

**Acting Virtuously:
Ceremonial Displays of Imperial Virtue in Byzantium**

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Abstract

Recent work by various scholars on the political make-up of the Byzantine Empire has highlighted the fragility of the emperor's position and his dependence on popular support to keep his office. This thesis looks at the use of ceremony by Byzantine emperors to advertise their qualifications to rule according to medieval Roman sensibilities. The crux of this thesis is the tenth-century Byzantine text known as the *De cerimoniis*, or *The Book of Ceremonies*, an imperial handbook detailing the procedures regarding numerous imperial processions, feasts, and other ceremonies compiled on the order of Emperor Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos (r.~ 913-959). With this text and supplementary historical narratives, this thesis examines how history, space, and symbolism came together to associate Byzantine emperors with the ancient virtues of rulership as defined by Menander Rhetor (c. second/third century A.D.) – justice, temperance, bravery, and wisdom – essential for any legitimate *Basileus*.

Keywords: Ceremony; *De cerimoniis*; Byzantium; Virtues; Macedonian Dynasty;

Dedication

To my parents Tina and Al Greenall
Thank you for all your help in getting me this far.

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Abbreviations:

In general, throughout this thesis I have tried to refrain from excessive abbreviation when referring to the sources and scholarly work as I find it often causes inconvenience to the reader, if not at times outright confusion. That said, I do abbreviate. In most instances, this is when referring to works that have easily shortened names and should not pose an issue when trying to find the work in the bibliography, e.g. *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* becoming *The Byzantine Republic* in my footnotes. There are also some instances of more extreme abbreviation such as in the case of primary sources from authors who have either only produced one surviving work, or where I have only cited one of their works in the thesis. For example, Ioannes Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historiarum*, 3.2 is often abbreviated to just be "Skylitzes 3.2." It should be evident from the Bibliography which work I am referring to, but redundancy in pursuit of clarity is not a cardinal sin.

De cerimoniis

Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies; with the Greek Edition of the Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (Bonn, 1829). Translated by Ann Moffatt and Maxene Tall. 2 vols. Byzantina Australiensia 18. Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2012.

When using the above abbreviation, it refers to the text of the *De cerimoniis* / *The Book of Ceremonies*, the principal text of this thesis. When referencing the translation work of Ann Moffatt & Maxene Tall which shares the same pagination as *De cerimoniis*, I make this clear by using the abbreviation 'Moffatt & Tall' followed by the page number. All of this should be clear from context provided in the citations themselves.

Glossary:

The following definitions are, unless otherwise specified, based on those provided in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, a three-volume set compiled by Alexander Kazhdan. The set as a whole is cited in the bibliography with the page numbers for the sections used provided at the end of each definition in this glossary.

Aktouarios

A senior member of the Hippodrome staff who coordinated with the emperor regarding imperial ceremony therein. Moffatt, “Glossary”, 826.

Archon

A designation denoting power and authority over others. In some examples, it can mean the most powerful or exalted of a group, eg. *Archons* of the *kouboukleion*. 160.

Atriklines

A courtier charged with organizing imperial banquets, including seating arrangements and such. A comparatively low rank in the hierarchy. 227.

Augustaion

A large enclosed courtyard in the space between the imperial palace, the *Hagia Sophia*, and the Hippodrome. The site of several monuments to imperial glory. 232.

Basileus

Literally, this term means king in ancient and modern usage and was always used in the Greek East in reference to Roman emperors rather than less explicitly royal titles common in the

Latin word like *imperator*. This became the official title of the Roman sovereign as the empire became increasingly Hellenized in the seventh century. 264.

Basilika

A collection of laws composed in six volumes under the early Macedonian dynasty. This consisted of a curation of Greek translations of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, the definitive law code of Justinian, with supposed superfluous materials omitted. 265.

Demarchos

The *Demarchoi* were the leaders of one of the Byzantine ‘factions’. Two of the teams (Green and White) were subsumed under the more popular teams (Red and Blue). All of these teams were famous for participating in the chariot races in the Hippodrome, but they also fulfilled other functions when the time called for it. The title is generally given with its associated colour. 602-603.

Demokrates

The *Demokratai* seem to have been a designation that the more illustrious *domestikoi* assumed as a representative for the two more prominent circus factions (Reds and Blues) in some ceremonial contexts. Moffatt, “Glossary” 828.

Domestikos

This title is indicative of one who was the head of a specific bureau, particularly a military posting in the context of this thesis. These military postings were to head the different divisions of the *tagmata*, the personal troops of the emperor as opposed to thematic troops. The most prominent of these officials was the *Domestikos ton Scholon* (the position was split in two

in the late tenth to eleventh centuries between East and West), but there were others such as the *Domestikos ton Exkoubiton*, *Domestikos ton Noumeron*, or the *Domestikos ton Hikanaton*. 646-648.

Droungarios

During the seventh and eighth centuries, a *droungarios* represented a high military rank between a *tourmarches* and a *komes*, commanding around a thousand men. Between then and the eleventh century, however, the post gradually lost its grandeur and its pay until it was barely above that of a common soldier and was merged with *komes*. Still, in between this time many important and influential men served as *droungarioi*, particularly in positions close to the court and the emperors. 663-664.

Eidikos Logos

The official in charge of the *Eidikon*, an imperial treasury that consisted of valuable goods such as silk and other wares not including ready cash. 681.

Ekloge

An eighth-century legal handbook intended to help define the most important precepts in Roman law while also making some updates to the punishments around certain crimes centered around morality. It remained very influential in later attempts at creating good guides to the most important facets of Roman law in the Macedonian period. 672.

Hebdomon

This suburb of Constantinople was situated along the Sea of Marmara and contained an important military camp along with a harbour. It represented a site from which many a triumphal

commander entered the city either arriving by the harbour from the East or marching there before entering through the Golden Gate. 907

Katepano

This term had many usages in different contexts, but for our purposes it was either a military designation of a commander of some description, or one title of certain kinds of governors of important provinces in the tenth and eleventh century. 1115.

Kathisma

The emperor's box in the Constantinopolitan Hippodrome. 1116.

Komes of the Walls (ton teicheon)

An official in charge of overseeing the walls in the capital and certain prisons. His exact responsibilities are not entirely clear outside of this vague description. 1140.

Koubikouarios

This eunuch palace position was one of many who collectively formed the *Kouboukleion*. This cadre of servants formed a very close connection to the emperor and fulfilled many functions or duties both reserved for the group, or more general fiscal, administrative, or even military posts. The most highly placed were the *praipositos*, the *primikerios* or the *parakoimomenos*, The *koubikouarioi* featured very prominently in imperial entourages throughout the *De cerimoniis*, particularly the *praipositoi* who were in charge of ceremony organization. 1154

Krites

The word for judge in Byzantine Greek. 1078.

Logothetes

The *logothetai* were officials in charge of bureaus, similar to the *domestikoi*, but with less martial purviews. The most famous of the *logothetes* were the *logothetes tou dromou* and the *logothetes tou genikou*. The *logothetes tou genikou* was a treasury official in charge of taxation, land assessment, and revenues. The *logothetes tou dromou* was an official with a variety of responsibilities from foreign affairs to the protection of the emperor and, most importantly for our purposes, ceremonial duties. There were other *logothetai* in the Middle Byzantine civil administration, but they are less involved in ceremony and their duties get increasingly murky and speculative. 829-830. 1247-1248.

Magistros

A high-ranking dignity the hierarchy of tenth-century Byzantium. 1267.

Mese

The *mese* represents the main artery of the Byzantine capital and the main processional route for imperial triumphs. It went from the *milion*, the first milestone of the empire from which various distances were measured, to the Golden Gate near the coast of the Sea of Marmara, or towards the gate to Adrianople (the *mese* actually forked near the middle and went north). Just behind the *milion* was the some of the most important structures of the empire including the Constantinian Palace, the Hippodrome, and Hagia Sophia. From here, the *mese* connected this node to the walls of the capital through numerous major sites such as the various forums of the city (the Forum of Constantine, the Forum of Theodosius, the Forum of the Ox, and the Forum of Arcadius). 1346-1347.

Notarios

An imperial official working as a secretary or scribe within many of the various bureaus of the empire's government such as the *genikon*, the *dromos*, etc. 1495.

Ostiaros

The term itself comes from Latin and meant doorkeeper. This high-ranking eunuch was in charge of introducing foreign dignitaries to the court and the emperor. 1540.

Patrikos

A court title that is etymologically linked to the Ancient Roman status of Patrician. By the tenth and eleventh centuries, this was a very prestigious title given to important governors and generals which sometimes included eunuchs. 1600.

Porphyrogennetos/Porphyrogennetai

Literally 'purple-born', this status was conferred on children born to sitting emperors (children born to empresses in the porphyry-decorated imperial palace). This designation was, from the tenth century onwards, used as a way to accentuate the dynastic legitimacy of the bearer. 1701.

Praipositos

High-ranking *koubikoularioi* which were primarily concerned with the successful planning and performance of Byzantine court ceremony. 1709.

Primikerios

A title held by high-ranking eunuchs of the *kouboukleion*. 1719.

Proskynesis

A gesture of respect and supplication, this could range from a small bow to full prostration before the sovereign. This was expected of those who came to hold an audience with the emperor, particularly when seated on the throne. When it came to foreign dignitaries, this often unfolded in multiple stages as the dignitary came closer to the emperor. 1738.

Protonotarios

The leader of a group of *notarioi* serving under either the emperor himself, or under the direction of another official, such as a *logothetes*. 1746.

Protospatharios

A high-ranking dignity. Originally reserved for theme commanders, it was gradually opened up to civilians. It usually conferred membership in the senate and *protospatharioi* often accompanied emperors in various ceremonies. 1748.

Protostrator

The head of the imperial stables. His role seems chiefly to have been the accompaniment of the emperor while on horseback. While this was not a highly prestigious role in our period, it did provide very direct access to the emperor and many careers were assured because of success in this role, notably that of Basileios I. 1748.

Sakellarios

A long-lived title whose functions changed radically over many centuries. Around the eighth century, this was a fiscal official in charge of the treasury of the *sakellion*. By the mid-

ninth century however, this changed into a kind of general overseer with *notarioi* across many different bureaux. In our period at least, a powerful individual. 1828-1829.

Silentiarios

Originally an official that would ensure silence and order within the imperial palace. Over centuries, the positing became more of a title than of a real job. The last reference to the title was in the reign of Nikephoros Phokas. 1896.

Spatharios

Literally ‘sword-bearer’, this office originally denoted one of the emperor’s personal bodyguards. By the Middle Byzantine period however, this had become a most ceremonial title that quickly lost its importance before disappearing entirely in the late eleventh centuries. 1935-1936.

Strategos

The ancient word for general, this term took on new meaning in eighth-century Byzantium as the title for the military governors of the new administrative units of the Middle Byzantine period, the themes. 1964.

Tagmata

Under Konstantinos V (r.741-775 A.D.), this general term for regiment found new meaning as a specific military force under the direct control of the emperor in part to counter the great power of the *strategoï*. 2007.

Taxis

A multifaceted term, *taxis* could be very concrete and refer to specific positions, roles, or orders. These included ranks at court, class, governmental bureaus, or troops. In a more abstract sense, this could include ideas ranging from etiquette, to the harmonious hierarchical societies of men (as well as that of heaven, with which the Byzantine court was supposedly analogous). Order is probably the most all-encompassing rendition of this term into English. 2018.

Theme (Thema)

Military and administrative districts of disputed provenance generally headed by a *strategos*. 2034-2035.

Introduction: The Virtuous Emperor

On March 9th, 1044 the emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos opened the customary feast day procession in honour of the Forty Martyrs.¹ He walked with his guards to the Chalke gate, one of the points of intersection between the palace grounds and Constantinople at large.² A combination of word of mouth from those many Romans and aliens who worked within the palace, the visible preparations that occurred in the days leading up to imperial processions, and the regularity of the calendar of imperial ceremony all ensured there was always likely to be an assembled crowd watching whenever the emperor left the palace grounds.³ As Konstantinos stepped out of the gate, acclamations rang out, both from the members of the faction, whose duty it was to lead by example and encourage others in the crowd to acclaim the emperor, and those from the citizenry at large. Just as Monomachos was about to mount his horse for the next stage of the procession, a voice cried out “we don’t want Skleraina as empress, and we don’t want our

¹ This ceremony is covered in *De cerimoniis*, Book II, Chapter 13, 557-563.

² This important gateway has actually received much scholarly attention, mostly due to its relation to the larger narrative of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Debates regarding the intensity of First Iconoclasm have led to the reexamination of Leon III’s supposed dismantling of an icon of Christ prominently featured on this gate. For more, see Brubaker, “The Chalke Gate, the Construction of the Past, and the Trier Ivory” 258-285; Haldon, “Evidence from Rome for the Image of Christ on the Chalke Gate in Constantinople”, 286-296. The most concise summary of the whole affair can be found in Brubaker and Haldon, “The Problem of the Chalke Icon”, 128–35. See also the older Mango, *The Brazen House*.

³ Looking at the *De cerimoniis* (also known as Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos’ *Book of Ceremonies* – more on this later) and the various imperial processions that fell on various feast days, see Moffatt “Introduction”, ix-xi, we can see a regular calendar to the ceremonial life of the capital. This is something that the entire populace of the city would have been at least aware of as often it lined up with existing religious holidays not to mention advertisement; public ceremony is rather pointless if no one is around to watch. For another, more humble example of the calendrical nature of ceremony, see Nesbitt and Wiita, “A Confraternity of the Comnenia Era”, 360-384.

mothers, the *Porphyrogennetai* Zoe and Theodora, put to death on her account”!⁴ With this cry, a riot broke out as the people tried to lay their hands on the emperor and his entourage. Anger only subsided when the *porphyrogennetai* were put before the crowd, assuring it of their health and their long-term safety.

This thesis will examine imperial ceremony as a form of dialogue between the government and the people. Here court ceremonial will be seen as a means by which one could associate emperors with the values expected of them in Byzantine society. This is reflected above where Konstantinos Monomachos attempted to use a religious procession to highlight his personal piety. For the ceremonies themselves, the tenth-century text *De cerimoniis* – an imperial handbook describing the proper procedures for the carrying out of various ceremonies – will serve as the bedrock of this examination, complemented by other more specific accounts from roughly contemporary sources. The virtues on display in these ceremonies will be examined through the work of Menander Rhetor, a 4th c. rhetorician whose works remained influential well into the Middle Byzantine era. The four virtues, which mark kingship in his work: courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom, form the core of this thesis’ investigation into the projection of values through ceremony. Furthermore, I will argue that these values were connected with

⁴ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 22.7. Quote from John Wortley’s translation *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 408-409 (with slight emendation from *Porphyrogennetoi* to *Porphyrogennetai*, the feminine plural form). To explain this debacle briefly, Konstantinos came to the throne by marrying Zoe, one of the two empresses installed after the downfall of Michael V. She, being older by then, was apparently not terribly bothered that he took as a mistress the much younger aristocratic Maria Skleraina. The people of the city were agitated and thought that he meant to do away with the Imperial sisters to make room for his mistress. One poem of Ioannes Mauropous seems to reference the popular concern around Skleraina, wishing that Christ would be Konstantinos, Zoe, and Theodora’s fourth person (presumably, rather than Skleraina), Mauropous, *The Poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous*, 54 (427-437p). The degree to which Monomachos saw the throne as an excuse to relax and ignore matters of state as Psellos states in his *Chronographia* 6.29-41 has been questioned by recent scholarship. Kaldellis in his survey of the tenth and eleventh centuries takes a decidedly laudatory tone towards the emperor, reappraising his reign as one characterized by energetic governance, Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 179-213. Still, it is clear from the incident above, other words Skylitzes had to say on the matter *Synopsis Historiarum*, 22.7:28-34, and the words of Psellos 6:59-60, the domestic situation was not the most popular aspect of the regime.

specific locations in the capital. This was not lost on imperial officials who sought out particular venues to enhance or otherwise modify their intended messages. Taken all together, this thesis will examine the ways that expected imperial virtues were manifested in ceremonial, how this related to the long history of Greco-Roman imperial governance and society, and how certain spaces became associated with these virtues and could be used to magnify the messages on display.

A core tenet of this thesis is therefore that ceremony was a form of dialogue. Recent work emphasizes the role that ceremony played in allowing the masses a venue for communication with the administration in premodern societies.⁵ This was necessitated, so argues Peter Van Nuffelen, by a comparatively underdeveloped bureaucracy, which was not robust enough to mediate between rulers and ruled to the same degree as many modern western nations.⁶ While scholars like James Howard-Johnston, who speak of an “intensively governed” Byzantine polity might argue that the bureaucracy was anything but underdeveloped,⁷ Van Nuffelen’s argument emphasizing the need of emperors to effectively communicate with their subjects still stands. Even today, in modern nation states governed by robust bureaucracies, people similarly resort to public appeals to their leaders when it comes to problems they feel they can not articulate to other officials for a myriad of reasons. Following the 2015 Canadian Federal Election, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau attended a series of ‘Town Hall’ meetings around the country to hear grievances and problems. Many of the issues raised in these meetings might ordinarily have been outside the purview of the Prime Minister’s office, yet the PM’s readiness to listen was ideologically crucial to projecting the image of a caring government and distancing the Prime

⁵ Van Nuffelen, “Beyond Bureaucracy: Ritual Mediation in Late Antiquity”, 233-235.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁷ Howard-Johnston, “The Peira and Legal Practices in Eleventh-Century Byzantium” 74.

Minister from the image of his more reclusive predecessor. Perhaps Trudeau was inspired by the eleventh-century Byzantine author Kekaumenos who advised emperors to leave the capital on similar excursions:

“[...] go out into the lands which are under you, and into the themes, and see the injustices which the poor suffer, and what the agents sent by you have done, and whether the lower classes have been unjustly treated, and set everything right. The themes of the Romans, and the lands of the peoples under you will know that they have an emperor and a master watching over them [...]”⁸

Such interactions are also reminiscent of an account of the emperor Theophilus (r.829-842). The eleventh-century historian Ioannes Skylitzes wrote that the emperor’s zeal for justice drove him to regularly proceed through the city, from the Great Palace to Blachernae, specifically for the purpose of “[rendering] himself accessible to all, especially to those who had suffered injustice.”⁹

In general, popular communication in Byzantine ceremony took two main forms: petition, acclamation. Petitions were often precipitated by individuals who sought redress for wrongs done to them which normal administrative processes had failed to resolve. These were generally personal requests, unrelated to larger public concerns. Though much modern literature focuses on their written form,¹⁰ the historical record attests numerous public petitions, which

⁸ Kekaumenos, *Consilia et Narrationes*, 103.18-103.103.33. trans by Charlotte Roueché.

⁹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum* 4.3, trans by John Wortley, *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 53.

¹⁰ See Hauken, *Petition and Response*; Kelly, *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt*. Roman Egypt making an attractive geographic region to study given the survival of textual evidence in the dry desert climate. Also, the majority of the work within Feissel and Gascou, *La Pétition à Byzance*, 125-140. But, of course, how could it be otherwise? Written petitions are far more likely to survive a millennium or so than those delivered verbally, in person, which themselves only survive if written about.

often interrupted ceremonies and put officials on the spot.¹¹ Though these affairs often involved personal matters, their public nature was of concern to imperial authorities given the centrality of justice in notions of imperial legitimacy.¹² As a consequence, the successful resolution of a private legal matter brought into the public domain through such remonstrations could have implications beyond the case itself.

A more common connection between ceremonies and communication, however, was the acclamation. Acclamations were shouts or chants that were cried out by the audience during imperial appearances to signal approval of imperial policies or conduct.¹³ Those instances when acclamations were baked into ceremonial were, however, also critical moments for voicing displeasure. Instead of vocal praise, an emperor might suddenly be met with loud criticism, or, in especially dangerous circumstances, phrases that might question his legitimacy and thus presage violence.¹⁴ Acclamations, and their photonegatives, could be used in a spontaneous fashion (or presumably by prior arrangement). Most acclamations, however, seem to have involved in some fashion the Constantinopolitan demes.¹⁵ In *De cerimoniis*, significant time is dedicated to outlining detailed, case by case blueprints for such acclamations.¹⁶

¹¹ Among the most famous is the interruption of a procession led by the emperor Theophilos during which a woman recognizes his horse as her stolen property (the horse arrived in the possession of the emperor through a thieving subordinate who gifted the animal to the emperor after the theft), *Theophanes Continuatus*, 3.7. Chapter 1 begins with another such occurrence, this time a woman interrupting a race at the Hippodrome to petition for redress against thieving bureaucrats, Anonymous, *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople*, 150-153. In both instances Theophilos is remembered for his justice in determining the veracity of the claimants' stories and punishing the wicked.

¹² For more on the centrality of justice to legitimacy, see Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867-1056*, esp. 16-44. See also Humphreys, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era*.

¹³ For information on acclamations generally, see Rouché, "Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias." 181-199.

¹⁴ Kaldellis notes a few particularly dangerous phrases for an emperor to hear in *The Byzantine Republic*, 92.

¹⁵ For more information on the roles of the demes, see Cameron, *Circus Factions*, esp. 155-311.

¹⁶ Some separate chapters devoted to acclamations can be found *De cerimoniis*, 35-70, while many ceremonies have statements similar to that found in *Ibid.*, 186, "...δηλονότι και τῶν δήμων κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς ἀκτολογούντων ἐν τοῖς τόποις αὐτῶν." That "the demes as usual reciting their acclamations at their positions." Translation from Moffatt & Tall *The Book of Ceremonies*, 186.

How did all this work in practice? In the eleventh-century example at the opening of this chapter, the people of the city interrupted an imperial ceremony meant to highlight the emperor's piety. As related by Skylitzes, the people had a specific grievance with the emperor: his favour for his mistress Maria Skleraina and the impact of his affair on the elderly Macedonian heiresses Zoe and Theodora.¹⁷ Popular displeasure was a legitimate concern for Konstantinos, as his immediate predecessor Emperor Michael V Kalaphates (r.1041-1042) had himself been overthrown by the people after a city riot that followed his attempt to sideline Zoe.¹⁸ Skylitzes was therefore not exaggerating when he stated that if not for the empresses' soothing words "many would have perished, possibly including the emperor himself."¹⁹ Clearly it was in the best interest of emperors to heed the wishes of the populace.

However, it was not just concern for their physical safety that made emperors listen to the people. As hinted at above, emperors were expected to at the very least pay lip service to the wishes of the governed, who were themselves more involved in politics than previously assumed. Newer readings of Byzantine political culture recognize the significant role of popular participation in the political life of the Empire. Rather than the autocratic and absolutist state structured around a theocratic "Imperial Idea", Byzantinists now recognize in Byzantium a polity where any given administration was ultimately dependent on the people's acquiescence to the

¹⁷ Attaleiates at least seems positive on the capabilities of Theodora, stating that she ruled capably after the deposition of Michael V, *The History*, 26, and her sole reign after the death of Monomachos was apparently pleasing to God 92, 94. Psellos is less charitable. He classifies both imperial sisters as unfit to rule, particularly Zoe who, though popular, was far too liberal with her spending which resulted in havoc for the treasury, 6:1-11.

¹⁸ Vryonis, "Byzantine Democratia and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century", 303-314; Krallis, "'Democratic' Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium: Michael Attaleiates' 'Republicanism' in Context", 35-53; Lounghis, "Χρονικόν Περί Της Αναίρέσεως Του Αποβασιλέως Κύρου Μιχαήλ Του Καλαφάτου, Του Γεγόντος Καίσαρος, Και Των Κατ'αυτήν Συμβάντων", 75-104, and Kaldellis, "How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium: The Role of Public Opinion in Sedition and Rebellion", 43-56.

¹⁹ καὶ εἰ μὴ τάχιον αἱ βασιλίδες προκύψασαι ἄνωθεν κατεστόρεσαν τὸ πλῆθος, ἀπωλόλειςαν ἂν οὐκ ὀλίγοι, ἴσως δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 22, 7.24-26. Translation taken from John Wortley's *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 409.

emperor's rule.²⁰ This newer analytical framework recognizes Byzantium as part of a longer political tradition that extends from the Roman Republic to the Middle Ages. Such continuity was not reflected in a direct replication of political structures,²¹ but in the persistence of the belief that power lay in, and officials were responsible to, the people of the polity.²² This take on Byzantine politics is coupled to a greater willingness on the part of Byzantinists to acknowledge the Byzantines' Roman identity. This framework has been expressed before and is therefore not entirely new.²³ It is, however, most clearly articulated in a pair of recent books by Anthony Kaldellis: *Hellenism in Byzantium* which deals with Byzantium's Roman identity and *The Byzantine Republic* which focusses on Byzantine politics.²⁴ The upshot of this analysis is that rather than using violence to hold on to power, most emperors understood that forceful reactions to popular action could severely undermine their legitimacy as just and benevolent custodians of the Roman polity. Interactions with the public were then always fraught with the potential for or political missteps and thus, disaster.²⁵

If ceremony was so dangerous then, why did emperors nevertheless resort to it like clockwork, participating in numerous public events throughout the calendar year? Besides the

²⁰ For an explicit statement regarding what the old Imperial Idea in Byzantine studies was regarding the emperor's role in Byzantine society, see Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204-1330*, 29-115. Suffice to say, the emperor was seen as a sacral ruler of divine characteristics, a characterization arrived at in large part by taking panegyrists at face value. For older examples, see also Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*; Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium*.

²¹ The offices in many instances did continue, though they had different responsibilities and functions.

²² For example: Krallis, "'Democratic' Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium: Michael Attaleiates' 'Republicanism' in Context" (2009); Kaldellis, "How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium: The Role of Public Opinion in Sedition and Rebellion." (2013). These selected works provide a narrative that either explicitly state that they are working with the 'Republican Byzantium' framework, or they take it as a given to great effect.

²³ Kaldellis states that Byzantium as a composite political structure with significant popular participation in modern historiography extends at least as far back as 1960s and 1970s with historian Hans-George Beck in a "preliminary and underdeveloped way." Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, xii.

²⁴ Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, esp. 42-119. Essentially all of *The Byzantine Republic* is useful material for our needs.

