**Put a Crown on It:   
Imperial Coronations in the Seventh Century (641-602)**

*Christian Rollinger (Trier)*

Something unusual happened in Hagia Sophia in September of the year 641: standing at or on the ambo of the Great Church and accompanied by his uncle Heraclonas, eleven-year-old Flavius Heraclius, afterwards known as Constans II, was made emperor:

[Heraclonas], taking along his nephew Herakleios [i.e., Constans II], proceeded to the church and mounted the ambo together with Pyrrhos, whom he invited to crown Herakleios; and as the crowd was pressing him [i.e., the emperor] to accomplishing the deed, he took from the church the crown of his father Herakleios and performed the ceremony. [[1]](#footnote-1)

What was unusual was not that this should happen in Justinian’s great church; although scholarship mostly alleges that Constans’ coronation was the first to take place in Hagia Sophia, at least one emperor had been crowned there before (and at least three others in other churches), as I will show.[[2]](#footnote-2) No, what was unusual, was first that the ruling monarch should invite the patriarch, Pyrrhus, to act as *coronator*. Patriarchs had crowned emperors before, to be sure, but traditionally only in those cases where ‘new’ emperors were created, when no living Augustus was available to actually place the diadem on the new emperor’s head, as remained customary.[[3]](#footnote-3) This was not the case with Constans, who was accepted as and made co-emperor by his uncle, who stood next to him in Great Church. Second, this seems to have been the first time (that we know of, at least) that a charismatic insignia was used in a coronation, i.e., the diadem of Heraclius, founder of the dynasty, which Heraclonas had had expressly fetched from his father’s grave.[[4]](#footnote-4) Constans’ coronation is typically mentioned without further analysis and only in passing, as point of origin for the traditional Byzantine rite of coronation in the Great Church, which would remain standard protocol for emperors until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and as a sort of coda to the first church coronation that we (perhaps) know of, that of Phocas. Its anomalies have so far merited little attention.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Imperial accessions – coronations[[6]](#footnote-6) – typically belonged to one of two categories: ‘full’ coronations, that is the creation of a new emperor in the absence of any living monarch to appoint and crown him, and ‘minor’ coronations, where a living emperor appointed a colleague. The latter happened frequently – but not always – when an emperor had sons or male relatives that he wished to succeed him, although on occasion non-relatives could be selected if there was pressing need.[[7]](#footnote-7) ‘Full’ coronations were particularly grand affairs and among the most splendid formal ceremonies that the late antique empire knew.[[8]](#footnote-8) The most important ritual elements of the accession ceremony were these: the acclamation of the new emperor by the various groups present; a ‘military’ coronation with a *torques* and subsequent raising on the shield; the investment with the imperial purple; the diadem being set on his head, either by himself or, later, the patriarch; a throne speech, which included the promise of a *donativum*.[[9]](#footnote-9) The traditional site of the ceremony during the fourth and much of the fifth century was the military parade ground (*kampos*) at Hebdomon, a suburb outside the Theodosian walls.With the accession of Anastasius to emperorship, however, the ceremony shifted its topographical focus, moving first to the hippodrome and thence, with the accession of Justin II in 565 to the Great Palace proper.[[10]](#footnote-10) Kai Trampedach has convincingly explained this shift with the lessened role of the army during the selection of emperors in the later fifth and sixth centuries and the concurrently greater importance of courtly elites, and the retreat to the palace/hippodrome complex was part of a (slightly) ‘de-militarised’ version of the accession ceremony, in which the top echelons of court society figured more prominently.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Ceremonies to mark the accession of co-emperors, who were co-opted by the ruling monarch, followed a similar, but reduced, protocol. During the fourth and first part of the fifth century, these, too, were held at Hebdomon, before moving to the city itself.[[12]](#footnote-12) Leo was the first to raise his grandson Leo II to the rank of Augustus in the imperial palace of the hippodrome, the *kathisma*, in 473, in full view of the assembled populace.[[13]](#footnote-13) Given that in these cases the origin of the new co-emperor’s imperial authority was plain, the ceremonies for such ‘minor’ accessions were, by comparison, simpler affairs and after Leo II typically took place in the Great Palace itself, in front of and with the participation of a relatively select audience. Still, the absolute number of participants was never low. Justinian, for instance, was appointed co-Augustus during a formal σιλέντιον καὶ κομέντον, i.e., an assembly of the *consistorium* and the whole senate, held in a courtyard of the Great Palace.[[14]](#footnote-14) The ceremony was witnessed by the court elites, the guard troops and *scholae* of the palace, and, very likely, by a delegation of the circus factions.[[15]](#footnote-15) Altogether, hundreds, if not thousands, crowded the palace courtyards. In each of these cases – and we have detailed descriptions of the ceremonies[[16]](#footnote-16) – it was the ruling monarch who personally invested the new co-emperor with the imperial purple and diadem.

However, political ceremonial is not static; it is subject to modifications and innovations, to change. In general terms, for both ‘minor’ and ‘full’ coronations, there was a similar process of gradual ‘demilitarisation’[[17]](#footnote-17) and concomitant spatial retreat of the ceremony first into the city and then into the palace proper during the fifth and sixth centuries. This changed in the early seventh century, the first half of which was, in general, a time of renewed and more intense military unrest breaking with the tradition of ‘peaceful’ transfers of power that had obtained since the death of Theodosius the Great.[[18]](#footnote-18) Emperors such as Phocas, Heraclius, or Constans II came to power amidst military (and partly civilian) uprisings, and in all three cases, these commotions found their echo in the way the accessions were celebrated and must by necessity influence our understanding of these ritual occasions. The coronation of Constans II can act as a starting point for a retrospective look at the earlier cases of imperial accession, in order to showcase how the ceremonial changed throughout the early seventh century, how it was adapted to each particular case of succession, and what specific role it fulfilled at each of these occasions.[[19]](#footnote-19) First, however, it will be necessary to briefly review the role of accession ceremonies and coronations in the late Roman polity in general.

**Making Monarchs: Ceremonial as Politics**

Ceremonial not only gave expression to the underlying ideology of emperorship—at least to the official, court-propagated version—; it embodied it. The emperor himself was remote, untouchable. When he spoke or was present, silence was observed, in order to hear his sacred utterances in appropriate humility. Walking in procession or seated on his throne, the emperor was a living, embodied icon of imperial, divinely sanctioned power.[[20]](#footnote-20) In the hippodrome, one of the most important places of ceremonial interaction between ruler and ruled, he not only ‘appeared’ in the *kathisma*, he “rose” like the sun.[[21]](#footnote-21) When he was raised on a shield as part of his accession ceremony, too, he shone forth like a second sun, as one panegyrist has it, and this description is more than mere simile.[[22]](#footnote-22) In ceremonial, the emperor appeared as part of a choreography of light, smell and sound; his appearance was an assault on the senses.[[23]](#footnote-23) Gold, jewels, and pearls, with which his dress, shoes, diadem, belt, carriage and horse bridle were beset, reflected artificial light as well as daylight, giving the emperor’s countenance a rippling, glittering effect; incense and other unguents were burned in his presence. When a later Byzantine panegyrist uses terms such as “purplegleaming” (πορφυραυγὲς) or the “purpleglittering sun” (ἥλιε πορφυρακτινε) to describe the emperor, it is a reflection of his ceremonial appearances as much as a literary device.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Scholarship has increasingly left behind the traditionally pejorative reading of such extravagances in performance and panegyrics as mere flattery or ‘representation’. Instead, the influence of anthropological researchers such as Clifford Geertz and Catherine Bell, has transformed our understanding of the importance of ceremonies in political contexts, supplementing the seemingly endless ‘turns’ of historical scholarship with a new *cultural* and an even newer *performative turn*.[[25]](#footnote-25) Recent scholarship, under the influence of Historians of the medieval and early modern periods have led the way in examining anew political rituals (such as coronations), their symbolic meanings and actual political import.[[26]](#footnote-26) In the German-speaking academy, the term *Kulturgeschichte des Politischen* has been coined to describe the ongoing interest in how political systems, ideologies and ceremonials interact with each other and how they influence a lived political reality in different polities.[[27]](#footnote-27) Ceremonial, in this view, was primarily a means of communication, both between the emperor and his subjects, and between different individuals or groups of these subjects, particularly within the context of the imperial court.[[28]](#footnote-28) It could also be transformative and nowhere is this more obvious or important than in the question of imperial succession.

