

# Spectacle, Power & Romanness in Byzantium



The Use of Roman Heritage in the Ceremonial Practices in the Hippodrome (10th-century)



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## Introduction

Unlike most empires, the Byzantine Empire did not grow out of conquest. The Empire rather evolved out of an already existing Roman political system that had developed over a long period of time. In 330 AD, when the city of Constantinople was officially dedicated to Constantine the Great, the Roman Empire was still undivided. After 476, when Odoacer deposed the Western Emperor, it was still possible to think of a united Mediterranean world. However, during this time the Eastern Empire had begun to take on a new role.<sup>1</sup> The Empire was a continuation of the former (Eastern) Roman Empire and it was still reigned by an emperor, but from the fifth century on it is called by scholars the ‘Byzantine Empire’.

The term ‘Byzantine’ was probably first used by German scholar Hieronymus Wolf in the sixteenth century, with reference to the ancient name of Constantinople, *Byzantion*.<sup>2</sup> Nowadays the name is used by scholars to indicate the former Eastern Roman Empire after 330 or 476. As a modern construct it does not provide us with a clear indication of the identity of the Byzantine people. The Byzantines did not call themselves by this name. They referred to themselves as *Romaioi*, Romans.<sup>3</sup> Identity, however, is not only a matter of a name, but it is also a matter of how you construct your own past.<sup>4</sup> This can be seen as problematic for Byzantium. The Empire’s history consisted not only of a Roman heritage but also of an ancient Greek and a Christian heritage. These multiple heritages have caused modern day scholars to question the Roman identity expressed in the name given by the Byzantines to themselves. This has resulted in a lively debate amongst scholars separated into different camps arguing for their view on the identity of the Byzantine Empire.

In general there are four main theories about Byzantine identity. The first and oldest theory sees Byzantium as a medieval form of a Greek national identity that lies behind a Christian religion and a Roman administration. The main advocates of this theory are Apostolos Vakalopoulos and Peter Charanis, who expressed their ideas in the sixties and seventies.<sup>5</sup> Both scholars do not deny the Roman element in the identity of Byzantium, but

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<sup>1</sup> Averil Cameron, *The Byzantines* (Oxford, 2006), 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> Claudia Rapp, ‘Hellenic Identity, Romanitas, and Christianity in Byzantium’, in: Katerina Zacharia (ed.), *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (Hampshire, 2008), 127–150, here 129.

<sup>3</sup> Christos Malatras, ‘The Making of an Ethnic Group: The Romaioi in the 12th-13th Centuries’, in: Konstantinos A. Dimadis (ed.), *Identities in the Greek World (from 1204 to the present day) Vol. 3* (Athens, 2011), 419–430, here 419-421.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 424-425.

<sup>5</sup> A. Vakalopoulos, ‘Byzantium and Hellenism: Remarks on the Racial Origin and the Intellectual Continuity of the Greek Nation’, *Balkan Studies* 9 (1968), 101–126; Peter Charanis, ‘How Greek was the Byzantine Empire?’, in: Peter Charanis and Speros jr. Vryonis (ed.), *Studies on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire* (London, 1972), 101–116.

they also see a strong Greek inspiration in Byzantine culture and civilization. Because the word ‘Hellen’ had a pejorative connotation, comprising the notion of paganism, the Byzantines hid their Greek identity behind the Roman label according to the Charanis and Vakalopoulos. This theory was backed up by Robert Browning in 1983, who also emphasized the strong Hellenic culture of the Empire.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, there is the notion of the dominance of the Greek language in Byzantium. As the Latin language had never been imposed in the east and was even seen as less civilized compared to the Greek language, Greek was still the main language in the Byzantine Empire.<sup>7</sup> The use of Greek as the language of education and culture marks the Empire as Greek according to Charanis. Nevertheless, Charanis does not see the Empire as a nation-state, since not all Byzantines were Greek-speaking and they could not be seen as an ethnically homogeneous group of people, although most did share a Greek culture.<sup>8</sup>

Where the first theory emphasizes the continuing elements in Byzantium, such as its Greek culture and language and its Roman imperial, administrative and legal traditions, the second theory depicts Byzantium as a medieval multi-ethnic empire, at least until the twelfth century, in which the average subject identified himself as Roman. The idea of Norman Baynes and others that Byzantium was just an imitation of the Roman Empire and copied its past without originality has been rejected by many scholars.<sup>9</sup> Alexander Kazhdan and Cyril Mango see a clear break between antiquity and Byzantium that took place in the seventh century and was closely tied to the collapse of the classical city.<sup>10</sup> They both stress the multi-ethnic nature of the empire and point out its main element: the Orthodox Christian religion. The Biblical tradition was especially important for Byzantine identity, something with which Paul Alexander agrees.<sup>11</sup> Greek culture was visible only in a Roman form and it does not seem to have had a special place before the Sack of Constantinople in 1204.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Browning, ‘The Continuity of Hellenism in the Byzantine World: Appearance or Reality?’, in: Tom Winnifrith and Penelope Murray (ed.), *Greece Old and New* (London, 1983), 111–128.

<sup>7</sup> J.N. Adams, ‘“Romanitas” and the Latin Language’, *The Classical Quarterly* 53:1 (2003), 184–205, here 204–205.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Charanis, ‘Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13 (1959), 23–44, here 25.

<sup>9</sup> N.H. Baynes, ‘The Thought-World of East Rome’, in: Norman Baynes (ed.), *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 25–46.

<sup>10</sup> A. Kazhdan and A. Cutler, ‘Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History’, *Byzantion* 52 (1982), 429–478; Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980); Cyril Mango, ‘Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium’, in: Margaret E. Mullett and Roger D. Scott (ed.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham, 1981), 48–57.

<sup>11</sup> Paul J. Alexander, ‘The Strength of Empire and Capital as Seen Through Byzantine Eyes’, *Speculum* 37:3 (1962), 339–357.

<sup>12</sup> Malatras, ‘The Making of an Ethnic Group: The Romaioi in the 12th–13th Centuries’, 425.



The third theory takes a surprising turn as it proposes very bold claims about the Byzantine Empire and its identity after an already very long debate among scholars. It does not only claim that Byzantium was a pre-modern nation-state, but it also states that the idea of Romanness was their national identity. This theory has been put forward by Anthony Kaldellis in the last decade.<sup>13</sup> He states that during the course of Late Antiquity the Romanization of the east did not destroy all local memories, religions and the Greek language, but it eventually made the people think of themselves as Romans. Their ethnic background is therefore irrelevant according to Kaldellis as the community of Byzantium was now defined by consensus, law, and custom. Furthermore, his claims of Byzantium as a nation-state are now recently supported by the theory of Azar Gat, who goes against the idea of nationalism as a creation of the modern era.<sup>14</sup> Gat states that a shared language and other bonding cultural elements could create a premodern notion of nationalism and could indicate the existence of a premodern nation-state.

Lastly, the fourth theory opposes all earlier theories and has been brought forward by Ioannis Stouraitis in 2014.<sup>15</sup> He proposes an ethno-cultural perspective in which ethnic groups are defined as cultural collectivities that are distinguished by certain attributes such as a collective name and a myth of common culture. According to Stouraitis others have failed to take into account the fact that the historiographical narratives mainly represent the views of the literate elite and not of the whole Byzantine population. This is something that his theoretical framework does pay attention to.

This thesis will provide a case study in the debate on Byzantine identity by analysing how the Byzantine emperor projected an image of himself to Byzantine society in ritual and ceremonial. To what extent did the Roman past shape these ceremonial practices? I will investigate this by examining the *Book of Ceremonies* and comparing the elaborate ceremonial practices in this tenth-century Byzantine work with the ceremonial practices in imperial Rome. The *Book of Ceremonies* provides us with detailed descriptions of imperial court ceremonies in and before the tenth century and was compiled by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos himself. The work can provide us with answers to questions central to Byzantine political culture, such as the legitimization of power and its implications for

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<sup>13</sup> Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Azar Gat and Alexander Yakobson, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2013), 382-383.

<sup>15</sup> Ioannis Stouraitis, 'Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107:1 (2014), 175-220.

Byzantine identity.<sup>16</sup> The ceremonies originated from the Roman Empire, but give us at the same time an idea of the circumstances in tenth-century Byzantium.<sup>17</sup> I will specifically examine the ceremonial practices during the chariot racing events in the Hippodrome as they brought together many different social groups in Constantinople and can therefore provide a good indication for the emperor's ideas about his relationship with the aristocracy and the people. Furthermore, the chariot racing events held in the Hippodrome evolved from the racing events that were held in the Circus Maximus in imperial Rome. Therefore the ceremonial in Constantinople can be compared to the ceremonial in Rome.

The Byzantine Empire's social, religious and cultural history were important aspects of its identity and these histories were made up of what Beate Dignas and Bert Smith call a dense web of 'memory layers'.<sup>18</sup> The collective memories of the Byzantines affected the collective identity of the Empire.<sup>19</sup> As the process of creating and forgetting memories is continuous, the annual performances of ceremonies are important for the implementation of certain memories in people's heads. Catherine Bell suggests that even despite the different interpretations of the ceremonial practices by all participants they still promote social solidarity and even uneducated citizens, which would have been the majority of Byzantium's population, tend to have adequate knowledge of concrete matters of ceremonial.<sup>20</sup> Thus the person or institution that shaped and controlled the collective memories also controlled the resulting identities.<sup>21</sup> The regular sequence of festivals each year created and supported by the Byzantine emperor was therefore significant in establishing certain themes in the minds of the elite and the populace regarding their identity.<sup>22</sup> Fritz Graf even thinks that the unity suggested by the festivals did also help the emperor to hold the empire together.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Holmes, 'Byzantine Political Culture and Compilation Literature in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Some Preliminary Inquiries', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 64 (2010), 55–80, here 55.

<sup>17</sup> Averil Cameron, 'The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies', in: David Cannadine and Simon Price (ed.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987), 106–136, here 109.

<sup>18</sup> Beate Dignas and R.R.R. Smith, 'Introduction', in: Beate Dignas and R.R.R. Smith (ed.), *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World* (Oxford, 2012), 1–11, here 1–2.

<sup>19</sup> Maggie L. Popkin, *The Architecture of the Roman Triumph: Monuments, Memory, and Identity* (Cambridge, 2016), 11–18.

<sup>20</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York, 1992), 182–185.

<sup>21</sup> Sinclair Bell, 'Role Models in the Roman World', in: Sinclair Bell and Inge Lyse Hansen (ed.), *Role Models in the Roman World: Identity and Assimilation* (Michigan, 2008), 1–40, here 21–23; Karl Galinsky, 'Introduction', in: Karl Galinsky (ed.), *Memoria Romana: Memory in Rome and Rome in Memory* (Ann Arbor, 2014), 1–14, here 1–9.

<sup>22</sup> T.P. Wiseman, 'Popular Memory', in: Karl Galinsky (ed.), *Memoria Romana: Memory in Rome and Rome in Memory* (Ann Arbor, 2014), 43–62, here 51–55; Zoe Antonia Woodrow, 'Imperial Ideology in Middle Byzantine Court Culture: The Evidence of Constantine Porphyrogenitus's *De Ceremoniis*' (, 2001), 208.

<sup>23</sup> Fritz Graf, *Roman Festivals in the Greek East: From the Early Empire to the Middle Byzantine Era* (Cambridge, 2015), 315–317.



In this study I will not go so far as to claim that the emperor determined the identity of the Byzantines. It is also debatable if we can say that the Byzantines were Romans because their emperor was the Roman emperor, as Evangelos Chrysos suggests you could claim.<sup>24</sup> According to Claudia Rapp it is a question of taking the word of the Byzantines at face value or if we claim for ourselves the role of objective observers in the quest for the identity of Byzantium.<sup>25</sup>

This study will demonstrate the Roman cultural heritage present in imperial court ceremonies in tenth-century Byzantium by comparing these ceremonies with the ceremonies practiced in imperial Rome. I will explain how the emperor projected an image of himself and his relationships with the populace and the elite in and through the ceremonies in the Hippodrome according to the *Book of Ceremonies*. This thesis will consist of five chapters. The first chapter will provide the reader with the context in which the *Book of Ceremonies*, the main source for this study, was written. It will provide information on tenth-century Byzantium and on the life of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (909-959), who compiled the book during his reign. The second chapter will concern the content and composition of the *Book of Ceremonies* and will also elaborate on how the work has been handed down to us and is used as an important source by scholars nowadays. The third chapter examines the ceremonial practices in the Circus Maximus and how the relationship of the emperor with the aristocracy and the populace was displayed during the racing events in imperial Rome. The fourth chapter will provide a careful analysis of the *Book of Ceremonies* and will also go deeper into the relationship of the emperor with the aristocracy and the populace as they were presented in the ceremonial practices in the Hippodrome in Constantinople. The fifth chapter will lastly compare the different aspects found in the ceremonial practices in Rome and in Constantinople regarding the representation of the social relations between the emperor and the elite and the emperor and the people. This essay will provide the reader with an idea of the emperor's projection of his power as expressed in the *Book of Ceremonies* and as part of the Roman heritage of the Byzantine Empire.

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<sup>24</sup> E.K. Chrysos, 'The Roman Political Identity in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium', in: K. Fledelius and P. Schreiner (ed.), *Byzantium: Identity, Image, Influence* (Copenhagen, 1996), 7–16, here 11.

<sup>25</sup> Rapp, 'Hellenic Identity, Romanitas, and Christianity in Byzantium', 133-134.