²⁵ For a recent work which effectively summarizes Kaldellis' work in this area, see Kaldellis, "Political Freedom in Byzantium", esp. 801-809.

fact that some emperors enjoyed the opportunity to be at the center of popular attention,²⁶ ceremony was in fact a regular part of life in the capital. The commemoration of certain events and feasts was important, and the absence of an emperor who resided in the capital from such an event would likely be noted.²⁷ The presence of an official tasked with collecting petitions during ceremonies²⁸ suggests that the regular occurrence of such events offered civilians a ceremonial outlet for the handling of their petitions. As a consequence, gaps in the ceremonial calendar impeded the communication between the emperor and his subjects. Beyond these expectations however, there were concrete reasons why emperors would want to be part of larger ceremonial events. If we look to Ioannes Skylitzes' account of the 1042 rebellion against Michael V, we see that this emperor used a regularly planned imperial procession as a way of gauging popular support in anticipation of further, potentially controversial political action.²⁹ That he critically misjudged his popularity is beside the point; ceremonial was nevertheless an emperor's primary means for interacting with the people of the city and may have at times operated as a primitive ratings poll.

²⁶ Michael III (r.842-867) was one such character. He famously adored having the populace of the city watch him race in the hippodrome, so much so that later sources claim he ordered the beacons which constituted an early warning system for Arab raids be disabled during his races so as to not distract the spectators. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*. 5.10, 5.14, 5.19. Though his debauchery and non-imperial character was likely exaggerated by writers affiliated with the later Macedonian dynasty (his nickname Michael 'the drunkard' is testament to this), it is likely that there is a kernel of truth to the narrative crafted by the Macedonian opposition.

²⁷ For general information on Byzantine Imperial processions, see Brubaker, "Processions and Public Spaces in Early and Middle Byzantine Constantinople", 123-127 and Berger, "Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions in Constantinople", 73-89. For more information on Constantinople as a setting for these processions, see Berger, "Streets and Public Spaces in Constantinople"; Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*; Brubaker, "Topography and the Creation of Public Space in Early Medieval Constantinople."

²⁸ For the official mentioned, see Morris, "What Did The Epi Tōn Deēscōn Actually Do?" 125-140. Unfortunately, Morris mentions there is much unknown about this official, and what they did specifically. Often they are left unmentioned when we would assume they should be present. Morris wonders if this was ideological in that the official was somewhat antithetical to the image of the emperor as personally ready to accept petitions and hear pleas, thus this official is often left out of official narratives, 128.

²⁹ τῆ κυριακῇ οὖν τῆ μετὰ τὸ ἅγιον πάσχα προέλευσιν δημοσίαν κηρύξας ἐν τῷ τῶν ἀγίων ἀποστόλων ναῶ, καὶ δι' αὐτῆς ἀποπειραθῆναι κρίνας τῆς γνώμης τῶν πολιτῶν, ἀπῆλθεν ἐστεφανωμένος μετὰ τῆς συγκλήτου, πάσης τῆς πόλεως ἀθροισθείσης εἰς τὴν θέαν... Ioannes Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 21.1.

In investigating the ceremonial life of the empire and its social implications, the core source is *The Book of Ceremonies*, a tenth-century imperial handbook also known as *De cerimoniis*. This work was commissioned along with many others in the rather bookish and academic court culture fostered by Emperor Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos (r. 913-959) and was conceived as a compilation of instructions on how to perform imperial ceremonies.³⁰ In fact Konstantinos outlined his goals when he noted that “through praiseworthy ceremonial the imperial rule appears more beautiful and acquires more nobility and so is a cause of wonder to both foreigners and our own people.”³¹ This work then, is divided into two parts. The first is a compilation of previous works dating back to at least the work sixth-century work of Peter the Patrician.³² The second is a written account of various oral traditions never before committed to paper.³³ All in all, the *De cerimoniis* is evidence that the medieval Roman state and its leaders well understood the utility of soft power and how to apply it to great effect.

The Macedonian Dynasty

³⁰ For information on the court of Konstantinos VII and his literary patronage, see Lemerle, *Le Premier Humanisme Byzantin. Notes et Remarques Sur Enseignement et Culture À Byzance Des Origines Au Xe Siècle*, particularly the last two chapters; Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 575-604; Odorico, “Idéologie Politique, Production Littéraire et Patronage Au 10^e Siècle: L’empereur Constantin VII et Le Synaxariste Evariste”, 199-220; Featherstone, “Basil the Nothos as Compiler”, 353-372.

³¹ ... ἄτε διὰ τῆς ἐπαινετῆς τάξεως τῆς βασιλείου ἀρχῆς δεικνυμένης κοσμιωτέρας καὶ πρὸς τὸ εὐσχημονέστερον ἀνατρεχούσης καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θαυμαστῆς οὔσης ἔθνεσί τε καὶ ἡμετέροις. *De Cerimoniis*, 3-4, for the translation see Moffatt & Tall, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 3-4.

³² Antonopoulos, “Petrus Patricius: Some Aspects of His Life and Career”, 48-53.

³³ One cannot conduct research on *De cerimoniis* without being in dialogue with the work of Michael Featherstone. His work on the text is considerable, ranging from commentaries on the manuscript itself, Featherstone, “Preliminary Remarks on the Leipzig Manuscript of De Cerimoniis”; Featherstone, “Court Orthography” to broader ideas of ceremonial spaces within the palace, Featherstone, “Δι’ Ἐνδειξιν”; Featherstone, “The Great Palace as Reflected in the De Cerimoniis”; Featherstone, “De Cerimoniis”; Featherstone, “Space and Ceremony in the Great Palace of Constantinople under the Macedonian Dynasty” to potential compilers Featherstone, “Basil the Nothos as Compiler.” There are of course other works which touch on various aspects of the text, but none have devoted themselves quite so fully to the text as Featherstone.

At the centre of our analysis of ceremonial lie the peculiarities of the dynasty which marks the timespan covered by this thesis. The Macedonian dynasty was put into power by Basileios I, a man of lowly origins in the Macedonian countryside. Basileios insinuated himself in the Amorian royal household, became a close associate of Emperor Michael III, and in 867 became sole-ruler, having murdered his master and benefactor. This highly successful dynasty ruled until approximately 1056 when it came to an end with the death of its final member, Empress Theodora.³⁴ Its members oversaw the flowering of arts and writing to such a degree that the period has been dubbed a “Macedonian Renaissance” by scholars in the modern era.³⁵ No less impressive was the change in the empire’s military fortunes, which may be dated to this period, when Byzantium retook the offensive and re-conquered much territory the Romans had seen stripped from them in centuries past.³⁶ All in all, this was a successful dynasty, though one cannot always say whether this was due to specific policies, or the culmination of many long-term processes.³⁷ Indeed, this dynasty is doubly important for this thesis in that the main source consulted, the *De cerimoniis*, was the brainchild of Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos, grandson of Emperor Basileios I.

Something that haunted members of this dynasty, however, was Basileios’ rise to the throne. Basileios was elevated to the rank of co-emperor some time after first coming to the attention of Emperor Michael III³⁸ by proving himself through the murder of Michael’s

³⁴ Admittedly, the dynasty had been living on borrowed time since 1028 with the death of Konstantinos VIII as his only heirs were the imperial sisters Zoe and Theodora, both too old to produce heirs themselves by this point. Some stability remained until their deaths whereupon the clash to establish the next dynasty nearly saw the empire ended at the end of the eleventh century.

³⁵ For the flowering of writing in this period, see Lemerle, *Le Premier Humanisme Byzantin*, 242-300, and Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, 89-145.

³⁶ For a new take on this period of military expansion in the empire, see Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*.

³⁷ See Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842*, esp. 330-386.

³⁸ There are two incidents which brought Basileios to Michael’s attention. One was Basileios breaking/taming a particularly stubborn horse, an act which impressed the emperor and another where he proves his prowess at wrestling by besting a Bulgarian combatant, Genesis 4.26.

apparently bothersome uncle, the Caesar Bardas.³⁹ Shortly afterwards Basileios attained sole-rule over the Empire of the Romans by murdering his erstwhile benefactor. This violent seizure of power by a former peasant remained an inconvenient stain on the reputation of a family line of rulers trying to legitimize itself. As a consequence, several avenues were pursued to ameliorate the image of its founder.

One major factor that contributed to the cleansing of the Macedonian image was its patronage of writing and, in particular, history. Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos spent many long years under virtual house arrest, imposed on him by his father-in-law and regent-turned-master Romanos II Lekapenos. Romanos came to power after a palace coup in Konstantinos' youth and worked slowly to co-opt the young emperor. Once firmly in control of the state apparatus, Romanos introduced his own sons to the public, associating them with the throne and steadily promoting them ahead of the Macedonian heir. Years into his life of scholarly isolation and political irrelevance Konstantinos was able to strike back and finally took the throne in his own right. Once in power Konstantinos sought to reinforce his diminished dynastic legitimacy in order to free himself from the Lekapenoi.⁴⁰ For an emperor already well disposed to history and literature more generally, Konstantinos focussed much of his attention on modifying the legacy and image of his grandfather Basileios I. Konstantinos' extensive literary patronage included numerous historical pieces, among them the *Vita Basilii*, as well as works by Genesisios and *Theophanes Continuatus*. All these commissioned texts were well disposed to the originator of

³⁹ Skylitzes 5.22, *Theophanes Continuatus*, 4.41, 4.43.

⁴⁰ Gregory, "The Political Program of Constantine Porphyrogenitus", esp. 129-130. For more on the Lekapenoi, see Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus & His Reign*.

the dynasty.⁴¹ Indeed, in sources directly connected with the patronage of Konstantinos VII, Basileios is personally disassociated from the murder of Michael III.⁴²

It is in the work of eleventh-century historian Ioannes Skylitzes, who writes after the demise of the Macedonians, where we see that things may have been more complicated. Skylitzes, who was freer to explore historical truth given the times, notes in one chapter that it was palace officials who killed Michael, thus following the Macedonian line of argument. In another chapter, however, he implies that Basileios himself took part in the assassination.⁴³ The historical exoneration of Basileios undertaken by Konstantinos and his court entailed the demonization of his victim, Michael III. The latter was criticized for participating in hippodrome races, for excessive drinking, and for impoverishing the state.⁴⁴ It might be the case that he did in fact drink, chariot race and ineffectively run the state's finances, and yet we know, from unconnected sources, that Michael was more energetic and involved in matters of state than pro-Macedonian sources let on.⁴⁵ Thus, even in sources favourable to the Macedonians, Michael's

⁴¹ Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, 132.

⁴² The *Vita Basilii* characterizes the murder of Michael as the work of his guards apparently encouraged by concerned senators, 27. In *Genesisios*, we see the supporters of Basileios trying and failing to convince him that he had to join their scheme to kill Michael or he himself would be killed first. They apparently decided to kill Michael on their own at this point, 5.28. Indeed, the *Vita Basilii* takes great pains to describe how it was really Michael's own fault he was murdered considering his debauched behaviour, 20.

⁴³ *Vita Basilii*, 27, also *Theophanes Continuatus*, 4.44, *Genesisios* 4.28. For Skylitzes repeating the official line, 5.24. For him leaving open the possibility Basileios took part, see 6.15.

⁴⁴ For Michael being negligent in matters of statecraft and preferring to participate in the races, see Skylitzes, 5.14 and *Theophanes Continuatus*, 4.35. See also the criticism levied by Skylitzes for Michael's alleged disabling of the warning system for Arab raids so that it did not distract from his races, 5.19, also *Theophanes Continuatus*, 4.35. For drunkenness see Skylitzes, 5.22, and *Theophanes Continuatus* 4.44. For impoverishing the state see Skylitzes, 5.10, also that various artistic marvels had been melted down for gold about to be misused, *Vita Basilii*, 29.

⁴⁵ George Huxley in his piece "The Emperor Michael III and the Battle of Bishop's Meadow (A.D. 863)" describes how the glory for turning back Arab forces in 863 has been typically ascribed to Petronas, the subordinate of Michael, by pro-Macedonian writers in later times. However, using unconnected Arab sources, Huxley is able to establish Michael's presence in the conflict giving him a much more effective role in affairs of state than is often allowed.

murder is treated as a necessary evil.⁴⁶ In any case, for a modern reader, Michael's supposed vices are far too aligned with the Macedonian agenda to accept uncritically.

It was with this complex historical backdrop in mind that Konstantinos VII began writing on imperial ceremonial. This work was couched in the desire for a restoration of a more orderly and stately past. The preface to Book I explicitly states that the rediscovery of lost knowledge was a key motivation behind the work. In this same book Konstantinos offers an analogy according to which imperial splendor was a "newly cleaned mirror," thus invoking the language of restoration.⁴⁷ This is related to other efforts to connect the Macedonian dynasty to the past, particularly the efforts to create associations with Constantine the Great.⁴⁸ These literary moves were all steps in the process of ameliorating the image of the dynasty. The Macedonians would morph in Konstantinos' texts from a dynasty marked by the rude origins of its founder and the violent means by which he came to the throne to one with venerable ancient origins associated with the proper imperial majesty. Ceremonial propriety and order in the palace and the streets of the capital served to buttress the Konstantinos' literary propaganda.

Ceremonial in Byzantium

As they appear in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*, Byzantine imperial ceremonies can be roughly divided into three broad categories based on the audience associated with them. They were either public (the audience being composed primarily of the general public as might be the case in processions or games in the hippodrome), elite (mostly held within the imperial

⁴⁶ Many state it was necessary to kill Michael to protect Basileios (and his supporters from being murdered first Genesis, 4.28, *Theophanes Continuatus*, 4.44, Skylitzes 5.24. The *Vita Basilii* characterizes the murder more as a move to stave off further harm to the empire, 27.

⁴⁷*De cerimoniis*, 4. Trans from Moffatt & Tall, 4.

⁴⁸ The most obvious example of this process was the reopening of the familial mausoleum of the Constantinian dynasty for Macedonian dead to be interred within. This idea is something that will be discussed at greater length in chapter 2, but for a good overview of the how Constantine related to the Macedonians, see Markopoulos, "Constantine the Great in Macedonian Historiography: Models and Approaches", 159-170.

palace, these events were directed towards the elites of the empire, or the bureaucrats who worked within the palace), or towards foreign embassies.⁴⁹ Here we focus mainly on public ceremonies as vectors for presentation – advertising if you wish – of Byzantine emperors to the population at large. Though similar messages and means of communication might be found directed at other audiences, those will not feature here.

The usage of the text has a complicated history around it.⁵⁰ What accounts we have of ceremonies from contemporary sources seem to match up with aspects of the ceremonies as described in the book, though the detail can be lacking.⁵¹ However, the evidence we have regarding the transmission of the surviving manuscripts only gets us to about the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969 A.D.).⁵² *De cerimoniis* can also be considered as an aspirational representation of interactions between ceremonial participants and spectators on the part of the administration. Even if the letter of the text was only followed briefly in the reign of Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos (though I suspect it was followed far longer), the text's utility as a window into the motivations and minds behind the rulers' ceremonial efforts are part of a long-lasting thought-world of imperial virtues as we shall later see.⁵³ Thus *De cerimoniis* remains a

⁴⁹ Ceremonies primarily meant for elite audiences are numerous in *De cerimoniis*, but the best examples are the first five chapters of book two. These include some appointments and the regular ceremonial of the daily functioning of the imperial palace. Specific instances of ceremonies for foreign embassies can be found primarily in book two, chapter fifteen. Here we find the general instructions of receptions of foreign dignitaries in the Magnaura hall followed by a number of descriptions of very specific instances of these receptions being carried out. See also Featherstone, "Olga's Visit to Constantinople" 294-312; Featherstone, "Olga's Visit to Constantinople in *De Cerimoniis*" 241-251.

⁵⁰ Featherstone, "*De cerimoniis* and the Great Palace" 162-174, discusses the difficulties the text presents to scholars.

⁵¹ The two manuscripts that we have of the *De cerimoniis* both date from the tenth century, at least one of which we are sure was in use into the reign of Nikephoros Phokas. Later developments, such as the wall around the palace constructed by Phokas, would have necessitated modifications to certain ceremonies described within, but variations seem to have been accepted. Moffatt "Introduction", xxiii-xxiv, xxx-xxxii. See also the work of Featherstone such as, "Preliminary Remarks on the Leipzig Manuscript of *De Cerimoniis*", 457-479, and, "Basil the Nothos as Compiler", 353-372.

⁵² Moffatt & Tall, "Introduction", xxiii-xxiv.

⁵³ Gilbert Dagron's *Constantinople Imagine* can be seen in a similar light. In his examination of the text of the *Patria*, he conceded to the traditional view of the text (a collection of fables and fairy tales unworthy of scholarly attention) that the text was of doubtful value in the realm of historical fact, he also asserted its value as a testament to the living memory of the city. Loc.47-99.

useful source in this investigation regardless of how long or how often the text itself was followed to the letter during this period.

Ceremonies in Byzantium were meticulously planned and prepared for. On most occasions, preparations would begin when the *praipositoi*⁵⁴ came to the emperor the day before the event in question such as in the first *De cerimoniis* chapter: “procession to the great church.”⁵⁵ In these meetings the *praipositoi* informed the emperor that a ceremony was indeed due and sought his consent to proceed with preparations. Many ceremonies appear to have occurred on a regular schedule and assumed the emperor’s presence in the city.⁵⁶ A reminder by the *praipositos* would therefore likely aid those unused to the ceremonial calendar of the capital, while also formally setting in motion the complex mechanics behind the staging of those events.⁵⁷ Depending on the venue of a given ceremony, the *praipositos* then went forth to inform whichever officials were involved in it so that the imperial bureaucracy might be able to prepare for the event. No small number of men were involved in this process. For example, the first event outlined in the *De cerimoniis* details a procession to Hagia Sophia. After the *praipositoi* informed the eparch to prepare the route, they

⁵⁴ The *praipositoi* were the chief members of the *koubikoularioi*, an order of eunuchs fulfilling a wide range of roles serving the emperor and the imperial household. These high-ranking officials played an important role in many of the ceremonies detailed in the *De cerimoniis*, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1709.

⁵⁵ *De cerimoniis*, 5-6.

⁵⁶ Exactly how celebrations or ceremonies proceeded (or, indeed, whether they did at all) without the emperor present is a topic we know little about. Many particularly martial emperors like Basileios II, Nikephoros Phokas, etc. would have been away on campaign much of the year. Presumably many important holidays would have been celebrated regardless but all we can do is speculate.

⁵⁷ Most of the Macedonians likely would not fall under this category, but many of the generals and later successors to the dynasty may not have had much prior experience with ceremony in the capital. Individuals like Nikephoros Phokas, Ioannes Tzimiskes, or Isaakios Komnenos could have been ceremonial neophytes considering their prior devotion to military endeavors before coming to the throne. Similarly, one might look at Michael the Paphlagonian and wonder about his knowledge before his elevation for less martial reasons.

“go out and give orders to all the members of the *kouboukleion*, and likewise to the *katepano* and the *domestikos* of the emperor’s men, and along with them the two demarchs, and they send out instructions to both the *domestikos* of the *noumera* and the *komes* of the Walls and, to put it simply, to all the orders and all the bureaux, giving notice concerning this procession, so that each order and each bureau may prepare in advance what is appropriate for them in accordance with their order and their type of bureau.”⁵⁸

Such preparations sought to appeal to all the senses seeking to accentuate the majesty of the ceremony. The eparch of the city was responsible for the preparing of the streets for the imperial procession. First, he sees that the route along which the procession will pass, as well as all the streets of the city leading to it, are cleaned. Then, “they recommend adorning this [route] with boxwood sawdust and with ivy and laurel and myrtle and rosemary, and with a variety of other sweet-smelling flowers that the particular season offers.”⁵⁹ Attaleiates’ *History* describes how a similar procession had silk and other precious fabrics lining the streets “all the way from the palace itself to the gates of the revered and great church of the Holy Wisdom of the Word of God” and “gold and silver ornaments [...] affixed along the full length of the route.”⁶⁰ This along

⁵⁸ *De cerimoniis*, 6. The translation used is the work of Ann Moffatt and Maxime Tall, 6. For the titles, see the glossary. Οἱ δὲ ἐξερχόμενοι ὀρίζουσι πᾶσιν τοῖς τοῦ κουβουκλείου, ὁμοίως καὶ τῷ κατεπάνω καὶ τῷ δομestikῷ τῶν βασιλικῶν, σὺν τούτοις δὲ καὶ τοῖς δυοῖν δημάρχους· ἀποστέλλουσι δὲ καὶ μανδάτα τῷ τε δομestikῷ τῶν νομῆρων καὶ τῷ κόμητι τῶν τειχέων, καί, ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν, πάσαις ταῖς τάξεσι καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς σεκρέτοις καταμηνύουσι περὶ τῆς τοιαύτης προελεύσεως, ἵνα ἐκάστη τάξις καὶ ἕκαστον σεκρέτον κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν τάξιν καὶ κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον τοῦ σεκρέτου τύπον τὰ αὐτοῖς ἀρμόζοντα προευντρεπίσωσι.

⁵⁹ *De cerimoniis*, 6. Translation that of Moffatt as well, 6. Καὶ μὴν καὶ τῷ ὑπάρχῳ τῆς πόλεως γνωρίζουσι τοῦ εὐντρεπίσαι καὶ ἀνακαθᾶραι τὴν βασιλικὴν ἐξοδὸν, ἐν ἣ μέλλουσιν οἱ δεσπῶται προελθεῖν, καὶ πάσας τὰς ἐκεῖσε εἰσφερούσας λεωφόρους ὁδοὺς, ἐν αἷς μέλλουσι διέρχεσθαι οἱ δεσπῶται διὰ τοῦ πυξίνου πρίσματος καὶ τῆς ἐκ κισσοῦ καὶ δάφνης μυρρίνης τε καὶ δενδρολιβάνου ταύτην κατακοσμεῖν καὶ ἄλλοις, ὅσα ὁ τότε φέρει καιρὸς, εὐώδεσί τε καὶ ποικίλοις ἄνθεσι.

⁶⁰ Attaleiates *The History*, 12-13. Translation Kaldellis & Krallis, 19. This customary aspect of Roman public celebration is expanded upon by McCormick in his *Eternal Victory*, as an activity typical of the Roman guilds under the likely direction of the *eparchos* of Constantinople, 205-210.

with the perfumers' scents, which were always filling the space of the *Augustaion*⁶¹ created an environment through which the imperial cortege would process. While the emperor marched the senses of smell and sight were in full alert.

Sight and smell aside, the soundscape of the city was filled with “acclamations, thanksgiving, and songs of praise”⁶² addressed from the crowd to the processing rulers. When performed to the dictats of imperial scripts, acclamations must have reinforced the gravity of the procession and the majesty of those receiving them. Along with the voices of the citizens music also played a role in shaping imperial ceremonies. Triumphs seem to have been associated with “victory hymns”, while in the period of Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos⁶³ organists are reported near the Chalke gate for the ‘Procession to the Great Church’.⁶⁴

Processions to Hagia Sophia typically involved an imperial cortege traveling on foot given the short distance from the Great Palace complex. The emperor did, however, also visit some of the more distant shrines and churches on various feast days. The Shrine of the Holy Anargyroi was one such place. It lay outside the city walls close to the Blachernae palace, along the Golden Horn. The distance between the Great Palace and Blachernae complex is about a 5km as the crow flies. The average person could walk from one to the other palace within an hour or so, though navigating the far from straight Constantinopolitan street plan would have added some time to one's itinerary. Furthermore, we cannot know the exactly speed of the procession,

⁶¹ Regulations found in the *Book of the Eparch* stipulated that perfumers and spice merchants set up shop in the *Augustaion* (the central square which connected the imperial palace, the Hippodrome, and Hagia Sophia) which would suffuse the area around the imperial vestibule with the various perfumes, Leo the Wise, *Das Eparchenbuch Leons Des Weisen*, 10.1.

⁶² Attaleiates *The History*, 12. Translation Kaldellis & Krallis, 19.

⁶³ See chapters 19 and 20 of Book II,

⁶⁴ Triumphs with victory hymns is a pair of ceremonies detailed in the book for both the Forum of Constantine, and the Hippodrome. Also, Organs and other instruments are present in the descriptions for receptions in the Magnaura. Of course, the most fantastic aspect of sound would be that made by the automata connected to the Throne of Solomon again in the Magnaura, seemingly reserved for overawing foreign dignitaries.

which would have moved through streets lined with people thus pacing at a languid speed to preserve a sense of majesty. Without even considering the distance of the Holy Anargyroi from the city's outer wall,⁶⁵ it becomes clear that the emperor would remain in the public eye for a rather long time before the church service at the target shrine ever began. It is perhaps for this reason that for numerous events in outlying areas the emperor opted to ride a horse. For other locations and given that the city was surrounded on three sides by water, a boat could also prove convenient.⁶⁶

Byzantine ceremonial therefore emerges as something frequently undertaken, labour-intensive, and in all likelihood expensive to produce. Every year a set of major ceremonies commemorating events both sacred and profane came to pass in a similar way to the way they had before. Many people were involved in the planning and execution of the ceremony from the preparing of the processional route, to the readying of the chariots and hippodrome for the races. There was liberal use of decorations and fragrant materials in preparing the streets for processions, pay for all imperial agents present, and occasionally gifts to the crowd; the monetary expense involved, considering these factors, must have been significant. Given the time, money, and effort that went into imperial ceremonial, one may surmise that what was being communicated through ceremony must have been important.

Finding the Virtuous Emperor

Before describing how imperial ceremonial was used to advertise the emperors' possession of certain desirable qualities, one should explain how one finds the virtuous emperor

⁶⁵ For a discussion on where to locate the church of the Holy Anargyroi, see Özaslan, "From the Shrine of Cosmidion to the Shrine of Eyüp Ensari", 383-390.

⁶⁶ See Book II's chapter 13, a collection of church visits which nearly all mention taking a boat or a horse, and chapter 12 in which taking a ship to Blachernae is also recommended.

in the sources. Many types of Byzantine texts can be marshaled to glean insights into Byzantine conceptions of imperial virtue; historical texts often offer criticisms of emperors for perceived failings, while works of popular literature such as *The Patria*, a tenth-century compilation of popular lore regarding the capital and its locations, include famous examples of imperial justice. However, the most explicit and comprehensive conceptualizations often lay in the realm of rhetoric, particularly the instructive works of late antiquity that were still used as rhetorical templates in the Middle Byzantine period. The connection between rhetoric and the advertisement imperial virtue is particularly apt given one scholar's characterization of rhetoricians as "the original spin-doctors."⁶⁷ The following section serves as a rather short general introduction to the chief rhetoricians of the age with specifics on imperial virtue featured at the beginning of each chapter.