Throughout its existences, the Roman empire had no formally settled or legally codified principle of succession, no equivalent to the British or American Succession Acts, which regulate lines and modalities of succession in the case of the death of the British monarch or American president. The dynastic principle was strongly embedded, certainly, but in and of itself was never a guarantee of a peaceful or successful transfer of power from one generation to the next, even when there was a new generation waiting in the wings.[[29]](#footnote-29) In any case, dynastic succession was not the norm in late antiquity. Apart from two more or less short-lived imperial houses – that of Constantine and Valentinian/Theodosius –, it was rare indeed for the son of one emperor to succeed him. Moreover, no emperor between Leo I (r. 457-474) and Maurice (r. 582-602) had male descendants that survived into adulthood at all, and even in those two cases, for one reason or another, the succession failed.[[30]](#footnote-30)

How, then, did Roman emperors become Roman emperors? They were *made* by and through their accession ceremonies. Political ceremonies not only symbolically represent any given political ideology; through its bodily performance of a valid, agreed-upon political order, they can also help stabilise or even establish that very order. Ritual theory, as exemplified by Catherine Bell, has held that ceremonies not only reify ideologies and political hierarchies, but in a sense produce them.[[31]](#footnote-31) Ceremonial is both a performative en*act*ment of imperial ideology and a communicative-creative action, an agent of change, as Clifford Geertz has argued[[32]](#footnote-32), within the political reality of Roman emperorship, which I understand, broadly speaking, as an political system based on consensus and acceptance (*Akzeptanzsystem*).[[33]](#footnote-33) In such a system, the legitimacy of the rulers did not rest on divine right or a legal principle, but on the acceptance of their rule by their subjects.[[34]](#footnote-34) Accession ceremonies, in this context, were ritual occasions that not only *showed* that the empire had a new emperor, but which, in a very real sense, *made* that emperor by performing a *consensus omnium* that was the base of his future rule.

It follows that accession rituals were by their nature and importance particularly lavish and impressive celebrations that included large numbers of participants, particularly those societal sectors, on whose acceptance the emperorship rested. In the urbanised, sedentary eastern monarchy of late antiquity, these were the inhabitants of Constantinople (the ‘people’ in Flaig’s model), the guard units and armed *scholae* (the ‘army’), and the court elites (the ‘senate’).[[35]](#footnote-35) By their presence and active participation, the decisive groups acquiesced to the claim of a new emperor and demonstrated this acquiescence to the new regime, as well as to each other, by playing their allotted parts in the ceremony. These parts were different and specific, but of equal importance. Ritual theory teaches us to recognise that the transformative effect of ceremonies resulted precisely from the sum of its actions, undertaken by the polity as a collective.[[36]](#footnote-36) For this reason, it is pointless to try to identify the precise moment or ritual act during the ceremony, in which the private individual was turned into an emperor, as earlier scholarship has long attempted to do.[[37]](#footnote-37)

**Constans Again**

Let us return briefly to our starting point. Constans’ accession was the result of a military coup. On the death of emperor Heraclius in February 641, his sons Constantine III (father of Constans) and Heraclonas had assumed joint emperorship, but Constantine, who had been ill for a time, died suddenly on 25 May. The precise events between February and September 641 are obscured from our view by a conflicting and incomplete source tradition, but this we know (or think we know): during the brief period of Heraclonas’ rule, which a hostile source tradition claims he shared with his mother Martina, a bitter factional battle erupted between the two family branches or the Heraclian dynasty.[[38]](#footnote-38) Rumors circulated that Martina, Heraclius’ second wife, had poisoned Constantine III to clear the path for her own offspring with Heraclius, most notably Heraclonas, their eldest son, and it was feared that Heraclonas and Martina would move against the young Constans, who was slightly more than ten years old.[[39]](#footnote-39) Among the supporters of the dead Heraclonas’, which included sections of the inhabitants of Constantinople, the court elites, and the senate, fears for Heraclonas’ son Constans were aggravated by uncertainties surrounding his imperial status.[[40]](#footnote-40) Constans had previously been elevated to the imperial college by his father Constantine III, promoted to Caesar together with his uncles David and Martinos, as Constantin Zuckerman has demonstrated by way of the evidence of dating formulae used in contemporary papyri.[[41]](#footnote-41) After his father’s death, he appears to have been dropped again from the imperial college, as his name no longer appears in dating formulae used in October/November, i.e. immediately prior to his coronation.[[42]](#footnote-42) Heraclonas was forced to publicly attempt to calm the populace by performing ostentatious ritual acts designed to project dynastic unity:

He showed him [i.e., Constans] hale and sound to everybody and protected him like his own child […]. In the presence of Pyrrhos, the archpriest of the City, he laid his hand on the life-giving cross and swore that Constantine’s children would not be harmed by him or anyone else.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Nevertheless, a general named Valentinos, allegedly bribed by the dying Constantine III to secure the loyalty of the armies to Constans, emerged as the leader (or figurehead) of opposition to Heraclonas.[[44]](#footnote-44) He seems to have led an armed insurrection against the emperor, moving to Chalcedon and plundering the Asiatic suburbs of Constantinople, with the aim of forcing the regime to accept Constans as co-emperor.[[45]](#footnote-45)

This, then, is the wider context of the politically charged coronation of Constans II in Hagia Sophia. The intention behind it was to try and defuse the delicate political situation by publicly associating him to Heraclonas’ rule and to emphasize dynastic unity. The coronation, witnessed and thus validated by thousands and thousands of participants was an attempt at ritually bridging the divide between the dynastic factions and thus securing the position of the rulers. The ceremonial ‘anomalies’ identifiable in the coronation are a result of the political situation and the intention of those in charge of the ceremony. It was by no means the now-standard procedure for making emperors, remarkable solely for taking place in the Great Church, as it is mostly depicted, but rather a last-minute gamble by a crumbling regime to prop itself up by emphasizing dynastic unity in a grand ceremony with religious overtones.[[46]](#footnote-46) In order to drive home the point for all participants and witnesses, the ceremony adopted the template of imperial ‘minor’ coronations (i.e., when a ruling Augustus elevated others to co-emperorship) laid down by Heraclius himself, but with important differences.