## Chapter One

### Constantine Porphyrogennetos and Tenth-Century Byzantium

The focus of this chapter will be on tenth-century Byzantium. This was the time and place in which Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos reigned and the time in which he compiled the *Book of Ceremonies*. A deeper insight will be given into Constantine's life and his reign and also into the political implications of Byzantium in the tenth century. Furthermore, a brief introduction will be given on the social relations in the Empire and the role of Constantinople and the imperial court in these relationships. This will provide a clear overview of the century in which the *Book of Ceremonies* was compiled.

Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos was part of the Macedonian dynasty (867-1056), one of the middle Byzantine dynasties. It is the dynasty known for the Macedonian renaissance, although there is a lot of discussion among modern day scholars whether or not we can speak of a renaissance. According to Zoe Woodrow and Warren Treadgold there was an increase in the interest in ancient sources around 800.<sup>26</sup> Others, such as Robin Cormack, John Hanson and Dino Milinovic, claim that this movement was only restricted to the elite and was not as influential as, say, the Renaissance in Italy a few centuries later.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, they claim that Byzantium was in itself a continuation of the Roman Empire and therefore there could not have been a complete rebirth or a complete renewal in interest in ancient sources. Nevertheless, it is known that Constantine Porphyrogennetos encouraged the interest in ancient sources during his reign.<sup>28</sup>

Constantine VII was a scholar and he provided for a few major works himself.<sup>29</sup> He wrote, among other things, the *Vita Basilii*, a biography about his grandfather Emperor Basil I, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty; *On the Administration of the Empire*, a work about how to run the Empire and handle foreign enemies; and the *Book of Ceremonies*, about all imperial court ceremonial in Byzantium.<sup>30</sup> Most of these works were instruction manuals for

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<sup>26</sup> Zoe Antonia Woodrow, 'Imperial Ideology in Middle Byzantine Court Culture: The Evidence of Constantine Porphyrogenitus's *De Ceremoniis*' (Unpublished Thesis, University of Durham, 2001), 6-7; Warren Treadgold, 'The Macedonian Renaissance', in: Warren Treadgold (ed.), *Renaissances Before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Stanford, 1984), 75-98, here 76.

<sup>27</sup> Robin Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 2000), 131; John Hanson, 'The Rise and Fall of the Macedonian Renaissance', in: Liz James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Oxford, 2010), 338-350, here 338-346; Dino Milinovic, 'How Byzantium Viewed Classical Heritage: A Case for the "Macedonian renaissance" in the Archaeological Museum in Pula', *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 16 (2010), 63-72, here 70.

<sup>28</sup> Cormack, *Byzantine Art*, 133.

<sup>29</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World* (London, 1973), 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 575-580.

his son Romanos II and for later successors.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, it must be noted that most of his works were arrangements of earlier writings to which he himself added almost no commentary or judgement.<sup>32</sup> It is unknown why Constantine compiled these works for his successors. It is possible that he perhaps saw it as his duty as a scholar to write such substantial compositions or that he tried to help his successors create stability in their reign as his own reign had known multiple difficulties.

You could say that Constantine VII's life was a series of tribulations.<sup>33</sup> He was born out of wedlock in 905 before Leo VI had married Zoe, Constantine's mother and Leo's fourth wife. With this marriage, Leo VI came into conflict with the patriarch, Nikolaos. To end this conflict, Leo removed the patriarch and reinstated another one. This, however, created a split in the Eastern Orthodox Church and in Byzantine society as many people sided with Nikolaos. When Leo died in 912 his brother, Alexander, succeeded him. Alexander reinstated Nikolaos, which made the marriage of Leo and Zoe illegal and thus Constantine illegitimate. Nevertheless, Constantine was still seen as a *porphyrogennetos*, born in the purple bedchamber, and before Leo VI's death he was crowned co-emperor in 908.<sup>34</sup> This was firmly embedded in the minds of the people and gave Constantine VII a strong base for becoming emperor after the death of Alexander.<sup>35</sup> In 913 Alexander died and because Constantine was still under-age, he became ruler under the regency of patriarch Nikolaos, with also an important role for his mother Zoe. This regency lasted until the admiral of the imperial fleet, Romanos Lekapenos, took control of the Imperial Palace and crowned himself emperor Romanos I in 920.<sup>36</sup> Constantine was not killed during this coup, but was married to Romanos' daughter Elene. For the next twenty-four years Constantine would be a subordinate to Romanos without giving any trouble. In 944 the two sons of Romanos overthrew their father to become emperors, but the people of Constantinople supported Constantine and with their support he was able to arrest them.<sup>37</sup> In 944 Constantine VII finally became sole ruler and he would reign the Empire until his death in 959.

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<sup>31</sup> Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 35-36.

<sup>32</sup> Treadgold, 'The Macedonian Renaissance', 92.

<sup>33</sup> Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 7-12.

<sup>34</sup> Ann Moffatt and Maxeme Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogennetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 1* (Canberra, 2012), xxiii; Romilly J.H. Jenkins, 'The Date of Constantine VII's Coronation', in: Romilly Jenkins (ed.), *Studies on Byzantine History of the 9th and 10th Centuries* (London, 1970), 133-138, here 138.

<sup>35</sup> Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanos Lekapenos & His Reign: A Study of 10th Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1929), 43.

<sup>36</sup> Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 9-11.

<sup>37</sup> Runciman, *The Emperor Romanos Lekapenos & His Reign: A Study of 10th Century Byzantium*, 229-237.

Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos reigned in a time in which the Byzantine Empire was prosperous.<sup>38</sup> He was aware that the Empire had become a much smaller part of the world than it had been in the time of his predecessors and he began to take a lively interest in foreign relations already under Emperor Romanos I.<sup>39</sup> In the tenth century most of the Byzantine Empire's foreign relations had been more or less unchanged for some time.<sup>40</sup> On the eastern frontier there was a very stable enemy, the Arabas.<sup>41</sup> There were multiple raids by both sides and although Asia Minor had the most prosperous provinces, the raids couldn't really harm the Empire. Italy likewise had similar problems with Arab raids from Sicily and the Aegean coast was also troubled by an Arab pirate base on Crete.<sup>42</sup> These were all minor problems, but the tenth century also knew some larger problems for the Byzantines. The Bulgarians under their king Symeon stood two times at the gates of Constantinople, but they were unable to take the city. This war would eventually end with the death of king Symeon and the marriage of the daughter of Romanos I to the new king Peter of Bulgaria.<sup>43</sup> This would strengthen the bond between Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire for the rest of the century. From the other side of the Black Sea the Russians also came to attack Constantinople twice, but they were defeated the first time by the Byzantine navy and army and the second time they were stopped by diplomacy.<sup>44</sup>

With the power and influence of the Byzantine Empire decreasing over the years, diplomacy became a major tool in the Empire's foreign policy.<sup>45</sup> Emperor Constantine VII was closely involved in the diplomatic relations of the Empire. He personally made some adjustments in the ceremonies and decorations that accompanied diplomatic visits.<sup>46</sup> The Byzantines, for example, did not want to conquer the Balkans and the Steppes and used mostly diplomacy to prevent raids in this territory.<sup>47</sup> They set up states against each other as a buffer for the Empire. Furthermore, as the Byzantine Empire was still very large in the tenth century, the Byzantines had to close treaties with, for example, the Arabs, so they could pay full attention to the Bulgarians without being attacked by another enemy. The elaborate ceremonial practices were necessary for the diplomatic relations and for an emperor's reign in

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<sup>38</sup> Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 26.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 346-349.

<sup>40</sup> Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus & His Reign: A Study of 10th Century Byzantium*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-150.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-101.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 109-116.

<sup>45</sup> Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 35-37.

<sup>46</sup> Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 502.

<sup>47</sup> Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus & His Reign: A Study of 10th Century Byzantium*. 117-119.

general according to Constantine's statement in the preface of the *Book of Ceremonies*. He declares:

'Perhaps this undertaking seemed superfluous to others who do not have as great a concern for what is necessary, but it is particularly dear to us and highly desirable and more relevant than anything else because 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.'<sup>48</sup>

Central in the ceremonies and in the Byzantine Empire as a whole stood Constantinople. It is estimated that the imperial capital contained one of the largest concentrations of people in the medieval world.<sup>49</sup> The city, moreover, also housed the Great Palace from where the emperors reigned over the Empire and Hagia Sophia, the most important church in Orthodox Christianity. Each of these institutions occupied their own space and their relations were reflected in topography and ceremonial.<sup>50</sup> The Great Palace served as the centre of the government and it was closely connected to the two main sources of legitimacy: the Hippodrome, where the emperor met the populace, and Hagia Sophia, where the emperor met the patriarch. Both acts were accompanied by elaborate ceremonial practices. The Great Palace was built by Septimius Severus (r. 193-211) in ancient *Byzantion* and later emperors would add to the complex until it covered a very extensive area in Constantinople.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately there are few remains left of the palace, so most of our information comes from literary sources.<sup>52</sup>

The Christian presence in Constantinople under Constantine I was initially not very extensive, but this changed rapidly over the years and in the tenth century the city was the largest Christian city of the medieval world.<sup>53</sup> The imperial cult that already existed in the Roman Empire was also present in the Byzantine Empire and had its own theology, ritual and iconography.<sup>54</sup> The imperial cult formed a close parallel with the divine cult of Christ.<sup>55</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 1*, trans. Ann Moffat and Maxeme Tall (Canberra, 2012), 3-4.

<sup>49</sup> Judith Herrin, 'Byzantium: The Palace and the City', in: Judith Herrin (ed.), *Margins and Metropolis: Authority across the Byzantine Empire* (Princeton, 2013), 159-178, here 160; Paul Magdalino, 'Byzantium = Constantinople', in: Liz James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium 2* (Oxford, 2010), 43-54, here 43-44.

<sup>50</sup> Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003), 95.

<sup>51</sup> Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (London, 2007), 28-31.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Maguire, 'Images of the Court', in: Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (ed.), *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261* (New York, 1997), 182-191, here 183.

<sup>53</sup> Magdalino, 'Byzantium = Constantinople', 52.

<sup>54</sup> Harry J. Magoulias, *Byzantine Christianity: Emperor, Church and the West* (Chicago, 1970), 1-2.



emperor was seen as standing close to God and ruling in His name. The earthly kingdom of the Byzantine emperor and its imperial court were a reflection of the heavenly Kingdom of God. The ceremonial had to present an image of *taxis*, the harmonious order essential for a proper functioning of the Empire.<sup>56</sup> The emperor stood at the centre of the court and order or disorder was reflected in his name. He almost acted as a quasi-priest or a quasi-bishop in the Christian ceremonial, but he was never ordained to the priesthood.<sup>57</sup> Only the clergy could perform in the sacraments of the church. Nevertheless, it is clear that the emperor had a spiritual role well above other lay-people.

The imperial court in Constantinople had expanded over the years and the emperor was surrounded by palace officials that perhaps numbered about two thousand people.<sup>58</sup> The court was its own social world with different gradations structured by the decisions of the emperor.<sup>59</sup> Through ceremony and the promotion of talented young Byzantines from all classes the court created a more devoted loyalty and even a sense of belonging.<sup>60</sup> The ceremony had all kinds of roles for the aristocrats and palace officials to play. These roles had different gradations that depended on the people's personal relationship with the emperor and because the various roles were accompanied by considerable prestige and a substantial salary and pension they were highly sought after by the elite.<sup>61</sup> Ceremony thus created prestige for the emperor and dependence on the emperor by the higher classes and was therefore a useful way for the emperor to control the aristocracy and to rule his empire.

Entrance to the Great Palace said a lot about one's status in Byzantine society. The aristocracy and the officials of the emperor were allowed inside, but the populace was normally not permitted to go inside the palace.<sup>62</sup> Contact between the emperor and the public always happened outside the palace. There were, however, a few exceptions when a representative of the population could penetrate the palace walls. They can be divided into four groups: leaders of the Blue and Green circus factions, members of trading corporations, members of the local guard, and groups of the poor. The last group was invited for imperial

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<sup>55</sup> Magoulias, *Byzantine Christianity: Emperor, Church and the West*, 6-8.

<sup>56</sup> Maguire, 'Images of the Court', 184-185.

<sup>57</sup> Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 102; Magoulias, *Byzantine Christianity: Emperor, Church and the West*, 9-10.

<sup>58</sup> Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 81-82.

<sup>59</sup> Alexander P. Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', in: Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington DC, 1997), 167-198, here 167.

<sup>60</sup> Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, 170-174.

<sup>61</sup> Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', 167-198.

<sup>62</sup> Herrin, 'Byzantium: The Palace and the City', 163-167.

philanthropy and they served as an expression of the emperor's ability to support his people.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, there were multiple opportunities for the rest of the populace to see the emperor outside the palace as it was not uncommon to see imperial processions in the streets of Constantinople.<sup>64</sup> Sometimes these were even accompanied by the scattering of money or the handouts of free wine, bread and clothing and were therefore very appealing for the inhabitants of the city. Still, it was the Hippodrome where the emperor mostly kept in touch with his people.<sup>65</sup>

The Hippodrome was the place where the people gathered to celebrate triumphs or to celebrate the anniversary of the city or of the emperor with chariot races. It was the place where it was possible for the people of Constantinople to interact with the Emperor.<sup>66</sup> There was also a physical relationship between the Hippodrome and the Great Palace with the two constructions built against each other.<sup>67</sup> The Hippodrome was thus an essential part of the palace architecture and its festivals were part of the imperial court ceremonial.<sup>68</sup> The Hippodrome was the place where the populace and its ruler spent most of their time together.<sup>69</sup> It was therefore the ideal place for the ideas expressed in the *Book of Ceremonies* to be spread to a wider audience. The ceremonial practices in the Hippodrome were witnessed by most of Constantinople's inhabitants at least once in their lifetime and therefore must have made a considerable impact on their way of thinking about the Byzantine emperor and the Byzantine Empire.

