The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Cerimoniis*

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In his preface to the text commonly known as the *De Cerimoniis* or *Book of Ceremonies*, the keenly antiquarian Emperor Constantine VII, who initiated this compilation in the context of a renewal of court ceremonial on his accession to sole-rule in 945, proclaims that his collected descriptions of imperial ceremonies will shine to the splendour of the imperial office like a bright mirror set forth in the midst of the Palace.\(^1\) Constantine’s image rightly places the ceremonies he describes in the context of the Great Palace of Constantinople in which they had evolved over the centuries. But for us there are two problems here. First, though we can more or less trace the confines of this palace on the map of modern Istanbul, all of its many structures and spatial elements have long vanished and can only be hypothetically reconstructed on the basis of written sources, of which the *De Cerimoniis* is the most important.\(^2\) And this brings us to the second problem: that the *De Cerimoniis* is, to use the term applied by Cyril Mango to Byzantine texts in general, a distorting mirror.\(^3\)

The *De Cerimoniis* and the Palace (Fig. 1)

First of all, let us ask what Constantine VII means exactly by the word Palace, in Greek τὸ παλάτιον. The *De Cerimoniis* contains various texts dating from the sixth to the tenth century and reflecting the Great Palace in the respective periods of its history. In the sixth-century chapters excerpted from Peter the Patrician we get a glimpse the old Constantinian palace on the upper terrace beside the Hippodrome with which court ceremonial was still very closely bound at the period.\(^4\) But in another text, the *Kletorologion* or *Banquet Book* of

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1 Cer. I, Preface, I p. 29; 14 Vogt.
2 The most important studies on the palace based on the *De Cerimoniis* and other texts are still Beljaev 1891; Ebersolt 1910 and Guillard 1969, I; and most recently Bolognesi Recchi Franceschini 2000, Bardill 1999, and J. Bardill’s article in this volume p. 5-45.
4 Chapters from Peter the Patrician: Cer. I 93 (84), 104 (95) p. 38625, 4339 Reiske.
Fig. 1  Sketch-Plan of Upper and Lower Palace, with the Walls of Nicephorus Phocas (969).
Philotheus, dated to 899,⁵ we observe that the old buildings on the upper terrace were now only used on special occasions. The everyday life of the emperors and court had shifted to the newer buildings on the lower terrace beside the sea of Marmara, with the emperor’s Koiton or private apartments and the adjacent Chrysotriklinos as its nucleus.⁶ Indeed, in Philotheus and in all the chapters of the De Cerimoniis dating from later periods, the term ‘Palace,’ sometimes with the epithets ‘God-Guarded’ or ‘Sacred’ – because the emperor’s person was considered sacred – is restricted to the complex around the Chrysotriklinos.⁷ Whereas in Peter the Patrician τὸ παλάτιον comprises all the buildings on the upper terrace,⁸ in the tenth-century texts the emperor is always said to leave the Palace when he goes from the lower terrace to one or another of the older buildings on the upper terrace for some special ceremony or when he passes through them in procession to Saint Sophia on feast-days. Similarly, imperial officials on their way to daily functions are able to traverse the upper terrace freely, but they must await the opening of the precinct of the Palace on the lower terrace at precise times.

Thus, such famous buildings of the old palace as the Chalke Gate, the Consistorium, the Great Triklinos of the 19 Couches, the Augusteus and even the Kathisma, or imperial loge, overlooking the Hippodrome, were no longer considered parts of the imperial residence.⁹ Like the adjacent Magnaura, the former Senate house on the Augusteon which was still used for grand occasions of state, the ancient structures on the upper terrace — now some 600 years old — were maintained, in a dubious state of preservation, as a sort of museum. Of course, though less carefully guarded than the actual Palace, the whole area of these old buildings remained inaccessible to the general populace of Constantinople at least until the Fourth Crusade.¹⁰ But just how difficult it had become by the tenth century to maintain and defend this white elephant, and how unnecessary it was to everyday court life, is shown by the construction under the emperor Nicephorus Phocas (963-969) in 969 — only a few years after the compilation of the De Cerimoniis — of walls running from the Hippodrome to the Sea of Marmara which cut off the Palace on the lower terrace from the older buildings on the upper terrace and destroyed not a few of them.¹¹ It was under this same Nicephorus Phocas that the Byzantines reconquered Antioch after three hundred