From different contemporary sources, we can reconstruct a rough outline of how co-emperors were made in the Heraclian dynasty. The *Paschal Chronicle*, for instance, mentions the promotion of Heraclius’ first-born son Constantine III (Heraclius II New Constantine) to co-emperorship in 613, although it remains somewhat vague and only refers to him being “crowned emperor by his father Heraclius in the Palace”.[[47]](#footnote-47) However, from the same source we know that his elder sister, Epiphania-Eudocia, had been elevated to Augusta in the Palace chapel of St Stephen the previous year.[[48]](#footnote-48) When Heraclius decided in 638 to raise his remaining children to *Augusti* or *Caesares*, this occurred in the same location. In a joint ceremony in St Stephen, the two younger sons of Heraclius were each promoted to a different rank: Heraclonas to full Augustus, David to Caesar.[[49]](#footnote-49) As it is explicitly mentioned both for Constantine III and David, we can assume that Heraclonas, too, was personally crowned by his father, and not the patriarch Sergius, who was present, but limited himself to blessing and prayers.[[50]](#footnote-50) The rest of the ceremonies still mostly followed the template of past centuries: the patricians – always ceremonially privileged – were gathered in one of the main representative halls of the palace, the Augousteus, where they acclaimed their new rulers; immediately afterwards, the court elites and senators, as well as the guard units and, perhaps, delegations of the circus factions, acclaimed the new rulers in the open courtyards. It is likely that they then went up to the Kathisma, that is the imperial palace and box in the hippodrome, to receive the acclamations of the factions and the people gathered there; this was the case, at least in 613 during the elevation of Constantine III.[[51]](#footnote-51) The final station of the ceremony was a holy mass at Hagia Sophia, in which the entire imperial family participated.[[52]](#footnote-52)

In September 641, such a ceremony, whose important elements were only visible to the participants of the ceremony in St Stephen, would have been wholly inadequate. After all, it was not only the court elites – who would have been present in St Stephen – who were clamoring for the coronation of Constans, but the wider senate, parts of the army, and large sections of the Constantinopolitan populace. In these circumstances, the ceremony that was intended to *show* dynastic unity and reconciliation needed to be *visible* to a large number of people and thus a larger venue, outside of the restricted palace area, was needed. The choice fell on Hagia Sophia, were Heraclius himself had previously been crowned in 610.[[53]](#footnote-53)

How much importance was attributed to such ceremonial gestures is also evident from a striking detail in Nicephorus’ account. Heraclonas invited the patriarch to crown his nephew, for what reason we do not know. It may have been out of deference to the patriarch in ‘his’ church. However, those present in Hagia Sophia – Nicephorus just refers to the ὄχλος – would not have it and instead pressed the emperor to personally put the diadem upon his nephew’s head, as was tradition for co-opted emperors. It was likely not mere traditionalism that was behind this. The patriarch Pyrrhus was known to have sided with Heraclonas and Martina; indeed, at some point after the coronation of Constans, he abandoned his patriarchy and fled to Carthage, though we cannot say if this happened before or after Martina’s fall.[[54]](#footnote-54) He had previously been involved in the public oath of Heraclonas to safeguard the lives of the children of Constantine III and it may be that Martina and Heraclonas had originally intended him to crown Constans in order to cement their alliance.[[55]](#footnote-55) However, such a coronation would have deviated significantly not only from the template laid down by Heraclius (and all his predecessors) but would have also left Constans’ imperial status further in limbo: what good was it to have the patriarch set the diadem on his head, when a living, ruling emperor, the sole possible *auctor imperii*, stood by and watched? The crowd assembled in Hagia Sophia wanted to erase all possible doubt and thus clamoured for a formal co-optation of one emperor by another. Heraclonas must have accepted this, willingly or not. It is for this reason also that Heraclius’ diadem was used and for this purpose, if we believe Nicephorus, that his grave was disturbed in order to retrieve it. Placing the dynastic founder’s own diadem on Constans’ head was intended to signal a willingness on the part of the regime to adhere to Heraclius’ own wishes for a harmonious and united imperial family.[[56]](#footnote-56)

**Heraclius**

In some regards, Heraclius himself had been in a similar position more than thirty years earlier. In October 610, when his fleet of rebels put in at Sophiae harbour on the southern shore of the peninsula of Constantinople, he had come to claim the purple, backed by a significant part of the military, but opposed at first by the reigning monarch, Phocas.[[57]](#footnote-57) Furthermore, though he must have been confident of support at least from part of the population and elite, he cannot have been sure of his reception. Phocas himself had first toppled and then killed the emperor Maurice eight years earlier, and part of Heraclius’ claim to emperorship was that he intended to avenge the murder of that sovereign and to free the republic from the damage that the usurper was wreaking on it.[[58]](#footnote-58) In essence, however, he was no less a usurper than Phocas had been. His arrival in Constantinople laid bare the fault lines of the latter’s faltering regime and Heraclius himself in the end had little more to do but wait on his flagship for the situation to resolve itself. Rioting and fighting broke out in the city as sectors of the populace and the elites turned on Phocas.[[59]](#footnote-59) On 5 October he was arrested and brought before Heraclius, who humiliated and then executed him.[[60]](#footnote-60) Probably the day after his execution, on sixth October, Heraclius was received in the city by the patriarch, Sergius, and elevated to emperorship. On the seventh, celebratory circus games were put on in the hippodrome, as was the custom.[[61]](#footnote-61)

But what do we actually know of the ritual of Heraclius’ coronation? Our sources are astonishingly tight-lipped about the details, given the importance attached to the rule of this emperor. Worse, still: they are obviously at odds with each other. While Nicephorus is completely silent, our three main sources – John of Nikiû, the *Paschal Chronicle*, and Theophanes – limit themselves to describing the barest of narrative sequences and providing the most basic information. In the account of John of Nikiû, Heraclius is taken “against his will” to the church of the apostle Thomas near Sophiae harbour. There, a diadem is placed on his head and the emperor afterwards makes his way to the Great Palace.[[62]](#footnote-62) In the *Paschal Chronicle*, the coronation happens in Hagia Sophia: “And about the ninth hour of the same Monday [sixth October], Heraclius was crowned emperor in the most holy Great Church by Sergius patriarch of Constantinople.”[[63]](#footnote-63) Finally, in the *Chronography* of Theophanes, yet another version of events is given, which locates the coronation in the chapel of St Stephen, within the Great Palace itself:[[64]](#footnote-64)

Herakleios entered the palace and was crowned by the patriarch Sergius in the chapel of St Stephen, which is in the palace. On the same day his fiancée Eudokia was crowned Augusta and both of them received the nuptial crowns from the patriarch Sergius, so that on the same day he became emperor and bridegroom.[[65]](#footnote-65)

What can one make of this? The confused picture we have of the accession of Heraclius is due on the one hand to the sparse and taciturn nature of the accounts, but also to the special circumstances surrounding the event. Heraclius’ coronation could hardly follow a normal, established procedure, as the events leading to Phocas’ fall and his own accession were anything but normal. This is particularly true for the question of where exactly it happened, by no means the only aspect of events that our sources disagree on.[[66]](#footnote-66) In order to disentangle the various narrative strands, we need to try and understand the complicated topography of the city quarters to the south/south-west of the Great Palace, not an easy task by any means. This section of the city was known as the Sophiae, after a palace built by Justin II and named after his wife, the empress Sophia.[[67]](#footnote-67) The district also included the Sophia harbour, the erstwhile harbour of Julian, rebuilt and renamed by Justin, again, after his wife.[[68]](#footnote-68) It is here that Heraclius’ fleet lay at anchor in 610 and where Heraclius remained on his flagship during the early fighting. Nearby stood the church of St Thomas; it’s location immediately on the seaside near or inside the harbour itself is confirmed by the name of a nearby jetty, which was known as ὁ μώλος τοῦ ἁγίου Θωμᾶ before the eighth century.[[69]](#footnote-69) This is the place in which John of Nikiû localises Heraclius’ accession. The church itself was of no special significance. As far as we know, it had no connection to and played no important part in imperial ceremonial.[[70]](#footnote-70)

It is difficult to see why Heraclius should have chosen this place to celebrate his accession, even should Janin be right in thinking that it was connected to an imperial monastery in which Justin I and his wife Euphemia were entombed, which is uncertain.[[71]](#footnote-71) This is particularly true when contrasted with the two alternatives given by our remaining sources.[[72]](#footnote-72) Both the Hagia Sophia and the palace chapel of St Stephen were closely associated with emperorship as such. Both were imperial foundations.[[73]](#footnote-73) Both played significant parts in a variety of imperial ceremonial: Hagia Sophia was, naturally the main church of the city, and St Stephen was a preferred location for imperial weddings.[[74]](#footnote-74) It is this latter role of St Stephen that also makes it likely that Theophanes is just as mistaken as John of Nikiû was, when he states that Heraclius was crowned in St Stephen. Not only was this chapel – not Hagia Sophia – used for imperial wedding ceremonies; Heraclius himself wedded Fabia-Eudokia there on the very day of his own elevation and her proclamation as Augusta, as Theophanes himself writes, seemingly conflating three separate events (Heraclius’ coronation, his wedding to Eudokia, and the latter’s coronation as Augusta):

