12. Court Intrigue and Ritual of the Macedonian Dynasty

The Byzantines defeat the Bulgarians

Bulgar king Samuel dying at the sight of his blinded soldiers (bottom).

Macedonian Dynasty (867-1056)

- Basil I Macedonian (867-86)
- Leo VI Wise (886-913)
- Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos (913-59)
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God's World

Orderly
- kosmos
- taxis
- eutaxia

Symbiotic relationship:
- between Roman Empire and Christianity
  - God ordained the existence of Empire
  - chose each individual Emperor
  - no human ruled formulated for appointment
    - alternative was tyranny or mob rule (demokratia)
How God Rules

- inspire through fear of Hell
- promises of rewards to Heaven
  - likewise Emperor
Emperor should share qualities of God
- man-loving (philanthropos)
- observance of law (eunomia)
- pious
- Christ-loving = victory (reward for piety to Christ)

Holiness of the Emperor

Your Holy-ness (Liutprand)
- people were to communicate with him in acclamations
  - rhythmical and repetitive like liturgy
  - prostrated themselves
Emperor: subjects = God: Emperor
- fuzzy line between imperium and sacerdotium

I Cor. 7:20
Let every man abide in the same calling when he is called

Rom. 13:1-2
"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained by God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

When some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."
The Macedonian Dynasty:
Zenith of Byzantine Court Culture

Titles for Emperor

Basileus (βασιλεύς)
– the Greek word for "sovereign"

Porphyrogenētos (πορφυρογέννητος)
– “born-in-the-purple”

Autokratōr (αὐτοκράτωρ)
– “self-ruler”

Two distinct categories of dignities (ἀξίαι)

“dignities by award” (διὰ βραβείων ἀξίαι)
– purely honorific court titles
– conferred by the award of a symbol of rank

“dignities by proclamation” (διὰ λόγου ἀξίαι)
• conferred by imperial pronouncement
Titles for imperial family

Despōtēs (δεσπότης) – “Lord” (Justinian)
Sebastokratōr (σεβαστοκράτωρ) – “Venerable Ruler”:
Kaisar (καίσαρ) – “Caesar”
Nobelissimos (νοβελίσσιμος) – from the Latin Nobilissimus (most noble)
Kouropalatēs (κουροπαλάτης) – from the Latin cura palatii, “charge of the palace”
Sebastos (σεβαστός) – “August One”

Court Titles designed during Macedonian Dynasty

- Proedros (προεδρός) - president
- Magistros (μαγιστρός) - magister officiorum – one of the most senior officials
- Vestarches (βεσταρχης) - awarded to “bearded” senior military officers and judicial officials
  - John I Tzimiskes.
- Anthypatos (ἀνθυπάτος) – “proconsul”
- Patroicos (πατρικός) - “patrician”:
  - Protospatharios (πρωτοσπάθαριος) – “first spatharios” awarded to senior officials such as Logothetes
- Spatharios (spatharios) - imperial guard
- Hypatos (ὑπάτος) - “consul”
- Stratōr (στράτωρ) – “groom”
- Kandidatos (κανδιδάτος) - from the Latin candidatus (guards)
- Basilikos mandatōr (βασιλικός μανδάτωρ) - “imperial messenger”
- Vestētōr (βεστήτωρ), were officers of the imperial wardrobe
- Aeparchōn (ἀεπάρχων or ἀπὸ ἐπάρχων), a translation of the Latin ex praefectis
- Apoeparchōn (ἀποεπάρχων)

Palace Offices

- Parakoimomenos - High Chamberlain who sleeps in the Emperor’s bedchamber.
  - Usually a eunuch, during the 9th-10th centuries, the holders of this office often functioned as de facto chief ministers of the Empire.
- Protovestiarios - usually a minor relative of the emperor
  - took care of the emperor’s personal wardrobe, especially on military campaigns. He was also sometimes responsible for other members of the imperial household, and the emperor’s personal finances.
- Papias - great concierge of the imperial palaces
  - responsible for the opening and closing of the palace gates each day.
- Pinkernes - originally the emperor’s cupbearer
- Kanikleios - the keeper of the imperial inkstand, one of the senior officials of the imperial chancery
  - In the Komnenian and Palaiologan period, some of its holders were de facto chief ministers of the Empire.
- Epi tes trapezes - official responsible for attending to the imperial table during banquets.
proedros epi tou kanikleiou
(president and Senior imperial chancellor)
prótoproedros
(president of the notoroi)
proedros kai dekanos
(president and Decon)
proedros kai megas primikèrios
( High official of state and church law)

