales, leases, and an exchange of land; she is also involved in two disputes, one court case in 980 and an appeal to the pope in relation to a dispute with the *dux* Stephen of Arricia in 981.[78] Her successor Sergia is named in seven transactions.[79] But S. Ciriaco is also indirectly involved in the affairs of its adjunct monastery of S. Biagio in Nepi. Five of its abbesses are recorded in its books, including a Theodora, who is also challenging three brothers of Nepi in a court case, which ends with success for the monastery in 996.[80]

The abbesses engaged in transactions on behalf of their houses, and were therefore dealing with monastic and ecclesiastical property. But as well as nuns or women religious economically active on behalf of their

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[78]   972, SMVL 6. 978, SMVL 7, 8 and 9. 980 and 981, SMVL 10, and 10. A court case against
       Stephen of Arricia: 983, SMVL 11; exchange 985, SMVL 12; cession 985, SMVL 13.
[79]   987, SMVL 14. 988, SMVL 16. 989, SMVL 17. 990, SMVL 19. 991 x2, SMVL 20 and 21. 1000,
       SMVL 24A. 1001, SMVL 25.
[80]   990, SMVL 18. 996, SMVL 24.

monasteries, with or without the abbesses, we also have examples of nuns granting or selling their own property. These women defined themselves as *ancillae Dei* (sometimes as *diacona*). The definition could, and in some cases, probably did, apply to women religious living in their own homes, as must surely be the case for Marozia, who, in 952, gives to Subiaco some land and houses to set up a monastery.[81] But it may also have been a way around the issue of nuns owning private property, which may well be the case for the widowed nun Crista, who in 988 left some property in Sutri to her daughter Romana and son-in-law John, 'who helped her a lot in her widowhood'.[82] Similarly, Maria in 929 granted land to Subiaco,[83] and Anastasia daughter of 'Kalopetro the Greek', in 986 leased to SCD.[84]

Nuns were thus clearly still owners of property. But the nuns mentioned are also present in the documentation in other capacities, for example as consenting to a transaction on behalf of all their sisters in the monastery, and as named witnesses. At S. Biagio of Nepi, the nuns Eupraxia and Maria in 950 actually sign their names in Greek, and in 965 another nun does the same.[85] In 985 Abbess Agatha of S. Ciriaco is accompanied as a witness by Sergia *secunda* and Benedicta *tertia* in the cession of land for pasture in the territory of Arricia.[86] In 986 Eufrosina, abbess of Sta Bibiana, and Anna, abbess of Sta Maria in Campo Marzio, are the principal actors for a lease, but in both cases the transaction is carried out with the consent of the nuns of both monasteries, represented by Amiza and Theodoranda, and witnessed by Costanza and Maroza.[87] Even more striking is the document of 992 in which it is not just Marozza abbess of SS Maria e Nicola ad Aquas Salvias who is named, but also her nuns, as well as the witnesses Gregoria and Stephania.[88]

As well as the *diaconae*,[89] several women are priests' wives, transacting together with their husbands or sons. Most call themselves so, as did Petronia, wife of Mercus the priest,[90] and Pretiosa married to the priest

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[81]   952, RS 122.
[82]   988, SMVL 15.
[83]   929, RS 40.
[84]   986, SCD, vol. 21, 11.
[85]   950 and 965, SMVL 4 and 5.
[86]   985, SMVL 13.
[87]   986, ed. E. Carusi, 'Cartario di S. Maria in Campo Marzio: 986–1199', *Miscellanea Società Romana di Storia Patria* 17, 2 vols (1948), vol. 1, 1.
[88]   992, in 'Un antico ed unico documento sul monastero di S. Maria e S. Nicola in "Aquas Salvias"', ed. G. Gullotta, *ASRSP* 66 (1943), pp. 185–95. The very important issue of women's literacy is too complex to be dealt with here but a starting point is N. Giové, 'Donne che non lasciano traccia. Presenze e mani femminili nel documento altomedievale', in La Rocca (ed.), *Agire da donna*, pp. 189–209.
[89]   We have Maria/Marozza in 953 and 963, RS 117 and 123; a Stephania in 927, RS 62 and another (the same?) in 929, RS 92.
[90]   919, RS 112 and 936, RS 43; above note 52.