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<sup>63</sup> Rosemary Morris, 'The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium : Law and Reality', *Past & Present* 173, 1976, 3–27, here 21.

<sup>64</sup> Herrin, 'Byzantium: The Palace and the City', 170-172.

<sup>65</sup> Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 185-187.

<sup>66</sup> Woodrow, 'Imperial Ideology in Middle Byzantine Court Culture: The Evidence of Constantine Porphyrogenitus's *De Ceremoniis*', 209.

<sup>67</sup> Hazel Dodge, *Spectacle in the Roman World* (London, 2011), 77.

<sup>68</sup> John H. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses: Arenas for Chariot Races* (London, 1986), 579.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (London, 1990), 400-401.

## Chapter Two

### Context Book of Ceremonies

This chapter will elaborate on the context of the *Book of Ceremonies*. It will start with an introduction to the *Book of Ceremonies*: how the work has been handed down to us, how it is important for scholars nowadays, how it was presented by Constantine VII and how it was possibly used during and after his reign. Secondly, the composition of the work will be discussed. The chapter will expand on how and why it was compiled in the order in which it was formed and provide some background information on the chapters analysed in this essay.

There is little doubt that the *Book of Ceremonies* was compiled at Constantine VII's initiative.<sup>70</sup> The preface of the work looks as if it was written by Constantine himself or at least recited by him, but it is uncertain how much he was involved in the rest of the process of compiling this composition. The book is a composite work that contains not only material from different periods, but it also contains revisions made to that material over time.<sup>71</sup> It was composed during the reign of Constantine VII, though there are some parts added later under Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969) reign. Internal references suggest that Constantine was still concerned with the project at the end of his reign, as some ceremonies refer to events that happened a few years before his death.

The only clearly legible manuscript that has survived is a tenth-century manuscript now in the University Library of Leipzig, *Lipsiensis Univ., Rep. I, 17*. This manuscript was copied by one hand during the reign of Nikephoros II, so after Constantine's death. All current editions are based on this manuscript. A second manuscript, also from the tenth century, was scraped clean in the eleventh century and has been written over with a new text.<sup>72</sup> This manuscript survives in two barely readable parts, with one half in Istanbul and one half in the Vatopedi Monastery in Greece. The title given to the work in the Leipzig manuscript is *A Compilation and Work Truly Worthy of Imperial Zeal*, but it is now referred to as the *Book of Ceremonies*, a name given to it by its first editor in the eighteenth century, J.H. Leich.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 1*, xxiii.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.

<sup>72</sup> Paul Stephenson, 'Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae', *Translated Excerpts from Byzantine Sources: The Imperial Centuries, c. 700-1204*, 2012  
<<http://www.paulstephenson.info/trans/decet.html>> [consulted on 29-05-2017].

<sup>73</sup> Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 1*, xxiv.

For scholars nowadays the *Book of Ceremonies* is a very important source for imperial protocol as it contains a compilation of detailed receptions, court rituals and activities outside and inside the Great Palace in Constantinople and was compiled by a Byzantine emperor, who presumably took also part in the described ceremonies.<sup>74</sup> The work has two main parts, referred to as ‘books’.<sup>75</sup> The books largely contain transcripts of older documents slightly adjusted by Constantine VII or with notes added to them.<sup>76</sup> According to the prefaces of both books the first book should contain surviving written records and the second book should contain ceremonies that have survived orally. This, however, seems not to be the case, as most chapters appear to be based on written records.<sup>77</sup> Constantine’s aim was to make an elaborate and clear work containing all earlier documents about ceremonies precisely sorted out.<sup>78</sup> However, the work still remains very chaotic with all kinds of descriptions of ceremonies from different periods standing next to each other, without eliminating all anachronisms. There is, for example, a reference to the visit of a Persian ambassador, though the Persian Empire did not exist anymore since the seventh century.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, some material is not even about ceremonial at all, although this would not be so peculiar if we use the title of the tenth-century manuscript in Leipzig: *A Compilation and Work Truly Worthy of Imperial Zeal*.<sup>80</sup>

Constantine’s introduction suggests that imperial protocol had fallen in a state of decay and he wanted to set this right.<sup>81</sup> It is uncertain if this claim is true. Most of these ceremonies had been performed regularly since at least the fifth century, as Constantine got his information from multiple sources between the fifth and tenth centuries. It could therefore be a writing tool to state a need for this work to be compiled and thus making it very important for the empire. It could also have been the case that in the years Constantine grew up, emperors such as Alexander and Romanos I used less ceremonial practices. This is, however, uncertain. Constantine also declares that a proper observance of court rituals would enhance imperial power over its subjects and would impress foreigners.<sup>82</sup> This could again be a statement for enhancing the prestige of the work by claiming its usefulness and its need.

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<sup>74</sup> Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, 177.

<sup>75</sup> Cameron, ‘The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies’, 109-110.

<sup>76</sup> J.B. Bury, ‘The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogenetos’, *The English Historical Review* 22:86 (1907), 209–227, here 210.

<sup>77</sup> Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 599.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 602-605.

<sup>79</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 398-408.

<sup>80</sup> Cameron, ‘The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies’, 110.

<sup>81</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 3-4.

<sup>82</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 3-4.

The *Book of Ceremonies* is presented as a guide for future emperors and is not a straightforward record of actual ceremonies performed at any one time. It is unclear how many of these ceremonies were actually regularly performed or were completely performed as described, because if all were performed in total they would have taken up almost all of the emperor's time. Nevertheless, the imperial protocol documented by Constantine Porphyrogennetos would continue to be used as a guide for centuries and, after 1204, during the Latin occupation of Constantinople, all the main centres that claimed to represent Byzantium adopted the ceremonies at their own courts.<sup>83</sup>

### Composition

The *Book of Ceremonies* consists of two books. Book one contains 97 chapters, according to the chapter count of the translation made by Ann Moffatt and Maxeme Tall in 2012, although a portion of the manuscript has been lost, so there were probably more.<sup>84</sup> The preface of the first book was probably written before book two was completed, because there is no reference to the second book. Chapters 1-83 are arranged by type of ceremony, first the religious ceremonies and then the secular ones. Chapters 84-95 apply to actual situations that happened in the past. They are therefore a sort of appendix for antiquarian interest. According to Bury it is almost certain that they were compiled by Peter the Patrician, a *magister officiorum*.<sup>85</sup> Chapters 96 and 97 are later adjustments to the book and are added under Nikephoros II Phokas.

Book two shows little attempt at structuring compared to book one. It was made after the completion of book one and it begins with almost the same scheme as book one.<sup>86</sup> The second book has 56 chapters.<sup>87</sup> Chapters 1-26 are parallel with chapters 1-83 of book one. Chapters 27-39 are antiquarian and can therefore be seen as similar to chapters 84-95 of book one. The remaining chapters could be documents that had not been included in the original book two compiled by Constantine VII and were probably added after his death. Most of these chapters have something to do with the theme of the book, but it really is a miscellany of various documents from different times and on different subjects, such as a chapter on a Cretan expedition under Emperor Leo VI and a chapter about imperial tombs.

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<sup>83</sup> Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, 183.

<sup>84</sup> Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogennetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 1*, ix-xvi; Bury, 'The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogennetos', 211-214.

<sup>85</sup> Bury, 'The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogennetos', 213.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-217.

<sup>87</sup> Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogennetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 1*, xvii-xxii.

For this thesis only the first book will be used as a source, as this is the book that contains most of the major ceremonies for the festivals in the Hippodrome. The first book can be divided into two parts. Part A, chapters 1-37, consist of church ceremonies and processions; part B, chapters 38-83, consist of secular ceremonies.<sup>88</sup> These ceremonies, however, also have strong religious connotations, which reflect the Christian society of Byzantium. The second part of the book that deals with secular ceremonies contains documents of different dates.<sup>89</sup> First there are ceremonies connected with members of the imperial house (cc. 38-42), then investitures of officials (cc. 43-59), the imperial burial ceremony (c. 60), the imperial birthday ceremony (c. 61), receptions (cc. 62-66), Hippodrome ceremonies (cc. 68-73), and lastly various ceremonies (cc. 74-83), such as acclamations on different occasions and cheers recited by the army. Not all anachronisms have been eliminated in the different documents used and although some ceremonies were as old as Late Antiquity, this did not mean that they were not practiced anymore in the tenth century.<sup>90</sup>

Most of the information on the festivals in the Hippodrome comes from chapters 68-73 of the *Book of Ceremonies*. These chapters are part of a composition on ceremonies in the Hippodrome. Chapter 64 could also be included in this composition, as this chapter talks about the reception prior to the Gold Hippodrome Festival, but this chapter has been placed alongside other chapters on receptions in the *Book of Ceremonies*. The analysis in this essay will mostly discuss chapter 68 on the Gold Hippodrome Festival as the protocol during this ceremony was a model that was followed, with some slight variation, at each of the events held in the Hippodrome. This particular chapter is divided into a morning and an afternoon ritual. The analysis will be expanded with more elaborate clarifications from chapter 69, which goes deeper in on different aspects of the ceremonial during and prior to the chariot-racing. These chapters combined provide a clear insight into the rituals practiced during festivals in the Hippodrome as described by the *Book of Ceremonies*.

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<sup>88</sup> J.B. Bury, 'The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogennetos (Continued)', *The English Historical Review* 22:87 (1907), 417–439, here 418.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 433-435.



## Chapter Three

### Imperial Ceremony in the Circus Maximus

In the Greek and Roman worlds chariot racing was one of the most popular sports.<sup>91</sup> Judging from sixth-century BC tomb frescoes and vase paintings, chariot racing was already very popular in Etruria. The Circus Maximus in Rome was the largest spectacle building in ancient history with a capacity of 260.000 people according to Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD).<sup>92</sup> Modern day scholars, however, have calculated that a capacity of around 150.000 people is more likely.<sup>93</sup> This was, nevertheless, still three times as big as the capacity of the Colosseum and with one million inhabitants living in imperial Rome at least one-sixth of the population would have attended the spectacles in the Circus simultaneously.<sup>94</sup> From its origin and through much of its history the Circus Maximus only had wooden seating, which possibly did not even encircle the entire perimeter in the valley between the Palatine and the Aventine Hills.<sup>95</sup> The first permanent structure was built by Julius Caesar, who undertook this project in 46 BC. He is the one who canonized the outline of the Circus for its remaining life. Multiple emperors sponsored improvements to the Circus, though the structure as we know it was mostly the work of Emperor Trajan (r. 98-117 AD).<sup>96</sup> Within five years Trajan erected the Circus Maximus for the first time entirely in stone.

The Circus Maximus was a depiction of Rome's highly political and socially divided society.<sup>97</sup> All ranks and classes were represented, from the freemen and slaves all the way to the emperor.<sup>98</sup> Everyone could see each other. Where you sat and what you wore was therefore a major advertiser for your status in society.<sup>99</sup> The senators and equites had seats on the lowest rows and the 'plebs' were seated above them on cheaper or even free seats made available by the emperor or a wealthy senator. Different from the Colosseum was the fact that men and women could sit together in the Circus Maximus. In the middle of the stand was the

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<sup>91</sup> Dodge, *Spectacle in the Roman World*, 16.

<sup>92</sup> Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, trans. John Bostock and H.T. Riley, Perseus (London, 1855), XXXVI.24.

<sup>93</sup> Fik Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel* (Amsterdam, 2004), 58-59.

<sup>94</sup> Eckart Köhne, 'Bread and Circuses: The Politics of Entertainment', in: Ralph Jackson (ed.), *The Power of Spectacle in Ancient Rome: Gladiators and Caesars* (Los Angeles, 2000), 8-30, here 8-9.

<sup>95</sup> Maggie L. Popkin, *The Architecture of the Roman Triumph: Monuments, Memory, and Identity* (Cambridge, 2016), 108-112.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Peter Rose, 'Spectators and Spectator Comfort in Roman Entertainment Buildings: A Study in Functional Design', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 73 (2005), 99-130, here 100-102.

<sup>98</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 133.

<sup>99</sup> Kathleen M. Coleman, 'Public Entertainments', in: Michael Peachin (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* (Oxford, 2011), 335-357, here 335-337.

*pulvinar*, which was the emperor's loge. It was expected from emperors that they would show themselves in the Circus to the Roman populace and some emperors such as Trajan even seated themselves amongst the crowd, which was highly appreciated by the populace.<sup>100</sup>

Annually there were 177 days of *ludi* held in Rome in the fourth century.<sup>101</sup> These were public games for the benefit and entertainment of the Roman populace and were part of religious festivals. On 66 of these days there were races held in the Circus Maximus, though this number could increase with new celebrations for imperial *adventus*, victories or accessions. In the imperial period there were normally twenty-four races a day held in the Circus during one of the festivals in Rome.<sup>102</sup> This made the organizational expenses involved enormous, but as state festivals, they were mostly covered by the treasury. It was, however, also possible for the emperor or for senators to organise the spectacles in the Circus and pay for the costs themselves. The essential core of the festivals was observed empire-wide and could be modified to suit every occasion and place.<sup>103</sup>

The horses and charioteers for the races were entered by the four factions or stables. The oldest were the Whites and the Reds, but when the Blues and Greens were added in the early days of the Roman Empire they would become the dominators of the scene.<sup>104</sup> In the first century Emperor Domitian (r. 81-96 AD) introduced a purple and a gold faction, but they did not last long. The four factions dominated the races in the west of the empire and would only become the norm in the east from the fourth century on.<sup>105</sup> The circus factions were very profitable economic enterprises with extensive accommodations and training facilities in the city and the countryside. The loyalty of the public in general went to one of the four factions rather than to individual charioteers and the people also placed bets on a faction instead of on specific charioteers.<sup>106</sup>

In the third century the economy of the Empire was at a very low point and this led to fewer and also less spectacular games in Rome as the state could not afford the events anymore.<sup>107</sup> From 284 on there was a renewed increase in the popularity of chariot-racing in the Empire, when Emperor Diocletian (r. 284-305) separated the Empire into four parts with

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<sup>100</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 61.