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⁵ Kletorologion = Cer. II 52, ed. Oikonomides 1972, 81-235.
⁶ For the localisation of the Chrysotriklinos on the lower terrace, see Mango1997, 45-46 and fig. 5.
⁷ See Fig. 1 for a sketch-plan of the entire ensemble of the ‘Palace’ and the older buildings. On the restricted use of the term τὸ παλάτιον, see Bolognesi Recchi Franceschini – Featherstone 2002. ‘Sacred Palace’: e. g. Cer. I 1, I p. 1690 and 2821 Vogt; I 33 (24), I p. 1273 Vogt; II 9 p. 5404 Reiske; II 12 p. 55013 Reiske; ‘Sacred Koiton’: e. g. Cer. I 1, I p. 1710 Vogt.
⁸ One entered the Palace directly from the Regia, the continuation of the Mese running beside the Augusteon: Cer. I 100 (91) p. 41513-14 Reiske.
⁹ On the topography of the upper palace see J. Bardill’s article in this volume p. 7-23.
¹⁰ When John ‘the Fat’ Comnenus revolted in 1200 he first found his way to the Palace barred at the ‘dwellings of the axe-bearers,’ viz. the Scholae beside the Chalke. Then, having gone under the seats of the Hippodrome to reach the gate of the Karea beneath the Kathisma, he had to break this latter down and overcome those guarding it: Heisenberg 1907, 24g-25g.
¹¹ For the walls of Nicephorus Phocas, see Mango 1997, 42-46 and Fig. 5. We have marked them in our Fig. 1.
years, and if the imperial administration had deemed the old palace indispensable, there 
would surely have been the resources to maintain it for at least another century.

Nevertheless, the earlier maintenance and ceremonial use – however occasional – of the 
structures of the old palace is of great significance. They were preserved for many centuries 
in order, as it were, to impart the glory of the past to the image of the reigning emperor 
and the state. This antiquarian tendency is reflected in the composition of the De Cerimoniis. 
Filled with descriptions of ceremonies performed in the old buildings, it tells us frustrat-
ingly little about current ritual in the actual Palace or the newer buildings on the lower 
terrace. Such famous structures as the Sigma-Triconchus exedra where, as we know from 
other sources, the emperor Theophilus (829-842) preferred to spend as much time as pos-
sible, or the Nea Church built by Constantine VII’s own grandfather Basil I (867-886), are 
described only in passing. But we must not let this antiquarianism obscure our view of 
the real state of things. By the tenth century the very names of the buildings of the old pal-
ace had gone out of common use. In a passage added to the De Cerimoniis by a later redactor 
in the 960’s concerning a reception for Arab envoys from Tarsus in 946, the Consistorium, 
the famed aula regia of the Constantinian palace, is repeatedly referred to as the ‘hall 
where the canopy stands and the magistroi are promoted’ – as if that was all that was known 
about it. Moreover, we note here that the Consistorium and all the other buildings of 
the old palace through which the foreign guests were paraded were hung with silken cloths 
and curtains from the Chrysotriklinos and chandeliers from the Nea church. The fact is 
that the old buildings no longer had their own decorations or lighting, and we ask ourselves 
whether the many silken and embroidered cloths hung everywhere, some of them blocking 
off entire ways of passage, were not intended to hide the state of disrepair of these struc-
tures.

The Chrysotriklinos

We shall return to the buildings of the old palace later, but let us now look at what the De 
Cerimoniis tells us about the everyday ritual in the Palace proper in the tenth century. 
Central to this ritual was the Chrysotriklinos. Built or at least reconstructed by the emperor 
Justin II (565-578) at the end of the sixth century, this octagonal hall was the interface 
between the private apartments of the emperor, the Koiton, and the public parts of the

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12 According to Theoph. Cont. 14219-22 Bekker, Theophilus even had the everyday processions (about which see be-
low) transferred to the Triconchus. There is no mention of this in the De Cerimoniis, where the Sigma and Tricon-
chus are mentioned only as the emperor passes on his way to the old palace e. g. Cer. I 19 (10), I p. 6515-21 Vogt, 
or as the setting for ballets and acclamations in honour of the emperor on special feast days, e.g. Cer. I 75 (66), II 
10820-26 Vogt, where we see that one went down a stairway from the terrace of the Chrysotriklinos and turned right 
to reach the narthex of the Nea; but there is nothing about the church itself.