Several late antique rhetoricians were quite popular in Byzantium. Among the most notable were Aphthonios of Antioch, Hermogenes of Tarsus, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Menander Rhetor.⁶⁸ Aphthonios and Hermogenes' *progymnasmata* were popular handbooks of rhetorical exercises that contained examples of different rhetorical genres: encomium, *ekphrasis*, declamation, etc.⁶⁹ Christian orators like Gregory of Nazianzus were also popular. Their popularity lay in their utility as stylistic models, particularly as the content of their writings was less suspect than with pagan works.⁷⁰ The pagan nature of the Hellenic corpus meant that Christians treated these late antique rhetoricians with a modicum of skepticism. Nevertheless, leading intellectuals throughout the centuries recognized their status as models of style and their

⁶⁷ Vinson, "Rhetoric and Writing Strategies in the Ninth Century", 12.

⁶⁸ For a brief overview of the major players in rhetoric in Middle Byzantium, see Kennedy, "Greek Rhetoric in the Middle Ages."

⁶⁹ Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors*, 56-60.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 238. See also Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos, Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium*, esp. 51-87, 166-191.

resulting utility in pedagogy.⁷¹ We see this in a letter the eleventh-century Michael Psellos wrote where he criticizes those who would discount pagan rhetoricians without fairly judging their stylistic merits.⁷² Similarly, Menander the Rhetor’s advice on praising an emperor was appreciated by Emperor Leon VI and was broadly popular in the Middle Byzantine period.⁷³

Menander’s work then provided a clear, straightforward guide to praising the emperor. While other rhetoricians like Aphthonios and Hermogenes also dealt with encomium, both were rather brief in their advice and neither exclusively dealt with the praise of imperial figures. These reasons, and Menander’s appeal to Leon VI, recommend him as a figure to focus on as we embark on the study of Macedonian propaganda given the central role of that emperor in the revival of learning often credited to his son Konstantinos VII.⁷⁴

Menander Rhetor’s *Basilikos Logos* features a “codified catalogue of the four classic virtues of a ruler” which emerged in the antique Mediterranean.⁷⁵ These virtues are broadly courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom (ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, φρόνησις/σοφία), though there are many meanings and ideas contained within these broad categories. These virtues were largely adopted by imperial Roman propagandists and had a lasting impact on the way the Greek-speaking world conceived royal power.⁷⁶ Indeed, in the tenth-century biography of the Emperor Basileios I (r.867-886AD), written in the same court that generated the *De cerimoniis*, it was said of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty that “the four virtues dwelt with him at all

⁷¹ Ibid., 238. See also Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, esp. 120-173.

⁷² Boissonade, Michael Psellus de operatione daemonum, 125.

⁷³ For information specifically on the usage of Menander Rhetor by Leon VI in the ninth century, see Vinson, “Rhetoric and Writing Strategies in the Ninth Century,” 13.

⁷⁴ For discussion on Leon’s purported wisdom and his contributions to learning and his sponsored literary endeavours more of which was to follow in the reign of his son Konstantinos, see Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912)*, 110-133, esp. 115.

⁷⁵ Whitby, *The Propaganda of Power*, 57.

⁷⁶ Braund, “Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric: Cicero, Seneca, Pliny”, 57. For further information on virtues in the early imperial Roman world, see Noreña, “Communication of the Emperor’s Virtues.”

times and everyone marveled at his valor [*andreia*] joined with wisdom [*phronesis/sophia*], and temperance [*sophrosyne*] coupled with justice [*dikaiosyne*]; everything was taking a turn for the better.”⁷⁷

Some Words on Structure

Each chapter will focus on a specific imperial quality as this was expressed through ceremony. The historical significance and necessity of these virtues is explained in the context of the Greco-Roman and Christian character of the Middle Byzantine state. This is followed by in depth study of ceremonies showcasing the virtues in question. It should be clear from the outset that this thesis does not provide an exhaustive account of all Byzantine ceremonial; it merely examines notable examples from the *Book of Ceremonies*. What is, however, of interest are the ways in which ceremonial situated the aforementioned virtue-displays in Constantinople’s cityscape. Finally, this study will demonstrate the risky nature of imperial pomp and circumstance by furnishing examples of ceremonies hijacked or derailed by the people.

The first chapter focuses on *Philanthropia*, the clearest expression of Byzantine justice in ceremony. As we shall see, justice, as defined by Menander Rhetor, had an expansive meaning that extended to what might today be considered social justice rather than a more strictly legal definition.⁷⁸ Therefore, we look to *philanthropia*, an imperial quality which mainly manifested itself in charity and general benevolence towards the masses and the granting of petitions towards humane ends. The ceremonial manifestation of *philanthropia* was localized at the

⁷⁷ *Vita Basilii* 72.27-31. Translation taken from Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographiae Quae Theophanis Continuati Nomine Fertur Liber Quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris Amplectitur*, trans. Ihor Ševčenko, 249.

⁷⁸ Menander Rhetor, 88, 90.

Hippodrome (itself a philanthropic institution *par excellence*),⁷⁹ the imperial palace, and the imperially funded homes for the aged. We will, in the process, also look at connections with ancient grain management by the classical Roman state and the republican history at the heart of civic games.

The second chapter focuses on imperial piety and how this related to the virtue of temperance. At its core, the concept of piety needs no large introduction, though its specific context in the Roman state, and the ways that it was manifested in both the Roman past and medieval “present” is subject to elaboration. Often piety seemed to manifest itself in the Great Church Hagia Sophia but many other locales also had important religious connections; a case in point, the main thoroughfares of the city, on which processions towards the famous Christian sites dotting the urban landscape unfolded.

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on the emperor’s bravery, primarily examined through a study of the imperial triumph. This ceremony had a continuous existence in the Byzantine polity of the Middle Ages and its importance never waned, despite changes in the empire’s fate and political, cultural landscape.⁸⁰ Two prototypical descriptions of Byzantine triumphs are recorded in the *De cerimoniis*. One takes place in the Forum of Constantine and the other at the Hippodrome. The appendices of this work also contain descriptions of triumphs that took place in the reigns of Konstantinos VII’s predecessors, suggesting perhaps that this emperor was deeply fascinated by military matters and likely sought to buttress by means of ceremonial his personal image (the scholar-emperor was rather too bookish to be seen as a military man).

⁷⁹ If we look at the interpretation of Ewald and Noreña regarding ancient Rome and the expenditure of funds from the imperial treasury as an instance of public benefaction which seems a reasonable interpretation, “Introduction.” 6-7.

⁸⁰ McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 131-137.

The final quality of Wisdom will also feature in this thesis, but not in the same way that the other virtues do. Wisdom, as defined by Menander, manifests itself as the mental acuity to successfully undertake anything he set himself to.⁸¹ For our purposes, this would entail looking at the success of ceremonies in conveying their intended messages to the degree that this is possible with the sources. However, this is not the only means by which Menander characterizes wisdom. Relevant to our purposes is part of how wisdom manifested itself in the realm of war where it allowed the Basileus to “discover[] [enemy] traps and ambushes[...].”⁸² This may seem somewhat dramatic in relation to ceremony, but the incident which opens this introduction involving Konstantinos Monomachos is an example of the emperor being ‘ambushed’ by civilians with grievances in the middle of imperial ceremonies. The navigation of such incidents can also, then, be associated with wisdom. Every chapter will therefore open with a similar vignette which demonstrates the varying levels of success emperors had in Byzantine ceremonial, whether that be through the propagation of their message, or the resolution of a nascent crisis.

⁸¹ ἐρεῖς τοίνυν ἐπὶ τῇ φρονήσει, ὅτι σύμπαντα ταῦτα οὐκ ἂν ἤρκεσε πράξει βασιλεύς, οὐδ’ ἂν τοσοῦτων πραγμάτων ὄγκον διήνεγκεν, εἰ μὴ φρονήσει καὶ συνέσει τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ὑπερέφερε, Menander Rhetor, 90.

⁸² εἶτα ἐρεῖς, ὅτι σὺ μὲν τοὺς ἐκείνων λόγους καὶ τὰς ἐνέδρας διὰ φρόνησιν ἐγίνωσκεις, ἐκεῖνοι δὲ τῶν ὑπὸ σοῦ πραττομένων οὐδὲν συνίεσαν. Menander Rhetor, 86. Translated by Russell & Wilson, 87.

Justice: *Philanthropia*, Evergetism, and Christian Charity

Every 11th of May a special Hippodrome race was held which marked the opening of the year's racing season.⁸³ Food was piled up in abundance on the *spina* (the raised center of the track) and as the morning's races reached a lull, preparations were made for the next stage in the day's events. This break in the action offered opportunity for entertainment, which came in the form of wrestling and comedy. This was not unlike a half-time show at modern sporting events. On one occasion in the reign of the emperor Theophilos (829-842AD), two fools dragged a small wooden boat in front of the emperor's private box (the *kathisma*). When the first fool asked the other to eat the boat, his companion replied that he could not. The first fool, unimpressed with this response, questioned why his friend could not swallow such a tiny toy boat when the emperor's chamberlain Nikephoros had in fact "devoured" a widow's merchantman with all its cargo. At this signal, the widow in question revealed herself and dropped to her knees in front of the emperor's box. She petitioned him for aid in resolving what was a serious case of property theft committed by Nikephoros. The Chamberlain had clearly been using his position to block attempts at resolution through normal channels. Theophilos listened, justice won, and Nikephoros was burned alive.

⁸³ This date had a special significance in the Byzantine Empire, and Constantinople in particular as it marked the anniversary of Constantine the Great's refounding/transformation of the Megaran colony of Byzantion into Constantinople, the new capital of Rome.

This story is taken from *The Patria*, a collection of myths and legends about Constantinople and its landmarks.⁸⁴ It should be treated cautiously when read as a factual account of the city and yet, to be as popular as they were, the accounts of *The Patria* must have sounded true to at least some readers from among the inhabitants of the city. Despite his championing of heretical iconoclast doctrine, Theophilos was generally thought to have been a champion of justice and similar stories were attached to his name by other authors.⁸⁵ This one vignette should not, therefore, be dismissed, as it is emblematic of what was deemed possible by medieval Romans. Importantly, we see demonstrated here the inherent risks of public ceremony. As we shall see, what helped make this intervention successful is that it deftly used the complaint at the heart of the petition to create a disjunction with official rhetoric. The ceremony was meant to highlight the charity and *philanthopia*⁸⁶ of the emperor, concepts with which we shall deal in detail in this chapter. In this case, however, messages of imperial charity were purposefully contrasted with the seeming reality of greed thus completely undermining the propagandistic value of the ceremony. Such a dissonance would have invited accusations of hypocrisy and demanded swift public resolution on the part of the emperor. Once the hollowness of propaganda

⁸⁴ For the full account of this incident, refer to Anonymous, *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople.*, 150-153.

⁸⁵ Other accounts of Theophilos and his reign also focus on his justice. Ioannes Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae, Synopsis Historiarum.* writes of a woman whose horse (belonging to her deceased husband) was stolen by the eparch. She interrupted an imperial procession demanding the beast's return when she noticed the emperor riding it (having been given it by the thief). Theophilos then catches the thieving eparch in a lie, punishes him severely, and reimburses the woman with the eparch's wealth. Skylitzes stresses the emperor's energetic opposition to lawbreakers: οὕτω φιλαπεχθίμων ἦν πρὸς τοὺς ἄρπαγας καὶ τοὺς ἐξ ἀδικίας πλουτεῖν ἐθέλοντας. Or, when in the twelfth century the satirist author of the *Timarion* uses Theophilos as one of the three impartial judges of the afterlife, *Pseudo-Luciano, Timarione: testo critico, introduzione, traduzione, commentario e lessico*, lines ~780-840. The Continuator of Theophanes also writes of the emperor's love of justice despite his heresy and the violence that greeted the opening of his reign, 3.1-4. Genesisios is quite critical in his history, spending much of the time criticizing the emperor and making only one rather indirect reference to his justice, which he expresses doubt at, *Iosephi Genesisii regum libri quattuor*, 3.10. See here for a breakdown of the narrative of the just Theophilos, Codoñer et al., *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829-842*, 454-460.

⁸⁶ An important term to be explained soon, though for now a basic understanding can be in the etymologically descended English term, philanthropy, or the emperor's philanthropic nature.

was laid bare, only actions could restore the imperial image and the emperor responded appropriately to salvage the situation.

In this chapter we will examine why and how Middle Byzantine emperors attempted to communicate their embodiment of justice (δικαιοσύνη). We will discuss how this trait was a key aspect of Roman imperial ideology, but its representation within the realm of ceremony will be more strictly limited to *philanthropia*, a subset of Byzantine justice given particular attention by Menander Rhetor in his discussion of justice. *Philanthropia* was a key imperial virtue that buttressed their image as pious and just rulers. This was also, as we shall see, a key aspect attributed to Christ in Byzantium and comparisons between Christ and the *Basileus* had been central to the Byzantine imperial image ever since Eusebios created the template for imagining a Christian Roman emperor in the fourth century.⁸⁷ In addition to the Eusebian template we will also look at the Greco-Roman roots of public benefaction, which informed the associations between philanthropy and the actions undertaken in Middle Byzantine ceremony. Then we see examples of philanthropic ceremonial and some of the ideas and assumptions that underlay them. Before we get to all that however, a look at the Byzantine idea of justice.

Δικαιοσύνη the Virtue

While it is outside of the scope of this chapter to give a full account of Roman and Byzantine legal history, it is important to explain some (necessarily simplified) major developments in Byzantine justice. Byzantium was a state which, by the Macedonian era (c.867-1056), had developed a long tradition of legal practice and ideology. The body of laws operant in

⁸⁷ For Christ-like comparisons with the emperor Constantine the Great, see Eusebius, *Eusebius Werke, Band 1.1: Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin*, 1.4-6, 4.6-7 (indeed, Eusebius had much praise for the *philanthropia* of Constantine specifically, 4.1-4). Also, Eusebius *Eusebius Werke, Band 1: Über das Leben Constantins. Constantins Rede an die heilige Versammlung. Tricennatsrede an Constantin*, 1.6, 2.1-6, 3.1-8, etc.

Byzantium stretched back to Justinian's foundational text, the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, a massive harmonized compendium of all previous Roman law. Unfortunately for Byzantine jurists, the rapid transition of the empire into a monolingual Greek-speaking state in the seventh century made the continued use of this Latin-based body of laws increasingly difficult. This situation precipitated several attempts to either interpret or translate these works into a language most jurists could understand. This is what led to the creation of edited and translated volumes such as the Isaurian *Ekloge* and the Macedonian *Basilika*. Recent additions to the historiography are quick to temper a sense of immutability by stressing the differences in application of the law, yet in effect Byzantium was a state under Roman law.⁸⁸ These law code revisions were often framed as great acts of imperial law reform along the lines of Justinian himself, an emperor famed for his legal legacy.⁸⁹

The Middle Byzantine period saw the transformation of the roles of judges as well. The *krites* went from a more decentralized position in antiquity under the jurisdiction of local administrators to more centralized in the Middle Byzantine state as control of the judiciary passed to the hands of the central government.⁹⁰ Judges were rotated around the provinces and increasingly in the tenth and eleventh centuries began to participate in the administration of the less-militarized interior provinces.⁹¹ The power and position of these judges grew throughout the period until the militaristic Komnenian dynasty established a new aristocratic in-group based on kinship that judges had little access to.⁹²

⁸⁸ Humphreys, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era*, 13-25. See also Fögen, "Reanimation of Roman Law in the Ninth Century: Remarks on Reasons and Results." For differences in legal practice vs. theory, see Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867-1056*, 3.

⁸⁹ Humphreys, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era*, 24-5.

⁹⁰ Howard-Johnston, "The Peira and Legal Practices in Eleventh-Century Byzantium", 67-8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 69. For more on judges in this period, see Saradi, "The Byzantine Tribunals", 170-204. See also Oikonomides, "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Romaios: An Abortive Attempt to Innovate in Byzantine Law", 169-192.

⁹² Howard-Johnston, "The Peira and Legal Practices in Eleventh-Century Byzantium", 15.

We see then that the *Basileus* was directly associated with ideas of justice central to medieval Roman identity and notions of governance. He oversaw the judges of the empire; he enacted law and legislation as a law-giver; he was the final point of appeal for previous judgements; he even affected the application of the law through his opinions, producing in this fashion what Zachary Chitwood describes as “a Byzantine *hadith*.”⁹³ Indeed, it seems that the emperor was generally seen as a model for subordinates, particularly in the field of justice.⁹⁴

However, this strictly legal and court-centric sense of justice is not the only kind that we find in the sources. Turning to the work of Menander Rhetor, we see that his definition of the virtue is linked to ideas of social justice. Peacetime justice is characterized by Menander as consisting of “mildness towards subjects, humanity [or *philanthropia*] towards petitioners, and accessibility. [...] he who comes before the emperor is freed from his perils.”⁹⁵ Menander further notes that the just emperor “sends just governors around the nations, peoples, and cities, guardians of the laws and worthy of the emperor's justice, not gatherers of wealth. [...] he is concerned also for his subjects' ability to bear those burdens lightly and easily.”⁹⁶

We see this multifaceted definition of justice reflected perhaps most clearly in the *Vita Basilii*, a biography of the emperor Basileios I written in the court of his grandson Konstantinos VII. The text extolls the founder of the Macedonian dynasty as a paragon of justice detailing his battling of corruption, promotion of judges and reform of the court system, and the reforms to

⁹³ For the legal powers of the Byzantine emperor, see Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867-1056*, 80-83, and McGeer, *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors*, 1-8. For the quote, see Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, 83.

⁹⁴ The Life of Basileios describes how his justice, compassion, and piety were all supposedly emulated by the men he appointed to office, *Vita Basilii*, 72. Chitwood, on a broader scale, states that *philanthropia* went from imperial virtue to guiding legal principal disseminating through the administration from above, Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867-1056*, 87.

⁹⁵ Menander Rhetor, 88. Translated by Russell & Wilson, 89.

⁹⁶ Menander Rhetor, 88-90. Translated by Russell & Wilson, 89-91.

legal texts that Basileios instituted.⁹⁷ However, the text also refers to the kind of social justice that is on display in Menander's work. The *Vita* makes clear the plight of the poor in the empire, particularly their maltreatment by the rich and powerful members of society. Basileios, a man who came from "modest circumstances" to a position of power gives hope to the poor that they would see an administration more understanding of their precarious position in life at the economic and social margins.⁹⁸ Later on, once Basileios eliminated Michael and achieved sole rule, he distributed significant largess to his subjects out of his own funds, an act that the text characterizes as pleasing to God in its justice.⁹⁹ This characterization of Basileios as a man of justice in all forms was clearly important to the dynasty as a whole, likely owing to his violent seizure of the throne.

Philanthropia the Concept

In the Greco-Roman world in general and Byzantium in particular, charity fell under the umbrella of the concept of *philanthropia*.¹⁰⁰ This word is closely related to the modern term 'philanthropy' but this does not quite capture its full meaning. Byzantine *philanthropia* was at its heart an attribute closely connected to Christ, one which virtuous humans demonstrated throughout the course of their lives.¹⁰¹ Most clearly exemplified by the love for all of mankind

⁹⁷ *Vita Basilii*, 29-31, 33.

⁹⁸ For the modest circumstances quote see *Vita Basilii*, 73, for the hopes of the populace having a 'man of the people' in government, see 19. Also, Skylitzes, probably working off the *Vita Basilii*, has a similar line in his *Synopsis Historiarum*, 6.14.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰⁰ Demetrios Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, though somewhat dated, is still the most comprehensive piece on the subject. There are more modern works on some aspects of Byzantine philanthropy mostly done by Timothy Miller, and focussing on particular charitable institutions of the empire, and thus are less comprehensive of *philanthropia* as a whole, Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*; Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium*. There are numerous investigations of the concept as used in Ancient Greece as well, cited below.

¹⁰¹ Indeed, the concept is so strongly associated with Christ in the Byzantine Christian world that *φιλανθρωπῶς* can be seen as a substitution for God in many texts Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, 41.

showed by Christ in his sacrifice to redeem original sin, *philanthropia* often manifested itself as the performance of charitable acts with no expectation of repayment in this life.¹⁰²

Though Christian theologians and clergy enthusiastically adopted *philanthropia*, the concept itself was not, strictly speaking, Christian. In the Ancient Greek thought-world, *philanthropia* had considerable usage dating back to at least Periclean Athens. According to one scholar it represented “...an ideal aristocratic attribute that is manifested primarily in the generosity and humanity of kings, potentates, and generals toward those less powerful than themselves.”¹⁰³ Linked with *philanthropia* is the concept of *euergetism*. This modern term describes the contribution of the rich to communities in the ancient world. As Paul Veyne explains, the rich spent personal funds for the benefit of the whole community in the hopes of acquiring prestige, or magnificence, in their attempt to translate economic into political power.¹⁰⁴ The men who funded public benefactions – whether those came in the form of feasts and circuses, or as investment in the construction of public buildings – were *euergetes* (benefactors) of the community.

Concepts related to *philanthropia* and *euergetism* also existed in Rome. *Liberalitas* referred to personal generosity while *munificentia* referred to public benefaction, particularly in

¹⁰² At its most extreme, charity could be achieved by extreme self-denial, as in the case of the Byzantine saint Serapion who sold himself as a servant in order to assist a widow, Leontius of Neapolis, *Leben des heiligen Iohannes des Barmherzigen erzbischofs von Alexandrien*. 48-9.

¹⁰³ Among the first uses of the term is applied in the play *Prometheus Bound*, in which the gods chastise Prometheus for his *philanthropia* which had led him to his betrayal of the gods, Sulek, “On the Classical Meaning of Philanthrōpia” 387-389; for the quote and more generally the role of the term in Athens at the time, see Matthew Christ, “Demosthenes on Philanthrōpia as a Democratic Virtue.”, 203. See also Mole, “‘Philanthropia’ in the Poetics” 325-335; Romilly, *Douceur dans la pensée grecque*.

¹⁰⁴ Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, 10-19. Also see Cornell and Lomas, “Introduction” 1-11, and Roskam, “Philanthropy, Dignity, and Euergetism.” 516-528.

the form of public games.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, according to Carlos Noreña these two virtues were essential imperial attributes:

“The personal generosity of the Roman emperor was fundamental to the structure of imperial ideology. The notion that a ruler had a moral obligation to provide his subjects with material benefits had a long history in the ancient world... and the large-scale distribution of gifts and other *beneficia* in some ways defined what it meant to be a Roman emperor. Later generations readily associated the virtue of *liberalitas* with Augustus, who spent exorbitant sums from his personal wealth on handouts of cash and grain, the provision of games and spectacles, numerous public building projects, loans to senators, and subventions of the aerarium.”¹⁰⁶

Once adapted to Christian sensibilities, both the ancient Greek and Roman concepts discussed here informed the definition of philanthropic action in the medieval Roman Empire. In fact, the very term *euergetes* often emerges in acclamations addressed to Byzantine emperors.¹⁰⁷ As for *philanthropia*, it can therefore be found all over the sources. A particularly vivid example of this is in the characterization of Michael VII Doukas (r.1071-1078) by Michael Attaleiates in his eleventh-century *History*. The historian’s critiques of Michael VII Doukas eloquently demonstrate the ways in which medieval Romans understood the concept of *philanthropia*. In the later days of the Doukid regime, the situation in Byzantium’s Eastern provinces was rapidly deteriorating in view of civil war and Seljuk raids. As a consequence, many refugees were

¹⁰⁵ For these imperial virtues, along with many others, see Noreña, “Communication of the Emperor’s Virtues” esp. 158-159; For other instances where games and public benefaction are viewed as imperial generosity, see Ewald and Noreña, “Introduction”, 1-44.

¹⁰⁶ Noreña, “Communication of the Emperor’s Virtues.” 160.

¹⁰⁷ It is certainly brought up very frequently for chariot races *De cerimoniis*, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 354, but also for the appointment of the Eparch, suggesting that the role was seen as a public good for the people, *Ibid.*, 267.

arriving in Constantinople, straining local resources and the emperor's ability to provide relief. The situation soon reached a breaking point.

“When winter arrived, because the emperor lacked generosity and was extremely stingy, he offered no succor from the imperial treasuries or any other form of provident welfare either to those in office or to the people of the City. [...] nor did he hold out an abundant hand that could assist the poor and provide them with daily provisions, for it is through these means that poor are normally supplied with necessities. There were many, indeed countless deaths every day...”¹⁰⁸

Attaleiates' criticisms of Michael Doukas demonstrate that material relief for the indigent in times of need was the expected duty of an emperor. They also highlight the enduring importance of *philanthropia* as an imperial attribute.

The Vegetable Race

In the first ceremony built around the emperor's *philanthropia* that we discuss here, we return to our opening story. The Vegetable festival marked the beginning of Constantinople's racing season. This event was distinct from others in the medieval Roman calendar by the distribution of food at the mid-day break after the first round of races. The day before the race was to begin, food was piled up on the *spina*, the raised interior barrier around which the chariots raced, next to permanent fixtures such as the obelisk of Thutmose III and the serpent's column.¹⁰⁹ Vegetables obviously made an appearance among the food, but also present were cakes and fish, the latter of which was brought up from the docks just before the mid-day break.

¹⁰⁸ Attaleiates, *The History*. 384. Translation by Kaldellis & Krallis, 385.

¹⁰⁹ These are far from the only decorations in either the *spina*, or the Hippodrome more widely, see Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*, 212-232. The *spina* was positively crowded.