<sup>101</sup> John Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000), 230-232.

<sup>102</sup> Marcus Junkelmann, 'On the Starting Line with Ben Hur: Chariot-Racing in the Circus Maximus', in: Ralph Jackson (ed.), *The Power of Spectacle in Ancient Rome: Gladiators and Caesars* (Los Angeles, 2000), 86-102, here 98.

<sup>103</sup> Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century*, 223.

<sup>104</sup> Roland Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games* (London, 1972), 135.

<sup>105</sup> Junkelmann, 'On the Starting Line with Ben Hur: Chariot-Racing in the Circus Maximus', 86-87.

<sup>106</sup> Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games*, 137.

<sup>107</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 174-176.

four new capitals that each received their own racetrack. The attraction of the Circus Maximus was not impeded by the rise of Christianity as also fourth-century emperors put considerable funds into the spectacles held in the Circus.<sup>108</sup> From 500 on the chariot-races in Constantinople became immensely popular, but the spectacle began to disappear in Rome.<sup>109</sup> The decline in Rome's population, political disintegration and economic depression had its toll on the Circus Maximus and eventually the long tradition of chariot races held in the city came to an end with the last known race held in 549 by Totila, King of the Ostrogoths.<sup>110</sup>

### **The Aristocracy and the Circus Maximus**

The Circus Maximus was an important place for the Roman aristocracy as the games had been a way for them to provide major spectacles for the populace to increase their popularity in Republican times. This giving by an individual to the community was called 'euergetism'.<sup>111</sup> The extent of euergetism was so great that most of the public buildings in Roman cities were constructed with resources of local notables and likewise all entertainment was provided by members of the higher classes. Euergetism was an important part of Roman society and existed already early on in the Republic.<sup>112</sup> Every class of the population benefited from the gifts of the rich and it was also expected by the community from the rich to contribute to the public expenses. The act of euergetism was therefore bound up with the state and with its rule. During the Imperial age the emperors centralized euergetism under their control and it became an intrinsic part of their relationship with the Roman elite and the populace.<sup>113</sup> The Romans came to expect these liberalities from their emperor and ancient historians began to pay more attention to the liberalities of an emperor in accounts of each emperor's reign.<sup>114</sup>

In the process of centralising the acts of euergetism the emperor made it almost impossible for the aristocracy to contribute to the games.<sup>115</sup> As the emperor tried to prevent individuals gaining popularity under his reign, the aristocrats were consequently obliged to organise routine entertainments, to perform anonymous repair jobs for already erected public buildings or to maintain the roads and aqueducts. Nevertheless, the elite still continued to play

<sup>108</sup> Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century*, 233-234.

<sup>109</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 202.

<sup>110</sup> Procopius, *History of the Wars, Volume V: Books 7.36-8*, trans. H.B. Dewing, Loeb Classical Library 217 (Cambridge, 1928), 12-13.

<sup>111</sup> Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 1.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-10.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, xx.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>115</sup> Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 389-390.

a significant role in the enforcement of the imperial regime.<sup>116</sup> They could donate money to the state, thereby supporting the emperor in his rule of the Roman Empire, and the aristocracy, in particular the Senate, also functioned as important advisors to the emperor.<sup>117</sup> The role of the Senate nevertheless became less important over time due to a lack of members in the senatorial elite, the political and economic problems of the Empire that also affected the senators and the role of the emperor who took over many functions of the Senate himself that were once part of the Senate's job.

In theory every emperor's position rested upon investiture by the Senate.<sup>118</sup> This function gave the Senate most of its prestige. In practice, however, this was usually a formality. Almost all emperors were designated by their predecessors or backed by military force, which most of the time gave the Senate no choice in the investiture of a new emperor. Nevertheless, the Senate still claimed the right to declare emperors as public enemies or to wipe out their memory in Rome and to rescind their acts whenever necessary.<sup>119</sup> This made for an ambivalent relationship between the emperor and the aristocracy. In law the Senate stood above the emperor in the hierarchy, but over time the emperor would require more and more functions in the government at the expense of the Senate.<sup>120</sup> This probably had a considerable impact on the relationship of the emperor with the aristocracy as one side gained power at the expense of the other.

The presence of thousands of spectators made the circus a perfect venue for the advertisement of the strength of the empire, the achievements of its ruler and the social hierarchy in society.<sup>121</sup> How the emperor and aristocracy demonstrated their relationship was a very important aspect of Circus ceremonial. The emperors knew this and made use of it by associating their names, achievements and fortunes with the festivals and also by depicting the Circus Maximus frequently on coins. At the end of the first century AD Domitian built a new residence on the Palatine, which had a central position in the role of his imperial status and the relationship with the population. The imperial palace had a façade facing the Circus, which gave the imperial living quarters a direct view over the Circus Maximus. This façade symbolised a constant presence of the emperor in the Circus, even when he was not physically there. It also expressed a sort of closeness to the Roman population, who could almost look

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<sup>116</sup> Ewald and Noreña, 'Introduction', 8.

<sup>117</sup> Richard Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton, 1984), 488-491.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 372-407.

<sup>121</sup> Kathleen Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', in: Jon Coulston and Hazel Dodge (ed.), *Ancient Rome: The Archaeology of the Eternal City* (Oxford, 2000), 210-258, here 215.

into his living room. The success of this architectural coupling was used in the residences built for the Tetrarchs at the end of the third century, who linked their imperial palace to the circus. Thus the role of the aristocracy was taken out of the Circus for an even more prominent image of the emperor's power and influence.

The aristocracy tried to minimise the hierarchical difference between themselves and the emperor in front of the populace in the Circus Maximus. At the Circus the ruling classes sought respect from the emperor, to set them above the rest of society. The emperor, nevertheless, also needed to acknowledge the populace and this created a competition between the aristocracy and the 'plebs' for recognition from the emperor.<sup>122</sup> As the Senate could not do much about the changing hierarchy they allowed the emperor to grant entertainments in the Circus Maximus and the Colosseum in his name to boost his popularity by the populace. They even accepted the acclamations performed by the audiences for the emperor, although they did not tolerate an emperor, such as Commodus, who demanded to be acclaimed by the Senate itself.<sup>123</sup> The Senate of Rome still demanded respect in the form of recognition, gifts and jobs from the emperor that was appropriate to their political power and material wealth. This was met with varying success, but it became more difficult as the influence and wealth of the aristocracy decreased over time. Nevertheless, there would always be a sort of recognition of the emperor for allowing the aristocracy for keeping their better places in the Circus Maximus in front of the lower classes.<sup>124</sup>

Overall, the relationship of the emperor with the aristocracy as expressed in the Circus ceremonies was one of ambivalence. On the one hand the emperor became more powerful by taking over functions of the Senate and other members of the aristocracy. He was also able to grant specific functions to members of the aristocracy, so they could grow in rank.<sup>125</sup> This made his influence on the aristocracy very significant. On the other hand the Roman nobility remained wealthy and powerful citizens through most of the imperial age and the emperor therefore still needed to show respect to them in the Circus Maximus. Furthermore, even the emperor could not do everything on his own and he thus needed the highest classes of society to support his reign. In the Circus Maximus the aristocracy therefore allowed the emperor his acclamations by the populace if he would show the elite the recognition they deserved in the

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<sup>122</sup> Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 406-407.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Rose, 'Spectators and Spectator Comfort in Roman Entertainment Buildings: A Study in Functional Design', 102.

<sup>125</sup> Richard Duncan-Jones, *Power and Privilege in Roman Society* (Cambridge, 2016), 6.

form of gifts, a special place in the Circus and the right to not join in the acclamations for the emperor.

### **The Populace and the Circus Maximus**

The idea of one group needing the other can also be seen in the relationship of the populace with the Roman emperor. The ultimate power of the emperor, who could grant or withhold the public their entertainment, created a tension between the emperor and the populace. The balanced relationship between the ruler and the ruled contained a clear hierarchy and that leads to the idea of Eric Hobsbawm.<sup>126</sup> He states that the ruler provided food and entertainment for the public and when he did, the people would support him. However, when the ruler failed or declined to provide, the people would riot until the ruler would provide again. This was a balance that was felt during the ceremonial happenings in the Circus Maximus and both sides knew how far they could go in their relationship. In 190 AD, for example, the populace managed to convince Emperor Commodus (r. 180-192 AD) to kill the praetorian prefect Cleander, who was blamed for the corn shortage in Rome.<sup>127</sup>

Nonetheless, the emperor was not obliged to provide these services and to join in the act of euergetism.<sup>128</sup> He was the sovereign ruler and therefore he did not need to reign for the people and to provide them with entertainment. It is, however, likely that the emperor sought some sort of validation from the populace. Not to mention it would also have cost an emperor considerable funds to reign as a tyrant with no protests allowed, because he would have had to enforce this type of reign militarily. Furthermore, even though the festivals at the Circus Maximus could end in demonstrations by the people, this also gave the emperor a good opportunity to show his qualities as leader of the Empire by providing a solution for the problems the people were protesting against, such as the aforementioned example of Commodus demonstrates.<sup>129</sup> Thus it clearly had advantages for the emperor to finance public entertainments and continue with the tradition of euergetism.

Multiple scholars have also put forward other possible ideas why the emperor joined in the act of euergetism. According to Paul Veyne it was a form of respecting Republican tradition.<sup>130</sup> The act of euergetism showed the personal generosity of the emperor and at the

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<sup>126</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester, 1973), 115.

<sup>127</sup> Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976), 185-186.

<sup>128</sup> Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 380.

<sup>129</sup> Jerry Toner, 'Trends in the Study of Roman Spectacle and Sport', in: Paul Christesen and Donald G. Kyle (ed.), *A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Oxford, 2014), 451-462, here 458.

<sup>130</sup> Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 402.



same time also induced a particular obeisance in the urban population to the imperial regime. This obeisance could then be used to weaken the grip of the aristocracy states Zvi Yavetz.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, the spectacles in the Circus Maximus were seen by the populace as an ideal way to escape the frustrations of daily life.<sup>132</sup> Cornelia Ewigleben thinks therefore that they were used by the emperor as an outlet for aggressive feelings, much as football and other sports are seen and used today. When placing these liberalities by the emperor in a wider context, Miriam Griffin suggests that the public entertainments were also meant to serve as a model for the social relations in the empire as a whole.<sup>133</sup> People visiting the imperial capital could witness the advantages of civic benefaction and public display of social hierarchy as instruments of social control and apply them in their own provincial cities. These possible explanations seem to have been enough reason for the emperor to provide the populace with entertainment.

For the Roman populace the Circus Maximus was a special place. They really made a day out of their visit by eating on the stands, making fun together and witnessing multiple races and other entertainment on the very few days for some people that they could afford to go to a festival.<sup>134</sup> Everything helped to make the circus a privileged place: the absence of individual seats that caused a forced promiscuity, the anticipation and enjoyment of the spectacle and the special excitement engendered by the presence of women, which was a reason for Ovid to urge his readers to exploit this opportunity to pick up female spectators.<sup>135</sup> Race fans would even argue that the state itself would fall unless their favoured team exited first from the starting gate according to Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>136</sup> He wrote in *The History*: ‘their temple, their dwelling, their assembly and the height of all their hopes is the Circus Maximus.’ It is therefore imaginable what the populace would do if the races were cancelled by the emperor. This made it almost necessary for an emperor to organise these games.

<sup>131</sup> Z. Yavetz, *Plebs and Princes* (Oxford, 1969), 132; Z. Yavetz, ‘The Urban Plebs in the Days of the Flavians, Nerva and Trajan’, in: Adalberto Giovannini (ed.), *Opposition et Résistance à l’Empire d’Auguste à Trajan* (Geneva, 1987), 135–186, here 165–174.

<sup>132</sup> Cornelia Ewigleben, ‘“What these Women Love is the Sword”: The Performers and their Audiences’, in: Ralph Jackson, Eckart Köhne, and Cornelia Ewigleben (ed.), *The Power of Spectacle in Ancient Rome: Gladiators and Caesars* (Los Angeles, 2000), 125–139, here 135.

<sup>133</sup> M. Griffin, ‘Urbs Roma, Plebs and Princes’, in: L. Alexander (ed.), *Images of Empire* (Sheffield, 1991), 19–46.

<sup>134</sup> Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games*, 134.

<sup>135</sup> Ovid, *The Art of Love I.V*, trans. A.S. Kline <[http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/ArtofLoveBkI.htm#anchor\\_Toc521049261](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/ArtofLoveBkI.htm#anchor_Toc521049261)> [consulted on 11-06-2017].

<sup>136</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, *The History XXVIII.4.29*, trans. J.C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 331 (Cambridge, 1939), 157.