Herakleios entered the palace and was crowned by the patriarch Sergius in the chapel of St Stephen, which is in the palace. On the same day his fiancée Eudokia was crowned Augusta and both of them received the nuptial crowns from the patriarch Sergius, so that on the same day he became emperor and bridegroom.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Raising Fabia-Eudokia to the status of Augusta was obviously important to Heraclius, who was in a hurry to consolidate the imperial couple as unassailable rulers of the empire. Phocas, we should remember, had waited five days before elevating his own wife, but Phocas had by then already cemented his own status as Augustus by the accession ritual at Hebdomon and the formal adventus into the city and entry into the Palace on the next day.[[76]](#footnote-76) Heraclius, by contrast, had to act fast given the delicate situation within the city and the confusion after Phocas’ execution. Nevertheless, the elevation of an Augusta by an Augustus was, broadly speaking, unproblematic. It belonged to the same category of events as the ‘minor’ accession ritual of a co-emperor and did not necessitate a public spectacle. Indeed, in later years, both the sons and one daughter of Heraclius were raised and crowned as *Augusti* (or Caesars) at the very chapel of St Stephen – a fact that may have further contributed to Theophanes’ error.[[77]](#footnote-77) Logically, as the tradition was that the reigning Augustus himself crowned his wife, the wedding must have taken place after Heraclius’ coronation. We should not doubt that it was Heraclius who crowned his empress himself or assume that the passive voice in Theophanes (ἐστέφθη) refers to the patriarch. This would contradict not only syntax, but also the symbolic import of the act itself: the Augusta derived her status from the Augustus, not from the patriarch or God. It would also run counter to established precedent, as well as later practice: we know that, e.g., Phocas himself crowned his wife Leontia in 602 and that it was Heraclius who crowned his second wife Martina in 612/13.[[78]](#footnote-78) Heraclius’ accession and coronation, however, was of a different nature entirely. As his position could not rely on an *auctor* *imperii*, but had to be accepted and that acceptance performed by the inhabitants of the imperial city, it was of paramount importance that this happened in front of and with the participation of as many people as possible. It seems unlikely, then, that he would have agreed to combine his own coronation with that of his wife and to have celebrated both events in the palace itself, in front only of the highest cadres of the states and hidden from the view of the majority of Constantinople’s inhabitants. We should discard Theophanes’ account of the chapel of St Stephen as the place of his coronation.

That leaves us with the *Paschal Chronicle* and Hagia Sophia. As mentioned above, scholarship so far near-unanimously claims that Constans II was the first Roman emperor to be coronated by the patriarch of Constantinople in Hagia Sophia upon his accession in 641. In my view, this is wrong: it was Heraclius. Of all the alternatives mentioned by our sources, Hagia Sophia is the most (indeed, the only) logical place for the coronation. But how can this hypothesis be brought into accord with our sources? Nadine Viermann, who has presented the most cogent account of Heraclius’ coronation so far, argues that the confusion of our sources is due to the fact that these churches were all part of an extensive accession ceremony – a form of *adventus* that saw Heraclius visit these three churches and that the later authors in particular, familiar only with the later coronation ceremony in one single church (the Hagia Sophia), misunderstood.[[79]](#footnote-79) Viermann is also one of the few scholars who argue that the actual coronation happened in Hagia Sophia.[[80]](#footnote-80) The different churches mentioned in the sources can indeed be linked to form a plausible topographical sequence, a procession that led Heraclius from Sophiae harbour to the palace by way of the Hagia Sophia. We know from Nicephorus that Herakleios was ‘received’ by the patriarch and the city population immediately after the execution of Phocas, by which we may well understand a greeting party that formally acclaimed him on the occasion of his first setting foot in the city. As the fleet was anchored in Sophiae, this likely happened near the church of St Thomas. Contrary to what the garbled account of John of Nikiû says, however, this was no ‘coronation’. Heraclius may have visited the church itself, perhaps to pray, but more likely to change into imperial costume for the formal procession to the Great Palace, in an imitation of the usual church visits during an imperial adventus.[[81]](#footnote-81) Herakleios then proceeded from the Sophiae harbour northwards, reaching the Mese – the main ceremonial artery of the city – in the area of the Forum of Constantine. From there, the procession, which would have included Heraclius, his future wife and principal adherents, and likely also officials who had gone over to his side either before or after Phocas’ death, followed the usual itinerary of an adventus, traversing the final section of the Mese to reach the Augustaion, the great public space that connected Hagia Sophia and the Palace. Here, Heraclius visited Hagia Sophia and afterwards entered the Great Palace via the Chalkê Gate, finally reaching the chapel of St Stephen, which was situated in the oldest part of the palace, the Daphne.The procession followed, at least in part, the normal ritual of adventus, as described, e.g., in the already mentioned chapter 91 of the *Book of Ceremonies*.

As we can see from the description in the *Book of Ceremonies*, *adventus* processions followed a finely tuned choreography and exercised a very specific form of crowd and audience control.[[82]](#footnote-82) As the emperor moves closer to the Great palace, the number of spectators decreases and their social status is elevated; the audience becomes more and more exclusive. On the Mese, he is acclaimed by the masses; at the Forum of Constantine the senate and city and praetorian prefects wait to receive him and then join the cortège; at the Augustaion the senate and the court elites receive him together with the patriarch; on entering the palace, they are all dismissed except for the highest echelons of the state – the *comites consistoriani* and the patricians. Heraclius’ progression through the city would have reflected this standard ceremony and it is precisely in that context that the different stations of his progress begin to make sense: Heraclius was playing to different audiences in different places. Individual ritual stages at the three churches visited in October 610 each addressed a specific audience and this complementarity was the point: to include as many people as possible in an accession ceremony that was as heterodox as the situation from which it emerged. Each station along the way from Sophiae to the Hagia Sophia and thence to the palace gave a different group of people the opportunity to participate in Heraclius’ ritual enactment of emperorship. St Thomas, which in this ceremonial logic was furthest away from the exclusive spheres of the Palace, was the place where the disembarked soldiers of his fleet, as well as the nearby inhabitants could and did acclaim him; the people also lined the streets of the Mese. Hagia Sophia was the ecclesiastical centre of the city, where the higher echelons of the city, the wealthy classes, the senate aristocracy, and the clerics of the patriarchate could witness his coronation by the patriarch. Finally, the chapel of St Stephen was the most exclusive place, reserved for his bodyguards and the ἄρχοντες of the palace, and where the people was represented only by the circus factions. Here, Heraclius married and proclaimed his wife empress and Augusta, and he could do so because he himself had already been made emperor. If we assume that the sequence reflects an actual *adventus*-like procession, it makes little sense to imagine that the emperor was crowned in a relatively unimportant and topographically distant St Thomas, and even less sense that he visited the Great Church, but was then crowned in the smaller chapel in the Palace, where fewer witnesses were present and smaller numbers could participate in the ritual. The only logical conclusion is that Heraclius, not his grandson Constans II, was the first emperor to be crowned in Hagia Sophia by the patriarch.