13 Cer. II 15 p. 57519, 57813, 58411, and 5957 Reiske. For the date of the later redactor’s work, see Featherstone 

14 E.g. curtains of the Chrysotriklinos hung in the Consistorium: Cer. II 15 = p. 57519, Reiske; chandeliers from the 
Nea hung in various buildings (on chains also brought from elsewhere): p. 5711-2, 18-19, 5724-5, 13-14, 18-19, 5734 
Reiske; archway in the Tribounalion blocked off with silk hangings: p. 58511, Reiske. On this question see F. A. 
Bauer’s contribution in this volume p. 162.
Palace. In the *De Cerimoniis* we see the Chrysotriklinos as a throne room, not for grand audiences of state as in the Magnaura with its phantasmagoric throne of Solomon, but for other functions such as the promotion of imperial officials, banquets and, especially, the so-called ‘everyday procession’ when officials assembled in the adjoining halls of the Lausiakos and Ioustinianos to await possible summons by the emperor.

The Chrysotriklinos is often compared with octagonal halls which have been found in positions of articulation between private apartments in other late-Antique palaces: in Constantinople beside the old Koiton on the courtyard of the Daphne on the upper terrace, in the Lateran in Rome (later converted into the ‘Baptistery of Constantine’), at Gamzigrad and elsewhere. Rather than look for some ideological significance, I would suggest, quite simply, that an octagonal space lent itself very well to a system of side chambers and curtains whereby the coming and going of the sovereign from his private apartments and his appearance to his subjects could be invested with the appropriate solemnity.

From the descriptions in the *De Cerimoniis* it is clear that the Chrysotriklinos consisted of eight vaulted elements (καμάραι) opening onto a central space. The element on the Eastern side is more precisely called a κόγχη, or apse, whereas the other seven sides are always referred to as καμάραι or βῆλα, that is, curtains, by which they were shut off from the central space. There were sixteen window vaults in a central dome, and also small windows glazed with alabaster set high up in the side vaults, whose light would have passed into the central space through openings, presumably arches, above the curtains which shut off the side vaults at floor level. Unlike the churches of Ss. Sergius and Bacchus, S. Vitale in Ravenna and the Palatine Chapel in Aix, which present a similar configuration of interconnecting side galleries, the Chrysotriklinos was not a free-standing building. There were no proper windows in its side galleries but only doors opening into adjacent structures. As illustrations we reproduce the reconstruction by Ebersolt (Fig. 2) and we offer a sketch plan of the Chrysotriklinos and the surrounding buildings (Fig. 3).

The orientation of the apse to the East is not the only element of the Chrysotriklinos suggestive of an ecclesiastical structure. This apse contained an image of Christ – probably a mosaic – under which, as we shall see, the emperor or co-emperors sat to receive the veneration of subjects and guests. The main entrance was on the Western side, with an

15 For a recent ideological interpretation of the various places and modes of the emperor sitting on the throne, see Dagron 2003. On the Throne of Solomon see A. Berger in this volume p. 68.
16 For these parallels see Featherstone 2005.
17 Cer. II 15 p. 58115-18, 58112-16 Reiske, and II 1 passim.
18 Cer. II 15 p. 51918-5201 Reiske.
Fig. 3 Chrysotrikinos and Surrounding Buildings.
outside porch called the Tripeton, in which there was a clock, or sundial. The Tripeton gave on to a terrace on which were also the entrances to the halls of the Lausiakos and Ioustinianos.

As we have said, all the side vaults except the Eastern apse were shut off from the central space of the Chrysotriklinos by curtains. The curtains on the Western side could be drawn back in the middle, and it was through them that one was admitted into the Chrysotriklinos for an audience with the emperor sitting opposite in the Eastern apse. On other occasions when the emperor was not sitting on the throne, imperial officials and guests could walk straight through the Chrysotriklinos, going in the Western doors and out other doors on the Eastern side, evidently in the Eastern apse, which gave on to a terrace. These doors, like those of the Western entrance, were of silver.19

The vault immediately to the left of the apse gave on to the chapel of St Theodore, which connected with the Phylax, or Treasury, of the Palace. Like the Octagon beside the old private apartments in the upper palace, the vault in front of St Theodore’s served as a vestry. The emperor’s vestments were kept there, and he was vested behind the curtain before various ceremonies in the Chrysotriklinos or any of the churches on the lower terrace.