Even though the emperor organised these public entertainments for the populace, he was still at risk. The Circus Maximus was not just a stadium for the Roman populace. It was also a place where the people could present their discontent to the emperor in person.<sup>137</sup> From Emperor Augustus (r. 27 BC – 14 AD) on it became common for the populace to make requests of the emperor at the Circus and he had to answer them in front of 150.000 people.<sup>138</sup> It seems that Emperor Tiberius (r. 14-47 AD) just simply stopped attending the games to avoid these requests, although this naturally made him unpopular with the Roman people. To avoid unpopularity most emperors regularly attended the races held in the Circus.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, the emperor was also expected to offer an explanation when he refused a request, even in the most trifling cases. This possibly made it a stressful undertaking for the emperor, while it was very important for the public that they could have the chance to put out these requests to the emperor. In this way you could say that the populace had the upper hand for a short time in their relationship with the emperor and the emperor was maybe even in a vulnerable position by attending the festivals in the Circus Maximus.<sup>140</sup>

It was, however, also important and very useful for the emperor to visit these public events.<sup>141</sup> According to Alan Cameron there were three main reasons for an emperor to visit the Circus Maximus. Firstly, our sources only record scenes where an emperor was booed in the Circus, because these were irregular events. The silence with which Caesar was greeted by the audience was an exceptional moment and is therefore mentioned in a letter by Cicero in July 59 BC.<sup>142</sup> The normal reaction for the crowd was to applaud when the emperor or popular heroes entered the stadium, which is evident from multiple sources such as Propertius, Lucan and Suetonius.<sup>143</sup> Secondly, the Circus was an ideal place for the populace to express their discontent, but also to forget the reality of everyday life. Thus the games functioned as a sort of safety valve against bigger uprisings. Thirdly, the most important virtue of an emperor was *civilitas*. The games in the Circus Maximus were an ideal place for the emperor to appear as the first citizen among his fellows and to win the populace for his

<sup>137</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 136.

<sup>138</sup> Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, 162-168.

<sup>139</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 163.

<sup>140</sup> Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, 170.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-178.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>143</sup> Propertius, *The Elegies* iii.18.17-18, trans. A.S. Kline <

<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/PropertiusBkThree.htm>> [consulted on 11-06-2017]; Lucan, *The Civil War* vii.18, trans. A.S. Kline <

[http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/PharsaliaVIImaster.htm#anchor\\_Toc391304506](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/PharsaliaVIImaster.htm#anchor_Toc391304506)> [consulted on 11-06-2017]; Suetonius, *The Life of Augustus* 56.2, trans. J.C. Rolfe, intr. K.R. Bradley, Loeb Classical Library 31 (Cambridge, 1913), 211.

cause. The notion of *civilitas* would, however, change over time.<sup>144</sup> Augustus used to watch the games from the *pulvinar*, which was situated between the crowds in the middle of the Circus Maximus. Emperor Theodosius (r. 379-395 AD), however, situated himself in Constantinople above the people. This was a trend already clearly seen during the time of the tetrarchs, who did not seek to display their *civilitas*, but only to glorify their imperial power.<sup>145</sup>

To summarize, the relationship of the emperor with the populace in Rome was a sort of relationship of checks and balances. The emperor had the ultimate power and could grant or deny the populace their entertainment, but the populace was not powerless. They could revolt and demand their entertainment or food or other things. Specifically the Circus Maximus was the place where this all came together and the relationship of the emperor with the populace became most clear. In the Circus the Roman people could request certain policies or gifts from the emperor and in return they would support him. Thus in a way the populace was submissive to the emperor. At the same time the emperor could learn what went right or what went wrong in Rome by listening to the crowd. Furthermore, he could gain the people's support by granting their wishes and answering their requests and he could display his power in front of a massive audience. Therefore you can speak of a relationship where the emperor was still the sovereign ruler, but this was balanced with the power of the populace. The emperor stood above the people and they accepted this, but the people also wanted something in return, just as the aristocracy also requested respect in return.

It is also interesting to see that the emperor sought *civilitas*. This shows that emperors generally upheld the value of closeness to people rather than merely maintaining distance. The emperor still wanted to be first, but first among his people, the Roman populace. The emperor sometimes even acted like an ordinary citizen in that he liked chariot racing and supported a certain faction.<sup>146</sup> Some emperors, such as Gaius and Nero, even helped their faction financially to win races, which could enrage the other factions.<sup>147</sup> This shows the way the emperors were involved in the races and how close they stood to the populace. The emperor was the sole leader of the Roman Empire, but at the same time stood not alone.

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<sup>144</sup> Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, 176-178.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>146</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 163.

<sup>147</sup> Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, 179.



## Chapter Four

### Analysis of the Book of Ceremonies

This chapter provides an analysis of the ceremonial practices as indicated in the *Book of Ceremonies* that were part of the Hippodrome festivals in Constantinople. It will elaborate on the relationships between the emperor and the aristocracy and the emperor and the populace expressed in these ceremonies as they will provide an image of the emperor's idea on Byzantine society.

The period in which festivals were held in the Hippodrome started with the Gold Hippodrome Festival on the second Monday after Easter and ended with the Lupercalia on the fifteenth of February.<sup>148</sup> The Gold Hippodrome Festival is the first ceremony described in the *Book of Ceremonies* that takes place in the Hippodrome and its protocol was followed in all other festivals. The three most important actors involved in the Hippodrome festivals were the emperor, the populace represented by the Blue and Green factions, and the higher classes represented by the patricians, the *strategoï* and the members of the Senate. Every one of these groups played a different part, but it is important to notice that the parts they played always revolved around the emperor, who stood at the central point of attention. Even when the emperor was not physically present, the imperial insignia were placed on his seat and all the festivals would still begin with an act of homage to the emperor.<sup>149</sup>

Before every festival in the Hippodrome the factions had to ask for permission from the emperor for the festival to be held. According to the *Book of Ceremonies* the emperor received a program from the factions early in the morning and if he was willing to allow the populace the entertainment of chariot racing the emperor would grant a permit.<sup>150</sup> This gives us an indication of the emperor's relationship with both the aristocracy and the populace. The emperor is shown as someone who reigned with absolute right and was the master of his subjects. It was only from virtue, from the idea of euergetism, that he granted his subjects these festivals in the Hippodrome.<sup>151</sup> The granting of the permit was therefore a first indication in the ceremony prior to the festivals to the emperor's role as supreme patron of his people.<sup>152</sup> Giving generous gifts, hearing his people's complaints and showing interest or even

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<sup>148</sup> Woodrow, 'Imperial Ideology in Middle Byzantine Court Culture: The Evidence of Constantine Porphyrogenitus's *De Ceremoniis*', 197-199.

<sup>149</sup> Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 400-401.

<sup>150</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 304.

<sup>151</sup> Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 294.

<sup>152</sup> Toner, 'Trends in the Study of Roman Spectacle and Sport', 454.

getting actively involved in the events, are indications of the sovereign's role as emperor and his relationship with his subjects. Furthermore, the Byzantine state also paid the factions to organise the races for the public, so from the very start in the organisation of a festival in the Hippodrome, the influence of the emperor as leader and contributor was felt. He was from the outset dominant in leading the whole ceremonial aspect of the festival.<sup>153</sup>

### **The Emperor and the Aristocracy**

Prior to the festival in the Hippodrome there was an elaborate ceremony that took place in the Great Palace. In this ceremony the higher classes of Byzantine society played their part. The aristocracy consisted of the patricians, who were aristocrats granted with this honorific title. Their role did not have any specific administrative functions, but patricians stood above the praetorian prefect (the commander of the emperor's bodyguard) in the hierarchy.<sup>154</sup> *Strategoi* were the administrative and military governors of the themes in the Byzantine Empire.<sup>155</sup> The members of the Senate only had a ceremonial and advisory function in Constantinople, but were nevertheless considered the highest members of society.<sup>156</sup> Also the *magistros*, or if there was no *magistros* then the *quaestor*, and the eparch and ex-eparch of Constantinople were present in the Great Palace and played their part in the ceremony prior to the festival. The *magistros* was a high ranking dignitary, but was not the master of offices as the *magister officiorum* had been in Rome, and the *quaestor* was a judicial power in Constantinople, although the function had lost the prestige it had had in earlier times in Rome.<sup>157</sup> The eparch was the governor of Constantinople and the supreme judge of the capital, second only to the emperor.<sup>158</sup> He was also responsible for all ceremonial practices in the city, which made him a very important figure for the emperor. In addition the emperor was assisted by eunuchs. The *praipositos* was the head of the eunuch staff of the emperor and in the *Book of Ceremonies* he is closely involved in the ceremonial practices involving the emperor. The master of ceremonies managed the court ceremonies, but only played a minor part during the

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<sup>153</sup> David Alan Parnell, 'Spectacle and Sport in Constantinople in the Sixth Century CE', in: Paul Christesen and Donald G. Kyle (ed.), *A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Oxford, 2014), 633–645, here 635.

<sup>154</sup> Alexander P. Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium Vol. 3* (Oxford, 1991), 1600 & 1710.

<sup>155</sup> Ann Moffatt and Maxeme Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 2* (Canberra, 2012), 835.

<sup>156</sup> Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium Vol. 3*, 1868–1869.

<sup>157</sup> Alexander P. Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium Vol. 2* (Oxford, 1991), 1267; Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium Vol. 3*, 1765.

<sup>158</sup> Alexander P. Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium Vol. 1* (Oxford, 1991), 704.

Hippodrome festivals, the *kouboukleion* were the personal staff of the emperor and the *ostiarios* was the eunuch who introduced officials to the emperor.<sup>159</sup>

This is how the ceremony before a festival day in the Hippodrome started according to the *Book of Ceremonies*:

‘The emperor, putting on his gold-bordered *sagion* and escorted by the archons of the *kouboukleion*, goes through the passageways of the Triconch, the Apse and the Palace of Daphne, lighting candles in the chapels as is usual for him. Having gone through the Hall of the Augousteus, he goes into the Church of St. Stephen, and from there he goes up via the private spiral stairway into the bedchamber of the Kathisma and there he watches until everything has been prepared.’<sup>160</sup>

The *sagion* was a short informal cloak and all other names indicated where places in the Great Palace. The *kathisma* was a sort mini-palace that was part of the Hippodrome, containing an imperial bedchamber and the imperial box from where the emperor watched the chariot races.<sup>161</sup>

In all the ceremonial activities the emperor was assisted by the *praipositos*. He led all the ceremonies and was also the one who did most of the talking for the emperor in his contact with the higher classes. The presence of the *praipositos* and other eunuchs was an indicator for an imperial court and the sheer number of eunuchs assisting the Byzantine emperor probably made an impact on the aristocracy and contributed to the prestige and exalted appearance of the emperor and his court. Furthermore, the aristocracy was allowed inside the Great Palace, but the emperor still kept a communicative distance between himself and the aristocracy. It was only the eunuch that did all the talking for the emperor, which is an indication of the difference in hierarchy the emperor created.

The first role of the members of the aristocracy in the court ceremonial was the dressing of the emperor. The *vestetores*, court officials of senatorial rank, were responsible for dressing the emperor. In the imperial bedchamber they put on the *chlamys* for the emperor to wear for the festivals in the Hippodrome.<sup>162</sup> Then the emperor was crowned by the *praipositos* before they both went to the vestibule, which was a narrow hall that led to the great hall where

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<sup>159</sup> Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogennetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 2*, 831-833.

<sup>160</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 304.

<sup>161</sup> Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogennetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 2*, 830; Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 96.

<sup>162</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 305.



the emperor lunched that day. Here the emperor was introduced by the *ostiarios* to the first members of the aristocracy.

All aristocrats were expected to attend the court ceremonial and the order in which they were introduced said a great deal about their status within the higher classes.<sup>163</sup> First the patricians went inside along with the *strategoi*.<sup>164</sup> They both stood lower in rank than the members of the senate and were therefore first introduced to the emperor. It was in the vestibule that they met the emperor. This could be an indication for their status as this introduction in a narrow hall did not express the ambiance that other members of the aristocracy got when they were introduced to the emperor in the great hall. Other members of the aristocracy were introduced to the emperor in this manner:

‘The emperor, escorted from there, goes and stands in the hall in which he lunches on the said day, and three or rather four silentiaries go in, .... When the *praipositos* has received a sign from the emperor, he gives a sign to the silentiary, and the silentiary goes away to the curtain and says loudly, “Raise it,” and he leads in the master of ceremonies.... When the magistros has received a sign, he signals to the master of ceremonies saying, “*Kometes*,” and he goes away and says, “Raise it.” The members of the senate go in...’<sup>165</sup>

Thus it seems clear that the emperor made a distinction between the patricians and *strategoi* and other members of the aristocracy. There was a clear order in which the members of the aristocracy would enter with the patricians first and the senate last. The court ceremonial therefore created a hierarchy in the higher classes or at least represented this hierarchy, though they were all depicted as subordinate to the Byzantine emperor.

The submission to the emperor was also visible in the way the aristocracy greeted him. According to the *Book of Ceremonies* all the different members of the aristocracy performed *proskynesis* to the emperor.<sup>166</sup> This can be translated into English as obeisance, but the practice has more to it than that. It already had a long history in Hellenic and Persian society before it was used in Byzantine court ceremonial. The act of *proskynesis* involved a subject acknowledging his servitude to his imperial lord and master by prostrating himself at his

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<sup>163</sup> Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, 170-172.

