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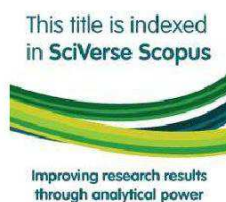
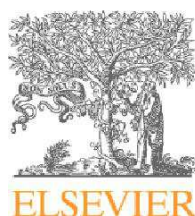
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The positive representation of the diplomatic Byzantine ceremonial in the Western chronicles of the first four Crusades

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Abstract: The period of the first crusades has been intensively debated in both Romanian and foreign literature, at its various levels: religious, economic, political, social, cultural and demographic. This epoch led to the intensification of relations between the West and the Byzantine and to the rediscovery of the Byzantine Empire by the Western nations. The meeting between the two cultures and civilizations and the manner of perceiving the other are highlighted particularly by the episode of the diplomatic receptions given by the Greek sovereign at the court of Constantinople. This study is based on the general assumption that diplomatic ceremonial, as full expression of imperial Byzantine ideology, becomes the meeting place between the splendor, opulence and diplomatic strategies characteristic to Easterners and the honor, chivalrous ideal and the simplicity characteristic for Westerners. The profound implications of this protocol are reflected in the divergent interests of the two sides. The acceptance or rejection of the diplomatic ceremonial by the Latin seniors represents a proof that they understood more or less the meaning and symbolism of these diplomatic meetings. This paper analyzes the main episodes in which the West appreciated positively the imperial protocol, thus contributing to effective collaboration with the Byzantines in the spirit of the ideal Christian brotherhood.

Key words: representation, ceremonial, diplomacy, Byzantines, Latins, Western chronicles.

In the context of diplomatic exchanges between the Greek and Latin during the period of the Crusades, the ceremonial represents a full manifestation of the imperial Byzantine ideology and an indicator of cultural diversity between the soldiers of Christ and the Easterners. The ceremonies expressed, through their rituals and symbols, the deep values and beliefs of a group. For the Byzantines, the protocol constituted an expression of their culture and civilization, which emphasized their role and place in the celestial and universal order established by God (Z.A. Woodrow, 2001). The imperial power was based on the religious and symbolic value offered by the

ceremonial and on the divine and inaccessible of this. The protocol determinate the functioning of the Byzantine court and the Greek society as a whole, because the subjects accomplished certain roles within it (Constantine VII Porphyrogénète, Volume I, 1935-1939). The message of this ritual was cultural, social and political, being an indicator of the Byzantine identity and a way of the Greeks' legitimating face to foreign nations. The ceremonial represented a symbolic affirmation of beliefs and Byzantine culture (G. Dagron, 1996).

The ceremonial system was a distinctive characteristic of the Greek world and a factor of otherness between the East and the West in the

context of holy wars. Because the protocol was intended to impress and to emphasize the imperial mystery, several crusaders eyewitnesses who participated were generally fascinated by the extent of its development and display of the wealth (Guillaume de Tyr, second tome, 1999); these elements were meant to underline the dignity of the protagonists simultaneously to the grandeur of the Byzantine Empire and the particularly status of the sovereign. When the ceremonial had as purpose to intimidate and to manipulate the Westerners, the reactions of the latter have been translated into a denial to participate to certain symbolic rituals that were not understood. When existing certain suspicions, some eyewitnesses associated the image of treacherous and effeminate Greeks with the various unusual aspects of the ceremonial that were significant in terms of Byzantine and Western cultural otherness.

The mixture of admiration and hatred simultaneously with the admiration and astonishment were characteristic to the Byzantine image towards the West. Constantine's successors appreciated the quality of the Westerners, especially their bravery and science of war (Guibert of Nogent, 1998). Nicetas Choniates describes the Latin as boastful, fearless, lacking humility, bloodthirsty, harboring hate and hostility to the Romans (Nicetas Choniates, 1984). The Byzantine court ceremonial, with the purpose to warrant the legitimacy of the regime led by the basileus (P. Magdalino, 1993), was widely admired in the West, and the ceremonial clothes were copied at the court from Jerusalem, Palermo or Venice.