Leo.[91] Others such examples are Boniza and her husband Peter the priest and their son Adrian in 983,[92] and the priest Amatus and his wife Pretia in 1001.[93] There may have been increasing pressure on priests not to marry officially, and this is why we have some who are becoming more discreet, calling their wives simply *honesta femina*; Leo priest of SS. Quattro Coronati, for example, does so in 953 and 965 when mentioning Helena,[94] and Gregorius priest does likewise with Marozia in 978.[95] The context leaves no doubt that the women were indeed their wives. The issue of the marriage and concubinage of priests and the way one slid into the other precisely at this period, has been well studied.[96] However, if some discretion was increasingly needed, this did not preclude the open acknowledgement of a priest's married status as late as the early eleventh century, not even when the transaction was with a monastery like S. Ciriaco, from which the priest Amatus and his wife Pretia obtained a lease granted by Abbess Sergia.

My final and most arresting category is the far from negligible number of lay women owning and transacting property by themselves. Marozia (II) *senatrix*, who gives the saltpan to Subiaco in 959, says in the act of sale that this is her full property: *omnia iuris de me Marozia dominatione*.[97] In 969 Theodora aka Dulciza grants some of her property to the monastery of S. Silvestro,[98] and a Constantia aka Rosa (though with her son Peter this time), grants to SSAG a house in the Leonine city in 994.[99] Other women are recorded as the owners of property in the past. In 949 John sells to Anastasius land which he had bought from Marozia (II).[100] Women inherited property of which they later disposed, as did Agatha, who granted houses and vineyards inherited from her parents John and Sergia, artisans.[101] Such transactions were not restricted to the wealthier women. Leasing land from monasteries or the church, with the aim of cultivating it, also involved women on their own, who may have been the breadwinners. Subiaco granted several such leases, for example to Constantia and

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[91]   927, RS 62; see above note 53.
[92]   983, SCD, vol. 21, 9.
[93]   1001, SMVL 25.
[94]   953 and 965, RS 89 and 90.
[95]   987, SMVL 7.
[96]   Di Carpegna, 'Il matrimonio', pp. 943–71, at pp. 957–8.
[97]   959, RS 64.
[98]   A.G. Luciani, 'La donazione di una nobildonna romana del X secolo', *ASRSP* 121 (1998), pp. 47–54.
[99]   994, SSAG 172.
[100]   949, RS 126.
[101]   991, SSAG 79 (artisans; also, as witnesses, an *ortulano*, a cook, a weaver).

Theodora for properties in the Campus Martius.[102] The bishop of Tivoli, Amizo, in 992 also granted leases to various women, including Sergia, Lucia, Stephania, Benedicta, and another Stephania.[103]

Conclusion: the women of power and influence in tenth-century Rome

The examples given show a large variety of people – women of various social ranks from the *nobilissima* to the plain *honesta femina*, from the nun and the priest's wife to the agricultural worker to the artisan. They show sales, grants, leases, and exchanges with individuals as well as with institutions such as monasteries, of land, vineyards, pasture, mills, saltpans, and houses. One could argue, therefore, that the Romans were used to women being in charge, not only of property but also of economic and social power on behalf of their families.

This behaviour is very marked among the ruling secular aristocracy of Rome, whose awareness of a secular past founded on the Roman tradition of the *matronae* may well have made them more used to power through female descent and personal agency. As seen before, however, without Roman law's acceptance of female property and agency (which can also be seen in other areas of post-Byzantine Italy such as Ravenna, Gaeta, and Naples for example),[104] allowing women to hold, dispose of, and acquire property, such acceptance would be difficult to envisage. Economic independence, the traditions of the Roman aristocracy, and the example of family groups of such prestige as the Theophylacts, Crescentii, and de Imiza, thus contributed to the considerable role of women in tenth-century Rome.