<sup>164</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 305.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 305-306.

feet.<sup>167</sup> In Ancient Greece a Greek would rather be put to death than perform *proskynesis*, but eventually it came over from Persia. The *Book of Ceremonies* shows that in the tenth-century it was an important part of imperial protocol. According to Chitoiu, the act of *proskynesis* was performed for the ideal of the glorious emperor and not for the man himself.<sup>168</sup> There was a clear distinction between the man (or woman) and the emperor. The man was susceptible to weaknesses and could make mistakes, while the emperor was the image of God. Therefore the act of *proskynesis* was not an act of submission to the man who held the power, but rather an act of submission to the image of God. This act of obeisance was performed by all the members of the aristocracy when they were introduced to the emperor. It was a part of the ceremony that again emphasized the hierarchical relationship between the emperor and the aristocracy. The image of the emperor as a transcendental reality was a powerful ideal that made the aristocracy a subordinate class.

The ceremony continued with the aristocracy accompanying the emperor to his seat in the Hippodrome and performing again the act of *proskynesis* in their order of rank.

‘After the completion of the cheering by the people and the troops, the emperor signals to the *praipositos*, and the *praiposistos*, going out outside the Kathisma, stands at the top of the steps and summons both the patricians [and the *strategoī*] who customarily perform the obeisance. Going into the Kathisma in their order of rank, they make obeisance to the emperor and go out praying and stand below the steps in front of the great door.’<sup>169</sup>

It is unclear how this act of obeisance in the Hippodrome can be interpreted with regards to the relationship of the emperor with the aristocracy. On the one hand, it could be viewed as an attempt by the emperor to humiliate the members of the highest classes of Byzantine society in front of the Byzantine people. As the aristocracy had to publicly subject themselves to the emperor and thereby acknowledged his superiority over them. On the other hand, it could also be a message of loyalty that the emperor wanted to portray in front of the populace. Both messages, however, express the idea of imperial power in Constantinople. An image that keeps recurring in the ceremonial practices in the Hippodrome.

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<sup>167</sup> Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 541-542.

<sup>168</sup> Dan Chitoiu, ‘Hierarchy and Participation: Spirituality and Ideology in Byzantium’, *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 64:1 (2008), 499–510, here 507-508.

<sup>169</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 307.

When the four chariot-races had been held, the emperor was again escorted by the aristocracy to the hall in the Great Palace, where the emperor had lunch with the guests he had invited.<sup>170</sup> It is uncertain who these guests precisely would have been, but it is very likely that they were members of the aristocracy and/or foreign ambassadors. After lunch the ceremonial rituals in the morning were repeated. The emperor had changed his clothes before lunch and was afterwards again crowned by the *praipositos* and put on his *chlamys* by the *vestetores*.<sup>171</sup> The members of the aristocracy were again introduced by the *ostiarios* in order of their rank and they all made obeisance to the emperor and prayed together before they again entered the Hippodrome through the *kathisma*. Only the act of obeisance in the *kathisma* in front of all the visitors of the Hippodrome was omitted. It is not explained why this part was different from the morning ritual; the *Book of Ceremonies* only states: ‘for in the afternoon the emperor goes out with this ceremonial, and not as in the morning.’<sup>172</sup> It could possibly have something to do with saving time, as all these ceremonies would have probably taken up a lot of time and the chariot races had to be completed before nightfall, when it would have been too dark to race.

Lastly, looking at the clothing worn by the different players during the ceremonies, there is also a notable difference between the aristocracy and the emperor. In the *Book of Ceremonies* only the emperor changes his clothes during the ceremony.<sup>173</sup> The emperor changed multiple times from *sagion* to *chlamys* and vice versa. The *sagion* was more informal than the *chlamys*, which was the ceremonial vestment worn by the emperor during the most important moments of court ceremonial.<sup>174</sup> The changing of the clothes can be viewed as an indication of the importance of the emperor with respect to the aristocracy, although there is too little information on the clothing of the aristocracy to say this with certainty. The *chlamys* and the crown however, were the imperial insignia with which the emperor was invested during his coronation, so the fact that these specific clothes are mentioned several times during the description of the ceremony definitely sends out a message of imperial power.<sup>175</sup> Unfortunately, the ceremonial protocol does not specify the colour of the emperor’s *chlamys*, although it probably must have been purple, as this was the colour reserved for the emperor alone.<sup>176</sup> The members of the aristocracy on the other hand wore white *chlamyses* according

<sup>170</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 307-308.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 305 & 308-309.

<sup>174</sup> Maria G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)* (Leiden, 2003), 11-13.

<sup>175</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 305 & 308-309.

<sup>176</sup> Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast, *Fashion, Costume, and Culture: Clothing, Headwear, Body Decorations, and Footwear through the Ages Vol. 2* (Detroit, 2004), 262.

to the *Book of Ceremonies*.<sup>177</sup> This was customary for them during ceremonies and it is again something that differentiates the aristocracy from the emperor in the ceremony.<sup>178</sup>

Thus the *Book of Ceremonies* establishes the relationship of the emperor with the aristocracy as unequal. The emperor stood above the aristocracy as he was the image of God. He expressed a divine purpose in exercising God's Will for the Byzantine people and this transcendental reality was idolized by the aristocracy in the ceremony. On a social level the emperor was also depicted as a powerful person standing above the aristocracy. He wore special clothing, had his own seat in the Hippodrome and was assisted by multiple eunuchs. The role of the aristocracy was to support this hierarchy in the ceremonies as is illustrated in the *Book of Ceremonies*.

### **The Emperor and the Populace**

Where the aristocracy was allowed inside the imperial palace and was required to participate in the ceremony close to and together with the emperor, the key word for the relationship of the emperor with the populace was without a doubt 'distance'. The ability to enter the palace defined one's status in Byzantine society, therefore the fact that the populace was not allowed to get inside placed them lower on the social ladder.<sup>179</sup> The festivals in the Hippodrome were the only times when the populace could get relatively close to the emperor, but as the *Book of Ceremonies* shows, this still remained far away.

The first indication of distance between the emperor and the populace was during the granting of the permit early in the morning. The *demarchs*, the heads of the Blue and Green factions, went on behalf of their factions to the Great Palace to hand over the program for the races to the emperor.<sup>180</sup> According to the *Book of Ceremonies* there was, however, no direct contact between the emperor and the *demarchs*, who represent the populace here.<sup>181</sup> This is illustrated by this passage: 'When the *praipositos* has received a program from a silentary he goes in and hands it to the emperor, and the emperor gives a command to the *praipositos* for the permit to be issued.' Thus the contact between the emperor and the populace went through the *praipositos*.

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<sup>177</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 303.

<sup>178</sup> Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*, 12.

<sup>179</sup> Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', 185.

<sup>180</sup> Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenetos: The Book of Ceremonies Vol. 2*, 828.

<sup>181</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 304.

Furthermore, the route the *praipositos* had to take to hand over the permit to the *demarchs* also suggests a great physical distance between the populace and the emperor that took some time to complete.

‘The *praipositos* goes out with all the members of the *kouboukleion* and goes through the passageways of the Holy Forty Martyrs. When he has gone into the Hemicycle of the Triconch, the master of ceremonies with all the silentiaries receives him there, and the *praipositos* goes with them through the Apse and the Palace of Daphne. Going away as far as the Hall of the Augousteus, he goes out to the Vestibule at the Gold Hand, and there he finds the footmen with the constables standing to either side.’<sup>182</sup>

Therefore, there were three ways in which the distance between the emperor and the populace was emphasized in this ceremonial practice before the festival in the Hippodrome. These key features of distance between the emperor and the populace will reappear multiple times in different forms in the *Book of Ceremonies*. First, there was the communicative distance, as the *demarchs* were only able to speak to a courtier and not to the emperor himself. Second, there was the physical distance, with the emperor residing in one part of the palace and the *demarchs* standing on the other side of the imperial palace. Third, there was the time distance, with the long walk of the *praipositos*, first with the program from the *demarchs* to the emperor and then all the way back with the permit to the waiting *demarchs*.

The act of waiting was a recurring phenomenon in the relationship the emperor had with the populace. In the Hippodrome the *demarchs* went to their usual seats, the horses were made ready for the races, the army was standing in their orders and the populace filled up the stadium.<sup>183</sup> Only when these preparations had finished, the emperor would begin with the ceremonial inside the imperial palace. This occurred in the morning and in the afternoon and it implied therefore probably a lot of waiting for the populace on the arrival of the emperor and for the races to begin. This act of letting the populace wait was probably deliberate and symbolizes the power of the emperor. It created expectation and implicated that the emperor was busy with other ‘more important’ things.<sup>184</sup> It also helped the emperor getting the full attention of the populace when he would finally arrive and it implied a certain power of the emperor over his people, as he could let them wait as long as he wanted. Thus there was again

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<sup>182</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 304.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 304-305

<sup>184</sup> Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organizations* (Boston, 1992), 235-236.

a distance created by the emperor in his relationship with the Byzantine people. The distance in time was used by the emperor to exploit and emphasize the power over the population.

The implication of distance is also visible inside the Hippodrome. The emperor got his own comfortable seat in the imperial box, while the populace had to sit in the rest of the stadium on uncomfortable benches close to each other.<sup>185</sup> Thus the populace could never get really close to the emperor and always remained at a certain distance. It was, however, possible for the people to see him from everywhere.<sup>186</sup> This fact that he could be seen from everywhere was employed by the emperor by letting the aristocracy perform *proskynesis* in the Hippodrome.<sup>187</sup> As stated earlier, this emphasized the difference between the aristocracy and the populace, for the aristocracy could get close to the emperor and the populace could not. Furthermore, as the aristocracy was already higher on the social scale of Byzantine society, the fact that even they made obeisance to the emperor suggested that the emperor was on a completely different level in society. This act of obeisance therefore accentuated the emperor's power even more and emphasized the distance there was on the social scale of Byzantium between the lower class and the emperor.

It is not surprising that there was also a religious element present in the relationship of the emperor with the populace as there was in the relationship of the emperor with the aristocracy. In the *Book of Ceremonies* the emperor is portrayed as a pastor for his people by performing the sign of the cross over the audience in the Hippodrome as illustrated in the following passage:

‘Then, ... the emperor goes out and goes up into the Kathisma, and standing in front of the throne he makes the sign of the cross over the people three times, firstly the middle [section, with the White and Red factions],<sup>188</sup> secondly the deme of the Blue faction [on the left] and thirdly the deme of the Green [on the right], and he sits on the throne.’<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games*, 134.

<sup>186</sup> Coleman, ‘Public Entertainments’, 337.

<sup>187</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 307.

<sup>188</sup> Woodrow, ‘Imperial Ideology in Middle Byzantine Court Culture: The Evidence of Constantine Porphyrogenitus’s *De Ceremoniis*’, 205.

<sup>189</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 307.

It is odd that the emperor did this, as the blessing of people was normally done with the authority of the church by a qualified priest and not by a layman.<sup>190</sup> Thus the emperor displayed himself at this moment as a representative of Christ. Moreover, he even performed this ceremonial act three times. The number three is a very important number in Christianity and represents the Holy Trinity. It keeps recurring in the Bible and was probably therefore also a recurring number in the ceremonies of the imperial Byzantine court. Furthermore, the sequence in which the emperor performed the sign of the cross for the people could also represent a symbolic sign of the cross, as the emperor first did this for the people in front of him, then to the left, and then to the right. This is also the sequence for the ritual of the sign of the cross, so this order could be deliberate. The emperor was thus shown as someone who appropriated the sacramental power of the clergy and thereby created a religious distance between himself and the populace.

In the *Book of Ceremonies* the blessings by the emperor were answered with the cheering of the people and the troops.<sup>191</sup> During the festivals in the Hippodrome the populace praised the emperor in long acclamations. The *Book of Ceremonies* contains several of these acclamations that were chanted during specific occasions in the Hippodrome. It is striking that even an acclamation for a victory of the charioteer from the Green faction contained a tribute to the emperor as is illustrated in the next passage:

‘When the charioteers receive their prizes, the cheerleaders recite, “Many years to you, the divinely-inspired imperial power!” The Greens: “The choice of the Trinity!” The people three times: “Holy!” The cheerleaders: “Many years to you, the servants of the Lord!” The people three times: “Holy!” The cheerleaders: “Many years to you, so-and-so and so-and-so, *augoustai* of the Romans!” The people three times: “Many years to you!” The Greens: “Holy!”’<sup>192</sup>

The acclamations were always led by cheerleaders. They had a major role in the starting of specific acclamations and hymns and also in what the people had to recite, as the people mostly repeated what the cheerleaders said. The *Book of Ceremonies* even speaks of specific indications for intonations that were chanted by the cheerleaders for the people to

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<sup>190</sup> Robert Taft, ‘How Liturgies Grow: The Evolution of the Byzantine “Divine Liturgy”’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* XLIII (1977), 8–30.

<sup>191</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 307.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.



know how to perfectly sing an acclamation.<sup>193</sup> These were terms such as ‘nana’ and ‘ananaïa’. Thus the cheerleaders played a major role in these acclamations and therefore also in the worship of the emperor by the populace. The acclamations are presented in the *Book of Ceremonies* as a confirmation of the hierarchical order and as a praise of the populace for their glorious emperor.

In the acclamations that were chanted by the populace, as they were written down in the *Book of Ceremonies*, there was also a lot of Christian symbolism present. Again the number three plays an important role as multiple words are repeated three times, such as ‘holy’ and ‘many’.<sup>194</sup> The emperor was furthermore addressed as ‘divinely-inspired’ and as ‘the choice of the Trinity’.<sup>195</sup> Thus he was acclaimed as chosen by God. This is again a sign of the transcendental entity of the emperor that was already illustrated in the *Book of Ceremonies* by the act of *proskynesis* performed by the aristocracy.

