

International Conference

# Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in the Medieval Mediterranean



Archaeological Research Unit  
Gladstonos 12, Nicosia

26-28 November 2010



UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF BYZANTINE AND MODERN GREEK STUDIES

This conference aims at discussing and developing comparative approaches to the investigation of ceremonies and rituals as symbolic languages of royalty and rulership in Byzantium, Islam and Latin Europe with a special focus on the Medieval Mediterranean from the seventh century to the age of the Crusades. While the main interest lies on historical methods, the conference will also include aspects of art and literature, which in many respects form an indispensable mode of expression for ceremonial realities in the Middle Ages.

Over the past decades medievalists, influenced by results and methods of adjacent disciplines, such as linguistics and anthropology, have made much progress in analyzing and explaining patterns of non-verbal and symbolic communication within a broader conceptual framework of interpreting political cultures in pre-modern societies. This shift of scholarly interest, which sometimes is even referred to as “performative turn,” is mainly due to a new understanding of the role and significance of these phenomena. Ceremonies in the sense of publicly performed acts of self-representation projecting authority, hierarchical order and ideological claims, on the one hand, and forms of ritual behaviour in various political contexts such as warfare, negotiations and conflict resolution, on the other, are no longer seen as mere decorative elements of processes determined by governmental traditions and customary law. Instead, many scholars consider them as key features for an adequate decipherment of the rules and principles on which medieval public order and the stability of ruling elites are based. Thus, the analysis of gestures and symbols became an essential part of what traditional scholarship used to call “Verfassungsgeschichte.”

Heinrich Fichtenau’s seminal study of tenth-century concepts of order included a systematic analysis of medieval hierarchical thinking (“Rangordnungen”) expressed in commonly understood symbols and ritual acts pertaining to medieval feudal society. Jean-Claude Schmitt’s *La raison des gestes dans l’Occident médiéval* moved the discussion an important step forward by examining the intrinsic logic of the medieval arsenal of gestures and by describing their function and effectiveness as an expression of mental conditions and emotions and as a means of communication. The highly influential school of thought initiated by the scholarly work of Gerd Althoff combined the medieval culture of signs and symbols with a new interpretation of public authority and state in the Middle Ages by emphasising the crucial significance of ceremonial and ritual acts for post-Carolingian forms of lordship “in the absence of a state” or a political order based on a consensual exercise of power respectively. Philipp Buc eventually brought in a new perspective by focussing on the “Dangers of Rituals” caused, on the one hand, by modern scholars’ proclivity to over-emphasize or even misinterpret these phenomena and, on the other, by the description and intrinsic meaning of rituals in medieval narratives.

In comparison to western medieval studies, much less work has been done for the other politico-cultural entities of the Mediterranean World, namely Byzantium and Islam. Michael McCormick’s *Eternal Victory* follows the evolution of the late Roman imperial triumph up to the tenth century and discusses the adoption of this concept by the western barbarian kingdoms in the early Middle Ages. Gilbert Dagron’s *Empereur et prêtre* investigates the religious dimensions on which Byzantine imperial rule and legitimacy are based. Thus we

know quite a lot about Byzantine court ceremonies in connection with imperial ideology, whereas the functional aspects of rituals in the framework of Byzantine political life are widely unexplored. As for the Islamic world, the great number and variety of dynasties and concepts of lordship extending from the Umayyad state in the seventh to the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century offers an incredibly vast field of inquiry, but also poses many hitherto unanswered questions concerning the nature and origin of Islamic court cultures and ritual forms of expression. Andrew Marsham’s recent book on “Rituals of Islamic Monarchy” for the Umayyad and early Abbasid period is an excellent point of departure.

Alexander Beihammer  
Stavroula Constantinou  
Maria Parani

## FRIDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2010

### 10.00 Opening Ceremony

#### 11.00-11.30 Coffee Break

#### 11.30-13.00 - 1<sup>st</sup> Session

Chairperson: JONATHAN SHEPARD

MARIA KANTIREA (NICOSIA): *A celebration in decline during Late Antiquity: the dies natalis of the Roman emperors.*

WALTER POHL (VIENNA): *Ritualized encounters: Rome and the barbarians, fifth-seventh century.*

ANDREW MARSHAM (EDINBURGH): *The architecture of allegiance in Islamic Late Antiquity.*