Emperor Nikephoros III flanked by Truth and Justice, and by his senior court dignitaries
Illuminated manuscript ca. 1070s

De Cerimonis, the Book of Ceremonies, compilation of religious and secular ceremonial procedures which took place in Constantinople
rhythm of life in the city
It guaranteed correct procedure and preserved taxis.
Eutaxis = correct order: within Byzantine society produced:
“harmonious hierarchy of institutions that constituted the state.”

Christ Crowning Constantine VII wood panel (945)

Byzantine Ivory of Christ Crowning the Emperor Romanos (c. 948-963) and the Empress Eudoxia
Ottonian Ivory of Christ Crowning the Emperor Otto II (c. 973-83) and the Empress Theophanu
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Nik2Phs’ dealings with the West
Otto the Saxon
952  king of Italy since 952
962  Crowned HR Emperor by Pope in 962
- wanted to reunite W and E through marriage
968  dispatches mission to Const. to secure marriage alliance
  – Liutprand of Cremona

Liutprand’s Ungracious Welcome
- kept outside the gates of Constantinople in the rain for hours
  - first admitted to the Logothete (court chamberlain)
    – Leo (Emp’s brother)
  - argue for hours over Otto’s proper title
- finally permitted to Nik2Ph
  - bit of an argument
  - told that Byzantines might have a princess for them
    if HRE cedes Rome, Ravenna, E. Italy and Dalmatian Coast
An “Extended” Stay

• kept in capital for 4 months
  – occasional dinners w/Nik2Ph
  – reek of onions, garlic, fish sauce
  – always sat far away from host
  – promised certain things, never happens
  – guards occasionally abscond with groceries
  – has purple cloaks confiscated
  – finally allowed to leave

Liutprand’s journey home

• journey home fraught with trouble:
  – ship is delayed
  – crew abandons him
  – unfriendly reception by eunuch Bishop
  – starving
  – 3 earthquakes on Corfu
• War resumes before he returns to Cremona

Liutprand’s Report

To Nikephoros, Liutprand was:
• barbarian
  – “leather-skinned Frank”
• everything he despised
  – smooth-tongued trickster
  – fluent in Greek
• represented a pretender
  – Otto was HRE
• no right to ask for a “born of the purple” princess.

To Liutprand, Nikephoros was:
• ungracious
• pompous
• haughty
• drinker of bad wine
• inane conversationalist
• effeminate
• weak-willed
The Unpopular Nikephoros II

- Had alienated everyone except military
  Easter 967 rumor spreads that Nik2Ph will start killing random people
- By summer, angry mob accosts him on the street
- Nik2Ph begins to fortify palace

Nik2Ph comes to a sticky End

- Empress Theophanu in love with young Armenian general
  — John Tzimiskes
- Theophanu lets her lover into the Palace
- Nik2Ph stretched out on a panther skin
- assassinated
Basil II Bulgaroktonos (Bulgar-slayer) (r. 978-1025)

- pacifies Bulgaria permanently (1018)
- 1014 Battle of Kleidion disaster for the Bulgarians
- Byzantine army captured 15,000 prisoners; 99 out of every 100 was blinded and the 100th was spared one eye to guide the rest back to their homes

Christ with his life-bringing right [hand] extends the crown
- symbol of rulership
- 2 incorporeal beings
  - one takes the crown
  - other placing the spear
    - adding victories to rulership
- The martyrs are his allies, for he is their friend. They cast down those lying at his feet.

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Psalter of Basil II

Basil’s psalter illumination ~1000 *78 (Cod. Marc. gr. 17, fol. 3r) with poem:

Triumph of Basil II through the Forum of Constantine, Chronicles of John Skylitzes, Madrid
Byzantine Empire at the death of Basil II in 1025