Moreover, the *Book of Ceremonies* also represented the emperor as an emperor who was loved by his people. In the acclamations the populace are portrayed as subjects that asserted how pleased they were with the emperor’s reign and expressed their hopes for a long rule as indicated in the following passage:

‘The cheerleaders recite, “Many, many, many!” The people: “Many upon many years!” The cheerleaders: “Many years to you, the appointee of the Trinity!” ... The people three times: “Many years to you!” ..... Again the cheerleaders recite, “How much joy does the state have in looking upon its rulers?” The people call out three times, “The state has much joy.”’<sup>196</sup>

It is possible that these phrases were changed for an emperor the populace did not like, but Constantine Porphyrogennetos depicted it in the *Book of Ceremonies* as constant acclamations of praise and love by the people for the emperor. The distance created in the ceremony between the emperor and the populace was thus portrayed in the *Book of Ceremonies* as a mutual understanding.

Overall the relationship of the emperor with the populace was thus characterized by separation. This was mostly due to the influence of the emperor. The distance was created on a physical level, on a communicative level, and also in time. The *Book of Ceremonies*

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<sup>193</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 319.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

portrayed the emperor as standing far above his people and this was also acknowledged by the populace, who praised the emperor for his services with acclamations in the Hippodrome. It is, however, likely that the emperor also had a say in these acclamations with the help of the cheerleaders. In addition the emperor was also portrayed as standing above the people on a religious level and he showed this by blessing the populace in the Hippodrome. This relationship of distance that was created during the ceremonies was projected as a privilege for the people to have with the emperor. The *Book of Ceremonies* shows with these ceremonial practices that the power of the emperor was felt in all aspects of imperial court ceremony.

## Chapter Five

### Comparing the Hippodrome with the Circus Maximus

This chapter will make a comparison between the findings on ceremonial practices in the Hippodrome according to the *Book of Ceremonies* and the information from modern day literature on the ceremonial practices in the Circus Maximus in Rome. The policy of the emperors in the representation of themselves in the Circus Maximus and in the Hippodrome had changed over time and was finally standardized in this end product, the *Book of Ceremonies*. A book created by an emperor as a guide for the presentation of future emperors in imperial court ceremonies and therefore also an idealised representation of Byzantine society as depicted in court ceremonies. How is the image of Byzantine society in the Hippodrome as presented by the *Book of Ceremonies* different from the image of Roman society represented in the Circus Maximus?

First it is important to note that the image of Byzantine society was not only changed by ceremonial practices, but also by the circus itself and by the seat of the emperor in the circus. In Rome the imperial palace was situated on top of the Palatine Hill and was not attached to the Circus Maximus.<sup>197</sup> Over the years the influence of the emperor on the chariot-racing events would increase with a façade built under Emperor Domitian in the first century that gave the imperial living quarters a direct view over the circus. In this way the emperor was always present in the Circus Maximus even when he was not physically there. This idea had been extended in the fourth century by the tetrarchs who attached their newly built palaces to the circuses and this was also implemented in Constantinople, where the Great Palace was directly connected to the Hippodrome.<sup>198</sup> This process shows how the emperor extended his influence in the circus and made it an essential part of the palace. The festivals in the circus became directly part of the imperial court ceremonies as described in the *Book of Ceremonies*.<sup>199</sup>

Roman society had always been a socially divided one in a clear hierarchy of classes with the emperor on top followed by the aristocracy and then the populace.<sup>200</sup> All these classes were present in the Circus Maximus during the chariot racing events as these were events that appealed to the whole population. Everyone had their prescribed places in the

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<sup>197</sup> Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', 215.

<sup>198</sup> Dodge, *Spectacle in the Roman World*, 77.

<sup>199</sup> Humphrey, *Roman Circuses: Arenas for Chariot Races*, 579.

<sup>200</sup> Rose, 'Spectators and Spectator Comfort in Roman Entertainment Buildings: A Study in Functional Design', 100-102.

Circus that represented their specific status in Roman society and which is also something that can be seen in the Hippodrome. All the aristocrats were seated on their designated seats close to the racetrack and the rest of the population was placed on the top seats of the circus.<sup>201</sup> The emperor, however, shows a change of policy over the years in his representation in the circus. He had his own seat in the circus; this was the *pulvinar* in the Circus Maximus and the *kathisma* in the Hippodrome. In Rome, however, the *pulvinar* was situated between the crowds in the middle of the circus. This depicts an image of an emperor who valued the virtue of *civilitas* and represented himself as the first among his people. In Constantinople on the other hand the *kathisma* was situated above the population, which symbolised an emperor who placed himself above his people and not as one of them.<sup>202</sup> Thus there was a clear difference between Rome and Constantinople in the display of power by the emperor represented in his seat.<sup>203</sup>

The *Book of Ceremonies* also displays an increase in the influence and power presented by the emperor in the circus. At the beginning of the Principate there were twenty-four races a day held in the Circus Maximus during the festivals in Rome.<sup>204</sup> These had a huge impact on the treasury of the Roman State as the races required an enormous organizational effort. In economically difficult times the festivals were already downsized with fewer races and with less spectacle and eventually this was also how the racing events would end in Rome.<sup>205</sup> According to the *Book of Ceremonies*, there were only eight races held on a single day during the time of Constantine Porphyrogennetos, four in the morning and four in the afternoon.<sup>206</sup> The races were accompanied with an elaborate display of ceremonial by the imperial court and where probably therefore not reduced to cut the costs. It is safe to say that this elaborate ceremonial could not have been part of ceremonial in the Circus Maximus as there would not have been enough time on one day for the twenty-four races to be held together with this elaborate ceremony. Constantine VII thus represented the imperial court ceremonies as the main part of the festival and increased the emperor's role at the expense of the races and therefore also at the expense of the entertainment for the populace and the aristocracy. This image of the influence of the emperor in the Hippodrome can be seen in multiple aspects in the ceremonial practices as described in the *Book of Ceremonies* and is different from the representation of the Roman emperor in the Circus Maximus.

<sup>201</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 59.

<sup>202</sup> Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, 176-182.

<sup>203</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 61.

<sup>204</sup> Junkelmann, 'On the Starting Line with Ben Hur: Chariot-Racing in the Circus Maximus', 98.

<sup>205</sup> Fik Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel* (Amsterdam, 2004), 174-202.

<sup>206</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 303-309.

The *Book of Ceremonies* shows a society that was divided in three groups, just as Roman society had been. This is displayed in the different roles played by the three classes of society during the festival in the Hippodrome. The emperor was the main character in the ceremonial display and all the acts of the aristocracy and the populace revolved around him. This showed his higher place in society relative to the other classes and was already seen during festivals in the Circus Maximus. The emperor had always had a special place in the ceremonial in the Circus Maximus and even when he was not physically present his insignia would be carried around and placed on his chair.<sup>207</sup> The aristocracy are also displayed as a high class in the *Book of Ceremonies*. They already participated in the imperial court ceremony in the Great Palace prior to the festival in the Hippodrome and their close role next to the emperor was also displayed in the Hippodrome in front of the populace. This closeness to the emperor and the relatively large role of the aristocracy in the ceremonial practices portrays them as a higher class in Byzantine society with respect to the populace. The physical closeness to the emperor and the special seating place in the circus were already seen, though to a less extent, in the Circus Maximus in Rome. Lastly, the populace in the Hippodrome played a small part in the ceremonial display of the emperor and they are also described as standing further away from him than the aristocracy did. Their main role was to cheer for the emperor, which was also part of the role the populace had played in the Circus Maximus. This depicts them as members of the lowest classes of Byzantine and Roman society. Thus the hierarchical society displayed in the Circus Maximus in Rome is also present in Constantine VII's display of Byzantine society in the *Book of Ceremonies*, though with some changes made in the hierarchy.

According to the *Book of Ceremonies* the role of the aristocracy in Constantinople had been reduced to only playing a part in the court ceremonial that revolved around the emperor. It was mostly the fact that the aristocracy in tenth-century Byzantium played a role in the imperial court ceremonies and the fact that they were able and allowed to stand close to the emperor that got the aristocracy their prestige and influence. This shows the power of the emperor as sovereign ruler in Byzantine society as one's closeness to him determined one's social status. In Rome the higher classes had been more or less fixed, but in Byzantium it was easier for people to get higher or lower on the social scale.<sup>208</sup> This meant that in Rome the emperor had to show respect for the status and wealth of the aristocracy in the Circus

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<sup>207</sup> Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 401.

<sup>208</sup> Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, 406-407; Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', 168 & 190.

Maximus as their status was fixed and the emperor needed their support for his rule, while in Constantinople the emperor had a huge influence on the social status of the aristocracy and could grant them titles or take these away from them. The aristocracy in Constantinople was therefore now depending on the emperor and almost acted as his clients instead of the political role they had acted out in the ceremonial practices in the Circus Maximus. This is clearly demonstrated in the *Book of Ceremonies* by the performance of the act of *proskynesis* to the emperor in the Great Palace and in the Hippodrome that showed the submissive nature of the relationship of the aristocracy with the emperor relative to the relationship displayed in the Circus Maximus, which had its ups and downs for both parties, but none was clearly subservient to the other.

The image of power displayed by the emperor relative to the aristocracy is also displayed in his relationship with the populace. However, instead of becoming more influential by bringing the populace closer to him, as the emperor had done with the aristocracy, the emperor chose to distance himself from the public. The *Book of Ceremonies* portrays an emperor that had placed himself far above the populace and did not allow any influence in his policy. The ideal for the Roman emperors to strive for the virtue of *civilitas*, to be the first amongst civilians, was changed into an ideal for emperors to strive for their own glory. The emperor as illustrated by the *Book of Ceremonies* clearly felt too good to be seen as a mere civilian, he was more than that. There is for example no direct contact depicted in the *Book of Ceremonies* between the emperor and populace. This would all be done by the *praepositos*, who spoke for the emperor.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, the emperor showed his power by granting a permit for the chariot races beforehand as an act of euergetism and he let the people wait for him in the Hippodrome while performing ceremonial practices in the Great Palace. This all illustrates an image of distance between the emperor and the populace and presents the idea that the population had to deserve the races and most importantly had to deserve the emperor's presence at the games. In Rome on the other hand the spectators expected the emperor to attend 'their' spectacle in the Circus Maximus. There was interaction between the different social classes and the emperor and the Roman populace was even able to request certain things from him in the Circus, while the emperor was expected to answer.<sup>210</sup> This shows a political role for the populace in Roman society, while the ceremonial display in the Hippodrome as depicted by the *Book of Ceremonies* was reduced to a theatrical role for the display of the emperor's power. The people's role is depicted as being reduced to a

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<sup>209</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 303-309.

<sup>210</sup> Meijer, *Wagenrennen: Spektakelshows in Rome en Constantinopel*, 163.

cheerleader function in Byzantine society with acclamations for the emperor for everything he had done and everything he would do in the future for the Empire.

Up to the fourth century the circus factions in Rome were solely concerned with chariot-racing and were rarely mentioned in the sources.<sup>211</sup> From the late fifth century on the two major factions, the Blues and the Greens, were mentioned regularly. The acclamations for the emperor, which were characteristic for the Blues and Greens in Constantinople, were unknown to the Romans in the Circus Maximus.<sup>212</sup> This was due to the phenomenon of cheerleaders who were already used for centuries in the theatre to steer the emotions of the crowd.<sup>213</sup> At first the Circus was considered too big for cheerleaders to dominate the audience there, but from the fourth century on the role of acclamations would grow and this created an urgent need for cheerleaders in the circus. The *Book of Ceremonies* shows that in the Byzantine Empire the cheerleaders dominated the audience in the Hippodrome. They are mentioned every time to start a chant and they guided it in the direction they wanted. This indicates that the political role of the populace changed into a ceremonial role according to the *Book of Ceremonies*.<sup>214</sup> The emperors created the hierarchy in the factions to exercise more control on them and the acclamations became the official imperial acclamations.<sup>215</sup> This reflected a change in the circus from a political confrontation between the Roman people and their emperor in the Circus Maximus to a directed display of acclamations for the emperor by the Byzantine people in the Hippodrome as portrayed by the *Book of Ceremonies*.

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<sup>211</sup> Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, 193.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>213</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 314-320.

<sup>214</sup> Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, 247.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 247-261.





## Conclusion

The Roman ceremonial tradition is as old as the Roman Republic and elements in the ceremonial practices can very likely be traced back to the Etruscan and Greek civilizations. In all the years of its existence the practices underwent considerable changes, especially with the introduction of a new player in Roman society, the Roman emperor. Already from Augustus on there was a visible process of emperors who incorporated themselves into the ceremonial practices. The Roman emperor became the main advocate of ceremonial. The tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* fits into this process as a guide for future emperors compiled by Emperor Constantine VII himself to standardize the ceremonial practices in the Empire.

The appropriation of ceremonial practices by the emperor can clearly be seen in the Hippodrome. When compared to the ceremonial practiced in the Circus Maximus in Rome the *Book of Ceremonies* portrays a role of the emperor that has considerably increased in Byzantium. The emperor placed himself at the centre of attention in the circus. He presents an image of sole rule and power that was not yet seen in the first centuries of the Principate. The *Book of Ceremonies* shows no intention of an emperor striving for the virtue of *civilitas*. Instead Constantine VII projects an image of Byzantine society that is subordinate to and dependent on the emperor. He considered the imperial court ceremony necessary for the rule of an emperor as the imperial court ‘appears more beautiful and acquires more nobility.’<sup>216</sup> It is this image of a powerful emperor who wanted to impress his subjects that is seen in the ceremonial practices in the Hippodrome as described by the *Book of Ceremonies*.