When the first round of the races concluded and awards had been distributed to the winners, the racers and the commanders of the *Tagmata* went to the *spina*. The *De cerimoniis* is not clear on this aspect of the ceremony, but it seems likely that the racers climbed onto the *spina* to distribute the food piled up there to the crowd. The Tagmatic officers likely ensured that people did not get too rowdy. Once everyone was in place, the crowd waited for the sign from the imperial box. The moment that the emperor stood from the throne to leave the hippodrome, the people in the crowd also stood up and went down onto the racetrack, where they received the food. It seems likely that everyone received an amount that was deemed fair, but the account does not specify how much. The break in between the races allowed people the time to take the food home and join in on the festivities headed by the factions that unfolded in the city streets.¹¹⁰

First of all, it is important to acknowledge that before even examining the specifics of this variant of chariot racing, that public events taking place in the hippodrome themselves constituted philanthropic ventures. By hosting such diversions, the emperors demonstrated a concern for improving the lives of citizens, not in a material way per se, but in a fashion that still enhanced civic life.¹¹¹ Chariot races were paid for and organized by the emperor and were not profit driven.¹¹² Additionally, they were for everyone in the city, regardless of income.¹¹³ The inaugural event of the racing season therefore represented the commencement of what amounted to an entire season of imperial munificence.

¹¹⁰ See *De cerimoniis*, 345.

¹¹¹ Just as municipalities paying large amounts for new sports stadiums can hardly be said to be materially improving the lives of the average inhabitant of the city but can still be justified as a reasonable expense (sometimes). For more on entertainment as a public benefaction, see Ewald and Noreña, "Introduction", Noreña, "Communication of the Emperor's Virtues" esp. 159-164.

¹¹² Cameron, *Circus Factions*, 5-13.

¹¹³ This inclusivity to audience becomes apparent further down when we look at a ceremony involving picking out poor audience members at random.

Overseeing the provisioning of public games and the distribution of food had been a matter of serious concern since the days of the republic, when *praetors* and *aediles* had been responsible for organizing annual games and food distributions largely out of pocket.¹¹⁴ While extremely expensive and a considerable monetary outlay that often put people in debt, such events nevertheless offered a chance to ambitious men to ingratiate themselves with voters by throwing particularly lavish and expensive games.¹¹⁵ The *circus maximus* was a popular venue for the citizens of Rome and served as the model for the Hippodrome of Constantinople,¹¹⁶ though other forms of entertainment were quite popular as well.¹¹⁷ As Rome came to be ruled by emperors, public entertainment became increasingly associated with imperial governance.¹¹⁸ So ingrained did this practice become that by the late third and early fourth centuries, when the special significance of Rome itself had dimmed,¹¹⁹ every new capital that sprang up from the

¹¹⁴ Paul Veyne describes how there were treasury funds available for the *aediles*, "but this was quite inadequate", *Bread and Circuses*, 208.

¹¹⁵ "Since they gave so much pleasure to people, why should the magistrate who produced them not make himself popular, if he was open-handed? How could he fail to be elected when he offered himself for some other magistracy higher up the *cursus honorum*? And how could he fail to be defeated, if he had shown meanness? The public at the games was a public of electors... The story of the Roman Games at the end of the Republican period is the story of how they grew ever more expensive and ever more sumptuous. It became sometimes necessary and often sufficient, in order to be elected to a magistracy, to have provided the plebs with magnificent games when one was an aedile. *Euergetism* [public benefaction] became an instrument in a political career." *Ibid.*, 212.

It was at the same time a pious action considering the games were held for various religious festivals, but Veyne seems to somewhat underplay piety as "the most superficial reason" for the enthusiastic contributions by magistrates to the cost of the games, *Ibid.* 208.

¹¹⁶ Dagrón describes the kinship shared between the Hippodrome and the Circus Maximus, *L'Hippodrome de Constantinople*, 13.

¹¹⁷ Gladiatorial games are famously seen as a staple in Roman entertainment even branching into the famous naval shows in the flooded Colosseum, but also popular were the somewhat less extravagant theatrical performances.

¹¹⁸ We can see this in Noreña's work as he describes how the early Julio-Claudian emperors, particularly Augustus, were associated with the virtue of *Liberalitas* through, among other public benefactions, the provisioning of public games. Later, we see how it becomes increasingly important after the passing of the first imperial dynasty, eventually becoming a regular fixture on imperial coinage starting under Hadrian, Noreña, "Communication of the Emperor's Virtues", 160-162.

¹¹⁹ The importance of Rome strategically and practically was on the decline throughout the third to sixth centuries. Van Dam, *Rome and Constantinople*, 47-50. The reign of Aurelian saw the imperial mint in Rome shuttered due to corruption and sedition, and while it eventually reopened, it was never as industrious as it once was. Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, 133. Under the reign of Diocletian we see the special tax exempt status of Italy itself reversed after near centuries of preferential treatment. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, 206. Later on in the reign of Constantine, the city itself was no longer the capital after the dedication of Constantinople. Though the city

days of the Tetrarchy to the Constantinian refounding of Byzantium sported Hippodromes attached to the Imperial palaces.¹²⁰ Since fame and popular support were essential conduits to power in the Roman world,¹²¹ authorities increasingly monopolized public entertainment on a grand scale in the major cities of the empire.¹²²

Public shows aside, food was also a regular offering of the powerful towards the urban populace. It is estimated that, similar to the medieval world, in the ancient Mediterranean food represented the average household's primary expense.¹²³ Relief from this expense, particularly in times of exceptional hardship, would have represented a tangible benefit for those who could enjoy it. The grain dole of the Roman Empire has its origins in the reformist legislation of the Gracchi and the senior *aediles* were in charge of its procurement and distribution.¹²⁴ As Rome's population grew, the city could not sustain its people by recourse to the local hinterland. Soon the regular importation of grain, shipped from the grain-rich regions of the empire in Egypt, Africa, or Sicily became an imperial duty. In times of festivities, surplus grain deliveries were incentivized through favourable tax breaks towards merchants.¹²⁵ Though the grain dole was

remained important ideologically, even in the Western Empire other sites like Milan and Ravenna were increasingly preferred imperial capitals.

¹²⁰ For the construction of popular entertainment venues in imperial capitals, see Magdalino, "Court and Capital in Byzantium", 131-134, esp. 132; Both he and Dagron classify the Hippodromes as truly extensions of the Imperial palaces, though one that was open to regular visitation by the public, "Trônes Pour Un Empereur", 180.

¹²¹ For information on the role of public opinion in Byzantine imperial governance, see the work of Anthony Kaldellis, "How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium: The Role of Public Opinion in Sedition and Rebellion"; and *The Byzantine Republic*, especially 89-164.

¹²² This is particularly true as we continue into the Dominate, and Middle Byzantium. For information on the monopolization of public entertainment, see Cameron, *Circus Factions*, 6-13.

¹²³ Erdkamp, *The Grain Market in the Roman Empire*, 258-262.

¹²⁴ The subject of the Gracchi and their reforms constitutes a massive body of literature, but as of recent years very few comprehensive volumes. Thus the rather aged Stockton, *The Gracchi*, might be useful for an introduction to the subject, but it is limited by its age. For a directory of the more recent research on the Gracchi, see Santangelo, "A Survey of Recent Scholarship on the Age of the Gracchi (1985-2005)", esp. 479-480. For more information on the background of the era, and the motivations of the opponents of the Gracchi and their reforms, see Tan, *Power and Public Finance at Rome, 264-49 BCE*, particularly 144-170.

¹²⁵ Outside of the capital, there was a series of provisions made for avoiding starvation prices. In the Eastern provinces, there was a long history of communal funds towards to the provisioning of cheaper grain, and in the west,

severely disrupted by the loss of many Roman provinces to the Caliphate in the seventh and eighth centuries, the need to keep Constantinopolitans happy meant that there was still government intervention in the capital's grain supply. By the tenth and eleventh centuries intensive agricultural development of Byzantine lands in Thrace, Bithynia, and even Crimea kept the citizens of the capital fed. The Eparch of Constantinople oversaw the distribution of grain to the city's bakers at fair prices and ensured the price of resulting bread also remained fair.¹²⁶

We therefore see that the Vegetable Race drew on long established ideas of imperial beneficence in the Roman world to construct a very clever piece of advertising regarding the emperor's *philanthropia*.¹²⁷ His prominent position in the *Kathisma* could not have been missed: his actions both signalled the beginning of the races when he made the sign of the cross over the people¹²⁸ and their conclusion at his standing. When charioteers were to be promoted, it was the emperor who publicly marked their advancement on the imperial *taxis*.¹²⁹ It would not have been possible, while the emperor was present,¹³⁰ to ignore his presence. With their presence then,

more individual elite intervention when required, Erdkamp, *The Grain Market in the Roman Empire*, 268-283, for tax breaks, see 297. For taxation in kind grain acquisition, see 206-257, 326-7.

¹²⁶ For an idea as to where the agricultural shortfall was made up, and the duties of the Eparch, see Harris, *Constantinople*, 96-7. His supposition that Cherson was a major source of grain however is questionable considering that Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos notes in *De Administrando Imperio*, 53.530-535, that Cherson is completely reliant on grain shipments from Anatolia to survive, though such things may have changed over time.

¹²⁷ We do not have specific acclamations for the vegetable festival itself but see above (citation 12) for the number of instances hailing the emperors as *euergetas* during chariot races generally.

¹²⁸ *De cerimoniis*, 340-346.

¹²⁹ This happens in a few instances such as promotions of a *mikropanites* to a *phaktionarios*, and a charioteer is given a girdle, *Ibid.*, 327-331.

¹³⁰ It is not entirely clear what would have happened while the emperors were away from the city, such as in the cases of the famously absent emperors Basileios II, Nikephoros II Phokas, or Alexios I Komnenos. In each case, these imperial figures spent considerable time away from the city on campaign. One presumes that this would then fall to junior emperors or other representatives. Alexios seems to have relied on his mother quite heavily to keep order back in the capital whilst away and perhaps her attendance at such events was part of this function, Komnene 3.6-8. Phokas seemed wary of leaving the younger Macedonian emperors alone in the city and Skylitzes reports he often took them on campaign with him 15.11. In the case of Basileios we might assume his younger brother and heir Konstantinos VIII could have fulfilled the role, but Basileios was a very suspicious and untrusting individual. As Kaldellis notes, "There is no sign that Basil entrusted him with any authority" and he had to be summoned from outside the city to the palace on Basileios' deathbed *Streams of Gold; Rivers of Blood*, 155. Perhaps in the absence of anyone else, such a role might have fallen to the *eparchos* of the city.

emperors were seen fulfilling ancient expectations about what rulers were supposed to do by providing for their subjects. Through both the commencement of a year's schedule of racing for the people's entertainment and their provision of tangible material benefits in the form of food for the assembled people, the emperors impressed their status as *euergetai* upon the crowd.

The Festival of the Vow

We can see from the previous ceremony that caring for the people's material wellbeing remained an important aspect of Roman imperial rule well into the Middle Byzantine period. It began to form kind of social contract between the rulers and the ruled. While the previous festival was one in which the whole capital's material wellbeing was ceremonially celebrated through ritual activities tied to the ruling dynasty, the Festival of the Vow targeted a much narrower segment of the populace for philanthropic intercession. This festival took place on January 1st. As described in the *De cerimoniis*, it was a racing festival much like the previous one, albeit shorter in duration. No vegetables were involved in this ceremony. Consulting a text on ceremonial slightly older than the *Book of Ceremonies*, the *Kleterologion* of Philotheos, we see that the Festival of the Vow came on day eight of a twelve-day cycle of ceremonies that stretched from Christmas to Holy Epiphany.¹³¹ For our purposes, however, the greatest distinction between this ceremony and the previous one is that before the races began, the emperor summoned to the *Kathisma* the highest-ranking officials of the empire: the archons of the *kouboukleion*; the *patrikioi*; the *stratego*.¹³² essentially whoever held the highest offices and were present in the capital. These eminent men were given tokens that they proceeded to distribute to select poor individuals present at that day's races. After the conclusion of the races,

¹³¹ *De cerimoniis*, 740-758.

¹³² The *stratego* were the thematic governors of the empire and at various times commanded the significant military forces based in the *themes* under their control. See glossary or *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1964.

these tokens would allow admittance to a special feast at the palace, in the halls of the nineteen couches.¹³³ Only a small number the city's poor were able to get tokens, and we have no way of knowing the exact criteria by which those men were selected.¹³⁴ In the absence of any further information we can only assume the choice was at the discretion of the officials given the tokens.

People were not generally allowed into the palace on a whim, though there were certainly many in Constantinople who came and went everyday. There were those who worked in its grounds in a service capacity, as members of the imperial bureaucracy, or as troops stationed within.¹³⁵ There were also those who had visited the palace as petitioners granted an audience with the emperor or on some other business. However, the average Constantinopolitan, to say nothing of the inhabitants of the empire at large, would never be permitted into the palace proper. An invitation to dine with the emperor was thus quite a special honour.

This dinner took place in the Hall of the Nineteen Couches, a long rectangular room meant primarily for dining and receptions. What makes the room stand out in the literature and what lent it its name, were the couches on which dinner guests were expected to recline while they ate like Romans of old. Reclined dining had largely died out in the Mediterranean world but was kept alive in the Byzantine court for special occasions. These couches were quite large and

¹³³ Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς προσκαλεῖται εἰς τὸ κλούβιν πατρικίους καὶ στρατηγούς καὶ τοὺς τοῦ κουβουκλείου ἄρχοντας καὶ τοὺς τὰ πρῶτα ὀφίκια κατέχοντας, καὶ δίδωσιν αὐτοῖς σφραγίδας διανεῖμαι τοῖς πτωχοῖς ὅπως ἀνακλιθῶσι μετ' αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰ ἰθ' Ἀκκούβιτα κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν συνήθειαν. *De cerimoniis*, 360-1.

¹³⁴ We can make a rough estimate of the likelihood to be chosen. The number of poor which could be seated numbered anywhere from 162-216 (look below at footnote 39 for the math breakdown). The population of Constantinople in this period is somewhat debated, but most estimates seem to place the number in the low to mid hundred thousands, and if Morrison and Cheynet are to be believed, anywhere from 10-20% of these may be classified as beggars or poor enough to be likely candidates to be chosen for this festival, "Prices and Wages in the Byzantine World," 872. Regardless of the exact numbers, clearly there were many, many times more people who were eligible to be chosen than possibly could have been every year.

¹³⁵ For information on the closed nature of the palace, see See Paul Magdalino, "The People and the Palace", especially 169-7. Maintenance of structures, cleaning, cooks, stable workers, everyone necessary to keep a large complex of most very old buildings running day to day.

accommodated a number of people each.¹³⁶ Before we go any further, we might consider what the *De cerimoniis* has to say about the actual meal:

“[...]going out to the Hall of the Nineteen Couches, he reclines at his previous table with the archons of the *kouboukleion*, the head of the *sakellion*, the master of ceremonies and the *aktouarios*, while our brothers in Christ sit on the couches below. Then, standing up, the emperor goes out[...].”¹³⁷

Unfortunately, we can see that the account is rather sparse here as occasionally happens in the *De cerimoniis* when ceremony becomes less scripted.¹³⁸ Still, we can glean some information from this description. The impoverished diners are referred to as οἱ διὰ Χριστὸν ἡμῶν ἀδελφοί, or “our brothers in Christ” here, contrasting with previous terminology in the text, τοῖς πτωχοῖς “the beggars”, or more generally “the poor.” This shift in language could be nothing more than variance in terminology, but the *De cerimoniis* is not a text chiefly concerned with style and its language can be quite repetitive. Such an editorial decision should instead be considered in the light of the Christ-like image the emperors are attempting to appropriate. Much as Christ associated himself with the poor of society, so too does the text accentuate the spiritual kinship

¹³⁶ If we look at the *Kleterologion* of Philotheos to guide us we can see that on at least one feast held in the Hall of the Nineteen couches, around 220 people regularly attend. It is not possible to imagine that 19 couches of individual size could adequately accommodate 220 diners. Instead what the sources describe is 19 π-shaped couch complexes with 3-4 persons per couch meaning that equation is 3-4 X 3 X 19 giving us a range of 171-228 attendees, *De cerimoniis*, 745.

¹³⁷ ...καὶ ἐξελθὼν εἰς τὰ ἰθ' Ἀκκουβίτα, ἀκουμβίζει ἐπὶ τῆς τιμίας αὐτοῦ τραπέζης μετὰ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ κουβουκλείου, τὸν τοῦ Σακελλίου, τὸν τῆς καταστάσεως καὶ τὸν ἀκτουάριον, εἰς δὲ τοὺς κάτω ἀκουβίτους καθέζονται οἱ διὰ Χριστὸν ἡμῶν ἀδελφοί. Καὶ ἀναστὰς ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κοιτῶνος τῆς Δάφνης, περιβάλλεται τὸ τοῦτου σαγίον... Ibid., 362.

¹³⁸ For example, when the emperor goes to the homes of the aged, the description is sparse concerning how to actually interact with the old people, instead just mandating to distribute wealth. Or, in the case of the various Hippodrome festivals, the emperor’s comportment during the races themselves is not touched upon. Perhaps the sort of coaching we might expect today regarding personal interaction would be too specific to a particular time.

between the emperor and the poorest members of society. Still, despite this linguistic insight, it is clear that for this specific moment in the ceremony, the *De cerimoniis* itself is not sufficient.

Philotheos' *Kleterologion* provides some of the missing details.¹³⁹ The poor had already been received and were reclining at the tables when the officials and the emperor entered. Once the emperor entered and reclined at his table, the officials were introduced. Among their ranks were the eight archons of the Kouboukleion and the head of the *eidikos logos*, a treasury official in charge of movable items other than coinage.¹⁴⁰ They formed a circle around the imperial table and at the vocal sign provided by the cantors present in the room, they too reclined at the imperial table.¹⁴¹ From descriptions of other dinners in this very room, we know that there was golden dinnerware upon which the meals were served, and fine golden ornaments hung by chains from the ceiling. There was varied entertainment throughout the evening with acrobatics and perhaps wrestling being a part of the repertoire.¹⁴² When the time came for desert, the *atriklines* went around the room collecting the tokens that had been granted to the poor in attendance,

¹³⁹ Philotheos was a *protospatharios*, and *atriklines*, and compiled his *Kleterologion* in AD 899 as a repository of information about the various ranks of the imperial court, what *roga* they were entitled to, and the organization and seating arrangements of various imperial banquets, matters which *atriklinai* were privy to, see Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System*.

¹⁴⁰ The *Praipositoi*, eunuch *protospatharioi*, *primikerioi*, and *ostiaroi* were the archons, *De cerimoniis*, 750. Curiously, the *eidikos logos* is not present in the *De cerimoniis*. This minor discrepancy in the guest list may be due to changes in the ceremony between Philotheos' time and the composition of the *De cerimoniis* in the reign of Konstantinos VII, some sixty years later, or a simple omission.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 750.13-751.5

¹⁴² For information on the decoration of the hall and acrobatics displays, see Liudprand of Cremona, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti, 200. Wrestling was a common attraction in between races at the Hippodrome, and pop up in accounts of Byzantine history as entertainment in various places (one tradition has the future emperor Basil I r.867-886 coming to the attention of Michael III r.842-867 through an impressive display defeating a Bulgarian wrestler), though admittedly I do not know of an instance specifically, or rather explicitly, taking place in the Hall of the 19 Couches.

while the *eidikos logos* went around and distributed purses to the poor each containing one *nomisma* in small change.¹⁴³

The account of Liudprand of Cremona's dinner in the Hall of the Nineteen Couches with Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos shows rather limited interaction with the emperor. The emperor calls over the ambassador when he sees Liudprand's amazement at the night's entertainment, and they exchange a few lines regarding it. We can gather from this source that it is likely that there was limited interaction at the dinner between the emperor and the poor diners present at the Festival of the Vow; infrequent, though likely not unheard of.¹⁴⁴ The degree of interaction surely depended on the disposition of the emperor(s) on the given day. The emperor appears in Liudprand's narrative to be affable enough a host to interact with his guests in such a way, but a more severe ruler like Nikephoros Phokas, whom Liudprand famously despised, may have been less inclined to even participate in such ceremonies,¹⁴⁵ piety notwithstanding. Accompanying the emperor at his table are the aforementioned officials¹⁴⁶ (more likely targets of conversation during the meal), while the poor recline at the other 18 couches.

This ceremony evokes a more extravagant manifestation of the role of imperial authorities as implied by Attaleiates in his account of the aristocracy and emperor's duty towards the city's poor. As noted earlier, Attaleiates criticized the emperor Michael Doukas for his lack of response to the humanitarian crisis occurring in the capital. He did not distribute either money from the imperial treasury or food to the many indigent in the capital during a harsh winter.

¹⁴³ *De cerimoniis*, 750-751. A *nomisma* was roughly equal to about one sixth of the years income for subsistence, or the upper limit of what an unskilled worker could earn in a month's time, Milanovic, "An Estimate of Average Income and Inequality in Byzantium Around Year 1000." 463.

¹⁴⁴ Liudprand of Cremona, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti, 200.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* For his account of Nikephoros Phokas, see 238-282.

¹⁴⁶ The Archons of the *Kouboukleion*, the head of the *sakellion*, the master of ceremonies and the *aktouarios*.

Michael's failure to live up to his philanthropic duties, as outlined in Attaleiates' late eleventh-century work offers a photo negative of the actions on display to the populace in the Ceremony of the Vow. While the banquet itself was only open to a small part of the city's population, its existence and annual occurrence made known to the general populace the emperor's philanthropic disposition while any interruption to the yearly repetition of the ceremony would have been immediately noted by the population at large. If there were no good reason for such a break, then an emperor might find himself criticized as an "extremely stingy" ruler committing "daily injustices."¹⁴⁷

There remain further complexities to unpack regarding this event. On one hand, it was not unlike the wealthy giving coins to beggars on the streets. By implicating both the emperor and the token granting officials the ceremony highlighted the charitable nature of the entire administration, rather than just the emperor. Since, however, the tokens were handed over by the emperor to his officials, they were also messages of top-down imperial charity. On the other hand, the most illustrious figures of the empire handing out dinner invitations to the lowest of society represents a kind of role reversal that also marked the ancient Saturnalia.¹⁴⁸ The elites, in this moment, became simple couriers delivering an invitation to a dinner party they were not themselves welcome to attend, even doing so in front of a large audience. The poor were in that moment transformed into persons of note, picked out for imperial attention and interaction. Just like the Saturnalia, the Festival of the Vow was marked by feasting, entertainment, and gift

¹⁴⁷ Doukas may have been less willfully malicious and cruel than Attaleiates lets on, the empire was facing significant monetary issues and disruption to taxation. A good excuse was not always enough to escape criticism in Byzantium for failing to live up to certain imperial expectations, for quotes, see Attaleiates, *The History*. 384, 386. Translation by Kaldellis & Krallis, 385, 387.

¹⁴⁸ One example can be found in Horace, *Satires*, 2.7. In this piece, a slave uses Saturnalia to criticize the lifestyle of his master, though even in this example we see that there were limits to such freedoms.

giving; it even took place at a similar time of year.¹⁴⁹ It was not quite masters waiting upon their slaves, but neither was it completely distinct.

Easter Thursday

Konstantinos VII's *De cerimoniis* offers blueprints for a number of ceremonies that take place around Easter. This feast, associated with Christ's resurrection, constituted one of the most important seasons of the entire imperial calendar and was among the holiest times of the year. There is a total of twenty-six ceremonies¹⁵⁰ marked in book 1 of the *De cerimoniis* under the rubric: religious feasts. Of these, ten pertain to Easter: Palm Sunday, the week leading up to Easter, Easter itself, the following Renewal Week, and Antipascha. Together, these ceremonies form a cluster that is completely unmatched among the remaining sixteen ceremonies of the section. For comparison, Philotheos' *Kleterologion* lists twelve entries surrounding Christmas compared with thirteen entries for Easter. Certainly then, Easter was an important time for the emperors to perform ceremonies and be seen as good Christians. In this chapter we will deal with only one of these Easter ceremonies, Easter Thursday, which most clearly demonstrates the nature of imperial charity and concern for the disadvantaged in the empire.

Easter Thursday was an occasion on which emperors could demonstrate their *philanthropia* through concern for the disadvantaged by leaving the palace grounds and traveling through the streets of Constantinople to visit the various *gerokomeia* of the city. The *gerokomeia*

¹⁴⁹ Information on major components of Saturnalia including feasts, revelry, and gift giving, see Dolansky, "Celebrating the Saturnalia: Religious Ritual and Roman Domestic Life", 492. One thing different though, is that while Dolansky posits that the women of the household were very likely present at these festivals, there is no evidence whatsoever for the presence of a *Basilissa* at the festival of the Vow. Indeed, there is a distinct difference in the degree of felt impropriety between women in the household during a festival involving domestic servants, and one involving the most impoverished of the capital's indigent.

¹⁵⁰ This count excludes the chapter "The summoning of the patriarch" as it is simply determining whether the emperor wishes to include the patriarch in the following day's ceremony.

were charitable institutions that provided care for the very elderly, particularly the poor who did not have the means to provide for themselves. The very earliest of these in Constantinople was supposedly established by Helena, the mother of Constantine, at the city's foundation, though many were present throughout the major centers of the empire.¹⁵¹ The *gerokomeia* formed one link in a chain of social welfare institutions within the Byzantine state ranging from some of the first dedicated hospitals of Europe, to state orphanages, to temporary housing for outsiders within the city.¹⁵² Emperors were often intimately associated with these charitable institutions either as founders or as benefactors.¹⁵³

It is hard to definitively say what types of specific services were offered at these institutions. There are some examples from the *Pantokrator* facility, which was established by Emperor Ioannes II Komnenos (r. 1118-1143). This large complex sported a hospital with five wards as well as old age homes. In the *Pantokrator gerokomeion* twenty-four elderly people with severe disabilities were housed and cared for by a team of six nurses. They were supplied with bread, cheese, beans, oil, and wine for food, along with clothes, firewood, and a modest stipend. There they had medical treatment from the nearby hospital should they require it, were bathed regularly, had clean bedding, and their own priest.¹⁵⁴ However, despite the rather detailed knowledge of this one facility, it is hard to know how generalizable such information is.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, 222-3. For the other major sites of *gerokomeia*, see 223-232.