The detailed analysis of the diplomatic Byzantine ceremonial and of the manner in which it was perceived by the West, hadn't made the subject of systematic study in local literature. The representation of the protocol was sometimes based on direct experience of the participants to expedition or on oral witness who returned to Europe, and other times on an imaginary construction of chroniclers who were trying to project a pre-established image of the Byzantines and their oriental environment (M. Carrier, 2012). Following the historiographic tradition of the Middle Age, the Greeks were considered by the western world as perfidious traitors and lacking of virility, while the Byzantines attributed to Westerners defects as non-abstinence, greed,

fickleness (Anna Comnena, vol II, 1977), arrogance (Nicetas Choniates, 1984) and hostility.

Among the many chroniclers of the Crusades only few provide detailed descriptions of the diplomatic ceremonial; most prefer short and sometimes simplistic comments for the diplomatic meetings between Crusaders and Byzantines. Thus, the historians of the holy expeditions merely reported that a king or Western senior was honorably received by the emperor (*honorabiliter*) (Gesta Francorum, 1924) or very honorable (*honorificentissime*), but without adding other details (Raimond d'Agiles, 1824; Albert d'Aix, 1825). The adverb *honorabiliter* did not include in itself any admiration on Byzantine protocol but a simply recognition that rules of civility of the medieval world had been respected. Many reasons may explain the relative silence of the chroniclers. A part of the authors were not eyewitnesses to the events, so that in the absence of detailed information, they contented with presenting a general impression of the meeting, usually specifying that the senior had an honorable reception. The phenomenon can be explained largely by the tendency of medieval chroniclers, often generalized, to be concise in describing events and places they consider most difficult to understand in their chronicles.

Although the number of chroniclers who gives detailed presentations of the diplomatic meetings between Greek and Latin is reduced, they state interesting information (M. Carrier, 2012). Among the eyewitnesses of Byzantine ceremonial, Guillaume de Tyr (1130-1185) is the most prolific. As archbishop of Tyr, the chronicler was well acquainted with the customs of Eastern than Western counterparts. He also was twice ambassador of Jerusalem's King at the court of Byzantium, in 1168 and 1179-1180. The historian presents details of the reception of King Amalric by Manuel Comnenus in 1171 (Guillaume de Tyr, 1999). The pomp and honors made for the king of Jerusalem were a mark of greatness Byzantine decor in the chronicler's eyes. The description of the ceremonial represents one of the most important, many of its stages faithfully following the prescriptions offered by *De ceremoniis*. Since he was familiar with the Byzantine customs, Guillaume was able to recognize the special honor at address to Amalric I, when the John protosebas-

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tos, a grandson of basileus and one of the most illustrious nobles of the palace, was sent to meet the king and lead him to Constantinople (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. II, 1999). Sending a delegate to receive the ambassador was one of the first stages of the diplomatic ceremonial. Arriving in the capital, the king of Jerusalem disembarked on the maritime façade of the Bucoleon, which was normally reserved only for the emperor, as a trademark respectful at its right (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. II, 1999). According to the chronicler, the pomp and splendor displayed in front of the sovereign of the Holy City were significant for his prestige and merit before the basileus; the wonders of the palace, which Amalric and his suite could admire during the audience, were only surpassed by the room of the imperial throne, the curtains or admirable works exhibited in front of the Latin audience (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. II, 1999). The function of curtains within the ceremonial, primordial for the performance of the rituals and for maintaining the imperial mystery, generated an interesting interpretation of the chronicler: according to Guillaume de Tyr, these were hiding the Greek's leader from the audience while this raised respectfully to receive the King in a familiar and friendly manner (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. II, 1999). Such a gesture was a very important mark of respect, because during the diplomatic audience, the basileus remained seated on the throne (M. Carrier, 2012). The curtains could hold the role to conceal the contrary, showing the appreciation of the king by the emperor, as his vassal (J. Kinnamos, 1972). According to the chronicler, the curtains had to disguise the fact that Manuel got up from the throne, which was an ungrateful gesture face to the subjects and an impairment of Byzantine ideology. Whatever was the intention, Guillaume perceived this ritual as a positive aspect of the ceremonial. Moreover, Amalric had the honor to sit next to basileus on a marvelous throne, but shorter. While the kiss of peace was changed and diplomatic formalities fulfilled, the Jerusalem's sovereign and his suite received numerous gifts benefiting of special hospitality (Y. Carre, 1992). The Latin had access during the sojourn in private apartments of the emperor and was invited to numerous banquets and festivities in the grand hippodrome, always amplified by the magnificent shows and harmonious songs (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. II, 1999). The scenery and the discipline of