In his preface Constantine VII states that the ceremonial practices had been neglected and were even ‘moribund’.<sup>217</sup> The ceremonial practices described for the Hippodrome, however, project a different image. They depict a long line of public ceremonial practices with its origin in the Circus Maximus in Rome. The emperor was being linked to the Roman emperors that ruled the glorious Roman Empire before him and by implementing this powerful image in the Byzantine imperial court ceremonies, it strengthened and increased the emperor’s status in Byzantine society and in the world.

The compilation of the *Book of Ceremonies* is in itself already an attempt to show the continuity in the Byzantine Empire and also a way of appropriating the image of the glorious Roman Empire for the Byzantines. The ceremonial practices are linked to Rome and this creates prestige for the Empire. Furthermore, the image of the emperor as a Roman emperor

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<sup>216</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 3-4.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

also glorified the Byzantine emperor, not only in Byzantium itself, but also in the world. This was something that Constantine VII strived for with the ceremonial practices as indicated in the preface. '[Ceremony].... is a cause of wonder to both foreigners and our own people.'<sup>218</sup>

The chaos in the Byzantine Empire experienced by Constantine Porphyrogennetos during his time with the reigns of multiple emperors and regents and the clash with the patriarch makes it conceivable that the Emperor tried to heighten his prestige in Byzantine society and tried to set up standards in history, with the *Vita Basilii*, in administration, with *On the Administration of the Empire*, and in ceremony, with the *Book of Ceremonies*. These were all intended for future emperors to fall back on in their reigns. The Byzantine Empire had lost considerable territory over the years, especially in the seventh century with the Arab invasions, and in the tenth century the Empire was attacked by the Bulgarians and Russians and raided every couple of years by the Arabs. In light of this the *Book of Ceremonies* was also a standard for imperial ceremonial that legitimised the existence of the Byzantine Empire by emphasizing its continuity with the Roman Empire. At the same time it was an expression of Byzantine power in the face of the other empires on the world stage.

The *Book of Ceremonies* provides an image for the social ideal of Byzantine society as illustrated by Emperor Constantine VII. It is uncertain if these ceremonies were practiced and if they were precisely executed as described. It is, however, interesting to see how an emperor wanted to project his idea of Byzantine society on his subjects through these ceremonies in the light of the discussion on Byzantine identity. From the described ceremonial practices in the Hippodrome it becomes apparent that the essence of Roman society as it was portrayed in the Circus Maximus had not changed over the years. Society was still divided in three major classes, an emperor at the top, the aristocracy close behind and then the populace on the bottom of society. In the Circus Maximus these classes all played their own part in the ceremonial acts. The aristocracy and the populace already bolstered the power of the emperor, but they were still able to express their displeasure in the Circus. This sets an image of Roman society in which these classes could stand up for themselves and could claim their right in society.

The description given by Constantine VII in the *Book of Ceremonies* shows that all the same classes still played their part in the ceremony in the Hippodrome, though their role had slightly changed and they were now even more linked to the power of the emperor. The *Book of Ceremonies* provides an image of Byzantine society in which the aristocracy and the

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<sup>218</sup> Constantine VII, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 3-4.

populace did not stand up for themselves, but were used by the emperor to enhance his image as all-powerful ruler. The continuing use of ceremonial practiced by all emperors in Rome and Constantinople had led to this projection of continuation illustrated in the ceremonial practices in the Circus Maximus and in the Hippodrome. This could illustrate the idea of Romanness as a national identity in Byzantium as illustrated by Kaldellis. It is, however, a projection by the emperor expressed in the *Book of Ceremonies* and through imperial court ceremonial. Therefore it is unclear if this was the reality of Byzantine society and if this image was also taken over by the aristocracy and the populace.

For future research it would therefore be interesting to see how much of this social ideal expressed by Constantine Porphyrogennetos in the *Book of Ceremonies* can also be found in other tenth-century sources. Was this ideal adopted by the aristocracy and the populace or was it only the ideal of Emperor Constantine VII? It would additionally be interesting to see if the emperor's projection of this social ideal can also be found in other ceremonies described in the *Book of Ceremonies*. Did Constantine VII standardize his ideal to be expressed in all ceremonial practices? Lastly, this thesis has focussed on the social construction of Byzantine society and has left the notion of the Christian Orthodox religion and the imperial cult mostly aside. These influenced imperial court ceremonial considerably. It would therefore be useful to see how the ceremonial practices conducted in imperial Rome had been continued in Byzantium relative to Christianity. The ceremonial practices in the Hippodrome already provide a great starting point for examining the role of the imperial cult in Rome and in Constantinople.



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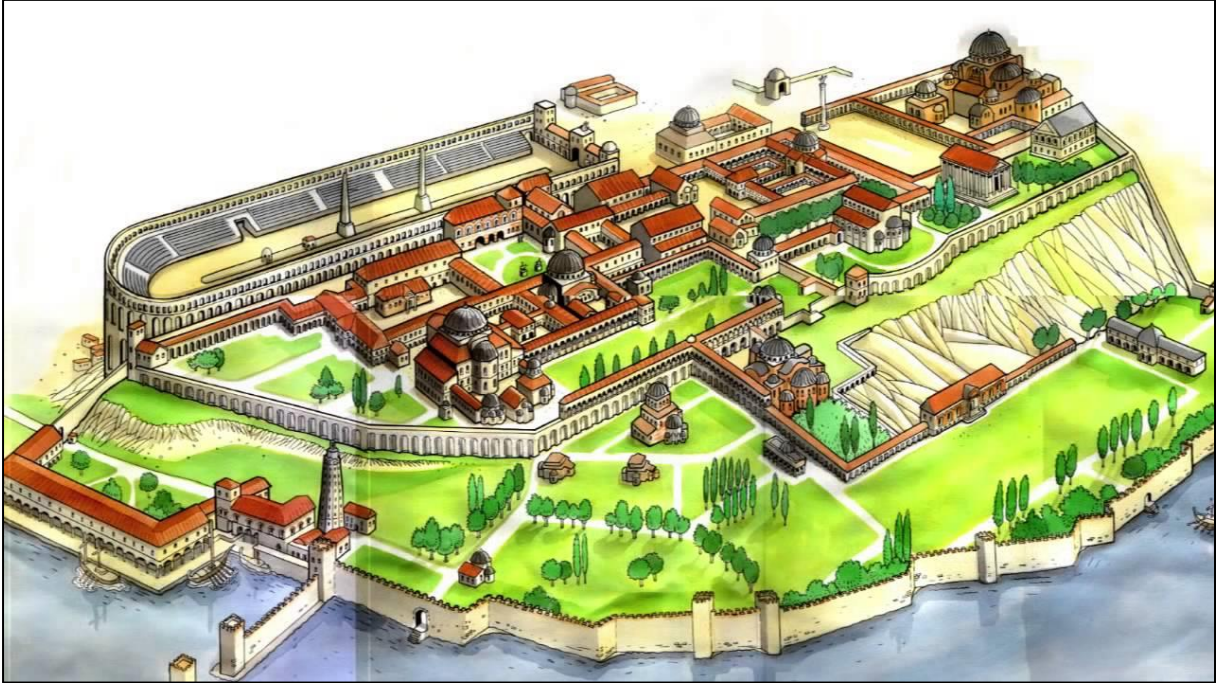
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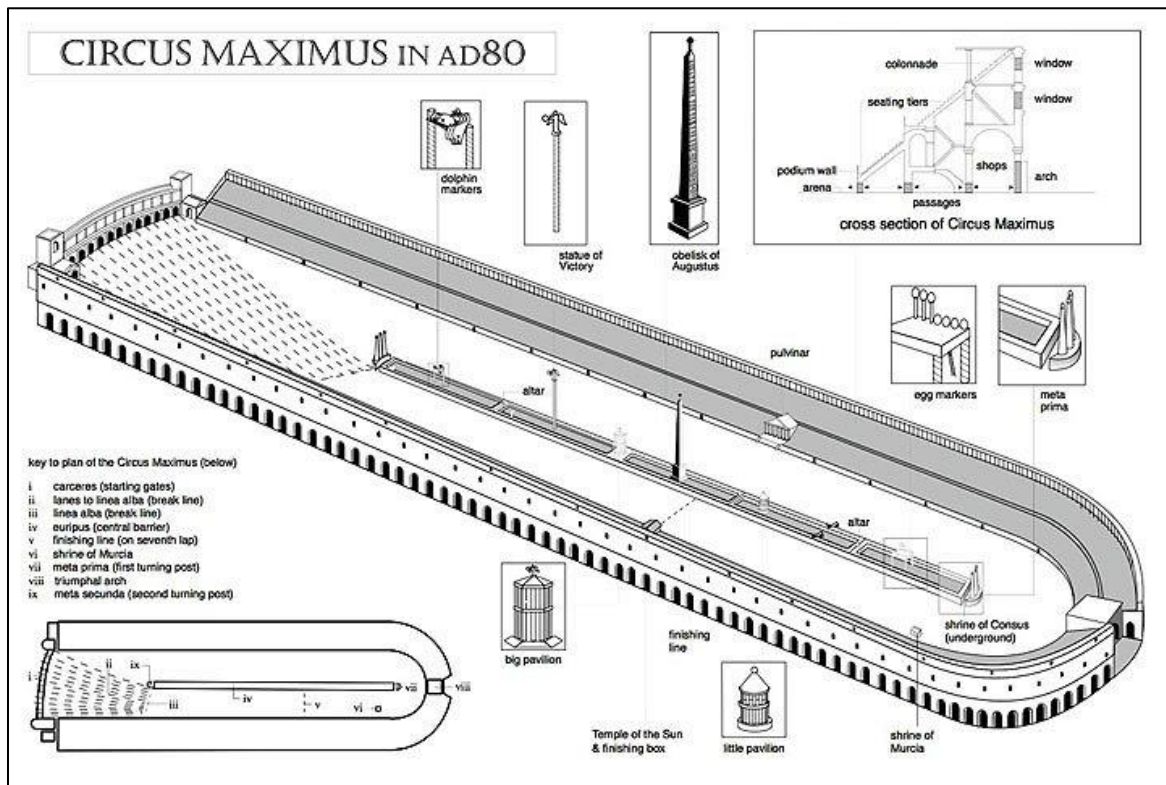
## Illustration of the Great Palace



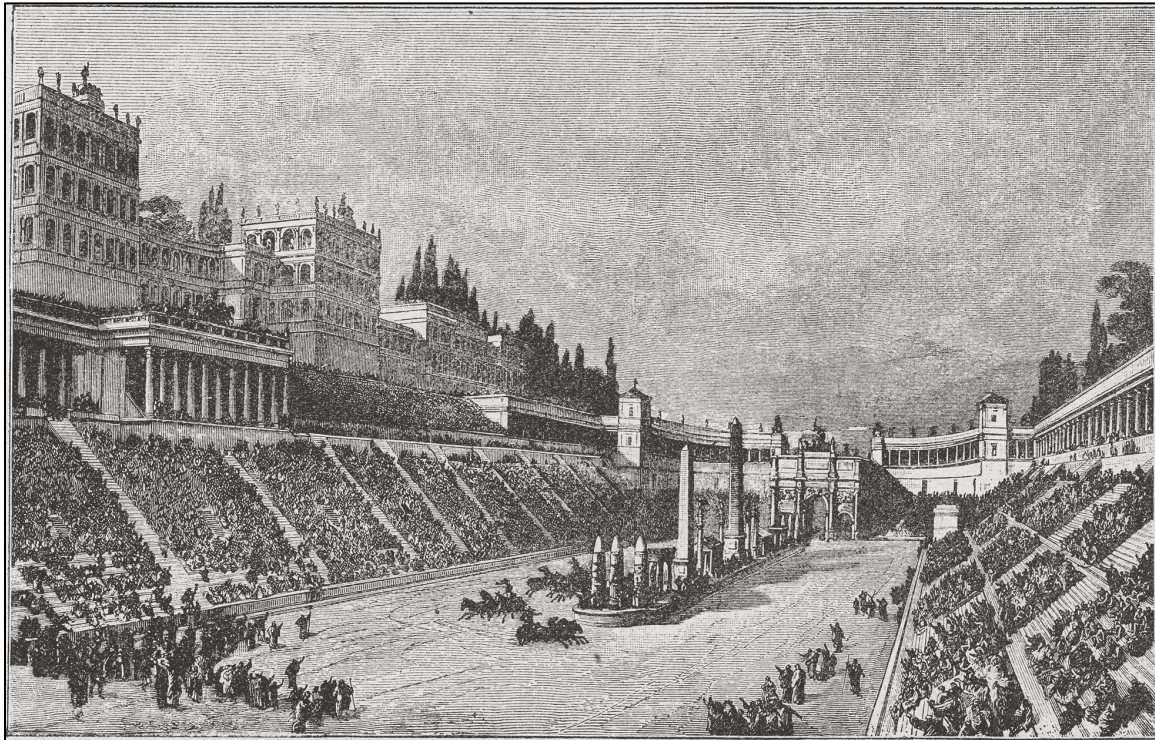


## Appendix B – The Circus Maximus in Rome

### Structure of the Circus Maximus



### Drawing of the Circus Maximus



Reconstruction according to G. Relender's project