Why? In late 610, the situation was as difficult and confused as it had ever been. Phocas had been abandoned by his bodyguard and the circus factions, Heraclius and his fleet rode at anchor in Sophiae harbour. A protracted civil war, fought in the provinces over the previous two years, was coming to its conclusion[[83]](#footnote-83) and a way was needed, after Phocas’ arrest and execution, to ritually re-establish order by having the greatest possible number of people participate in the elevation of the new ruler. In Constantinople, his arrival in Sophiae harbour, where Phocas was delivered to him, meant that none of the traditional places in which to perform his accession – such as the Great Palace itself, the kathisma, or Hebdomon – were available. Instead, he or his advisors decided to combine an *adventus* with a new form of accession: Heraclius would be crowned in a church building and on the grandest scale possible. It was the logical conclusion: he was not yet in possession of the palace or hippodrome and he could hardly, at this point, have sailed out again, landed at Hebdomon to repeat the ‘military’ accession ritual of earlier times, as Phocas had done, to whose coronation we must now turn.

**Phocas**

Phocas is commonly held to be the first Roman emperor to be crowned inside a church and thus an important innovator in imperial ceremonial. However, in many respects, his coronation was somewhat more conventional, though our sources for it are, again, problematic and partly at variance with each other, not only as to the mechanics of his usurpation and the nature of the power struggle within Constantinople, but also with regard to his coronation.[[84]](#footnote-84) Generally for Phocas, perhaps one of the most-maligned emperors of all of Roman history, there is very little we can actually say with certitude about his reign that has not in some way or other been distorted or influenced by the extremely hostile sources tradition that began with his successor, Heraclius.[[85]](#footnote-85)

The ‘standard’ narrative of his usurpation and accession is based mostly on the account of Theophylact. Phocas was the first successful claimant to the throne in two centuries who did not reside in Constantinople and who wrested power from a ruling emperor. When the Thracian army mutinied in 602, because of imperial parsimony and an order to spend the winter across the Danube in enemy territory, emperor Maurice quickly lost support and acceptance in Constantinople, while the mutinous army – including Phocas – was encamped at Rhegion. An army delegation offered the throne to Maurice’s son, Theodosius (III) and/or his father-in-law, Germanus, which meant the abdication of Maurice. After angry recriminations, Germanus sought refuge in Hagia Sophia and when Maurice made attempts to arrest him, a riot broke out. During the night, Maurice and his family fled; unwilling to accept Germanus as emperor, the Greens sent a delegation to the army at Rhegion, some distance to the west, inviting Phocas to the city. Arriving at Hebdomon, Phocas ordered the people, the senate, and the patriarch to meet him there, his intention now clear: he was reaching for the purple. After Germanus had been made to publicly renounce any claims to the throne and Phocas has assured the patriarch of his orthodoxy, he was proclaimed emperor.[[86]](#footnote-86) His actual accession ceremony is described only with the barest possible information. The most complete version of events is found in John of Nikiû and the *Paschal Chronicle*:

Phocas was crowned by Cyriacus, patriarch of Constantinople, in the venerated church of St. John at the Hebdomon.[[87]](#footnote-87)

All the population came together to the patriarch, and by general consent they placed the imperial crown on Phocas in the church of S. John the Baptist.[[88]](#footnote-88)

For the first time in imperial history, so it seems and so scholarship has so far unanimously accepted, a Roman emperor was made in a church building. Two other sources – Theophylact and Theophanes -, however, concur on St John as the location for Phocas’ accession, but disagree on who did what there: Theophylact recounts that Phocas received the diadem there, but not from whose hands; Theophanes says only that the “proclamation” took place in the church at Hebdomon.[[89]](#footnote-89) John Zonaras mentions the coronation by the patriarch, but not the church.[[90]](#footnote-90)

John of Antioch, by contrast, mentions neither coronation nor church, but instead states that Phocas was raised on a shield on the tribunal of the campus, the military parade ground at Hebdomon, which had been the traditional place for the coronation of emperors in the late third and fourth centuries, until the elevation of Leo II in the *kathisma*.[[91]](#footnote-91) Given the occasion – a military coup and the choice and coronation of a claimant from the army –, such a return to previous, traditional means of emperor-making would have been fitting for a ‘full’ coronation ceremony.[[92]](#footnote-92) In fact, the last such ‘full’ coronation had been that of Justin II in 565 and he, too, had been raised on a shield, albeit this had happened inside the palace.[[93]](#footnote-93) Notably absent from the (admittedly short) description in John of Antioch is another traditional ritual act, i.e. the *torques* being placed around the claimant’s neck by a soldier before the coronation with a proper diadem by the patriarch; both are attested for Justin, in addition to the usual acclamations. Thus, the still-standard ‘full’ accession protocol, was apparently also used for Phocas, with only the location at Hebdomon (instead of the hippodrome or Great Palace) and the church element being unusual. The former is easily explained not only by the geographics of the usurpation (Phocas was outside the city walls), but also as a reference to earlier, ‘military’ ceremonial. Both Theophylact and Theophanes state that the invitation extended to Phocas by the Greens was specifically and explicitly to the Hebdomon and this was surely no accident.[[94]](#footnote-94) The site was closely associated with the military accession ceremonial of the past and the circus factions were certainly aware of this, as they played a significant part during ceremonial occasions. By this invitation, Phocas was explicitly being offered the purple and the location would also have set a template for the proclamation ceremony itself.[[95]](#footnote-95) While none of our sources actually mention the rest of the traditional ritual acts during the accession (changing into the imperial habit; the lowering and raising of military standards; acclamations) that make up the ‘full’ coronation ceremony, this does not mean that they did not occur. As Michael McCormick has rightly pointed out, most of our sources mention ceremonies only if they diverged from the usual template or in the case of something unforeseen happening.[[96]](#footnote-96) In all likelihood, then, Phocas’ coronation will have resembled that of Leo I more than that of Maurice himself.

The ’antiquarian’ bent of the proceedings may also explain the diverging (or at least uneven) accounts of the proceedings in our sources. As we have seen, only the *Paschal Chronicle*, John of Nikiû, and Theophylact explicitly attest to a coronation at the church of St John at Hebdomon; Theophanes, John Zonaras and John of Antioch either do not mention the church at all or use the general term “proclamation” (ἀναγόρευσις), which can include, but does not necessarily mean “coronation”.[[97]](#footnote-97) If Phocas was indeed crowned in that church building, in a striking innovation of ceremonial, why do our sources not all explicitly comment on it? Is it conceivable that some of our authors either misunderstood or deliberately misrepresented what had actually happened at Hebdomon? Scholarship, as far as I can tell, has so far not questioned the reliability of those accounts who attest that Phocas was the first Roman emperor to be proclaimed in a church. But the church of St John Prodromos, an important ecclesiastical building first constructed by Theodosius I to house the head of St John, and later rebuilt by Justinian[[98]](#footnote-98), figures in earlier imperial ceremonial as well and there is the possibility, however remote, that we are dealing with a misunderstanding.[[99]](#footnote-99) In the sixth-century chapters of the *Book of Ceremonies*, St John Prodromos is mentioned as one of the stages of the imperial *adventus* into the city.[[100]](#footnote-100) As part of chapter 91, which is an account of the accession ceremonies of Leo I in 457, the first station of an adventus is described as a short ride on horseback from a temporary structure called the *Papilion* to St John Prodromos.[[101]](#footnote-101) At St John, the emperor enters the *mutatorion*, or dressing room, of the church, removes his diadem and hands it to the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, who accompanies him. When the emperor enters the inner sanctuary to pray, the *praepositus* hands the crown back to the emperor, who then sets it upon the altar and presents gifts to the church. Back in the *mutatorion*, the emperor again sets the diadem on his head and proceeds with the *adventus*, which was part of the wider accession ceremonies on that day.[[102]](#footnote-102) The precise significance of the imperial visit to this church during the *adventus* is lost on us; however, in a later section of the *Book of Ceremonies*, which describes the triumphant arrival of the emperor Basil I in AD 879, an imperial visit similar to the one just described is again mentioned.[[103]](#footnote-103) We can thus assume that the tradition to visit St John when entering the city via the Golden Gate (as Phocas also did in 602) was likewise alive in the early seventh century. In the ninth century, the visit was unconnected to accession ceremonies or coronations, and this was likely already the case in the fifth century, the description in chapter 91 of the *Book of Ceremonies* notwithstanding.[[104]](#footnote-104)