This is precisely what non-Romans like Liutprand found so problematic. Liutprand was not necessarily writing out of misogyny: he was hugely supportive of, and indeed laudatory towards, the empresses Adelheid and Theophano as wives, mothers, and regents. But in Rome, it was not simply a case of glorifying women in 'supporting roles' as it were, women who did not hold power in their own name but for, and in the name of, a man deemed to be temporarily unable to do so himself. We saw that Liutpand's discourse required that he lower the role and behaviour of the family that the new Ottonian emperor wanted to supersede. In addition, as a cleric presumably promoting the Carolingian doctrine of Christian marriage, he might have understood,

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[102]   981, RS 137. 997, RS 141.
[103]   992, Tivoli 8.
[104]   Di Carpegna, 'Società romana', pp. 78–9; P. Skinner, *Women in Medieval Italian Society 500–1200* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 103–6.

though not condoned, the practices of concubinage or serial marriages that were part of the alliance strategies of the aristocracy in Rome (as they had been with Hugh), thus allowing women to exercise power as ruler-makers. Unfortunately, Liutprand's is the main, indeed one of the few, contemporary narratives which deals in detail with the Roman situation in the tenth century, and it has therefore remained for a long time the default. It became the cornerstone of most historians' views until fairly recently, and in the 1990s, the Roman tenth century was still described by some as the 'secolo di ferro', 'l'église aux mains des laics', and the 'nadir of the papacy'.[105] The last two are revealing expressions because, for these scholars, Rome was indeed without its 'natural' government by the papacy, and in the hands of the secular aristocracy. The historiography of the *Adelspapsttum* and of the subsequent debates of both Catholic and Protestant historians over the centuries has been summarized by Wickham.[106]

In this Rome of aristocratic government, women are far more visible than before. We can see them in the documentation, which further enhanced and projected their visibility, even allowing for the more abundant sources at this time and their greater survival rate. Sometimes these women speak with their own voice or, at the very least, with their own signature. They were the agents in their own economic transactions, they were awarded titles on a par with men, and sometimes, when their status was higher than a man's, the latter took his name and title from his grandmother and/or mother. Often, such women – like Marozia and Stephania – were not acting for or with the men, but themselves held the reins of power through family alliances and interventions in public life.

Given the number of such appearances in the documents, and given that such a large proportion among these women were lay persons rather than members of the elite, secular or monastic, we need to ask why. Is this a specific circumstance owing to the Theophylact family, which established a habit of female political, social, and economic pre-eminence – one seen with excessive distaste by ecclesiastical figures, who came to equate what they saw as the ebb in the history of Rome with its 'female' rule, known under the slur 'pornocracy'? As shown earlier, women in the tenth-century west were crucial instruments in the play of family power and heredity. Lombard queens and

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[105]   *Il Secolo di Ferro: mito e realtà del secolo X, Settimane* 38 (Spoleto, 1991); É. Amann and A. Dumas (eds), *L'Église au pouvoir des laïques (888–1057)*, vol. 7 of A. Fliche and V. Martin (eds), *Histoire de l'Église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1940); W. Durrant, *The Age of Faith* (New York, 1972), p. 537.
[106]   Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 13–17.

Carolingian empresses and abbesses – especially Louis II's wife Angelberga and other Supponid wives, and later on Adelheid, Theophanu, or Hroswith of Gandersheim[107] – had a key role to play in the politics and resources of the territory they helped control. But they were queens and empresses; Marozia and Stephania were not. The role of the Theophylact women, and their apparent acceptance by their peers, may be explained by family prestige and the awareness of the Roman past with its secular senatorial tradition – a tradition that Alberic wanted to uphold, at a time when papal dominance was at a low ebb. This lack of a papal and a local ecclesiastical narrative, and the need for legal private documents, both throw women into prominence. The sheer number of transacting women – like the widow Domnina, Anastasia daughter of 'Kalopetro the Greek', Theodora aka Dulciza, or Agatha the daughter of artisans – and the apparent ease with which they sold, granted, or leased land and inherited houses and vineyards, needs to be explained. To find the reasons, we need to look to the control they exercised within and beyond family groups, the permission they were granted to do so by Roman law and tradition, and possibly, also, the increased use of practical legal documentation. This is what may explain the high visibility of women at all levels in tenth-century Rome.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

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[107] For some among many examples, including the above, see the essays in T. Lazzari (ed.), 'Il patrimonio delle regine: beni del fisco e politica regia fr IX e X secolo', *Reti Medievali Rivista* 13.2 (2012), pp. 123–294; F. Bougard, 'Les Supponides: echec a la reine', in *idem et al.* (eds), *Les Elites au Moyen Age. Crises et Renouvellements* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 381–401; C. La Rocca, 'Angelberga, Louis II's Wife, and Her Will (877)', in R. Corradini *et al.* (eds), *Ego Trouble: Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010), pp. 221–6.