¹⁵² The entire last third of Constantelos's work on philanthropy is a series of investigations on the various charitable institutions of the Byzantine Empire. The ones mentioned, and more, can be found within. Other such works on Byzantine charitable institutions include Timothy Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium*; and *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*. The concept of *philanthropia* features throughout the entirety of both works.

¹⁵³ Additionally, many of the economic and social elite also began to establish charitable institutions by their own initiative in a similar fashion. Gilleard, "Old Age in Byzantine Society." 626, 631.

¹⁵⁴ Gilleard, 635. For more on this facility, see also Guenter Risse, "Church and Laity: Partnership in Hospital Care. The Pantocrator Xenon of Constantinople." 1-41.

¹⁵⁵ At least one scholar in looking at this specific *gerokomeion* characterized it as "...a medical center in the modern sense of the term" and "amazing and a credit to twelfth-century Byzantium" Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy*

Returning to Easter Thursday, the actual text of this ceremony is again rather sparse, but that makes certain inclusions all the more noteworthy. One of the main purposes of the emperor's visits to the various old folks' homes in the city is his distribution of gifts and included in the passage in the *De cerimoniis* is a passage from the Septuagint describing the righteousness of those who give freely and widely.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, the text belabours the point that the emperor is a conduit for the treasures given by God to be distributed so that they may relieve discomfort.¹⁵⁷ This makes for an interesting editorial choice. Does this passage serve as a reminder to emperors of the Godliness of imperial almsgiving? Or did it perhaps represent an idiosyncratic intervention on the part of one of the document's compilers? Regardless, it does serve to highlight the rather connected nature of *philanthropia* as a concept; while it is clearly associated in Greco-Roman thought with justice, it is also undeniably associated with Christian piety.

From a modern perspective, this behaviour is not dissimilar from the sort of activity used to garner public support in modern democracies. The emperor(s) here are shown very publicly going from one *gerokomeion* to another throughout the city. Indeed, the attention being drawn through the traversing of the city results in a great deal of free advertising. The emperor(s) demonstrate here their care for older members of society, a group considered especially venerable.¹⁵⁸ Considering the already imperially sponsored nature of many of the *gerokomeia*,¹⁵⁹ one could almost think of this whole ceremony as a way to draw attention to the sort of

and Social Welfare, 171. Absent other documents detailing the operations of similar establishments, we cannot say with certainty that this was similar to how all *gerokomeia* operated, or if it was exceptional.

¹⁵⁶ Either Psalm 112:9, or II Corinthians 9:9 where the earlier Psalm is quoted.

¹⁵⁷ πλουτοποιῶν ἅπαντας καὶ παραμυθούμενος ἐκ τῶν παρὰ Θεῷ δεδωρημένων αὐτῷ ἀνεξαντλήτων θησαυρῶν, *De cerimoniis*, 177.

¹⁵⁸ The Byzantines had great respect for the aged, Gilleard, "Old Age in Byzantine Society", esp. 632.

¹⁵⁹ See above.

philanthropic work undertaken all year by the imperial establishment; a way of ensuring that, from the point of view of imperial public relations, certain fixed expenses offered a return on investment.

Concluding Remarks

We see in the Byzantine concept of *philanthropia* a kind of collective concern and desire for social welfare that represents a major underlying component of broader ideas and definitions of Justice in the Greco-Roman world. As mentioned in the introduction and earlier in this chapter, δικαιοσύνη, as defined by Menander Rhetor, was to a degree associated with a ruler's care for the plight of citizens and required a discernible commitment to the alleviation of suffering. This quality was deemed desirable and emperors felt the need to shape their public image by highlighting the different ways in which they themselves were just and philanthropic. The ceremonies discussed in this chapter outline regular imperial actions that involved considerable monetary and material outlays aimed at reinforcing the emperor's philanthropic *bona fides*. They are therefore a testament to the value of communication as a means for the shaping of an imperial image that conformed to traditional expectations of virtuous rule.

In the ceremonies discussed above, imperial *philanthropia* was demonstrated in a number of locations all around the capital. The Hippodrome, the *gerokomeia*, and the Imperial Palace all feature quite prominently. Excepting for now the instance of the Vegetable Race, we see that while there are public aspects to philanthropic ceremonies (the distribution of the tokens and the traveling to the *gerokomeia* of the City), much of the actual philanthropic activity seem to take place in comparative privacy; inside either the *gerokomeia* or the imperial palace (though certainly we would expect that word would still travel as participants related what happened). This would seem to limit the efficacy of an imperial ceremony meant to highlight philanthropy.

Why would this be the case? Perhaps these ceremonies are structured in such a way in order to remain predominantly Christian in character. Chapter 6 of the Book of Matthew clearly condemns public alms-giving for the purposes of one's appearance.¹⁶⁰ It may be that in order to operate within the prescriptive framework of Christian belief, *philanthropia* as a virtue had to be expressed predominantly within private spaces in the capital. However, turning back to the Vegetable festival, we see a highly public expression of philanthropic virtue centered in the Hippodrome. How can we reconcile this public ceremony with the more private nature of what was discussed just above?

To solve this conundrum, we must consider the origins of the ceremonies. Easter Thursday and the Festival of the Vow were both primarily expressions of Christian *philanthropia* with a pious emperor aiding the most lowly of his subjects in a similar way that Christ saw to the needs of the meek. The Vegetable festival on the other hand was, as mentioned above, part of a different tradition of imperial benevolence and commemorated the foundation of Constantinople itself. Despite the religious narrative around the foundation of the City by Constantine,¹⁶¹ this was a civic and comparatively secular festival, bound up in ancient ideas and assumptions about the imperial office, rather than the scriptures. In keeping with the tradition of Roman imperial benevolence then, this ceremony is intensely public and broadcasts the *philanthropia* of the *Basileus* loudly for all to hear.

¹⁶⁰ From the King James Version for reference: Matthew 6.1-4 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

¹⁶¹ Constantine is said to have received divine aid in the construction of his city in the form of an angel, *The Patria*, 3.10. Eusebius also mentions divine inspiration in the construction of the city, though does not go into much detail, Eusebius, *Eusebius Werke, Band 1.1: Über Das Leben Des Kaisers Konstantin*, 3.47-9.

Temperance: *Sophrosyne* and Imperial Piety

For *Antipascha* (the Sunday after Easter) 1042 A.D. the emperor Michael V, nicknamed *Kalaphates* (the caulker) (r. 1041-1042) decided to perform the customary procession through the capital. From the gates of the imperial palace to the doors of Hagia Sophia itself, the procession route was lined with silks and scented by the perfume shops within the district.¹⁶² The emperor was surrounded by the senate as he processed to the great church, then riding on horseback towards the church of the Holy Apostles. This route through the *Mese* was adorned by luxurious fabrics along with gold and silver ornaments hung from buildings, while the forum of Constantine was fully garlanded.¹⁶³ It seemed as if the entirety of the city turned out to watch the procession as acclamations and songs rang out all over the city. People voiced their pleasure at seeing so ostentatious a display: it was deemed a major success with the population still gushing the day after.¹⁶⁴ Michael's popularity was palpable.

This was an important move for the young emperor. Michael was only a few months into his reign and was a young man subordinated by means of oaths to Empress Zoe, a much older benefactress. This state of affairs put him in a comparatively weak position for one holding such

¹⁶² For the perfume aspect, see *Das Eparchenbuch Leons Des Weisen*, 10.1 (110). For the other aspects of this ceremony, Attaleiates *The History* 18, Skylitzes 20.1 (though Skylitzes is rather sparse on details, particularly compared to Attaleiates), and perhaps Psellos 5.16-17, though he never explicitly mentions the procession.

¹⁶³ Attaleiates, *The History*, 18.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Attaleiates foreshadows doom in stating that the ceremony was marred by a mistake in execution when the signal to start is given too soon, something only the wise and perceptive saw at the time and interpreted correctly, a theme present throughout his history, *Ibid.*, 18. Skylitzes mentions the wide attendance of the procession, 417.

an august office. Michael apparently bristled at this state of affairs.¹⁶⁵ It was therefore important for him to be seen taking a leading role in imperial ceremony. In doing so he was to reshape his image into that of a sovereign rather than the ward of a doting empress. What makes the choice of a religious procession significant, however, are some of the allegations against him both before and after coming to the throne. Attaleiates alleges that the emperor had associated with disreputable characters before his elevation and, though his short reign afforded him comparatively few imperial actions, he found the time to have his male relatives castrated to stave off competition for the throne.¹⁶⁶ These acts did not befit the ideal of virtuous rulership in Byzantium. Jealousy, paranoia, and dishonourable conduct were not consistent with the Imperial virtue of temperance.¹⁶⁷ Michael's image was in need of rebranding and, through a demonstration of piety, he sought to counteract whatever doubts may have been growing regarding his legitimacy.

Indeed, by all accounts, the endeavour seems to have been initially quite successful. The emperor's cortege did make a good impression on Constantinopolitans. Attaleiates and Skylitzes agree that the initial reaction by the people was quite positive and the young emperor enjoyed widespread popularity in the city – for around 24 hours or so.¹⁶⁸ Skylitzes reveals another purpose for the ceremony; it was a kind of approval poll to test the emperor's popularity with the

¹⁶⁵ Psellos describes the hate and jealousy that Michael felt for the Porphyrogenneta's primacy of place, particularly when it came to the order of their names in imperial pronouncements *Chronographia*, 5.17-18.

¹⁶⁶ Attaleiates, *The History*, 16-18.

¹⁶⁷ Attaleiates goes further by characterizing the castration of Michael V's male relatives as lacking in wisdom as well considering it deprived him of talent and further allies in the empire *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁸ Attaleiates *The History*, 20; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 20.1; Psellos, *Chronographia*, 5.24-27.

residents of the capital.¹⁶⁹ Since Michael liked the results, he exiled the aged Zoe assuming that his popularity would weather the effects of such an act. Events proved him wrong.¹⁷⁰

It soon became clear that Michael V overestimated his own popularity, while also underestimating the people's attachment to the purple-born empress. While he attempted to regain control of the situation, the people's anger at his mistreatment of Zoe proved too great. This resulted in possibly the single instance in the history of the Byzantine polity when an emperor was deposed on account of his misreading popular responses to ceremonial.

Sophrosyne

Sophrosyne is our conceptual frame for this chapter. Broadly, it can be referred to as a soundness of mind.¹⁷¹ More specifically, this idea has often been refined down to a quality possessed by virtuous individuals related to self-restraint, temperance, and what might today be described as upright moral character.¹⁷² As a result the concept is often described as the opposite of excessive personal indulgence. Thus for later medieval writers, *sophrosyne* would be classified as the antithesis of lust and gluttony.¹⁷³ However, the original term in the Ancient Greek world was imbued with a wider spectrum of meaning than temperance.

The Romans had trouble translating the word, and often many different words and concepts fell under the broader banner of the Greek concept. Eventually Cicero established a default translation for the term as either *temperantia* or *frugalitas*, but neither was perfect and

¹⁶⁹ Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae, Synopsis Historiarum*. 20.1

¹⁷⁰ Indeed, our main sources for the event were unanimously convinced that the charges levied against the Empress were fabricated, Skylitzes, 418; Attaleiates, *The History*, 20-23; Psellos, *Chronographia*, 134.

¹⁷¹ Mikalson, *Honor Thy Gods*, 180-181.

¹⁷² Kanavou, "Sōphrosynē and Justice in Aristophanes' Wasps", 176. The most detailed overview of the concept is surely still North, *Sophrosyne*. As it relates to Christian thought, see 312-379.

¹⁷³ North, *Sophrosyne*, 318.

there were many other options.¹⁷⁴ While this failure to properly render the term might have signified the diminishment of its importance in the greater Roman world. However, its eager adoption by the expanding community of Christian faithful ensured its continued importance. The early church was eager to use morality as a basis for differentiation from pagan society at large and *sophrosyne* was embraced by it, becoming increasingly associated with sobriety and chastity among Christians.¹⁷⁵ This association of outward displays of *sophrosyne* with Christian piety only grew as it became the only one the four classical virtues to end up assimilated into a new canon of theological virtues, joined by *pistes* (faith) and *agape* (love). *Sophrosyne* was further associated with *hagiasmos*, a word describing the attainment of purity or holiness.¹⁷⁶

This association was not without prior basis in Hellenic thought. Drawing on *sophrosyne* as soundness of mind, the word could denote piety when sound thought was directed towards the gods.¹⁷⁷ This is exemplified in this rather explicit example from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*,

I wonder, then, how the Athenians can have been persuaded that Socrates was a freethinker, when **he never said or did anything contrary to sound religion**, and his utterances about the gods and his behaviour towards them **were the words and actions of a man who is truly religious and deserves to be thought so.**¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ For Cicero and the term, see *Ibid.*, 268-271, for the rest of North's treatment of the Romans and *sophrosyne*, see *Ibid.*, 258-311.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 300-312.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹⁷⁷ Mikalson, *Honor Thy Gods*, 180-2.

¹⁷⁸ θαυμάζω οὖν ὅπως ποτὲ ἐπείσθησαν Ἀθηναῖοι Σωκράτην **περὶ θεοῦς μὴ σωφρονεῖν**, τὸν ἀσεβὲς μὲν οὐδὲν ποτε περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς οὐτ' εἰπόντα οὔτε πράξαντα, τοιαῦτα δὲ καὶ λέγοντα καὶ πράττοντα περὶ θεῶν οἷά τις ἂν καὶ λέγων καὶ πράττων εἴη τε καὶ νομίζοιτο **εὐσεβέστατος**. Xen. Mem. 1.1.20. Translation: William Heinemann, *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*, 4.

While Mikalson details further examples from the Classical Greek corpus,¹⁷⁹ the more pertinent *Basilikos Logos* of Menander Rhetor shows a similar connection, albeit loosely. Menander states that temperance worthy of praise is exemplified by causing “whoever sees the emperor’s [way of] life to seek to emulate it.”¹⁸⁰ Menander further states that emperors should be praised in encomia for bringing about a general increase in piety among the people.¹⁸¹ Combining the highly visible nature of imperial religious processions with the piety on display there, we come to an important example of the kind of lifestyle emulation that Menander is describing. The piety of the emperor was certainly something intended to be emulated by the populace, though perhaps not so ostentatiously. Considering that 1. piety alone was not one of the imperial virtues talked about by Menander Rhetor,¹⁸² 2. the previous history of association between *sophrosyne* and piety, and 3. the incorporation of the concept into the demonstration of Christian piety, ceremonial *sophrosyne* will be examined primarily through displays of imperial piety and holiness in this chapter.

Imperial Piety

To understand imperial piety in the Macedonian era and the role that the imperial edifice assumed in the religious life of the empire, we must turn to Byzantine iconoclasm. The divisive theological debate which constituted *iconomachy* (as the Byzantines referred to it) had only recently been definitively put to rest at the ascension of Basileios I.¹⁸³ Gilbert Dagron argues that

¹⁷⁹ Mikalson, *Honor Thy Gods*, 180-182.

¹⁸⁰ οἷον γὰρ ὁρῶσι τὸν βασιλέως βίον, τοιοῦτον ἐπανήρηνται. Menander Rhetor, *Basilikos Logos*, 376.8-9.

¹⁸¹ εὐσέβεια δὲ ἢ περὶ τὸ θεῖον ἠϋξῆται, *Ibid.*, 377.14

¹⁸² This may be in part due to a general tendency to automatically equate piety with virtue in general, Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle*, 67.

¹⁸³ The last iconoclast emperor was Theophilus (r.829-842), though the struggle over icons had raged on and off since the reign of Leon III (r.717-741). The extent of actual violent repression of icons, particularly in the first period of iconoclasm under the Isaurians, has been determined to have been significantly embellished by subsequent writers as detailed in the work of, Haldon and Brubaker, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, esp. 79-94, 105-155 and all of Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*.

the controversy was responsible for a rather fundamental shift in the relationship between the imperial office and Byzantine Christian practice.¹⁸⁴ Iconoclasm in the second iconoclast era has been read as an imperial initiative imposed on the church rather than as a bottom-up theological movement.¹⁸⁵ A corollary of this identification was that the thorough repudiation of the imperial doctrine of Iconoclasm proved damaging for the image of the imperial office. Whereas, according to Dagron, we can speak of a Melchizedek-inspired emperor-priest in the Iconoclast emperors, particularly Leon III, such imagery was no longer palatable in the time of the Macedonians who did their best to avoid it.¹⁸⁶ Emperors still involved themselves in religious controversy and the inner workings of the Patriarchate, but their ability (or even desire) to dictate the course of church doctrine seems comparatively reduced.¹⁸⁷

Beyond the new role the imperial office had vis-à-vis ecclesiastical authority, the Macedonians also had skeletons in the closet. The Macedonian dynasty needed to project a sanitized image of imperial power because of the way in which its founder, Basileios I, came to power. The heinous murder of his benefactor, fellow Emperor Michael III, combined with the still recent memories of imperial iconoclasm, prompted Basileios and his propagandists to rethink the image they projected to society. In doing so Basileios associated himself and his dynasty with venerable figures from the legendary and historical past. Constantine the Great was

¹⁸⁴ Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 213-219.

¹⁸⁵ Haldon and Brubaker, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 370.

¹⁸⁶ Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, for quote and information about the Macedonian response to Iconoclasm's influence, see 218-219. For more information about the religious role of the emperor in the iconoclast era, see 173-181.

¹⁸⁷ Incidents of imperial meddling include those such as Basileios I's replacement of Photios with the previous patriarch Ignatios seemingly to mollify the Roman see, Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae, Synopsis Historiarum*, 6.16. Famously, Nikephoros II Phokas also tried to modify Orthodox thought regarding soldiers, but to no avail, perhaps indicative of a lack of ability to affect religious change from the top-down because of Iconoclasm's legacy, Skylitzes. 14.18. Also, infamously, there is the matter of Alexios I Komnenos and his involvement in the dispute with the Bogomils.

a major figure for the nascent dynasty and from early on this association was promoted.¹⁸⁸ For example, we know from *De cerimoniis* itself that the Macedonian dynasty reopened the Mausoleum of Constantine for use as their own final resting place. Dagron characterizes this move as “an attempt to graft the new dynasty onto the old imperial stock.”¹⁸⁹ Indeed, while the fictive ancestry of the Macedonians was crafted over many years – the process of ennobling the ancestry of Basileios began at least as far back as the reign of his son Leon VI – the legacy of Constantine the Great, whose name was imparted on Basileios’ first son, evidently appealed to the new emperor.¹⁹⁰ Being so heavily associated with the sainted Constantine the Great would have helped smooth out the problems associated with the violent murder that marked the commencement of the dynasty.¹⁹¹ Rather than the act of a murderous upstart seizing the throne because of a lust for power, Basil’s usurpation was recast as a case of the scion of a long-lost dynasty coming to retake the throne and invoke the glory of a bygone era. This was by no means the only saintly associations that the dynasty cultivated beginning with Basileios, but this is among the strongest and we do not have the space to detail them all here.¹⁹²

A more overt display of piety on the part of the Macedonian dynasty was their construction or repair of numerous ecclesiastical buildings. Basileios famously oversaw the

¹⁸⁸ Markopoulos, “Constantine the Great in Macedonian Historiography: Models and Approaches”, esp. 161.

¹⁸⁹ For the accounts of the final resting places of the early Macedonian rulers, see *De cerimoniis*, 642-3. For the quote from Dagron, see Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 206.

¹⁹⁰ For Basileios’ ancestry by the time of Konstantinos VII, see Ševčenko, *Vita Basilii*, 3. This biography of Basileios was written as a part of the historical works produced in the court of the Porphyrogennetos and would have conformed to his editorial tastes. Markopoulos, “Constantine the Great in Macedonian Historiography: Models and Approaches”, 164-165. For Leon discussing the ancestry of his father, see *Oration Funèbre de Basile I*, 42.19-46.12.

¹⁹¹ Constantine was also convenient for the new dynasty to attach itself to as he was sainted despite his murderous nature, specifically killing of members of his family and opponents to his reign. See Zosimos’ *New History*, 2.28-9. See 2.28 where Zosimos classifies Constantine as one who habitually broke his word in executing his former colleague Licinius.

¹⁹² Basileios also heavily associated himself with, and dedicated the Nea Ekklesia to, the Archangel Michael, and the Biblical Elijah, for the church dedications, see *Vita Basilii*, 68.15, 83. There were also hints of a Davidic association of the peasant coming to the throne as a divine outcome, a theme which Leon ‘the Wise’ became tied up in compared to David’s son Solomon ‘the Wise’, see Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 192-219.

construction of the *Nea Ekklesia*, a large new church, a first among major construction projects since the days of Justinian.¹⁹³ As stated in the *Vita Basilii*, the construction of this church “alone suffice[s] to demonstrate piety towards the Godhead.”¹⁹⁴ Indeed, the biography further highlights Basileios’ piety through his construction of new places of worship and the restoration of old ones for the common inhabitants of the City and outside it as well.¹⁹⁵ This evoked the piety of the emperor Justinian who famously had constructed the original Great Church, the towering *Hagia Sophia*, as a testament of his personal grandeur and his devotion to God.¹⁹⁶

However, in ceremony, seeking to display imperial piety buildings can at best operate as props. We shall therefore be looking to, primarily, the various religious processions that the emperors took part in throughout the religious calendar year. The destinations could vary significantly, as well as the means of transportation, but processions as a category offer the most obvious example of imperial piety as demonstrated through ceremony and are certainly well documented in *De cerimoniis*.

Indeed, underlying these views of Christian imperial piety is an older idea connected to the pagan past and the definition of *sophrosyne* offered by Menander. Among his other listed manifestations of *sophrosyne* is that “spectacles, festivals, and competitions are conducted with proper splendour and due moderation.”¹⁹⁷ This harkens back to the importance of *orthopraxy* in ancient religion, something that has received significant attention in studies of Ancient Roman

¹⁹³ Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire. Études sur le recueil des Patria*, 269. Unfortunately, the New Church has not survived into the modern era, having been destroyed in the fifteenth century. For further information on the *Nea Ekklesia*, see Magdalino, “Observations on the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I.”

¹⁹⁴ *Vita Basilii*, 92. Translation from Ševčenko, *Vita Basilii*, 303.

¹⁹⁵ *Vita Basilii*, 93-95. His buildings are also recorded in *The Patria*, 3.29a.

¹⁹⁶ It was such an impressive structure that it was popularly held to have been divinely inspired and there were numerous miracles associated with its construction, *The Patria*, 4.

¹⁹⁷ Rhetor, “The Imperial Oration (Basilikos Logos)”, 90. Trans. Russell & Wilson 91.

and Greek expressions of faith.¹⁹⁸ Since the days of the Republic at least, the Roman state was obsessed with the correct practice of religious festivals often resulting in their repetition if something did not transpire correctly.¹⁹⁹ Normally this was the responsibility of the official that was conducting the ceremony, but with the Augustan transition to monarchical rule and the *princeps*' subsequent adoption of the title *Pontifex Maximus*, great importance was placed on the actions of the Roman sovereign.²⁰⁰ Though the use of this title fell out of favour with Roman emperors, if Konstantine VII's great desire to see ceremonies conducted correctly is any indication,²⁰¹ *orthopraxy*, even in religious ceremony, was still a great concern for the *Basileus*. Indeed, the eleventh-century historian Michael Attaleiates lamented that the Orthodox rulers of his day had brought ruin to the Roman state through practices displeasing to God while the virtuous pagan Romans of the past had brought about prosperity and victory, propitiating the divine through *orthopraxy*.²⁰²

Imperial Processions

Before opening our discussion of imperial religious processions, it is important to note a few facts. What we will primarily be discussing in reference to these processions are a subset of a larger whole as they are described in the *De cerimoniis*. A considerable amount of the space given over to these ceremonies describes the conduct of the emperors performing processions, receptions, and prayer within the palace complex itself to an audience of, primarily, court officials who double as participants in these performances. Additionally, there are numerous

¹⁹⁸ Clifford Ando summarizes the scholarly obsession with *orthopraxy* in his *The Matter of the Gods*, esp. 12-20. He argues that too much importance has been attached to this as how ancient faith was structured and argues throughout that the real difference was a basis in knowledge rather than faith.

¹⁹⁹ Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, 211-212.

²⁰⁰ See Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 167-210, esp. 186-192. See also Cameron, "The Imperial Pontifex."

²⁰¹ See the foreword that Konstantinos VII placed in *De cerimoniis*, 3-5.

²⁰² Michael Attaleiates, *The History*, 352-361

references to even more secluded interactions within the Hagia Sophia that we shall not discuss here. As this thesis' focus is primarily on the advertisement of various virtues to the populace these occurrences away from the public eye are less valuable for us, unless there is reason to believe they impacted the city in a significant way.

Even within these more restricted parameters, imperial processions are a broad category. This chapter focuses on imperial processions of a pronounced religious bent.²⁰³ The *De cerimoniis* records various imperial religious processions in its first 35 chapters. The first chapter describing a procession to Hagia Sophia is, however, by far the most descriptive and serves as a kind of template for numerous subsequent such events. We shall, therefore, deal heavily with the first chapter as a gateway into the “archetypal” religious procession with the understanding that significant variations might emerge, as location and distinct holidays affected the way ceremonies unfolded.

Leslie Brubaker, in her work on processions,²⁰⁴ divides them into three categories: linear, intrusive, and enclosing.²⁰⁵ Linear processions, rather simply, go from point to point and would seem to make up the majority of religious processions in Constantinople. Such events took the emperor and his cortege from the imperial palace to the Hagia Sophia and back. Intrusive processions are those that left Constantinople to reach some point outside the city only to return to it. Some started from outside the capital, the emperor entering the city in procession. The best

²⁰³ Some, like Leslie Brubaker, use the term ‘imperial processions’ in their work to denote comparatively secular processions (the most famous example of which are triumphs) that declined in popularity throughout Late Antiquity. Brubaker, “Processions and Public Spaces in Early and Middle Byzantine Constantinople”, 125.

²⁰⁴ Note that Brubaker does not necessarily divide her categories on the basis of whether processions were religious or secular. These definitions include both and any distinction in Brubaker’s work between the two is made after this initial classification. Though for our purposes in this chapter we specifically use these definitions for dealing with religious processions, they are not conceptually restricted to the religious.