Proceeding counter-clockwise, the central vault on the Northern side gave on to a structure called the Pantheon, about which all we know is that it was big enough for at least one high official to wait in before ceremonies; and the next vault, immediately to the left of the Western entrance, articulated with the Diaitarikion or steward’s room. Behind the curtain of this vault was a bench on which the Papias, or Door Keeper of the Palace, placed the keys when he had opened the Chrysotriklinos. In addition to the main doors of the Western entrance and those in the Eastern apse, there were at least two other ways into the Chrysotriklinos on the Northern side, through the Diaitarikion and the Phylax, whereby officials could come and go unseen behind the curtains which shut off the central space. Thus, it was this Northern side which articulated with the public parts of the Palace.

The vaults on the opposite, Southern, side of the Chrysotriklinos gave on to the private apartments of the emperor and empress. The entrance to the Koiton of the emperor appears to have been in the wall of the central vault. There was a bench behind the curtain here, and the doors to the Koiton were of silver. The vault immediately to the right of the Western entrance is mentioned as the place where the patriarch divested himself of his stole after blessing the meal at banquets; and in the wall of this same vault there was a direct entrance to the Koiton of the empress. The remaining vault, just to the right of the Eastern apse, is the probable location of Constantine VII’s Aristeterion, or breakfast room, where other members of the imperial family, including the children, could come from the Koiton to join the emperor for dessert in the company of select guests at the end of banquets in the Chrysotriklinos.20

19 For these and other details of the side vaults, see Featherstone 2005, 846-851.
20 As during the celebration of the Brumalia: Cer. II 18 p. 603-6 and 7-9 Reiske; and after the banquet for Olga of Russia: Cer. II 15 p. 597-598 Reiske.
Everyday Ritual

From the two comparatively scanty chapters of the De Cerimoniiis on everyday ritual we learn that the Palace was normally opened every morning after Matins, thus shortly after dawn. The hetairiarch or chief of the Company of guards, together with the weekly rota quartered within the Palace first opened a complicated passage from the courtyard of the Daphne leading to the Lausiakos, and then, together with the Papias, opened the Western doors of the Chrysotriklinos. Then they went into the other adjoining hall, the Ioustinianos, and passing through it, opened the gate on its opposite end which gave on, through a porch called the Skyla, to the so-called Covered Hippodrome. This latter was a part of the old upper palace, and the gate in the Skyla was the most direct entrance to the newer lower Palace. Corresponding in position with the so-called Stadium of Domitian’s palace on the Palatine, the Covered Hippodrome was not a race course at all, but a rectangular garden surrounded by galleries. It was here that imperial officials awaited the opening of the Palace and entered to take their places ‘in procession,’ that is, in the order of their rank, on benches in the Ioustinianos. This daily procession is the survival of the Roman Salutatio Augusti or, more particularly, the Cottidiana Officia, when the emperor greeted high officials. As in the case of its classical antecedent, however, we cannot know whether all imperial officials came for this procession every day: no particular officials are mentioned for weekdays. The attendance of even the highest officials is indicated on ordinary Sundays, but the procession was held on such Sundays only when the emperor so desired.

Unfortunately, the De Cerimoniiis tells us nearly nothing about where the everyday business of administration was conducted. There is mention of the daily opening of bureaux (ἀσηκρητεῖα) beside the Lausiakos and the Eidikon or Imperial Privy Purse, and it is here that the Logothete, or chief official for foreign affairs, awaits his summons by the emperor. We must assume that a fair number of people were admitted to these bureaux each day.

The procedure for the everyday procession was the following. At the end of the first hour, thus at about 7 o’clock, when all had taken their places, the head of the weekly rota of servants assigned to the Chrysotriklinos knocked thrice on the doors of the Koiton. This was as close as anyone but the servants of the bedchamber got to the emperor’s private apartments. At the emperor’s command, the servants of the bedchamber opened the doors and vested the emperor in the skaramangion, or coloured silk tunic, which the chief of

21 Cer. I 1 p. 518-522 Reiske is about the everyday procession on weekdays; Cer. II 2 p. 522-525 Reiske on ordinary Sundays.

22 For the topography of the Covered Hippodrome and the other buildings involved in the daily opening of the Palace, see Bolognesi Recchi Franceschini – Featherstone 2002, 39-44.

23 For the Salutatio, see Winterling 1999, 117-138, and esp. 117-118 on the Cottidiana Officia. On ordinary Sundays the Magistroi and Patrikioi are mentioned together with the Drungarios of the Fleet: Cer. II 2 p. 523-12,15 Reiske.