#### 13:00 – 15:00 Lunch break

#### 15.00-16.30 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Session

Chairperson: GILLES GRIVAUD

BJÖRN WEILER (ABERYSTWYTH): *Ceremonies of succession, c. 1050 – c. 1200.*

ALEXANDER BEIHAMMER (NICOSIA): *Comnenian imperial succession and the ritual world of Niketas Choniates' Chronike Diegesis.*

RUTH MACRIDES (BIRMINGHAM): *Byzantine coronation protocols.*

#### 16.30-17.00 Coffee Break

#### 17.00-18.30 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Session

Chairperson: RUTH MACRIDES

HENRY MAGUIRE (BALTIMORE): *Parodies of imperial ceremonial and their reflections in Byzantine art.*

ANTONY EASTMOND (LONDON): *Saints at court in the tenth century.*

MARIA PARANI (NICOSIA): *Look like an angel: the attire of eunuchs and its significant ramifications within the context of Middle Byzantine court ceremonial.*

20:00 Dinner

## SATURDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2010

#### 09.30-11.00 - 4<sup>th</sup> Session

Chairperson: HUGH KENNEDY

JENNY RAHEL OESTERLE (BOCHUM): *The power of invisibility and the invisibility of power: some remarks on the political function of concealment and epiphany in Fatimid court ceremonial.*

JO VAN STEENBERGEN (GHENT): *Ritual, politics and the city in Mamluk Cairo: the Bayna I-Qasrayn as a Mamluk 'lieu de mémoire'.*

NIKOLAS JASPERT (BOCHUM): *Court regulations, administration and ceremonies in the medieval Crown of Aragon.*

#### 11.00-11.30 Coffee Break

#### 11.30-13.00 - 5<sup>th</sup> Session

Chairperson: NIKOLAS JASPERT

IOANNA RAPTI (PARIS): *Court and religious ceremonies in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia: evidence from documents and arts.*

STEFAN BURKHARDT (HEIDELBERG): *Court ceremonies and rituals of power in the Latin Empire of Constantinople.*

GILLES GRIVAUD (ROUEN): *En quête d'un style: les rituels royaux des Lusignan.*

#### 13:00 – 15:00 Lunch break

#### 15.00-16.30 - 6<sup>th</sup> Session

Chairperson: MARGARET MULLETT

CHRISTINA ANGELIDI (ATHENS): *Designing a reception area at the imperial palace (De Cerimoniis II,15).*

ANTONIA GIANNOULI (NICOSIA): *Coronation speeches in the Palaeologan period.*

MARTIN HINTERBERGER (NICOSIA): *Phthonos - a pagan relic in Byzantine imperial acclamations?*

#### 16.30-17.00 Coffee Break

#### 17.00-18.30 - 7<sup>th</sup> Session

Chairperson: HENRY MAGUIRE

STAVROULA CONSTANTINOY (NICOSIA): *Violence in the palace: rituals of imperial punishment in Procopius's Secret History.*

PANAGIOTIS AGAPITOS (NICOSIA): *The 'court of amorous dominion' and the 'gate of love': rituals of empire in a Byzantine romance of the thirteenth century.*

MARGARET MULLETT (WASHINGTON D.C.): *Tented ceremony.*

#### 20:00 Dinner

## SUNDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2010

#### 09.30-11.00 - 8<sup>th</sup> Session

Chairperson: WALTER POHL

ERIC J. HANNE (FLORIDA): *Ritual and reality: the bay'a process in eleventh- and twelfth-century Islamic courts.*

JONATHAN SHEPARD (OXFORD): *Adventus, arrivistes and rites of rulership in Byzantium and France in the tenth and eleventh century.*

HUGH KENNEDY (LONDON): *Itinerant and transhuman monarchy in the medieval Islamic world.*

#### 11.00-11.30 Coffee Break

#### 11.30-12.00 Concluding Ceremony and Acclamations

#### 20:30 Farewell Dinner

## List of Participants

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, *Par. gr. 139 (Paris Psalter)*, fol. 6v:  
The coronation of David.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, *Par. lat. 1 (Vivian Bible)*, fol. 423:  
The presentation of the Bible to Charles the Bald.

Istanbul, Topkap Saray Müzesi Kütüphanesi 3593, fol. 47b, Vehbî's *Sûrnâme*:  
Sultan Ahmad III (1703-1730) and his entourage are watching games.

Digedag comic-book series, vol. 4, *Abenteuer am Bosphorus*:  
The knight Runkel von Rübenstein in front of the Byzantine emperor in the Magnaura.