²⁰⁵ For a brief discussion of the classifications, see Brubaker, “Processions and Public Spaces in Early and Middle Byzantine Constantinople”, 125.

example of such a procession would be imperial triumphs. Finally, enclosing processions made a circuit of the city's fortifications, as famously happened when sieges raised people's concerns regarding the strength of the walls.²⁰⁶ In the *De cerimoniis* most religious processions are linear, though a few intrusive ones are also revealed. Such was the procession commemorating the Holy *Anargyroi* on July 1st.

As with all ceremonies, imperial processions began with planning. The *De cerimoniis* opens its outline of such ceremonies with the *praipositios* informing numerous officials the day before the planned procession that preparations were to begin. We must assume, however, that the cyclical nature of imperial ceremonial (and, indeed, of religious feast days) would have been sufficient for many officials to have anticipated such impending ceremonial in advance of these official directives. Streets began to be cleaned, aromatics gradually filled the air, and military officials were put on notice.²⁰⁷ In parallel with such planning, substantial activity unfolded within the palace, marked by processions to different chapels and churches within the palace grounds for private or group prayer.²⁰⁸

As for the procession to the Great Church discussed here, we know some of the participants, but it is not clear if the list we have is comprehensive. The *De cerimoniis* notes that, at various times, along with the rulers one would find the *praipositoi*, the *magistroi*, the proconsuls, patricians, the rest of the Senate, the imperial *spatharioi*, the silentarios, and other important military officials like *droungarioi* and *strategoï*. This is a probable list, but the text is

²⁰⁶ More in-depth definitions can be found in Brubaker, "Topography and the Creation of Public Space in Early Medieval Constantinople", 42-3.

²⁰⁷ It is not entirely clear what it is that the military officials such as the various *domestikoi* and the *komes* of the Walls would have been doing as the text does not really elaborate on their roles here aside from their being notified. They do later appear in the ceremony as participants in some fashion and it seems likely some of these men served as a kind of security detail, but this is conjecture on my part, *De cerimoniis*, 6.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-11.

not always clear on whether all these people continuously followed the rulers all the way to the church and back, or if they were only present for a short time in distinct spaces.²⁰⁹ It would be reasonable to assume that the majority of these men did indeed follow the emperor to the Great Church, but the text is not explicit in this regard. These participants added to the procession by the carrying of various relics and objects of religious importance. In this particular ceremony, the Cross of Saint Constantine was prominent among these objects, as was the Rod of Moses.²¹⁰ Also present were various banners, insignias, and badges of office along this procession which mark the social station of either the bearers themselves or serve to enhance the majesty of the procession as a whole.²¹¹

The first signs of popular participation in this procession materialize as the rulers reach the Hall of the Exkoubitoi where, among the military officials, were also gathered many of the city's lawyers. All those assembled there prayed for the emperor. Afterwards, the emperor and his party moved on to the next building known in the text as the Tribunal, or alternatively, the Lamps.²¹² There the text relates, is the first of many receptions. In total six different receptions are held along the comparatively short distance between the palace grounds and the entrance to Hagia Sophia where the rulers and their entourage are greeted by representatives of the factions. In this first instance in the Tribunal, it is the *demokrates* of the Blues along with the *domestikos* of the *scholai*, but subsequent receptions involve the *demokrates* of the Greens along with the *exkoubitos*, *demarch* of the Blues with the white deme, and the *demarch* of the Greens accompanied by the Red deme. The demesmen give the emperor a document through the

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 10-11, 14-15.

²¹⁰ It is not clear if the Rod accompanied the procession or not as it is only mentioned in the sections within the palace itself. The Cross, however, is attested throughout.

²¹¹ Ibid., 15.

²¹² Τριβουνάλιον, Λύχνους respectively.

praipositos (though the nature of this document remains a mystery) and the demes recite acclamations while the *domestikos* makes the sign of the cross over the rulers.²¹³ This basic formula is roughly replicated across the other reception locations. Another element of popular participation appears here in the Tribunal as in addition to the many secular officials present, we also have the guilds of the city of which, notably, the clothiers and the silversmiths bring objects with which to decorate the halls for the occasion.²¹⁴

After an indeterminate amount of time, the procession continues onwards out of the Tribunal and into the Hall of the *Scholai* (refer to the map in the appendix for the route of this procession). Another reception took place with the demes and, after prayer, the party continued along towards the Chalke. The Chalke was a large structure that acted as one of the main entry points from the central public square of the Augustaion and the Constantinian Palace. Another reception with the demes occurs within the Chalke building itself as before. Exiting the Chalke Gate, we see yet another reception, the first one entirely within public view, with organists standing to either side and cheering as the rulers pass through the gate.²¹⁵ Subsequent receptions occur at the Augustaion and at the entrance to the Great Church itself along the same pattern.²¹⁶

At this stage, the imperial procession has arrived at the great church. The *praipositoi* here take the crowns from the heads of the rulers. This is in preparation of the rulers meeting the patriarch as they move into what is essentially his domain. They begin by entering the chancel and interacting with (kissing, touching, praying) various holy relics or church objects. They

²¹³ All the information taken from *De cerimoniis*, 5-15.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

²¹⁵ Later, we see mention in the text that for some religious processions the organs are meant to sound at each one of these receptions, audibly marking them as important moments, and perhaps preparing the crowd to join in on the acclamations. *Ibid.*, 33.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

continue a small circuit around the church similarly interacting and praying at various spots before retiring to the robing room.²¹⁷

We now see a very special church service with numerous instances of the rulers moving about. It is hard to judge how long they are in one location versus another, but it seems that the majority of their time in Hagia Sophia is spent in the robing-room, between numerous re-entries back into the main church. They take part by censing the crucifixion, by presenting gifts to the patriarch, kissing all the high clergymen assembled there, and joining in in communion. After this, large sums of cash are distributed to the assembled clergy outside of the church near the chapel of the holy well.²¹⁸

From here on, we observe the reversal of the earlier procession with the receptions and acclamations repeated in much the same fashion as they had originally occurred, though with some differences. One minor difference is that the *De cerimoniis* makes it clear that the documents given to the rulers by the demes (whatever their purpose) are absent this time.²¹⁹ This was important enough to note in the text, but the significance of this is lost to us. Another difference was that instead of the first of these return receptions taking place at the horologion of the Hagia Sophia as did the last one on the way to the Great Church, the return trip begins with a reception outside the Chapel of the Holy Well.²²⁰ As both locations marked the passage between the ecclesiastical environs of the Great Church complex and the public sphere, this seems a comparatively minor difference. It likely seems that the change can be attributed to the mundane reason that these two locations were closest to where the rulers needed to be at the beginning and

²¹⁷ Ibid., 15-6.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 15-19. For some further analysis of this moment of interaction between patriarch and emperor, see Dagron's *Emperor and Priest*, 99-114.

²¹⁹ *De cerimoniis*, 19.

²²⁰ Ibid.

end of the service in the Great Church. Additionally, there was another relocation. The rulers, instead of returning via the Augustaion through which they had travelled on their way to the Great Church, returned via a colonnaded walkway from the chapel to a gate at the Chalke,²²¹ though the reception still took place at roughly the same spot. Furthermore, there was one less reception within the Chalke complex itself on the return journey making the tally of receptions six versus five.²²² It is impossible to say how meaningful these differences were, however.

What we can see from the account laid out here is that imperial religious processions were elaborate affairs. Many different branches of government and of the imperial household were involved from soldiers to administrators; from generals to eunuchs; along with the entirety of the senate hierarchy.²²³ Indeed, the account Harun-ibn-Yahya, an Arab prisoner in Constantinople who described an imperial procession makes plain – even taking into account his obvious exaggeration of exact figures – the number of participants taking part in these imperial processions made quite an impression on the audience.²²⁴ Furthermore these processions took quite a long time to unfold. The relatively short trek from the imperial palace to the Great Church and back involved many receptions and acclamations along the way. In each instance the rulers stopped, were greeted by diverse groupings of people, received their acclamations, and were handed documents before continuing along their way. What is more, the relatively slow pace necessitated to maintain an appearance of dignity meant that even a comparatively short procession afforded the rulers plenty of exposure to the public.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Receptions towards the Great Church versus those on returning from Hagia Sophia, Ibid., 19-20.

²²³ We can see from the history of Zonaras that there was an important conceptual distinction to make between the government and the imperial household, Zonaras, *Chronicle*, 18.29.

²²⁴ Ducène, “Une Deuxième Version de La Relation d’Harun Ibn Yahya Sur Constantinople”, 247-249.

Indeed, if we examine some of the processions towards more distant destinations, we note that time could be a concern. Often horses are mentioned as options for travelling to churches further afield from the palace, though it is not always clear whether or not the rulers were conducting a formal procession on horseback or if they rode most of the way before formally processing once closer to the final destination.²²⁵ Some feast days necessitated visits to places that were both far from the palace and close to the water such as the processions for the commemoration of the Holy *Anargyroi* and for the participation in feasts at Blachernae. In these instances, travel by boat from the imperial palace to the nearest dock and then a procession to the final destination from the docks was considered adequate.²²⁶

Processions were public affirmations of imperial piety. In later chapters of the *De cerimoniis* we find the various scripts that the demes and the people at large used to cheer and acclaim the emperors at the various reception points. Scattered within the acclamations are the usual fare of wishing the emperors long reigns and references to their holiness; both rather common topics for acclamations. There are, however, also specific chants tailored to the holidays currently being celebrated.²²⁷ Thus, for the procession in celebration of the Feast of the Nativity, the demes chant out episodes from the birth of Christ during the various receptions in addition to the normal acclamations.²²⁸ In turn, the Feast of Epiphany feature chants regarding the baptism of Christ, and the Feast for Easter dealing with the Resurrection.²²⁹ With the participation of

²²⁵ *De cerimoniis*, 535, 342 (but only on days with poor weather), 557-563.

²²⁶ It seems though, that in rough weather, or due to personal preference, travel by horseback was always an option, *Ibid.*, 557-563.

²²⁷ Expecting the people to chant “Holy! Holy! Holy!” or the popular refrain “Many years!” was very popular in Byzantine ceremonial and, according to the accounts within the *De cerimoniis*, appeared essentially every time the populace was expected to participate in acclamations. For this most recent example, see *Ibid.*, 35-41.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 41-46.

many of the spectators, these religious processions turned into interactive events retelling the stories of the faith.

There was, however, room for clever usage of these stories to further the glorification and sanctity of the emperors. First, we see the manipulation of the timing of some of these acclamations, for example, the beginning of the acclamations for the celebration of the Nativity. The emperor appears to be associated with Christ in this instant as the acclamations announcing the birth of Christ are called out just before the emperor arrives, possibly placing the *Basileus* in the role of Christ, ever so briefly.²³⁰ Midway through we see an interesting usage of the traditional chant of “many, many, many” as the normal method of wishing the rulers many years on the throne is momentarily modified. The demes quickly change the object of these acclamations from the emperor to Christ while the people continue repeating the same refrain creating a semblance of equivalence between the two.²³¹ These sorts of associations continue throughout the rest of the chapter seemingly accentuating the holiness of the rulers.

While imperial sponsorship was responsible for the origin of many feast days, that of Saint Elijah being a prime example, they were also nodal moments in the Orthodox calendar and quickly began to develop lives of their own.²³² Research has shown that expressions of lay piety that have nothing to do with the planning of the imperial officials did materialize, particularly outside of the capital.²³³ Considering then, that emperors could not attend every religious festival

²³⁰ This is coupled with an interesting phrase “a star heralds the sun”, *Ibid.*, 35, reminiscent of the imagery often referenced in the work of Dagron of the emperors being equated with the sun, Dagron, “Trônes Pour Un Empereur.”

²³¹ *De cerimoniis*, 38.

²³² The Feast of Saint Elijah originated with the emperor Basileios I as a *scholion* in *De cerimoniis* attests, no doubt due to his continual infatuation with the biblical figure. *Ibid.*, 114. For more on Basileios and Elijah, see above in footnote 20. Among others, the feast days celebrated in the Great Church included Nativity, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, etc. Very important celebrations in the liturgical calendar of Orthodoxy. For more on these feasts and their origins, see Rudolph, “Heterodoxy and the Twelve Great Feasts of the Eastern Church”, 13-30.

²³³ Nesbitt and Wiita, “A Confraternity of the Comnenian Era”, 360-384.

within the capital (illness, campaigning away from the capital, and any number of other reasons could result in non-attendance) and that the capital was but a small part of the Roman lands, the majority of the religious life of the Roman polity in the Middle Ages unfolded without imperial involvement. While things were different in the capital with the much larger imperial footprint, that very imperial presence in religious processions could be seen as an intervention onto the liturgical calendar of both empire and the city that aimed to harness popular devotion and piety inherent in these religious celebrations to the imperial government's own needs.

As mentioned above, various important religious objects and symbols were displayed at the procession, amplifying the sense of the rulers' sacrosanctity. Not only was there Constantine's Cross which was carried to Hagia Sophia, but we know from other sources that many personal crucifixes were carried by the procession's participants.²³⁴ Also attested is the Rod of Moses, a religious artifact said to have been in the prophet's possession.²³⁵ Other sacred relics are also attested in religious processions by a variety of sources such as during the relocation of relics to new resting places.²³⁶ The sheer number of relics that converged on Constantinople over the centuries helped establish the city as a major site of pilgrimage in the

²³⁴ Nothing has really been written about the Cross of Saint Constantine as (presumably) a religious relic, but the importance of crosses in general hardly needs explanation in the context of Christian faith. For the account of other golden crosses being present during the procession, see the account of Harun ibn Yahya translated in Ducène, "Une Deuxième Version de La Relation d'Harun Ibn Yahya Sur Constantinople", 247. The source itself is somewhat dubious about certain details, particularly regarding specific numbers, but on the whole some valuable information can be extracted if done carefully. For more information about the source, see also Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*. 152-159.

²³⁵ This particular artifact may be the same reputed Rod of Moses that is today held within the Topkapi palace in Istanbul, but the history of the object is too fragmentary to be entirely sure.

²³⁶ Again, Harun ibn Yahya mentions in his account of a procession to the Great Church that one such relic that appeared was the inkstand of Pilate, Ducène, "Une Deuxième Version de La Relation d'Harun Ibn Yahya Sur Constantinople", 248. Not in an imperial procession, but the True Cross is described to have been processed throughout the city annually in Book II Chapter 8, 538-541. Among the most famous of relic translations is probably that of the Mandylion being brought from Edessa to Constantinople and the reception it received, see Cameron, "The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story", esp. 92-93; Weitzmann, "The Mandylion and Constantine Porphyrogenitus", "Narratio" in *Patrologia Graeca* 113, 423-453. Guscini, "The Sermon of Gregorius Referendarius", esp. 81-2. It seems likely that many more artifacts received similar treatment as a part of imperial ceremonial without having been recorded.

Middle Ages, despite the fact that the capital did not have quite the same Christian pedigree as a home of early saints and martyrs like Rome and other major centers.²³⁷ Icons had some presence in processions too, but this was not common of those with imperial involvement.²³⁸

Another signalling of imperial piety was evident in the emperor's close connection to and interaction with the clergy of the empire during such feast days. While he does not appear in every such religious ceremony, the most prominent representative of the Church was the patriarch and as discussed above, interaction between the emperor and the leader of the Church was extensive and public during processions to Hagia Sophia.²³⁹ The two spent significant time together in various locations that contained the most sacred of objects within the church such as the altar cloth, chalices, and relics.²⁴⁰ We can see the significance of patriarchal presence as an affirmation of the emperor's piety (or at least, acceptability) through the fact that patriarchs (infrequently) used the denial of their presence as a sign of disapproval of imperial actions/politics. A prominent example is the flurry of clerical disapproval that surrounded Leon VI's many marriages where the patriarch refused to participate in Leon's second marriage, to say nothing of condoning his subsequent behaviour.²⁴¹ Similarly, the patriarch Polyeuktos refused to admit Ioannes I Tzimiskes into Hagia Sophia, much less crown him there, after the gruesome

²³⁷ Wortley, "The Byzantine Component of the Relic-Hoard of Constantinople", 354-355. See also Wortley, "The Marian Relics at Constantinople."

²³⁸ Nesbitt and Wiita, "A Confraternity of the Comnenia Era", 360-384, describes a confraternity of Christians that came together monthly for their own processions involving a local icon of the Theotokos. There were even some exceptional examples of icons taking center stage in comparatively secular imperial processions like triumphs, such as in the case of the triumph of Ioannes Tzimiskes, Skylitzes, 15.18 However, this was not common and when religious icons are mentioned in *De cerimoniis* it is often as a descriptor noting location, Carr, "Court Culture and Cult Icons in Middle Byzantine Constantinople", 87-89.

²³⁹ Though the emperor still held a significant amount of temporal power over the patriarch, the patriarchs had come increasingly prominent in their moral authority since the iconoclastic controversy. It is during this controversy that we see evidence in hagiography of forcefully expressed assertions of jurisdiction over religious matters superseding that of the monarch, Kaplan, "Le Saint, l'évêque et l'empereur: L'image et Le Pouvoir à l'époque Du Second Iconoclasme d'après Les Sources Hagiographiques." esp. 186-189. Also see Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 223-247.

²⁴⁰ *De cerimoniis*, 15.

²⁴¹ Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912)*, 143.

murder of Nikephoros II Phokas without some show of penance.²⁴² That patriarchs occasionally refused to associate themselves with emperors based on their actions, effectively causing Byzantine Canossas, meant that the patriarch's association with emperors implicitly conferred on an emperor a seal of divine approval. Patriarchs were, consequently, often some of the first targets partisans tried to sway during attempted regime change; their defection lent legitimacy to what could be very violent events, especially if they had a personal reputation for exceptional piety.²⁴³ Additionally, we must also acknowledge the role that the religious structures of the capital played in these ceremonies. The Hagia Sophia was an architectural marvel of the medieval world and would have heightened the effect of any display of imperial piety. This relic of the late antique world when coupled with the various shrines of the city helped cement Constantinople as a site of Christian pilgrimage. Though these associations may seem obvious, they are nonetheless important to note, particularly when one considers the sheer ability to inspire wonder that was contained within such important locales.

Conclusion

Sophrosyne, as we saw, is a complex term that was integrated into emerging early Christian thought and practice. We looked at how imperial piety was projected to the populace through the various imperial religious processions that commemorated important religious festivals all year round. An appearance of personal piety was essential to the image of any emperor, particularly when that emperor came to the throne in less than honorable ways. We

²⁴² Tzimiskes' shifting of the blame at least partially on to the empress Theophano also allowed him some reprieve from the Polyeuktos' wrath, Skylitzes, 16.2

²⁴³ A good example is the turning of the patriarch Alexios Stoudites during the overthrow of Michael V. His past as an exemplar of the monastic life lent even further weight to his defection, as Attaleiates describes, Ἔσχον οὖν τοῦ δικαίου τούτου συλλήπτορα ζήλου καὶ τὸν **ἀγιώτατον τοῦτον ἄνδρα**, Ἀλέξιος ἦν ὁ πρὸ τοῦ τὴν μοναχικὴν πολιτείαν ἀκριβωσάμενος, καὶ ἀνάγουσι γνώμη καὶ τινῶν τῶν ἐν τέλει τὴν ὁμαιμόνα τῆς παθούσης δεσποίνης, Θεοδώρα ταύτη τὸ ὄνομα, ἐξ ἐνὸς τῶν Πετρίων ἐν ᾧ χρόνοις πολλοῖς ιδιωτικῶς μονονουχί ἐβίότευσε. *The History*, 22-24.

have already dealt with the various ways in which Basileios the Macedonian cloaked himself and his nascent dynasty in novel religious and imperial imagery. It is also interesting, however, to consider the triumph of Ioannes Tzimiskes (r. 969 - 976) in celebration of his victory over the Rus in Bulgaria. This emperor celebrated a famous triumph in the capital which displayed several modifications of established practice aimed at highlighting his piety. When met in front of the Golden Gate by a delegation of the most important of Constantinopolitans, Tzimiskes was offered a triumphal carriage drawn by four white horses, but he declined to ride upon it himself. Instead, he placed the royal insignia of the Bulgarian crown upon the carriage along with, in the highest and most exalted position, an icon of the Virgin. This carriage proceeded him throughout the procession and during a stop he publicly stripped Tsar Boris of his royal regalia. The ceremony culminated at the Great Church where the Bulgarian crown was given as an offering to God.²⁴⁴

Though this account's authenticity has recently been questioned, it is still interesting to us. Regardless of its veracity, it relates a later perception of the emperor's triumph, while it also had a hand in influencing the triumphs of future emperors.²⁴⁵ Through it, we see that the appearance of piety held great importance in the medieval Roman Empire. Every emperor participated in popular religious rituals and celebrations during his tenure, associating themselves with saints and religious establishments in the process. This process was especially important for a number of emperors throughout the existence of the Empire considering the often-brutal ways in which they acquired had the throne. We have often discussed the special urgency of Basileios' attempts to paint himself as a pious ruler "beloved of Christ", as the epithet normally went and

²⁴⁴ The entire account can be found in Skylitzes 15.18 and in Leon the Deacon, IX.

²⁴⁵ Kaldellis, "The Original Source for Tzimiskes' Balkan Campaign (971) and the Emperor's Classicizing Propaganda", 35-52.

how this was because of the vicious murder that marked the beginning of his reign. It is perhaps, then, no coincidence that the innovator discussed above, one who sought to enhance the perception of his piety, was Tzimiskes.²⁴⁶ Much as Basileios became sole ruler after murdering his patron in cold blood, so too did Ioannes Tzimiskes come to the throne by sneaking into the palace and butchering his uncle Nikephoros II Phokas.

²⁴⁶ While there is some doubt as to the authenticity of the triumph due to Ibid. it is still quite telling that such an account would have been manufactured for him regardless of the reality of the ceremony.

Bravery: *Andreia*, Victory, and Divine Approbation

Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos stands sternly atop the raised platform at the center of the Forum of Constantine. He is flanked by his retinue which includes various bodyguards and high officials. In pride of place near the emperor is the emperor's son and successor the Co-emperor Romanos II while next to both of them, the *protostrator*²⁴⁷ bears a ceremonial spear topped by a pennon bearing the cross. The forum is packed with spectators save for a large empty space just in front of the emperor and the steps leading up to the Column of Constantine. Before long the patriarch Theophylaktos arrives with his own entourage, but instead of waiting with Konstantinos, enters an adjoining chapel.²⁴⁸

The crowd begins to stir and from his raised vantage point, Konstantinos observes the approach of one final group. Cries of praise and acclamation erupt similar to those that greeted the processions of the patriarch and the emperor. At the head of these latest arrivals is the *Protonotarios tou Dromou* and the military men responsible for the victories being celebrated: Nikephoros Phokas, his nephew Ioannes Tzimiskes, and other military officials who have had a role in the recent campaigns. Arab prisoners of war follow, escorted by Roman soldiers carrying captured enemy banners. The prisoners are brought before the raised center of the forum while church singers begin to lead the crowd in hymns in praise of victory.

²⁴⁷ The *protostrator* was a kind of head groom, the uppermost official in the imperial stables in the tenth century. It was a post with close access to emperor and Konstantinos' own grandfather, Basileios I, had occupied the post before ascending to the imperial throne. For more information, see Guiland, "Le Protostrator", 478-497. See also *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1748.

²⁴⁸ Though this structure has not received much scholarly attention, Mango's suppositions on its origins and probable location and orientation seem adequate. He believes this was a small chapel on the column's raised platform, to the north of the column itself. Mango, "Constantine's Porphyry Column and the Chapel of St. Constantine", 107-8.

At this point, the *Logothetes tou Dromou* and Phokas lead the most valuable prisoner, Abu'l-'Asha'ir (cousin of the Empire's most vigorous enemy in the east at the time, the Hamdanid Emir Sayf al-Dawla) up the steps. The prisoner is forced to the ground before the emperor while the head groom brings the tip of the imperial spear to his neck. All the other prisoners below then fall to the ground while the imperial soldiers take the Arab banners and flip them upside down. Konstantinos then places his feet on the head of Abu'l-'Asha'ir and ritually tramples him. A voice cries out of the church window to the side of the Forum asking: "What God is as great as our God? You are the God who works miracles." This is the beginning of a prayer which fittingly ends with "Cast under their feet every enemy and foe."²⁴⁹ The people then beg the emperor (and God) to show mercy just as the patriarch steps back into the forum and proclaims God's mercy. The prisoners stand, and Abu'l-'Asha'ir is led back towards them.

Acclamations burst forth. The people wish the emperors long reigns, praising their greatness and specifically their bravery.²⁵⁰ After many, many praises have been heaped upon the imperial persons, Konstantinos and Romanos return to the great palace on horseback, and the patriarch returns to his residence astride a donkey.

This ceremony was an important statement for Emperor Konstantinos VII as certain realities of his reign required him to pay great attention to the crafting of his image. Konstantinos was subjected to embarrassing interactions with the church due to the circumstances of his birth.²⁵¹ Throughout his reign he had lived for long periods of time under regents. First, under his

²⁴⁹ Translation taken from Moffatt & Tall, Porphyrogenetos, *Constantine Porphyrogenetos, The Book of Ceremonies; with the Greek Edition of the Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (Bonn, 1829), 611.

²⁵⁰ ἀνδρειοτάτων βασιλέων πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη, *De cerimoniis*, 611.21-612.1.

²⁵¹ His father Leon IV Sophos went against church law and custom by having not only a third marriage (by custom, two marriages was too many) but also a fourth which finally produced the male heir he longed for, Konstantinos. In retribution, the patriarch required the young emperor sit through a ceremony every year marking the sacrilegious circumstances of his birth, Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 6-9. See also Oikonomides, "Leo VI's Legislation of 907 Forbidding Fourth Marriages", 173-193. For the circumstances of Konstantinos' birth, see

mother and later under a military strongman who nearly succeeded in supplanting the Macedonian line.²⁵² This subordinate position afforded him few opportunities for battlefield glory and conspired to engender for him an image of meekness and servility rather than power and bravery. The emperor's focus on academic pursuits – itself the result of his years of effective house arrest under the Lekapenoi – hardly ameliorated this image.²⁵³ When, after a successful palace coup, he assumed the reins of power for himself, the initial military failures of his *Domestikos* of the *Scholai*, Bardas Phokas, hardly improved his image.²⁵⁴

Thus, late into his reign, when the new *Domestikos* Nikephoros Phokas achieved notable victories over the Hamdanids in the East, an emperor already interested in ceremonial saw an opportunity to project a new image of martial prowess. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this move. Konstantinos VII is not remembered today for his military exploits, even though some important victories took place during his reign. Indeed, his mostly sedentary lifestyle (he rarely ventured outside the capital) and his focus on intellectual pursuits enforces a mostly bookish legacy.²⁵⁵ Still, other emperors, notably Justinian, stuck mostly to the capital and are more closely associated with imperial victory. Perhaps this is in part due to the subsequent ascension to the throne of Konstantinos' most able commander, Nikephoros Phokas, who was in a better

Nicholas I Mystikos, "The Tome of Union", 57-81, and for the embarrassing interactions with the church, see Oikonomides, "Leo VI and the Narthex Mosaic of Saint Sophia", 170.