24 Opening of the ἀσηκρητεῖα: Cer. II 1 p. 519 Reiske; Logothete waiting there: p. 520 Reiske. There is also mention of old bureaux near Ss. Sergius and Bacchus, but only as a place through which the emperor passes on his way to that church; they were apparently disaffected: Cer. I 20 (11), I p. 79-14,15 and 80-25,24 Vogt.

25 The only exception is on the occasion of the birth of a son to the emperor, when the wives of imperial officials were admitted to the empress’ Koiton to see the mother and baby, under golden bedclothes, and present their gifts: Cer. II 22 p. 618 Reiske.
the guards had placed on the bench beside the doors to the Koiton. The emperor then entered the Chrysotriklinos and, going into the Eastern apse, he did reverence to the image of Christ and sat down, not on the main throne in the centre of the apse – this was left empty on ordinary days – but on a golden sellion or chair on the left side of it. He then summoned the Logothete, who entered through the Western curtains drawn aside by the Papias. On entering for the first time – though not subsequently – the Logothete, as everyone who entered the presence of emperor, fell to the floor in ἱππονισία, or obeisance – the salutatio had given way to the adoratio already in the Late-antique period. The emperor then commanded the Logothete to bring in whomever he desired to see. On non-feast days, when there was no special business, the Papias gave the minsai, or dismissal – from the late-Latin missa –, by shaking his keys at the end of the third hour, around 9 o’clock. On hearing this the officials made their way out of the Ioustinianos to go home. From notes appended to this section we learn that on ordinary Sundays the emperor sat on a sellion covered in purple silk on the right side of the throne. On weekdays he wore only a scaramangion without the gold-bordered cloak; on Sundays he also put on the gold-bordered cloak. On weekdays the high officials wore the scaramangion in the procession; on Sundays a red sagion, or short cloak. To receive foreign dignitaries, the emperor sat on the purple covered sellion as on Sundays, wearing a gold-bordered cloak with pearls and, if he desired, a crown. A further note states that the same order was followed when the Palace was opened in the afternoon, though no exact times are given. On Sundays, before the minsai were given the Artoctolines or banquet-master read out the names of those invited to dine. Banquets were held in the Ioustinianos or in the Chrysotriklinos itself. The emperor sat at a table set apart from the others, the ἐποκοπτή. With him sat only his family and the very highest officials such as the Caesar and Zoste Patrikia, or Girdled Patrician, who were most often also his relations, and the patriarch. Other officials were seated at other tables in proximity to the emperor according to their rank.

Particular Ceremonies

This was the bare minimum of everyday ritual. On most days it would have been augmented by other ceremonies which, depending on their solemnity, were either performed completely in the lower Palace or involved going to the old upper palace and Saint Sophia as well. Lesser religious feasts were celebrated on the lower terrace, with a liturgy in one of the Palace churches, such as the Theotokos of the Pharos on the terrace beside the Chrysotriklinos, or St Basil’s chapel in the Lausiakos, followed by a banquet. Such
personal celebrations as the emperor’s birthday or the newly revived Brumalia were also confined to the lower terrace, with a ballet in the Sigma-Triconchus complex and a banquet in the Chrysotriklinos. Promotions of all but the highest officials were performed in the Chrysotriklinos, for example those of a strategos, or a cubicarius, or, at a higher level, a Patrikios or a Zoste Patrikia. Like state receptions in the Magnaura and celebrations in Saint Sophia on great feast days, the promotion of a Patrikios or a Zoste Patrikia involved the full assembly of all the officials. The Chrysotriklinos now took on a more solemn aspect. The emperor wore his crown and sat on the central throne – not a sellion at the side – and the cubicularii stood in a semicircle in the apse behind him. Beginning at the curtains before the Western doors, the Papias censed the Chrysotriklinos with a thurible, and then censed the emperor. The officials were admitted according to their rank in a series of eight entrées or ‘curtains,’ as they were called, and performed the proskynesis under the eye of the Master of Ceremonies. When all had entered the candidate was brought in to the emperor and invested in his or her office, whereupon the whole assembly acclaimed the emperor with the shout ‘Many Years’. Then all went in procession through the old palace, and the emperor and the new Patrikios or Zoste Patrikia were acclaimed at set points by the circus factions. The procession continued to Saint Sophia, where the new dignitary received communion and the blessing of the patriarch. A Patrikios would then be escorted home by the factions, whereas a Zoste Patrikia would proceed to the Magnaura, where she herself was the object of another ceremony of proskynesis by the wives of imperial officials. She then returned to the lower Palace, where, being usually a member of the imperial family, she lived.