customs were observed on Amalric I; the protocol had as purpose not only to confirm the imperial glory but also the honor and prestige of Jerusalem's king.

The sovereign of the Holy City persuaded Manuel to renew their commitment regarding its support to capturing Egypt, arguing that this can be done easily because the Constantinople was closer than the West, being richer and able to provide help easier. A treaty was drawn up and sealed, but its terms remain unknown. John Kinnamos states that Amalric agreed to become a vassal of the basileus (J. Kinnamos, 1972). It seems that the king recognized vaguely the suzerainty of the Greek emperor over local Christians; Manuel promised naval and financial aid for the close expedition in Egypt and to take part in the joint operation against Mleh of Armenia. Certainly there were clauses relative to the Greek Church in the Syrian capital and probably for the kingdom one, where the basileus already assumed to redecorate the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in 1169 (S. Runciman, 2000).

The pomp and grandeur of the byzantine ceremonial had amazed the chroniclers of the holy expeditions, Guillaume de Tyr saying that its description is a difficult mission. For Robert of Clari the description of the imperial protocol demonstrates an interest for its riches and splendors; a striking thing and consistent with the Western concept of showing its fortune as proof of power and honor. In this perspective, the imperial palace which abounds in sceneries constituting the place for the main ceremony, usually retained the attention of chroniclers and influenced their impressions over the protocol. However, only the most distinguished crusaders could admire the inside of the main palace in Constantinople, particularly the one of Vlaherne palace and the ancient complex called the Grand Palace, composed of Bukoleon and Magnaura (G. Dagrón, 1996). Despite the symbolic and ancient value of the Grand Palace, the one from Vlaherne became famous during Comnenian period. Odon of Deuil, as a member of the suite of Louis VII, could admire its beauty; his external beauty was incomparable, so that no description could show the greatness and splendor that flowed over the walls (Odon of Deuil, 1825). After the conquest of the Constantinople, only the Crusaders less fortunate could not see inside the palace; Robert of Clari shows that there

were twenty chapels decorated with mosaics (Robert of Clari, 1991). In 1171, the King Amalric had the honor to visit the imperial assembly where he received a grandiose reception (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. II, 1999). A part of the Latin chroniclers, impressed by the grandeur of the imperial palace were tempted to present a positive image for the diplomatic Byzantine ceremonial.

The magnificence of the Byzantine court corresponded to the expectations of the soldiers of Christ regarding an illustrious sovereign, which generate a positive perception of the basileus and the scenery surrounding it. Geoffroy of Villehardouin recognized in the Byzantine administration the confirmation that the court of Alexios IV Anghelos was one of a great prince, a reflection of idealized Western court. The pomp, hospitality and gifts offered by the Greek sovereign to his guests were in the eyes of the Western chroniclers the evidence and the recognition of the honor and privileged status of the Latin seniors and kings of the Crusades, so that these courtesy marks contributed to the positive perception of the ceremonial. The glamour and pomp of the protocol represented a sign of respect and courtesy for the guests of the basileus. The hospitality was a mark to the magnanimity for the Greek leader; according to the conventions of the medieval world, the fact of receiving and accommodating the neighbors was perceived as a great virtue, considered an obligation that couldn't be avoided. The wasteful and sumptuous banquets, which were usually the last stage of the diplomatic process, were marks of the hospitality much appreciated by the leaders of the holy expeditions. These banquets, as they were based on shared values of both Christian worlds as giving, hospitality and self-sacrifice, created strong links between the soldiers of Christ and Orientals, creating positive reactions (Anna Comnena, vol II, 1977).