²⁵² Konstantinos was 40 or so by the time he became sole emperor, unfettered by a regent. Romanos Lekapenos came to the throne by a coup and first married Konstantinos to his daughter Helena, and then slowly began promoting his own sons up the hierarchy above the Macedonian ward.

²⁵³ Psellos may have described academic pursuits as manly in his letter "To the same", 307-308, yet the people on the street would likely not have agreed.

²⁵⁴ For reports of Leon Phokas the elder's failures as Domestic, see Ioannes Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 12.7. Eric McGeer also details Konstantinos' military ambitions with the aforementioned failures in "Two Military Orations of Constantine VII", 111-135. For the original text of the orations, see Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, "Un Discours Inédit de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète", or the English translation of McGeer above.

²⁵⁵ Konstantinos never led troops on campaign, the main activity emperors undertook when traveling from the capital. Conceivably he led processions to various religious sites outside the city as many emperors did, but these were generally just outside the city walls.

position to claim ownership of the eastern victories he had a hand in. If Belisarios had attained the throne after his many military campaigns, perhaps Justinian's legacy would be similarly less marked by reconquest and more focused on the *Corpus Iurus Civilis*. The ceremony described above was nevertheless an impressive display of imperial power. Its focus was victory over an implacable enemy and Konstantinos, martial or not, was the commander in chief and leader of the Roman polity. As for the officers leading the prisoners to the emperor as victors in the campaign, they shared the spotlight with him, albeit as his inferiors. Nikephoros and Ioannes would themselves become emperors recognized for their martial ability. Their dramatic introduction to the populace clearly associated them with military ability and glory and no doubt helped their eventual bids for the throne.²⁵⁶ This one ceremony, therefore, boosted the image and martial reputation of as many as four different individuals eventually associated with the throne.

The Forum of Constantine was also a cleverly chosen venue for this triumph. It was a regular location for imperial triumphs and it seems likely that most such events passed through and stopped at it.²⁵⁷ There were, however, also certain ideas and symbols being exploited in this venue. The connection with Constantine could hardly be missed in a venue named after him. The tenth-century emperor sharing his name stood under the first Christian emperor's statue that overlooked the ceremony from atop the porphyry column at the center of both the forum and the event.²⁵⁸ This column was wrapped in representations of laurel wreaths with images of winged

²⁵⁶ Nikephoros II Phokas (r.963-969) and Ioannes Tzimiskes (r.969-976).

²⁵⁷ Most triumphs entered at the Golden Gate in the Theodosian Walls and continued down the Mese which ran through the forum. Also, the chapel there was a major religious site that seems to be represented in many triumphal accounts we have.

²⁵⁸ For Kaldellis discussing the statue and column, see, "The Forum of Constantine in Constantinople: What Do We Know about Its Original Architecture and Adornment?" 731-735. For more information on the column and statue, see Ousterhout, "The Life and Afterlife of Constantine's Column", 304-326.

victories represented below; all imagery recalling victory.²⁵⁹ More specifically, we find here echoes of Constantine the Great's own victory over his eastern foe, the emperor Licinius. In accounts of this imperial victory Constantine is framed as a defender of Hellenism, while Licinius is an oriental despot styled on the Achaemenid monarchs,²⁶⁰ thus neatly mirroring the victory being celebrated by the forces of New Rome over the Hamdanid emir in the east.

Andreia, Imperium, and Victory

Andreia literally means “manliness” derived from the Greek word for man, *andras*. The term had various related meanings including hardiness, insolence, bravado, virility, and bravery.²⁶¹ The concept of *andreia* also paralleled nicely with Roman bravery, *virtus*, which was similarly related to the Latin word for man, *vir*.²⁶² Considering the similarities, it is not hard to see how ideas of bravery easily spanned linguistic traditions during the cultural intermingling of the Late Republic and Early Empire.²⁶³ Since Byzantium was a product of this intermingling, it is no surprise that bravery was also a lauded quality in Middle Byzantine leaders. It was, however, so tightly woven with military exploits that Menander counseled passing it over entirely should the emperor have no prior military experience.²⁶⁴ And yet, as leaders of the polity, emperors and their image-makers treated bravery as an indispensable component of their

²⁵⁹ Kaldellis, “The Forum of Constantine in Constantinople: What Do We Know about Its Original Architecture and Adornment?” 732-733.

²⁶⁰ Krallis, “Greek Glory, Constantinian Legend: Praxagoras’ Athenian Agenda in Zosimos’ New History”, 112-120.

²⁶¹ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 128. For even greater detail on the more socially regressive aspects of *andreia*, see Magdalino, “Honour Among Romaioi: The Framework of Social Values in the World of Digenis Akrites and Kekaumenos”, esp. 190-197.

²⁶² Coulston, “Courage and Cowardice in the Roman Imperial Army”, 14.

²⁶³ For information on this cultural intermingling, see Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 42-119

²⁶⁴ Rhetor, “The Imperial Oration (Basilikos Logos),” 84-5.

public image. Indeed, the encomiastic directions of Menander Rhetor placed bravery first in the structure of an encomium.²⁶⁵

In Middle Byzantium, then, bravery and war were concepts too enmeshed to separate from each other. However, in the example of Konstantinos VII, which opened our chapter, what recognition of bravery or tactical renown is there to be won when the emperor was clearly not present for the battle? In Byzantium, as in Rome, there was an understanding that the wars and battles won by the emperor's subordinates belonged to the imperial person.²⁶⁶ To understand this phenomenon, we must look to the Ancient Roman concept of *imperium*.

Imperium is a tricky term to understand considering its evolution in modern languages.²⁶⁷ Quite literally, *imperium* in Republican Rome and the early Empire referred to both a conceptual designation of authority over military matters and to a more general power over a certain area.²⁶⁸ This could refer to individuals who were invested with *imperium* commensurate to their magisterial position or to the state as a whole.²⁶⁹ Many Roman officials of the Republic, like *praetors*, *pro-praetors*, *consuls*, and *proconsuls*, possessed *imperium* as a natural consequence of their magisterial position. This was often a consequence of the post having military duties and responsibilities. As scholars have convincingly argued, *imperium* only extended over the city of

²⁶⁵ Rhetor., 84-5.

²⁶⁶ This is reflected in the triumphs of non-martial emperors such as the very incident which opened this chapter with Konstantinos VII. There were, however, exceptions, such as in the case of Stephanos Pergamēnos' victory over Georgios Maniakes. In this instance, the eunuch Pergamēnos was allowed a triumph, on horseback, through the city. Up to the Macedonian period, however, such incidents breaking the imperial monopoly on victory were not common, though McCormick implies it was a sign of things to come in the Komnenian era and beyond, *Eternal Victory*, 180-184.

²⁶⁷ It could easily be conflated as referring to 'Empire' considering the clear connections the two have etymologically and historically.

²⁶⁸ Morstein-Marx, *Hegemony to Empire*, 20-28.

²⁶⁹ This word eventually morphed into a referential term for the bounds of the Roman state more generally, becoming in the English language the root for the word 'empire' in the process. For a brief introduction, see Richardson, "Imperium Romanum: Empire and the Language of Power", 1-9. For a comprehensive treatment of *imperium*, among other, related concepts, see the extensive Drogula, *Commanders and Command in the Roman Republic and Early Empire*.

Rome itself in exceptional circumstances, normally being relinquished at the crossing of the *pomerium*, a kind of religious perimeter of the city within which military activity was generally forbidden.²⁷⁰ Magistrates that had some duties within the city such as consuls and praetors could perform a ceremony on leaving the city to regain *imperium*, but this was not quick nor was it a complete resumption of their former *imperium*.²⁷¹ Magistrates without business in the city, such as pro-praetors and proconsuls, would be forfeiting their grant of *imperium* for the remainder of their tenure should they cross the boundary. It was only under exceptional circumstances then that *imperium* was retained within Rome itself. Such was the case of dictators, who operated under a *senatus consultum ultimum* and brought the stark force of imperium in the city's affairs in order to stabilize the polity. Another, happier occasion was that of the triumph.²⁷²

Imperium was often granted as a by-product of a magistrate's posting to a province or, indeed, a series of provinces. After Augustus assumed the reins of the state and increasingly monopolized military authority by arrogating himself control over Rome's border provinces he began to unravel the traditional link between imperium and provincial governors. Under Augustus imperial provinces were governed by legates the emperor appointed himself.²⁷³ These legates were likely granted *imperium* by the senate, as had similar legates under Pompey and Caesar, but the provinces themselves remained under the control of the *princeps* legally. As subordinates to Augustus and his heirs, provincial governors were unable to benefit from their

²⁷⁰ Drogula, "Imperium, Potestas, and the Pomerium in the Roman Republic", 419-452.

²⁷¹ It was not a complete resumption of their former *imperium* as any accomplishments, such as military exploits worthy of a triumph, were seemingly tied to that initial grant of *imperium*. Thus, any general who entered the *pomerium* was forfeiting their right to a triumph, even if they took up *imperium* again after leaving the city, Ibid., 435-443. As for the length of the ceremony, Drogula speculates it may have been one of the reasons that Augustus sought his second settlement in 23 B.C., *Commanders and Command in the Roman Republic and Early Empire*. 357-360.

²⁷² For specifics, see Drogula, "Imperium, Potestas, and the Pomerium in the Roman Republic." 442-448.

²⁷³ *Commanders and Command*, 354-364.

actions – martial or other – as all spoils, glory, and credit for victory were ultimately owed the *princeps*.²⁷⁴ This early development in Roman imperial history explains how Konstantinos VII could stage a triumph for victories won while he remained in the capital.

Military success was a primary vector for legitimacy in the Byzantine world for obvious practical reasons. A ruler's military ability was of great importance in any society where success in war made the difference between life and death for both the members of the military, but also for civilians and society itself as a whole. It is therefore hardly surprising that an emperor's military abilities were an essential component of his image. Indeed, martial exploits helped build a potential emperor's reputation. This was the case with Nikephoros II Phokas, who leveraged his brilliant victories against the empire's enemies to claim the throne for himself.

There were also other elements that constituted the Roman conception of bravery. Ideas about role of the divine in human affairs also significantly affected the evolution of the emperor's martial image. Throughout Roman history military victory was seen as a sign of divine approval towards the polity and its sovereign (people or emperor). In Christian imperial thought, this goes back to the Battle at the Milvian Bridge and Constantine's vision of a cross in the sky, an idea with considerable longevity in the Christian world.²⁷⁵ In the eleventh century we find Theophylaktos of Ohrid at the tail end of this tradition who notes that "In times of war, He

²⁷⁴ For the legates and their lack of credit earned in this subordinate position, see *Ibid.*, 353-357.

²⁷⁵ Eusebius, *Eusebius Werke, Band 1.1: Über Das Leben Des Kaisers Konstantin*, 1.28-30. Constantine is supposed to have seen a sign from God at the battle which signified God's favour and resulted in victory over Maxentius. This is supposed to have sparked Constantine's Christian conversion. For more information on how this story was received in the Roman world, see Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge*. A similar story is often told of the conversion of Clovis, king of the Franks, Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, ii 30-31. If we wanted to go even further back, ancient Roman armies often waited until the will of the gods could be determined before committing themselves to important engagements through the reading of entrails or other such signs. Generals could try to manipulate these signs to be more favourable to their endeavors by hiring their own prophets and suppressing tales of negative signs, Rosenberger, "Strange Signs, Divine Wrath, and the Dynamics of Rituals." 250.

brings success and raises up trophies [over the enemy]”, a clear allusion to Constantine’s own ability to raise trophies thanks to God’s favour.²⁷⁶ As Jean-Claude Cheynet noted in *Pouvoir et Contestations*, “challenges overcome, confirmed the legitimacy of a new emperor.” More specifically, this was grounded in the very origins of imperial power. “The legacy of the Roman revolution, which grounded the emperor’s constitutional power largely in his position as commander-in-chief or *imperator*, lent unique urgency to the message of Roman victory. The ruler’s military success confirmed his right to rule.”²⁷⁷

The Triumph – A breakdown of the sources

The Triumph represents an ancient and enduring ceremonial tradition. Triumphs in Rome go back at least to the early Republic, if not further, and it is often in its republican form that the popular image of the Roman triumph originates.²⁷⁸ There was a significant religious aspect to early Triumphs, but as time progressed into the late Republic this was increasingly eclipsed by their political function.²⁷⁹

“When prominent men engaged in the scramble for power vaunted their *felicitas*, their good fortune or divine favor, as an essential qualification for leadership, what more unequivocal confirmation of *felicitas* could they desire than a resounding

²⁷⁶ For the quote from the letter of Theophylaktos of Ochrid, “Discours Au Porphyrogénète Kyr Constantin,” 200-1. In Constantine’s victory over Maxentius, he then proceeds to raise a trophy in Rome for his victory which he strongly asserts is thanks to God, Eusebius, *Eusebius Werke, Band 1.1: Über Das Leben Des Kaisers Konstantin*, 39-41.

²⁷⁷ As a whole, McCormick’s work here is indispensable for looking at triumphs in general and the emperor as victor in specific, *Eternal Victory*, 4. See also Gagé, “La Théologie de La Victoire Impériale”; Fears, “The Theology of Victory at Rome: Approaches and Problem”; Heim, *La Théologie de La Victoire, de Constantin à Théodose*.

²⁷⁸ The first Roman triumph was often ascribed to Romulus, the first King of Rome, on the date of the city’s foundation. This was taken from a marble tablet that was in the forum that held a registry of all the triumphs of the city. Mary Beard highlights this fact as proof that Rome was, from its foundation, a triumphal city Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, 314.

²⁷⁹ McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 11-12.

military victory, achieved under the proper conditions and sanctioned by the Senate and the gods in the spectacular triumph ceremony?” McCormick²⁸⁰

By the Augustan era however, ceremonies began to be limited to the glorification of the emperor and family. The celebration of successful generals characteristic of the republic was reserved for rare, exceptional circumstances.²⁸¹ Belisarios was given a special Roman triumph celebrating his many victories against the barbarian kingdoms of Vandalic Africa and Ostrogothic Italy, but he was still visually subordinate even during ‘his’ triumph, being forced to walk rather than ride and performing *proskynesis* to Justinian in the Hippodrome.²⁸²

When we look specifically at what the *De cerimoniis* has to offer on the subject of triumphs, it is rather limited. There are two triumphal ceremonies detailed in the *Book of Ceremonies*,²⁸³ one of which I have already related in the introduction to this chapter. They

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 12.

²⁸¹ McCormick, 13. We also see from Mary Beard an assertion that the under Augustus the triumph began to be restricted only to the emperor and close family, *The Roman Triumph*, 69

²⁸² For debate on the triumph being that of Belisarios, see *Eternal Victory*, 125-129. For details on Belisarios’ triumph, see Prokopios, *History of the Wars IV, IX*. Other examples of subordinates triumphing in intervening Byzantine history include: The various *theme* commanders who were granted triumphs in the reigns of Leon IV and Konstantinos V Theophanes, *Theophanis Chronographia*, AM 6270, though McCormick carefully notes this was a ceremony that was far removed from the city itself and intended as a performance for the emperors, *Eternal Victory*, 137-140. The eunuch commander Staurakios was awarded a Triumph for his military service under the regency of the Empress Eirene *Theophanis Chronographia*, AM 6276, though this again hints that such celebrations were only awarded so as not to undercut the current rulers. Staurakios could not be a threat because he was a eunuch, *Eternal Victory*, 141-142. Frequency of non-emperors as the center of attention in imperial triumphs seems to have ticked up during the Macedonian period such as with the Phokades in the reign of Romanos II, Ibid., 164-188. In the reign of Konstantinos IX Monomachos, we see the triumph of the eunuch general Stephanos Pergametos over the rebel Georgios Maniakes, Psellos, *Chronographia*, 83-91.

²⁸³ There are two other Triumphs described in a work that is traditionally included as an appendix to book I of *De cerimoniis* which do presuppose a start from outside the city. These two ceremonies, however, are not the normal schemas of imperial ceremonial that one finds in the rest of *De cerimoniis*, but descriptions of specific historical triumphs, those of Basileios I and Theophilos. Additionally, these pieces form the end of a larger whole which is mainly military advice on the part of Konstantinos VII and are only really associated with *De cerimoniis* because they were found on the same manuscript (before the main body of work) and may have been added by a later copyist. For all these reasons (the differing nature of the content, and the dubious connection with the larger piece), I have excluded the two from consideration in this specific analysis. See Bury, “The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogenetos”, 438-439; Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus - Three Treatises on Imperial Military*

concern triumphs in the Forum of Constantine and triumphs in the Hippodrome, but both presuppose a starting point within the palace itself. This seems at odds with both the traditional notion of a Triumph and with various examples from Byzantine history, all of which generally feature a triumphal entry into the city by the returning general/emperor.²⁸⁴ Konstantinos VII, however, met his generals at the Forum of Constantine as they delivered the prisoners to him. Why?

To make sense of this, we must first acknowledge that there are two basic categories of imperial triumphs in Byzantium. One was conducted by a returning victorious emperor, while the other was led by a triumphant general leading his forces before the emperor. Konstantinos never travelled, let alone campaigned, away from Constantinople unlike more martial emperors who would lead their armies in person and even fight in the front lines.²⁸⁵ If the emperor had led in person his military campaign, as in the case of Ioannes Tzimiskes, then generally he also led the triumph into the city (often through the Golden Gate).²⁸⁶ If, however, the emperor had remained in the capital, he likely received the triumphant general, who made a display of his subordination to the emperor in the process such, as in the case of Leon Phokas or even Belisarios' Late Antique triumphs.²⁸⁷

Expeditions, 34; Moffatt, "Introduction", *The Book of Ceremonies; with the Greek Edition of the Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (Bonn, 1829), xxvii.

²⁸⁴ For the traditional stereotype of Roman triumphs, see both Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 14-17, and Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, 42-106. Some byzantine examples include Ioannes Tzimiskes' Triumph found in Leon Diakonos, *Historiae* Book XI, 12. Konstantinos V Kopronymos (r.741-775A.D.) is another, Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 433. Also, the Triumph of Basileios I over the Paulicians of Tephrike Moffatt 502-503.

²⁸⁵ Basileios II and Nikephoros Phokas both serve as examples of far-ranging emperors.

²⁸⁶ Leon Diakonos, *Historiae* Book XI, 12.

²⁸⁷ Leon Phokas conducted a triumph due to a great victory over the Hamdanid emir Sayf al-Dawla under the brief reign of Romanos II and entered the city triumphally before meeting the emperor in the Hippodrome to show off the loot and prisoners to the crowd. Leon Diakonos, *Historiae*, Book II, 5. Things went similarly in the triumph celebrated by the general Belisarios, though his triumph began from his private residence, before meeting Justinian again in the Hippodrome, Prokopios, *History of the Wars IV*, IX. The Triumph of Nikephoros Phokas for his reconquest of Crete is also similar, though we only see reports of the part within the Hippodrome itself, it is not explicitly stated whether or not he triumphed through the streets or not.

In this instance, Konstantinos' propensity to remain within the capital likely influenced the composition of the *De cerimoniis* resulting in the absence of Triumphs starting from outside Constantinople.

This means that for this chapter we must look outside of the regular chapters of the *De cerimoniis* which have sufficed until now. The wealth of sources provided by historical works, particularly the appendices of the *De cerimoniis*, is impossible to ignore.²⁸⁸ The appendices are a part of this work that we have not previously examined here and require some explanation. They are a remnant of the Leipzig manuscript which formed the basis of J.J. Reiske's version of the text (and the one we use). It preceded the main body of text in the Leipzig manuscript and seems to have been commissioned, like the subsequent copy of the *De cerimoniis*, for the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas. That means that these texts were not originally included in Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos' version of the *Book of Ceremonies* and perhaps that they did not fit into his original vision for the project. That these texts are traditionally added to the *de Cerimomiis* is due to Reiske's desire they not be left unpublished more so than anything, though it proves to be a happy coincidence for our purposes as they contain two accounts of specific triumphs, one of Basileios I and one of Theophilos, that are far more detailed and specific than what is on offer within the text proper.²⁸⁹ As such, for this chapter we will be considering primarily the material contained

²⁸⁸ The appendices are quite detailed, though they are not at all the kind of idealized schemas we are used to in other areas of the *Book of Ceremonies*. They are instead very specific accounts of specific events. On the other extremity, some of the historical/literary accounts of triumphs can be very brief or non-descriptive indeed, with only the barest mentions that a triumph did occur, however they make up for this deficiency with sheer volume. For example, the entirety of Skylitzes' description of the Triumph of the admiral Nasar, καὶ ὁ μὲν Νάσαρ καὶ ὁ μετ' αὐτοῦ Ῥωμαϊκὸς στόλος τοιοῦτων τροπαίων εὐμοίρησεν ἐκ θεοῦ καὶ μετὰ πολλῶν λαφύρων καὶ νικητικῶν στεφάνων ἐπανήλθε πρὸς βασιλέα. *Synopsis Historiarum*, 7.33.

²⁸⁹ See Moffatt, "Introduction", xxiv-xxvi; Bury, "The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogenetos", 438-439; Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus - Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, 34.

within the *De cerimoniis* and its appendices, while using historical accounts as supplementary information where the situation warrants it.

The Triumph of Basileios I²⁹⁰ over Tephrike and Germanikeia

The first triumph considered here is the one celebrated by Emperor Basileios I after he defeated the Paulicians of Tephrike and the Arabs of Germanikeia in 879. In this ceremony we see a quintessential Roman triumph.²⁹¹ The emperor crossed over from Asia and landed near the *Hebdomon*, a military training field outside the city. On this spot, Basileios was met by a delegation of citizens and the Senate. The citizens greeted the emperor wearing “crowns made of flowers and roses” then he in turn received the senate with a kiss.²⁹²

At this moment we begin to see an aspect of triumphs that appears again and again. They are among the most extravagant and extraordinary of imperial ceremonies and thus serve to impress upon the population multiple imperial virtues at once. Along the triumphal route, from the *Hebdomon* through the Golden Gate, then along the *Mese* and into the Constantinian palace through the Chalke gate, numerous stops are made to various shrines and churches to thank God for the victory.²⁹³ This is not limited to displays of imperial piety however, we see from the text that there are references towards the end of the account

²⁹⁰ Basileios may or may not have been accompanied by his son by his first wife, Konstantinos, who was heir apparent before his early death also in 879. There is some dispute over this and has complicated both the precise dating of the campaign and of the death of Basileios' son. For a breakdown of the dispute, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 154.

²⁹¹ McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 154.

²⁹² *De cerimoniis*, 498-499.

²⁹³ Indeed, there are no fewer than four stops at various churches along the processional route, though some seem designed to give the organization of the triumph time to get things ready before the emperor arrives at the city itself, *De cerimoniis*, 498-503, translation from Moffatt & Tall, 498-503.

to celebratory gifts being distributed to “everyone as far as was possible, both to those with him and those in the City”, evoking philanthropy as discussed in chapter 1.²⁹⁴

The nobly born prisoners of war, along with their arms, armour, and banners, and the booty captured from the campaign are all gathered outside the Golden Gate, presumably for purposes of organization. They then enter the city and are paraded from the Golden Gate all the way through the city to the Chalke Gate, a distance of around six kilometres. The Eparch has prepared the streets for the occasion and the entire route through the city is garlanded, the streets strewn with various herbs and flowers.²⁹⁵

It is only after²⁹⁶ this grand show has been made of the spoils of war that the emperor arrives at the Golden Gate himself. The text describes in great detail the garb of both Basileios and his son Konstantinos as they ride to the gate. The procession is decidedly military in character. They both sported armour (far too ornate to be of practical use) and weapons on horses with bejewelled caparisons. At the gate the demesmen acclaim the emperors for being victorious, exalted by God, and “most courageous rulers.”²⁹⁷ Before the Golden Gate Basil and his son met the Eparch of the City and the *Praispositos*, essentially the ranking officials in the city during the emperor’s absence,²⁹⁸ who performed obeisance before the emperor. Afterward, they presented Basileios with crowns of gold and

²⁹⁴ ἐπανιώντι τοίνυν τῷ βασιλεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ φοσσάτου ἀντιλήψεις πλεῖσται καὶ δωρεῶν παροχαὶ πᾶσιν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν τοῖς τε μετ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐδίδοντο. *De cerimoniis*, 503, translation from Moffatt & Tall, 503.

²⁹⁵ *De cerimoniis*, 498-500.

²⁹⁶ How long after the prisoners and booty have gone by is not specified, but one may assume that the emperor would follow not too far behind the end of the procession of prisoners and goods.

²⁹⁷ For the information on the outfits, see *De cerimoniis*, 500. The full acclamations: “δόξα Θεῷ τῷ ἀποδόντι ἡμῖν μετὰ νίκης τοὺς ἰδίους δεσπότας· δόξα Θεῷ τῷ μεγαλύναντι ὑμᾶς, αὐτοκράτορες Ῥωμαίων· δόξα σοι, παναγία τριάς, ὅτι εἶδομεν νικήσαντας τοὺς ἰδίους δεσπότας· καλῶς ἦλθετε νικήσαντες, ἀνδριώτατοι δεσπότες.” *Ibid.*, 501.