Now, we note here that the actual rite of promotion of a Patrikios or Zoste Patrikia was performed in the Chrysotriklinos. Likewise, foreign envoys were received there to conduct the real business of their visit. But their first audience, as in the case of the Tarsans in 946, was always held with great pomp in the Magnaura and followed by an itinerary through the old palace fitted out to impress them. As in the promotion of a Patrikios or Zoste Patrikia, however, these old buildings served as little more than a ceremonial backdrop on the way from the lower Palace to Saint Sophia or the Magnaura. The same is true even on great feasts such as Easter, Christmas and Pentecost, when the emperor went in a grand procession, or πρόκενσις, to Saint Sophia, though every effort was made on these occasions to bring the old palace back to life. Very early in the morning all the paraphernalia – the Great (processional) Cross of St Constantine, the Rod of Moses, the Roman sceptres, the ptychia (whatever they were!), and all the rest – most of which were now kept in the

34 The Tarsans and the Daylamite (Sayfaddawla) and Olga of Russia are all received first in the Magnaura: Cer. II 15 p. 583-58424, 595-521, 58416-5955 Reiske; the Tarsans and Olga are then received subsequently in the Chrysotriklinos: p. 58615-58815 and 59017-20 Reiske (the Chrysotriklinos is not named here, but Olga is summoned from the adjoining Kainourgion where she had been waiting). On the reception of the Tarsans see F. A. Bauer in this volume p. 154-162.
35 The very first chapter of the De Cerimoniis is devoted to this grand procession: I 1, I p. 3-28 Vogt.
Treasury beside St Theodore’s or in the Theotokos of the Pharos, were taken out and set up in what was apparently their traditional places in the old palace. The imperial crown and vestments were also sent up from the lower Palace and laid out in the Octagon beside the old Koiton on the courtyard of the Daphne. On this day the lower Palace was not opened as usual but all the imperial officials and the circus factions went directly, in their parade clothes, to set points in the old palace along the itinerary to be followed by the emperor. The most important stops were the Augusteus, where the servants of the Chrysostriklinos and the Company of guards acclaimed the emperor; then St Stephens’s Church beside the Hippodrome, where the emperor revered the Cross of St Constantine; then the Octagon, where the emperor was vested and crowned for the feast; then back through the Augusteus, where the Logothete was waiting to perform the *proskynesis*; then to the porch of the Augusteus called the Golden Hand, where the emperor received the *proskynesis* of the magistrioi and other high officials; then across the Onopodion for the *proskynesis* of the Drungarios of the Fleet; then to the Consistorium where another cross of Constantine and the Rod of Moses were set up and the Protasecretis and imperial notarii were waiting; then through the porticoes of the Candidati, the Exkoubita and the Scholae, where the emperor was acclaimed in Latin – now generally unintelligible – by the imperial guards who bore as many of the ancient banners and standards as could be kept in repair.\(^{36}\) Next came the Tribounalion, where the emperor was acclaimed by the circus factions. Then he proceeded through the Propylaion of the Holy Apostles to the Chalke Gate for more acclamations by the factions; and from there he went to Saint Sophia for the liturgy.

For state receptions in the Magnaura, imperial officials went directly at the first hour of the morning to the Magnaura, and the emperor went privately (μυστικῶς), as he always did when not taking part in a formal procession, through a system of corridors which brought him up from the Palace to the Magnaura.\(^{37}\) After such a reception or after the liturgy in Saint Sophia, the emperor normally returned to the Palace privately through the corridors, whereas the officials and foreign guests who were invited to dine made their way to the Palace through the old buildings on the upper terrace. By the tenth century banquets were almost always held in the Ioustitianos or the Chrysotriklinos, where we find the only mention of kitchens in the *De Ceremoniis*.\(^{38}\) On special occasions banquets might be accompanied by the choristers of St Sophia and the Holy Apostles, who stood behind the curtains of the side vaults of the Chrysotriklinos. The playing of organs marked the entry of the various courses of the meal.\(^{39}\) On great secular holidays there might also be a ballet,

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\(^{36}\) Latin acclamations for the feast: Cer. I 1, I p. 819 Vogt. The fossilised and corrupt nature of this ceremonial Latin is clear from the examples preserved in the *De Ceremoniis*, e.g. the acclamations of the cubicularii at Christmas: Δόξα τοῦ Βασιλείου ὁ Θεός εἰμι. *De Ceremoniis* I 32, I p. 125–51 Vogt. According to the inventory of banners etc. kept in the Church of the Lord beside the Consistorium – evidently a sort of chapel of the adjacent Exkoubita, Candidati and Scholae of the old palace – twelve of the eighteen standard-holders had been repaired in the Fourth Indiction (AD 946), and the other six were out of repair: Cer. II 40 p. 641, 5 Reiske.