Etienne of Blois was very grateful to the hospitality shown by the Alexios I, expressing his appreciation to the basileus in a letter to his wife, Adele of Normandy in June 1097: "with great joy, due to the grace, I arrived to Constantinople. The emperor received me very well, worthy and honorable, as I was his own son and he made me sumptuous gifts. There is no other in the army of God, neither duke, nor count, nor other powerful person, who enjoy much consideration and favors like me. Indeed, his Imperial Highness asked me

and begged me to entrust one of our sons. He promised me for this great things and honors. I assure you there are not two people like him on the earth. In fact, he gives to the princes and his soldiers gifts, maintains the poors with his possessions "(Etienne de Blois, 1992). Etienne was a prince who appreciated the luxury and culture, the honor and splendor of the imperial court. He doesn't share the prejudices of the knights who looked hostile to the Greek sovereign, being an equilibrated person. His testimony is not sufficient to show that at that time there were no tensions between the East and West. The sources make no mention of Etienne's tribute, although it may have happened (J. Flori, 1997). Favorable to the basileus, the Count of Blois states that Alexius had awarded the princes with the main treasures and the knights with gold and silver. Foucher of Chartres shows that Alexios gave gold, silver and precious suiting to the princes and gold coins to the pedestrians (J. Flori, 1997). Although he left the crusade during the siege of Antioch, the Count completed later his pilgrimage to his wife's insistence. The testimony of Etienne of Blois is one of the few from the twelfth century which not allude in any way to the perfidy of the Greeks. It must be taken into account that the story of the lord is contemporary with the events, while the subsequent presentations, established after the capture of the Nicea, Antioch and Jerusalem were written into the rivalry climate between the two worlds. The meeting between the emperor and count in Constantinople was followed by another in Philomelion, in June 1098. The last appointment can be considered a natural consequence of honorable reception, and implicitly of the ceremonial, and it contributed to the success of the negotiations between the two leaders.

The description of the ceremonial by Guillaume of Tyr aims to emphasize the majesty of the Byzantine emperor and the privileged status of his guests (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. I, 1999). Although less detailed, the Archbishop provides a less concise but alike presentation to the reception of Badouin the IIIrd by Manuel I in 1159; he includes marks of respect for the guests, as the honorable welcome by the collaborators of the basileus, the kiss of peace, the respect of the priority and the permission of the king to sit on a throne less high than the Greek's leader (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. II, 1999). Guillaume appreciated these gestures as

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marks of honor towards Badouin the IIIrd. The two rituals criticized by the historian advert to the custom of the Greek sovereign to cover certain parts of the body in order to avoid the profanation in contact with the profanes, and to the ritual of *proskynesis*, which was perceived as a cult addressed to a deity (Guillaume de Tyr, vol. II, 1999). There is no concrete evidence that Baldwin the IIIrd would have sworn an oath of allegiance.

The positive representation of the diplomatic Byzantine ceremonial occurred when the Western seniors enjoyed the marks of the honor adequate to their status and dignity. The imperial audience became the frame within the Western leaders exposed their requirements, even if the Greek sovereign used this opportunity to legitimize his supreme position in the fictional family of the princes. Showing fortune and offering gifts to Latin leaders are integrating part of the diplomatic process, with the purpose of establishing trust relations between the parties and to facilitate the conclusion of agreements. Sometimes, the chroniclers voluntarily overleaped certain elements of the Byzantine protocol that could affect the dignity and honor of the Westerners.

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