Could our sources have mistaken the behavior of a new emperor, who, by tradition, took of his diadem when entering the church and took it up again when leaving, for a coronation?[[105]](#footnote-105) Of our near-contemporary sources, John of Antioch includes only the barest outlines of a traditional accession ceremony and does not mention an ecclesiastical setting. Theophylact remains tellingly vague. Later sources such as Theophanes and Zonaras are mostly dependent on Theophylact and thus also include no further details of the ceremony; from their point of view, it should be added, a church coronation would not have been surprising in the slightest. But why does Theophylact not comment on it, except to say that Phocas ‘received’ the diadem? It seems uncharacteristic for him, opposed and hostile to Phocas in everything else, to miss the opportunity to execrate the misshapen usurper for soiling such a holy place with his farce of a coronation.[[106]](#footnote-106) At the same time, if he had wanted to downplay the fact that Phocas was crowned in the church, why did he not just write that the accession took place at Hebdomon? There remains, thus, a significant degree of uncertainty as to what actually happened. John of Nikiû, it is true, explicitly attest a church coronation, but the transmission history of that work is notoriously complicated and prone to uncertainty.[[107]](#footnote-107) We are left with the *Paschal Chronicle* as a lone, but admittedly usually reliable explicit witness. On balance, then, it is perhaps slightly more likely than not that Phocas was in fact the first Roman emperor to be crowned in a church.

This, however, begs the question: why? The inclusion first of the patriarch as participant and then of churches as locations for imperial coronations has traditionally been ascribed to the Christianisation of ceremonial and a growing religiosity, a liturgisation or even hyper-liturgisation in late antique political life.[[108]](#footnote-108) However, as we have seen with the coronations of Heraclius and Constans, it is important to situate each ceremony in its specific circumstances. The conventional explanation as to why Phocas was (perhaps) crowned in St John Prodromos, if the question is asked at all, is political in nature. David Olster, for instance, has argued that Phocas attempted to “bolster his pedigree” by appealing “to the virtue most favored by new men: piety. […] Without dynastic or legal sanction, piety and divine election had to defend a candidate’s claims.”[[109]](#footnote-109) I fail to see, however, how a church coronation by itself would have added to Phocas’ piousness beyond the patriarchal coronation alone, which would have been conventional. Nadine Viermann likewise ascribes the move to a “gesteigerten Legitimationsdruck” and in this view, Phocas reacted to a perceived need to further ‘legitimise’ his accession, as there was no obvious *auctor imperii* (and he had, in fact, toppled the ruling emperor). Vierman argues that, for Phocas, God acted as a symbolic *auctor imperii* and that the choice of a church building was intended to reinforce this message.[[110]](#footnote-110) While a church coronation certainly lend the ceremony a distinctly religious atmosphere, the reverse is not equally true: earlier fifth-century coronations were by no means less religiously charged and full of Christian symbolism, as the acclamations recorded in the *Book of Ceremonies* make clear:

Leo, Augustus, may you be victorious, may you be pious, may you be revered! God has given you; may God guard you! … May God guard closely a Christian realm!

Lord, have mery! Son of God, have mercy on him! Anastasios Augustus, may you be victorious! May God guard a pious emperor! God has given you; may God guard you![[111]](#footnote-111)

The additional divine ‘legitimation’ would have been a matter of nuance, not a change in quality. I am also unsure that this would have materially impacted his ‘legitimacy’ and whether the *Legitimationsdruck* pressing on Phocas was actually that great – or greater, at any rate, than that weighing on every emperor that had to be created ex nihilo. In a very real sense, his rule was as legitimate as Maurice’s had been and as Heraclius’ would be, in the sense that it was accepted by the relevant power brokers and by the populace at large. Being crowned in the church of St John (or not) did not meaningfully impact his legitimacy, because the emperor “did not have to scrabble about collecting legitimacy in holes and corners” in order to rule.[[112]](#footnote-112) What he did have need of (and had), was acceptance (or *consensus*): it manifested itself in the participation of the relevant groups in his accession ceremonies, in the cheering during this formal adventus, which had been a standard element of accession ceremonies in the fourth and fifth centuries and with which he formally took possession of city and palace as legitimate emperor.

Much about Phocas’ eight-year rule is obscured from our view by the wilful distortion of the historical figure by later Heraclian court circles and authors, desperate to draw a clear line between violent usurpation (by Phocas) and legitimate restitution (by Heraclius), between the ‘tyrant’ and the heroic ‘saviour’.[[113]](#footnote-113) We should be careful not to follow this distortion too easily. Maurice was recognized and accepted as legitimate emperor until he was not; the final *dénouement* was violently sudden, as emperors may have lost support gradually, but within the context of a system of acceptance, there was no gradual loss (or acquiring) of legitimacy.[[114]](#footnote-114) Maurice had lost the support of the important sectors of Constantinopolitan society; his position in the imperial city was no longer secure in the face of the army mutiny, which had spread to the palatine guard units, whose loyalty was in grave doubt[[115]](#footnote-115); and the opposition of both the aristocracy and the populace (or parts of it). Thus, he decided to flee, perhaps planning a later return with Persian aid.[[116]](#footnote-116) In the power vacuum left by this flight, Phocas, encamped outside with an army, was accepted as new, legitimate emperor after some debate within the higher echelons of city, state, and court.[[117]](#footnote-117) Phocas’ accession was witnessed by and enjoyed the participation of the army, the senate and (parts of) the people. During his formal *adventus* into the city, celebrated two days after his accession, there was general rejoicing, “with no-one at all opposing, but everyone acclaiming him” (μηδενὸς ὅλως ἀντιστάντος, ἀλλὰ πάντων εὐφημούντων), as the *Paschal Chronicle* writes.[[118]](#footnote-118) John of Nikiû goes as far as to say that Phocas was crowned “by general consent.”[[119]](#footnote-119) This, in other words, was as legitimate as Roman emperors got.

**Coda**

Why does it matter whether or not Phocas was crowned in a church or in which church Heraclius and Constans was made emperor? In the conventional view, the first matters because this precedent was then taken up on a grander scale for the latter. Heraclius was structurally in much the same situation as Phocas had been: a usurper toppling an unpopular ruler who had lost the support of the important sectors of Constantinopolitan society. He, too, had no special need to ‘legitimise’ himself in the sense that this is conventionally understood. His need was to be recognised, publicly and actively, by these very sectors. His decision to adapt the ritual of coronation in the way that he did, to celebrate it as a modified adventus that included his coronation in Hagia Sophia, is a reaction to this need: he did not have the wide-open spaces of tribunal at Hebdomon available to him, and he had not yet taken possession of the palace, to use the kathisma for his coronation. The solution that he or his advisors adapted, was a ritual procession through the significant parts of the city that provided the largest possible number of people the opportunity to acclaim (and thus to accept) him, while leading him to the place most closely associated with emperorship: the Palace. The decision to celebrate his coronation at Hagia Sophia, as I think he did, was, again a question of publicness: Justinian’s Great Church was much the better location if the goal was to let as many people as possible participate in the act. A similar reasoning – bolstered by the dynastic precedent of Heraclius – was behind the decision by Heraklonas and Martina to crown Constans in Hagia Sophia, and with the diadem of Heraclius, no less. In a sense, too, the genie was out of the bottle, both for Heraclius, and Heraklonas and Martina: once the precedent had been created, it was impossible to ignore it. It is difficult to see how succeeding emperors should have chosen differently than to emulate their predecessors without, in some way, running the danger of being ‘lesser than’.