\(^{37}\) Order for receptions in the Magnaura: Cer. II 15 p. 566/15–570 Reiske.

\(^{38}\) The door to the kitchen opened into the adjoining Lausiakos: Cer. II 1 p. 519, 5 Reiske.

\(^{39}\) On the function of organs as ‘giver of signals’ within court ceremony see A. Berger in this volume p. 66.
either before the banquet in the Sigma-Triconchus complex on the lower terrace or in the Chrysotriklinos during the meal. On each of the twelve days of Christmas, however, ancient custom was preserved and banquets were held in the Triklinos of the 19 Couches reclining in the Roman style.40

The Hippodrome

Another part of the old palace where particularly ancient ceremonies persisted was the Kathisma on the Hippodrome. There are six lengthy chapters in the De Cerimoniis which describe in detail the procedure for races and the appearance of the emperor on such holidays as the anniversary of the City on the eleventh of May.41 These chapters contain precious information taken from much older sources. But again, we must be wary of antiquarianism. For our present purposes, the description of the races put on – or, we might say, staged – for the Tarsans in 946 is much more telling. Here again, as in ceremonies elsewhere which have nothing to do with the Hippodrome, we see the circus factions reduced to a purely ornamental function as chanter of acclamations and dancers. Moreover, the races themselves appear as little more than another pretext for the extravagant display of costume; there is a total disregard for sport, equal honours being given to the winning and the losing faction.42 One can only wonder what the guests made of these races! All this would suggest that the Hippodrome, once a place where the ruler confronted the populace and the factions took a live interest in the races and issues of the day, had also become, by the tenth century, a sort of museum piece, with stylised ceremonies repeated at set dates in the year and on special occasions.43

The Walls of Nicephorus Phocas and Desuetude of the Old Palace

But whatever the nature of the ceremonies of the Hippodrome, the fact that the Kathisma was included within Nicephorus Phocas’ walls in 969 proves their continuity. The case is less certain with other ceremonies in the old palace described in the De Cerimoniis. Imperial coronations are said to commence in the Augusteus, marriages in the church of Saint Stephen beside the Hippodrome, and the lying in state for funerals in the Triklinos of the 19 Couches; the promotion of a Caesar is also placed in the 19 Couches, and that of a Magistros in the Consistorium.44 But as we have already seen, even if the Magistroi were

40 Christmas: Cer. II 52 p. 175\textsuperscript{22}-185\textsuperscript{4} Oikonomides. The banquet for the Daylamite (Sayfaddawla) was also held in the 19 Couches ‘after the manner of Twelfth Day’: Cer. II 15 p. 594-5 Reiske.


42 Description of the costumes of the factions, choristers from St Sophia and the Holy Apostles and Hippodrome employees fills most of the section on these races: Cer. II 15 p. 588\textsuperscript{19}-590\textsuperscript{11} Reiske; ‘for the sake of display before the Saracen envoys,’ the emperor commanded, in contradiction to the ‘old order,’ that the losing faction should also accompany the winner in the victory celebrations: Cer. II 15 p. 590\textsuperscript{11}-11 Reiske.