²⁹⁸ Basileios had left the *praispositos* Baanes in charge as his representative while he was on campaign Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society*, 55.

laurel, ancient symbols of victory.²⁹⁹ This meeting served a dual function. The Eparch and the *praipositos* welcomed the emperor back to the City, symbolically rendering Constantinople back into his hands. They also drew attention to the emperor's military triumphs by awarding him ancient symbols of victory.

From here on, the emperor proceeded along the *mese* all the way to the Forum of Constantine, where he was met by a religious procession led by Patriarch Photios. Here emperor and the patriarch together entered the Church of the *Theotokos*. After praying, the emperor and his son changed out of military garb into silk clothing then followed the *mese* to Hagia Sophia. Inside, the patriarch personally crowned Basileios with the *corona triumphalis* (νίκης στεφάνος). The ceremony comes to an end in the palace, culminating in a banquet.³⁰⁰ As ever, imperial propaganda relied on ideas and symbols well known by both the people and their rulers. A number of those ideas are unpacked here.

Crowns made out of various materials, often awarded based on military exploits, had a long history in Rome. The *corona triumphalis*, mentioned briefly above, was granted to those awarded a triumph, but this was but one in a larger collection of crowns. In the republic, the *corona civica* was a crown of oak leaves requiring one to have saved a Roman's life in combat and slain his assailant. Even more prized and more rarely awarded was the *corona graminea*, a crown of grass that was awarded to one who had saved an entire legion through his actions by the legion itself, made with the grass that grew upon the battlefield.³⁰¹ The victory crowns, or νικητικῶν στεφάνων as they are referred to in the

²⁹⁹ For the significance of the crowns, see Smith and Anthon, "Corona" in A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities. Particularly in the subsection devoted to the Corona Triumphalis.

³⁰⁰ *De cerimoniis*, 502-503.

³⁰¹ Smith and Anthon, "Corona" in A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities. Quote from *De cerimoniis*, 498, translation Moffatt, 498.

sources, given to the emperor by the Eparch come from this tradition and are the direct descendants of the *corona triumphalis*. It appears that, while not all variants were preserved, the symbolism of these crowns persisted well into the Middle Byzantine period and emperors leveraged this to their advantage in imperial ceremonial.³⁰² Examples include the crowns offered to Ioannes Tzimiskes at the city gates when he returned from his successful campaign against the Rus in Bulgaria, those awarded to Basileios by the patriarch, or the victory crowns offered to the admiral Nasar for his victories at sea.³⁰³ The social import of these crowns is underscored in the *Chronographia* of Psellos. Psellos calls attention to the importance of the triumphal crown as he wrote that Konstantinos IX Monomachos might have staved off the anger of Georgios Maniakes by writing to him at his ascension and promising to “wreath him with countless crowns.”³⁰⁴ Later on in the text, Psellos also uses the imagery of the triumphal crown to accentuate the degree to which Monomachos honoured him personally with his words.³⁰⁵

Of less certain provenance is the parallel tradition at work in the “crowns made of flowers and roses.” These crowns are worn by the citizens of the City when they meet the emperor at the *Hebdomon* and by the demes as garlands around their necks as they precede the triumphal procession of the emperor through the streets. Little is said in the texts about these crowns aside from their existence in general and that they are worn. Present in both triumphal

³⁰² See McCormick who briefly details the phenomenon, *Eternal Victory*, 156-7, though victory crowns appear throughout.

³⁰³ Skylitzes references how Ioannes Tzimiskes was offered crowns at the city gates when he returned from his successful campaign against the Rus in Bulgaria, 16.18. Basileios’ coronation with crowns of victory by the patriarch is detailed in *Vita Basilii*, 40. See also McCormick talk of the way Basileios used the symbol of the victory/triumphal crown to shore up legitimacy, *Eternal Victory*, 157. For the description of the Triumph of the admiral Nasar and him being given νικητικῶν στεφάνων, or victory crowns, see Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 7.33.

³⁰⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, 6:79

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 6:199.

descriptions, these crowns are, at a glance, reminiscent of the traditional *corona convivialis*, which were worn to celebrations or given to guests at banquets.³⁰⁶ Certainly a triumph would be cause for celebration among the people as an indication of victory in war and would warrant such crowns/garlands, but there is little concrete information or scholarship extant to help solidify this connection further.

As noted earlier, the presumed association between military victory and God's favour was a strong one in the Roman Empire. This was reinforced in the minds of Middle Byzantine onlookers through the various stops for prayer that marked much of the Triumph. Basileios appeared to be continually highlighting the religious aspect of his victory, implying that it was by God's favour no less than his own skill that he triumphed over the enemy. No less symbolic of divine triumph was the crowning of Basileios by the patriarch Photios with the *corona triumphalis*. Perhaps this could be explained by Basileios' need for religious sanction of his reign given the rather heinous acts of usurpation and murder against Michael III that brought him to power.³⁰⁷ That said, the visitation of shrines and churches along the triumphal route was a common aspect of Byzantine triumphs.

While Basileios' triumph serves well as a framework for the investigation of Byzantine triumphs, it nevertheless lacked one prominent component of other such ceremonies: the involvement of the Hippodrome.³⁰⁸ This large venue was perfect for

³⁰⁶ For the crowns' presence in the triumphs see *De cerimoniis*, 498, 500, 508. For the definition of the *corona convivialis*, see Smith and Anthon, "Corona" in *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*.

³⁰⁷ McCormick details other efforts by Basileios to associate himself with godliness to essentially wash his hands of Michael's blood in the public image, *Eternal Victory*, 152-159.

³⁰⁸ McCormick here notes that this change sets apart the triumphs of Basileios from those of the Amorians, *Eternal Victory*, 155.

impressing upon the people the emperor's victory. This was not just because of the large amount of seating available in it, but also the inherent associations between the Hippodrome and victory as a concept. The city's chariot racing circuit was a place where emperors were acclaimed by the people, triumphs were held, and chariot races staged which would produce a winner.³⁰⁹ All victories, even those we would not associate with the emperor personally today such as victories of individual charioteers, were deemed the property of the emperor given to him from God. Indeed, this exclusive quality was what underlay the imperial theology of victory shaping much of the rhetoric around imperial victory.³¹⁰ The acclamations recited for victory in chariot races discussed just below reinforce this connection explicitly. Of course, occasionally the victory of the emperors in the hippodrome could be more immediate, such as when an emperor might compete himself. Famously, this was the case with Michael III (r.842-867), the predecessor and victim of Basileios, an avid charioteer in the sources.³¹¹ Or we might also consider the Hippodrome's later usage as a place for western-style jousting in the case of Manuel Komnenos (r.1143-1180). The association between the Hippodrome and victory was so strong that dreams set in it were said to presage success.³¹²

Acclamations

Acclamations form an integral part of the Byzantine triumph. They are also an important means by which to study how authorities disseminated propaganda about imperial virtues. This is because much of what was expressed by the people through

³⁰⁹ For more on the association between victory and the Hippodrome, see Dagron, *L'hippodrome de Constantinople*, esp. 229-251.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 241-251.

³¹¹ Skylitzes, 5.14, 5.19 and *Theophanes Continuatus*, 4.35.

³¹² Dagron, *L'hippodrome de Constantinople*, 251.

acclamations was the product of some coaching on the part of the imperial government, by way of the “claque function” of the demes.³¹³ People could be spontaneous with their acclamations, particularly when they wished to express dissatisfaction, but the *De cerimoniis* seems to suggest that acclamations “became absorbed into ritual and standardized.”³¹⁴ Those acclamations recorded in Konstantinos’ work on imperial ceremonial seem to reflect the official take on events, as well as those ideas and imperial qualities that the court wished to impress upon the public.³¹⁵ So we turn now to the script of imperial triumphal acclamations.

Based on the differing accounts offered in the *De cerimoniis*, it seems likely that triumphal acclamations were largely similar across different iterations. There is one set of fairly detailed acclamations given to us in chapter 19 of Book II describing a triumph in the Forum of Constantine.³¹⁶ This is complemented by the description of Basileios’ triumph in the appendix.³¹⁷ God figures prominently in these acclamations, but, not surprisingly, so do the concepts of bravery and victory.

In the triumph of Basileios we see such phrases as “Glory to God who returns our rulers to us with victory!”, “Glory...that we saw our rulers victorious!”, and “Welcome,

³¹³ Rouché, “Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias.” 198-199. For the claque function of the demes, see Cameron, *Circus Factions*, 234-258.

³¹⁴ For the quote, see Rouché, “Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias,” 198. Van Nuffelen, “Beyond Bureaucracy: Ritual Mediation in Late Antiquity.”

³¹⁵ See Alan Cameron’s *Circus Factions*, 234-249. This book uncovers the role of the various factions in ceremonies where they functioned primarily as claquers who guided crowds in acclamations and other group behaviours of great importance in medieval Roman ceremonial.

³¹⁶ The text for the Triumph in the Hippodrome of chapter 20 merely states that the acclamations to be used are those of the previous chapter.

³¹⁷ In contrast, Theophilos’ triumph as recorded in the same appendix unfortunately offers no real verbatim rendition of acclamations save for two words, “εἰς ἄγιοϛ.” The text does note that there are victory chants and acclamations, it is just not specific, *De cerimoniis*, 507.

conquerors, most courageous rulers!”³¹⁸ The text hints at “other acclamations in praise of victory... and *apelatikoi* for a general”,³¹⁹ but offers no more specifics. When we turn to the acclamations of Book II chapter 20, however, there are a considerable amount of acclamations listed, not all of which can be covered in this chapter. Again, we see similar ideas being expressed. “Many years for the very courageous emperors!”, “Many years for the victorious emperors!”, “many years for the emperors who shame their enemies!”³²⁰ That ideas of bravery are present here, in the schema of Konstantinos’ own triumph, helps illuminate the inseparable association between triumphs, victory, and imperial bravery. Konstantinos was never anywhere near the battlefield on these campaigns, yet we see that acclamations in honour of imperial bravery are still expected when he triumphs.

There are also military aspects of imperial rule referenced in acclamations in the Hippodrome outside of triumphs. Acclamations for the victory of a charioteer in Chapter 69 of Book I include, among others, “may the divine Word multiply your victories!”, “A share, rulers, in your victory over the barbarians!”, and “Through this [cross], reign and conquer!”³²¹ Clearly ideas of victory, whether military or sportive, bled into each other, particularly in a place so associated with both types of victory as the Hippodrome.

Concluding Remarks

³¹⁸ “δόξα Θεῷ τῷ ἀποδόντι ἡμῖν μετὰ νίκης τοὺς ἰδίους δεσπότης”, “δόξα σοὶ, παναγία τριάς, ὅτι εἶδομεν νικήσαντας τοὺς ἰδίους δεσπότης”, “καλῶς ἦλθετε νικήσαντες, ἀνδριώτατοι δεσπότηι.” *Ibid.*, 501, translations taken from Moffatt & Tall, 501.

³¹⁹ *De cerimoniis*, 501. Trans. Moffatt & Tall, 501.

³²⁰ “ἀνδρειοτάτων βασιλέων πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη” γ’. “νικητῶν βασιλέων πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη” γ’. “ἐχθρελέγκτων βασιλέων πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη” γ’. All are to be repeated three times, *De cerimoniis*, 612, translations from Moffatt & Tall, 612, except the final one.

³²¹ *De cerimoniis*, 321, 324.

Triumphs constituted a major ceremonial testament to an emperor's right to rule. They advertised his possession of the interwoven attributes of victory, bravery, and divine approval. These were all virtues a Roman emperor wished to have associated with his person and were all represented in the acclamations which accompanied triumphal ceremonies. In Menander Rhetor's rhetorical handbook, we read that feats of bravery and military exploits were to be addressed first in imperial encomia.³²² This mirrored the importance success in war was accorded by Romans, ancient and medieval. No legitimate emperor could be thought of as separated from victory much as it was inconceivable that he would be a coward.

We have seen that imperial triumphs were intimately associated with the topography of Constantinople. The Golden Gate was the traditional point of entry for triumphal emperors returning from campaign most clearly seen in the importance ascribed to Basileios' passage through the middle door in the Golden Gate when he first arrived in the capital.³²³ Above, we looked at some of the symbols and meaning contained within the Forum of Constantine, a space riddled with images of Roman imperial grandeur and Constantine himself, a martial emperor.³²⁴ Furthermore, we also considered how the Hippodrome was a venue suffused with ideas of victory, whether it was in contests of arms or the races and the two could seemingly inhabit the same space at the same time.³²⁵ This is without considering that a great deal of the time spent in imperial triumphs was in

³²² Menander Rhetor, 84.

³²³ *Oration Funèbre de Basile I*, 50.15-24. For more information, refer to the discussion on this in the conclusion.

³²⁴ See Kaldellis, "The Forum of Constantine in Constantinople: What Do We Know about Its Original Architecture and Adornment?", 714-739, and Ousterhout, "The Life and Afterlife of Constantine's Column", 304-326.

³²⁵ See the acclamations in *De cerimoniis*, 321, 324, during a normal race at the Hippodrome we see military aspirations expressed for the emperors.

procession from one location to another. What kind of memories of imperial victory might have been imprinted at various points along the roads we do not have access to?

Conclusion: Ceremonial Reinforcement

As the story goes, Basileios spent many long days traversing the Macedonian and Thracian countryside from his native village to seek his fortune in the Queen of Cities. Fellow travelers on the road reassured him of the distance to the City, but he was no doubt awed by the giant walls that guarded the land approach to Constantinople. By the time the massive three-layered Theodosian walls towered over Basileios, the sun was low in the sky.³²⁶ In front of him was one large gate flanked by two smaller ones, all open. With growing fatigue Basileios travelled through the middle gate and, finding a nice spot by a monastery further along, threw himself on the ground and slept. He had finally made it to the City.³²⁷

As mundane as this story sounds, particularly compared to the ostentatious imperial ceremonies we have looked at in previous chapter introductions, it formed an important piece of the legitimizing narrative constructed for the founder of the Macedonian dynasty.³²⁸ Basileios, a newcomer to the imperial capital (and a peasant at that), was unlikely to have known much about the Golden Gate before arriving in Constantinople. The event is consistently mentioned in accounts of his arrival in the capital and receives special attention in the funeral oration delivered by his son Leon VI.³²⁹ As mentioned in chapter 3, the Golden Gate was an entryway through

³²⁶ *Vita Basilii*, 9.

³²⁷ Some artistic licence was taken in this piece, mostly about the fellow travelers bit which is not mentioned in the sources. The whole account can be found in *Ibid*.

³²⁸ For the piece as part of a larger whole aimed at dynastic legitimization, see Gregory, "The Political Program of Constantine Porphyrogenitus.", also Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 575-605. See also Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, 153-196. For broader info on the genre of the piece, see Alexander, "Secular Biography at Byzantium", 194-209.

³²⁹ *Oration Funèbre de Basile I*, 50.15-24. Though it is not addressed in any substantial way in the other sources, it is consistently mentioned in Skylitzes 6.4, the *Vita Basilii* 9, and Genesios 4.24. Of these Genesios is the only one to

which triumphal emperors entered the city in procession. Specifically, they entered the city through the middle door, normally closed to traffic and reserved for imperial triumphs.³³⁰

Basileios' first entry into the capital through this symbolically important ingress was framed as a way in which his glorious future had been foretold from his earliest days. We see here that even just echoes of ceremony had power and meaning in Middle Byzantium.

In looking at the parallels between the four kingly virtues of antiquity and the qualities and values on display in imperial ceremonial we have examined the way that ceremony could be used as a means of communication between the elite and the rest of the capital. While the people could, and often did, use this opportunity to voice concerns and sentiments to the sovereign, the rulers also used ceremony as a vector for a directed form of communication aimed at the people. Crucially, the *De cerimoniis* allows us to glimpse the ideology behind this communication. Regardless of its status as an exact blueprint of court ceremonial, the tenth-century text is illustrative of what imperial ceremonial aimed to accomplish and of which qualities Macedonian emperors saw fit to advertise. *Andreia*, *Dikaiosyne*, *Sophrosyne*, and *Phronesis* were all put on display to varying degrees in ceremony and were necessary qualities for legitimate rulers.

Andreia was best exemplified by the ostentatious triumphal processions following victory in war. As we have seen, victory in ancient Rome was a key aspect of establishing the legitimacy of a ruler. Even in the Christian tradition we see this association made clearly and early through both incidents described in the old testament (David killing Goliath), as well as in Constantinian lore (Constantine at the Milvian Bridge). Additionally, many Roman and Byzantine dynasties

note that it was in some way out of the ordinary. It seems that Basileios' entry to the city in this manner was deemed important enough to mention in every account of Basil's history, but the symbolism itself was obvious enough for these historians and their audiences to need no further explication.

³³⁰ That the middle door was reserved for triumphs, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 152.

began with a successful general being placed on the throne by the army. This pattern would only have reinforced the Roman association between military success and the imperial throne. Thus, when Basileios walked through the Golden Gate, an anticipation of his later triumph over the Paulicians, it was an omen which necessarily hinted at his future on the throne.

Basileios is also purported to have possessed many other virtues which were not necessarily on display in this vignette. *Dikaiosyne* (or justice) was primarily viewed through the lens of *philanthropia* throughout this thesis. While imperial engagement with laws and courts were very important to the image of an emperor (and that of Basileios in particular),³³¹ *philanthropia* was a concept more related to social rather than legal justice. The distribution of food, money, and entertainment –particularly to the needy– was a necessary facet of imperial rule. This was something for which Basileios was well known: his *Vita* describes how the people of the city were clamouring for a ruler from a humble background who understood the poor’s lot in life.³³² Basileios was portrayed by his propagandists as such a ruler and once in power he was shown to have delivered. One of his first acts was thus a procession to Hagia Sophia. On the return journey, he and his family made a great show of largesse by distributing money to the populace. This act of generosity was only enhanced by the report that the money came from Basileios’ own personal funds.³³³ This *philanthropia* was maintained throughout his reign as he funded numerous charitable institutions in the capital.³³⁴

Basileios also worked hard to cultivate an image of *Sophrosyne*. Though often translated as temperance, *sophrosyne* itself was coopted as a means of displaying piety in the early

³³¹ *Vita Basilii*, 31, 33. For more information on the legal legacy of Basileios I and his son Leon IV, see Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition*, 16-44.

³³² *Ibid.*, 19.

³³³ This was apparently necessitated by Michael III’s apparently horrific management of state finances, *Ibid.*, 29.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

Christian tradition. We thus examined this virtue through ceremonial displays of Christian piety generally through the many religious processions detailed in the *De cerimoniis*. As discussed in chapter 2, Basileios was heavily invested with *sophrosyne* both during his own reign, and in the subsequent reigns of his descendants who had a vested interest in whitewashing the rather sordid tale of his ascension to sole rule. Indeed, as mentioned above, one of Basileios' first ceremonial acts after the murder of his colleague was a religious procession to demonstrate the approval of the religious community.³³⁵ An appearance of piety was key to the continuance of the nascent dynasty.³³⁶

Phronesis/Sophia was the final virtue under Menander's schema. It denoted wisdom, but also the ability to think quickly on one's feet. Though there was no chapter for this virtue owing to its lack of representation in the *De cerimoniis*, we examined instances found in other sources where it was manifested in diffusing difficult situations such as the crowd voicing displeasure. Thus, while the *De cerimoniis* is silent regarding Basileios and his ceremonial *phronesis*, we find him invested with this virtue elsewhere. His *Vita* describes how in war the emperor was successful and cunning, laying traps and taking prisoners.³³⁷ Indeed, later on the work very explicitly ascribes *phronesis* to him along with the other three virtues.³³⁸ However, with regards to *phronesis* in the realm of ceremony, Basileios seems rather under-represented in the sources available to us.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ This is likely one of the reasons that Basileios also oversaw an attempt at the forced conversion of the Jews of the empire, an act less likely to garner modern approval than his restoration and construction of numerous churches in the capital, but still one which confirmed his Christian zeal in the eyes of his contemporaries, Ibid., 93-95.

³³⁷ Ibid., 49.

³³⁸ Ibid., 72.27-31.

We have seen throughout this investigation the longevity and durability of many of the concepts that we have examined, most importantly δικαιοσύνη (justice), σωφροσύνη (temperance), ἀνδρεία (bravery), and φρόνησις/σοφία (wisdom). While there was change and evolution, it seems that a remarkably high amount of lexical and ideological continuity persisted over the centuries. The main vector of continuity as regards these virtues according to my analysis was Menander Rhetor. This author who lived and died sometime around the late third to early fourth centuries AD, drew on ideas dating back to at least Plato in the fifth to fourth centuries BC.³³⁹ These ideas endured, and what is more, remained relevant in political and cultural discourse at least up to the period that we have dealt with in the tenth and eleventh centuries AD.³⁴⁰

There are many reasons for this. In Byzantium the classical and late antique written corpus was continuously studied. It never became ossified and remained an essential part of the curriculum of higher education and offered templates for the articulation of intelligent discourse and ideas about current affairs.³⁴¹ Thus, writers of history would sometimes work-in complex allusions to classical history in their works and authors could take it upon themselves to write pieces with settings of remarkable similarity to their classical models. Both these traits have

³³⁹ Russel and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor: A Commentary*, xi, xiv.

³⁴⁰ For example, see the remarks in *Vita Basilii* 72.27-31 asserting Basileios I's possession of the four kingly virtues. Being used in such a way for the legitimation of an emperor underscores their continued importance.

³⁴¹ There were certain breaks in continuity in this regard and in certain fields such as philosophy, but the overall continuity was remarkable and on the upswing towards the end of the Macedonian period, Kaldellis, "The Byzantine Role in the Making of the Corpus of Classical Greek Historiography: A Preliminary Investigation", Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 173-224, and Browning, "Byzantine Scholarship", Jeffrey, "We Need to Talk about Byzantium." Krallis, "Imagining Rome in Medieval Constantinople: Memory, Politics and the Past in the Middle Byzantine Period." For a stark example of the contrary, see George Finlay, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 233-237, 262-263 where Byzantines were labelled as hostile to the classical tradition (to say nothing of Greeks apparently chaffing under the disdain of Armenian despots). For a more modern and moderated version of this view, see how the "Byzantine Dark Age" and tensions around paganism in Greek culture are used to argue that Byzantium turned away from Classical culture in Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 13.

frequently conspired to confound scholars seeking to engage with these works.³⁴² This is even present in the *De cerimoniis* itself considering the extent to which the late antique work of Peter the Patrician was used in the construction of the text.³⁴³ There is, however, a method of transmission more germane to the topic of public and popular ceremonial which we will discuss here.

In the previous chapters I have belaboured the point that imperial ceremonial was built upon underlying concepts of considerable antiquity. *Philanthropia* has an ancient origin dating back to at least Classical Greece, similarly so with *Sophrosyne*, though both were augmented with the advent of Christianity.³⁴⁴ Their longevity helps underscore the importance of such qualities to Greco-Roman society as ideas with which emperors wished to associate themselves. It was necessary for medieval Roman rulers to fulfill expectations in Roman society regarding proper conduct for a ruler and this is why we see these concepts highlighted again and again in imperial ceremony. However, I believe that we can also attribute part of the longevity of these concepts within a broader public setting in part to the ceremonies themselves. Imperial ceremonial and the history of its performance is quite old as well. If we look at the bridge between the ceremonies recorded in the *De cerimoniis* from Peter the Patrician to those recorded

³⁴² For the history work, there are numerous examples of quotations and allusions within nearly all historical texts, but one example that stands out is that of the story of Tzimiskes' triumph talked about by Skylitzes and Leon Diakonos, which Kaldellis has revealed is based off of classical accounts of Camillus, "The Original Source for Tzimiskes' Balkan Campaign (971) and the Emperor's Classicizing Propaganda" 1-18. See also Kaldellis, "The Manufacture of History in the Later Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Rhetorical Templates and Narrative Ontologies" 293-306; Kaldellis, "The Textual Sources for the Peloponnese, A.D. 582-959: Their Creative Engagement with Ancient Literature", 105-135. For the question of literary works, see Kaldellis, "'The Emergence of Literary Fiction in Byzantium and the Paradox of Plausibility,'" in P. Roilos, Ed., *Medieval Greek Storytelling*"; Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*. 256-283.

³⁴³ Moffatt notes that several of the later chapters part of Book I seem to have been lifted from a now lost work by Peter the Patrician, a *patrikios* under the emperor Justinian, Moffatt, "Introduction" in *The Book of Ceremonies*, xxvi-xxvii. A similar process was at work in another of Konstantinos' works, the *Excerpta Historica*, about which one can read in Lemerle, *Le Premier Humanisme Byzantin*, 280-288.

³⁴⁴ *Andreia* and *phronesis/sophia* as well obviously, though they seem to have been altered somewhat less by the rise of Christianity.

under the Porphyrogenetos, we can see that there are hundreds of years of continuity when it comes to acclamations. There is even more continuity with regards to other ceremonies such as triumphs and processions, both of which have histories long predating even the sixth century when Peter wrote.

What I am proposing is that the longevity of these concepts of imperial rule was buttressed by the similarly long-lived tradition of imperial ceremony displaying these virtues. The constant repetition of acclamations and ostentatious displays of imperial virtues inculcated in the general populace an appreciation for those same virtues. Imperial utilization of Menander's semi-classical schema of an ideal royal figure helped perpetuate the idea through the generations, particularly through what have been referred to as the Byzantine Dark Age; a period where the written word was comparatively neglected.³⁴⁵ In short, it is precisely because emperors aggressively advertised their possession of specific qualities generation after generation that it remained necessary to keep doing so. This makes for an interesting kind of "virtuous cycle" between ceremony and expectation in Byzantine society, which would necessitate further study to do justice to.

The position of a Byzantine monarch was unstable and so the constant reinforcement of the image of the *Basileus* in the eyes of the populace was crucial to assuring his place on the throne. Ceremony formed an important facet of this ongoing imperial project as one of the main points of interaction between the elite and the commoners; two normally rather disconnected

³⁴⁵ The term can be seen as somewhat dubious in many regards, but it cannot be ignored that there was a marked decline in the output of the written word during the seventh to ninth centuries AD in Byzantium, particularly secular writing. The majority of surviving literature from the period consists of hagiography, theology, and polemical disputation on church canon (obviously with exceptions), Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 179-183.

groups. However, these interactions were not without dangers, particularly when the reality of imperial rule did not conform with the rhetoric.

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