The decision to move coronations to church interiors must also be looked at in tandem with the evolution of the patriarch’s role. Neither a coronation in a church, nor even by the patriarch, were constitutive of an Augustus' authority or legitimacy in late antiquity or into the later Byzantine period. And while they became utterly conventional in these later years, the origin of the patriarchs’ involvement was that they were able to fulfill a specific purpose in particular situations. While the patriarch had had no formal role to play in the accession ceremonial of the fourth and (most of the) fifth century, this had changed by 602. His role had significantly grown since Anastasius, who had acceded to the throne in 491: during that emperor’s accession, the patriarch had set the diadem upon the brow of the new emperor for the first time.[[120]](#footnote-120) The reason for this change was contingent: the choice of Anastasius as successor to Zeno was controversial, as he had no meaningful military experience, being instead a veteran courtier, and his orthodoxy was in doubt. He had to give written assurances on that question to the patriarch.[[121]](#footnote-121) In my view, it is precisely these doubts that led to the very same patriarch purposefully being assigned an important role during the ceremony, that of *coronator*: it was important that he was seen to be supporting and blessing the new regime and what better way to show this than that he be the one to ‘crown’ Anastasius, particularly given the doubts surrounding Anastasius’ religious sympathies and the patriarch’s notorious enmity of heterodoxy in general, and his dislike of Anastasius in particular.[[122]](#footnote-122) As Anastasius had been crowned by the patriarch as a sign of ecclesiastical and divine support, how could Justin I not be? The need was the greater as the events leading up to the choice of Justin as successor to Anastasius in 518 were unusually (and unusually publicly) contested?[[123]](#footnote-123) If the first patriarchal coronation was the result of doubts as to a new emperor’s orthodoxy, in other circumstances, the patriarch’s involvement could signal a restored concord among fractious court circles.[[124]](#footnote-124) The first church coronations in the early seventh century must be understood in a similar context and as having a similar intention, regardless of whether the first instance of it was under Phocas or Heraclius: they were intended to signal a re-established unity and concord among all the sectors of Constantinopolitan society.

There is an additional dimension to our study or ritual and ceremony, however, that makes it an important element in understanding the political and cultural configuration of Roman monarchy in the seventh century (and all the others besides). In her recent monograph on Heraclius, Nadine Viermann has called the accession ceremonial a moment of social integration and self-assertion, which allowed the relevant sectors of society to assure themselves of their acceptance of a claimant’s rule.[[125]](#footnote-125) This is eminently true, but it is not the whole of it: rituals of accession, such as coronations, produced a *consensus omnium* precisely by performing it. Claudia Sode, in her study of the fragments in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* attributed to Justinian’s *magister officiorum* Peter the Patrician, has called Peter’s compendium of court ceremonial an essay in ‘constitutional’ writing, precisely because state ceremonial was the closest that the late Roman (or Byzantine) polity had to a constitution as such.[[126]](#footnote-126) In these ceremonies and rituals, the abstract ‘empire’ was embodied and reified in its constituent (at least for political power) parts. In their fulfilment of ceremonial roles during, e.g., accession ceremonies, the state was transformed into a performance and the ceremony became the πολιτεία ἔμψυχος.