43 About this ceremonialisation of the races, see Mango 1981, 344-350.

44 Coronations of both emperor and empress begin in Augusteus: Cer. I 47 (38), II p. 1\textsuperscript{6} Vogt and I 49 (40), II p. 11\textsuperscript{3}-12\textsuperscript{2} Vogt; marriages in St Stephen’s: Cer. I 48 (39), II p. 6\textsuperscript{4}-5 Vogt; lying in state in the 19 Couches: Cer. I 69 (60), II p. 84\textsuperscript{3} Vogt; promotion of a Caesar in the 19 Couches: Cer. I 52 (43), II p. 26\textsuperscript{2}-27\textsuperscript{5} Vogt; of a Magistros in the Consistorium: Cer. I 55 (46), II p. 40\textsuperscript{20}-43\textsuperscript{20} Vogt.
still promoted in the hall where the canopy stood, the name of the Consistorium and its
original function had been forgotten, and the ceremonies there, with furnishings brought
from the lower Palace, must have been very artificial. Likewise, one wonders how long
Constantine VII’s restoration of the 19 Couches from a state of dilapidation lasted.\footnote{Cf. Theoph. Cont. 449\textsuperscript{17}-450\textsuperscript{3}.} Indeed, can we even be sure that ceremonies were still performed in the old palace at all?
The only contemporary coronation described in the \textit{De Cerimoniis} is that of Nicephorus
Phocas in 963. This, too, is a splendid example of antiquarianism. Parts of these ceremonies
were copied from the description of the coronation of Leo I in 457 by Peter the Patrician,
– it is in fact because of this borrowing that the excerpts from this author were included
in the \textit{De Cerimoniis}.\footnote{Account of the coronation of Nicephorus Phocas in Cer. I 105 (96) p. 438\textsuperscript{2}-440\textsuperscript{11} Reiske (borrowings from Peter the Patrician: p. 439\textsuperscript{10}-17 Reiske [cf. Cer. I 100 (91) p. 410\textsuperscript{15}-411\textsuperscript{3} Reiske]); cf. Featherstone 2004, 114.} Nicephorus Phocas’ coronation began, as that of Leo had done,
with acclamations by the soldiers before the Golden Gate outside the city, followed by a
triumphal entry through the Golden Gate. Proceeding along the Mese, or main street of
the city, amidst the acclamations of the populace, Nicephorus Phocas went to Saint Sophia
for coronation by the patriarch. Unfortunately, the end of this chapter is lost in the Leipzig
MS of the \textit{De Cerimoniis}, and unless it is discovered in the palimpsest, we shall never
know whether there were also ceremonies in the old palace.\footnote{There is one folio missing here from the \textit{Lipsiensis}, and the account breaks off at the beginning of the office in St Sophia (p. 440\textsuperscript{11} Reiske). Fol. 265 of the \textit{Chalcensis} part of the palimpsest contains this passage of chapter I, 105 (96) but, alas, it breaks off a few words earlier than in the \textit{Lipsiensis}, with \textit{έννοια} p. 440\textsuperscript{11} Reiske). Perhaps the subsequent text will be found in the Vatopedi part. About the palimpsest, see Featherstone – Kresten – Gruškova 2005.} But in any case, it is a curious
coincidence that Nicephorus Phocas chose not to commence his reign in the old palace, much
of which his walls would soon destroy, but preferred instead the Golden Gate which, we
now know, was redecorated as a triumphal arch in this same period.\footnote{See Mango 2000, 181-186.}
Summary

The text commonly known as the De Cerimoniis is our most important source for the architecture and ritual of the now vanished Great Palace of Constantinople. This compilation, however, comprises material dating from the sixth to the tenth centuries, and care must be taken to determine to which period any particular detail belongs. From the tenth-century chapters it is clear that the everyday life of the court had shifted from the old Constantinian palace beside the Hippodrome on the upper terrace to the complex around the Chrysotriklinos and adjacent private apartments of the emperor on the lower terrace beside the Sea of Marmara.

The structure of the Chrysotriklinos and the ritual performed in it can be reconstructed from the De Cerimoniis. This octagonal building contained seven side chambers shut off by curtains from the central space whereby the coming and going of officials and audiences with the sovereign could be invested with the appropriate solemnity. Reminiscent of a church, there was an apse on the Eastern side where the emperor sat on the throne under an image of Christ. The most important ritual was the ‘everyday procession’. The Chrysotriklinos was also used for imperial ceremonies such as the promotion of officials, the reception of foreign guests and for banquets.

On great religious and state holidays and to impress foreign dignitaries, the buildings of the old palace on the upper terrace were also brought into use. In fact however, these buildings had become a sort of museum which served as little more than a backdrop for processions by the emperor and court on their way to St Sophia or the Magnaura. Just how unnecessary the old palace had become to court life, and how difficult it was to maintain and defend, is shown by the construction of walls by Nicephorus Phocas in 969, cutting off the lower Palace from all but the Hippodrome and destroying not a few of the other old buildings.
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Fig. 1: adapted from W. Müller-Wiener, Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbul (1977), 232. – Fig. 2: Ebersolt 1910, folding plan. – Fig 3: author.
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