1. Nic. *brev*. 31: ὁ δὲ συλλαβόμενος τόν ἀνεψιὸν Ἡράκλειον εὐθέως ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερὸν ἐχώρει καὶ ἀνέρχεται ἅμα Πύρρῳ ἐν τῷ ἄμβωνι καὶ προτρέπεται στέφειν Ἡράκλειον. Οἱ δὲ ὄχλοι τὸν βασιλέα ἐβιάζοντο τὸ ἔργον ἐπιτελεῖν. ὁ δὲ λαβὼν ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τὸν τοῦ πατρὸς Ἡρακλείου στέφανον τό ἔργον ἐπλήρου (trans. Mango). According to John of Nikiû (120.44), it was Valentinus, a rebellious officer, who placed the crown on Constans, but this is a misunderstanding; on the role of Valentinus during these events, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For the tradition of Constans’ being the frist coronation in Hagia Sophia, see, e.g., Brightman 1901, 377; Treitinger 1956, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. E.g. when (Tiberius (II) placed the diadem on Maurice’s head (Theoph. Sim. 1.1.22); for the patriarch’s role during imperial elevations, see now Rollinger 2024, 415–432. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Nic. *brev*. 30. The crown had originally been buried with Heraclius and is said to have weighed 70 lbs. On the importance of such insignia, objects imbued with dynastic or religious charisma, see Trampedach 2005, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Including in my own recent work on imperial ceremonial; as the present chapter is an extension of that larger research project, I ask the readers’ indulgence for referring them again and again to my own monograph (Rollinger 2024). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Although I am wary of the implications raised by this term, I shall here adapt the widespread use of the term ‘coronation’ as a descriptor for the accession ceremonies of a Roman emperor. Neither the act of ‘crowning’ a Roman emperor with a diadem, nor the question as to whose privilege it was to do so, have the same connotations and implications in an Eastern Roman context that they do, e.g., in a Western European one. Throughout late antiquity and Byzantium, the coronation as such was but one of a group of ritual acts that *together* (not individually) transformed a private person into an emperor; cf. Rollinger 2024, 446–455. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. E.g., Leo appointed his grandson, Leo II (*de cer*. 1.94); Justin appointed his nephew Justinian (*de cer*. 1.95); Maurice appointed his son Theodosius (III) (*Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 590, p. 691, ed. Dindorf; Theoph. Conf. AM 6082, p. 267, ed. De Boor). Justin II, on the verge of a debilitating mental illness, appointed Tiberius (II) (Evagr. *HE* 5.13) and Tiberius in turn appointed Maurice (Theoph. 1.1.2). Notably, Justinian chose not to appoint a designated successor from among his relatives (or from outside his family), even though nephews were available aplenty. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. From the fragments of Peter the Patrician collected in the *Book of Ceremonies* (*de cer*. 1.91-93)*,* we are well-informed as to the usual modes of ‘full’ coronations; the fragments describe those of Leo I, Anastasius, and Justin I. We can add to these the panegyric description of the accession of Justin II in Corippus’ *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* (cf. Antès 1981, xi-cvi) and information gleaned from a variety of other sources. On these coronation ceremonial as such, see Trampedach 2005 and now Rollinger 2024, 377–455, with older scholarship. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Rollinger 2023, 377–405. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cor. *in laud. Iust*. 2.84-174; 278-430. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Trampedach 2005; cf. Rollinger 2024, 406–414. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. E.g., Amm. 26.4.3 and Claudianus (*IV cos. Hon*., 174; *VI cos. Hon*. 203-209) for the accessions of Valens and Honorius respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *De cer*. 1.94. The kathisma was much more than an ‘imperial box’, as it is sometimes refered too; in truth, it was an architecturally significant extension of the Great Palace into the stands of the racecoursn; see Dagron 2000; Fauquet 2002, 483-497. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. On the *silention*, see Christophilopulu 1951 and cf. *Nov. Iust*. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *De cer*. 1.95 (432-433 Reiske); cf. Rollinger 2024, 411–412. Similar ceremonies are attested for Tiberius and Maurice: Evagr. *HE* 5.13; Theoph. 1.1.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See above, n. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The word should not be taken to mean that the ceremony itself was now ‘civilian’ in any meaningful or modern sense; both in the groups present (bodyguards, guard units, staff officers, palace officials classed in para-military *scholae*) and their visual appearance, the ceremony was still ‘military’. The term indicates merely that the political role of the field armies in choosing a new emperor was reduced. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Kaegi 1981, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Trampedach 2005, 286–287 has previously stressed the importance of taking the specific circumstances of coronations into account when analyzing them, but his own analysis does not reach into the seventh century. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. On the emperor’s iconicity, see also Carile 2016; Rollinger 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *De cer*. 1.68 (316 Reiske) and cf. Rollinger 2024, 587–613. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Coripp. *in laud. Iust*. 2.148-150: *Astitit in clipeo princeps fortissimus illo / solis habens speciem: lux altera fulsit ab urbe. / Mirata est pariter geminos consurgere soles.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Rollinger 2023, 104–118. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Theod. Prodr. *poem*. 12.4 and 7 (ed. Hörandner). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Geertz 1980. Bell 2009. On the performative turn in ancient history, see Hölkeskamp 2015; 2014. The traditional study of ceremonies and political rituals has, throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, argued from the perspective of ‘classical’ and Enlightenment scholarship: Gibbon’s dismissal of ceremonies as “splendid theatre” (Gibbon 1906, III 114) and Goethe’s smirk of a description of the coronation of the young Joseph II as King of the Romans in Frankfurt on 3 April 1764 (Goethe 1985, 224-225) are well-known cases in point. Two seminal works by Alfödi (1970) and Treitinger (1956), that both date back to the 1930s, are representative for much of the work done in the twentieth century: for Alföldi, late antique ceremonial is intended to impress “eine primitive Menge” (274) and its forms are derived from the tastes of said mass of people; for Treitinger, Byzantine ceremonial is but the expression of divinely sanctioned rule. For more recent analyses and interpretations, see, e.g.k 1985; 1986. Tantillo 2015. Guidetti 2018. Two seminal works by Alfödi (1970) and Treitinger (1956) that are still frequently cited (and rightly so) date back to the 1930s., MacCormack 1981; McCormick 1985; 1986; Tantillo 2015; Guidetti 2018; Rollinger 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For the medieval period, see the review article by Rexroth 2003. The rise of interest in medieval rituals has led to individual scholars warning about the dangers of viewing everything through a ‘ritual lens’: Buc 2001, but cf. the responses in Koziol 2002 and Pössel 2009. For early modern political ritual, see especially the works by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger 1997; 2000; 2002; 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Stollberg-Rilinger 2005, 2013: “Das Anliegen einer Kulturgeschichte des Politischen ist also die Dekonstruktion jedes überhistorisch-universalisierenden und essentialistischen Verständnisses politischer Handlungsformen und Institutionen, Wertvorstellung und Motive. Der Weg dazu führt über die Rekonstruktion von Diskursen, Praktiken und Objektivationen, in denen sich die zeitgenössischen Bedeutungsstrukturen greifen lassen, ohne die wiederum die zeitgenössischen Macht- und Herrschaftsstrukturen nicht angemessen zu verstehen sind.” Cf. Stollberg-Rilinger 1997; 2000; 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Cf. Guidetti 2018; Rollinger 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Pfeilschifter 2013, 124-125; 125; Börm 2015, 252-253. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Leo II, aged six, was formally Augustus after the death of his imperial grandfather, but his father, Zeno, made himself co-emperor barely two weeks into his ‘rule’ and Leo died of an illness before his first imperial anniversary; cf. Croke 2003. Theodosius (III), son of Maurice, was sent by his father on a mission to secure Persian support after the emperor had fled Constantinople in 602 in the face of Phocas’ challenge. Theodosius was either recalled and killed together with his family, or made it to the Persian court and was turned into a figurehead for the Persian campaign against Rome; cf. Booth 2019 and Rollinger (in press) for discussions of his fate. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Bell 2009, 100; 1997, 160-162. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Geertz 1972, 26; 1980, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See Flaig 1992; 2019 for the concept of *Akzeptanz*, which he supplements for Weberian ‘Legitimität’; on the latter’s deficiencies, see Lendon 2006; Gotter 2008. Dieffenbach 1996 and Pfeilschifter 2013 have adapted the model for the late antique Roman empire; Brandt 2021 has recently revised several of its individual elements. While Flaig’s model has unfortunately enjoyed little success outside of Germanophone academia (the only notable example of its analytical use that I am aware of is Chrubasik 2016), anglophone scholarship has grativated around a consensus-based model of emperorship proposed, e.g., by Ando 2000; cf. Kaldellis 2015, which pursues a similar (if not identical) approach for Byzantine emperorship. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Cf. Flaig 1992, 174-207; 2019, 198-235. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. These are the groups identified by Pfeilschifter 2013, 28-38 on the basis of Flaig’s work on the principate. Flaig himself, initially sceptical about the possibility of adapting his model for late antiquity, has later himself tried to do just that: Flaig 1992, 200-201; 1997; 2019, 231-232. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Flaig 2019, 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. E.g.: the raising on a shield and acclamation of a candidate by the army (Eichmann 1942; Enßlin 1942; Straub 1964, 170) or the coronation with a diadem, particularly if the patriarch acted as *coronator* (Charanis 1940-1941; Becker 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Martina, as guardian of the 15 year old emperor, seems to have been able to exercise considerable influence in political and religious matters, even if Nicephorus’ statement that she shared the administration of the empire (Nic. brev. 30: ᾧ συνελάμβανεν εἰς τὰ τῆς βασιλείας πράγματα καὶ ἡ μήτηρ Μαρτῖνα) is likely exagerated; for her role during Heraclonas’ brief reign, see Viermann 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Theoph. Conf. AM 6132 (p. 341, ed. De Boor). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Cf. Cosentino 2021, 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Zuckerman 1995; 2010, 869-874; cf. SB 6.8986. According to Zuckerman 2010, 875, based on CPR 23.35, Martinos was promoted to Caesar before 9 November 639. For the succession crisis of 641, see also Kaegi 1981, 154-158; Cosentino 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Zuckerman 2010, 875-877; cf. CPR 23.35. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Nic. *brev*. 30: καὶ πᾶσιν ὑγιᾶ καὶ σῶον ὑπεδείκνυ, καὶ ἄμα ὡς τέκνου γνησίου περιείχετο. … καὶ συμπαρόντος Πύρρου τοῦ τῆς πόλεως ἱεράρχου τῶν ζῳοποιῶν ξύλων ἥπτετο καὶ διώμνυτο ὡς οὔτε δι᾿ αὐτοῦ οὔτε δι᾿ ἑτέρου τὰ τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου τέκνα βλαβήσεται. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Nic. Brev. 29. For the bribes, see Kaegi 1981, 155. Cf. PLRE 3b [Valentinus 5], 1354-1355. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Kaegi 1981, 154–158. Olster 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. In the end, it was to no avail. It was too late for Heraclonas and Martina, however; they had lost the support of at least the senate and were deposed in shadowy circumstances in late 641 (Theoph. Conf. AM 6133 [p. 341, ed. De Boor]). Valentinus’ fate is unclear; while Theophanes states that he was done away with together with the emperor and his mother, John of Nikiû claims that he was rewarded with the title of Caesar (John Nik. p. 582, ed. Zotenberg) and the Chronicle of Sebeos (44 = 141 Thomson) has him return to the east to command Roman troops. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 612/3 (p. 702-703, ed. Dindorf); cf. Theoph. Conf. AM 6104 (p. 300 ed. De Boor) and Nic. brev. 5, who adds that Constantine’s promotion to emperorship happened immediately after his baptism. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 612/3 (p. 702-703, ed. Dindorf); Theoph. Conf. AM 6104 (p. 300 ed. De Boor). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *De cer*. 2.27 (p. 627-628, ed. Reiske). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Constantine III: ἐστέθην τό παιδίον Ἡράκλειος νέος Κωνσταντῖνος βασιλεὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ Ἡρακλείου – “the child Heraclius II Constantine was crowned emperor by his father Heraclius in the Palace” (*Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 613, p. 703, ed. Dindorf); David: ἡ δὲ εὐχὴ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ Στεφάνῳ τῆς Δάφνης, καὶ ἐπῄρθη, ὅπερ ἐφόρει καμελαύκιον ὁ καῖσαρ, ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ περιετέθη αὐτῷ ὁ βασιλικὸς στέφανος, Δαβὶδ δὲ τῷ δεσπότῃ ἑτέρας εὐχῆς γενομένης, ἀνήγαγεν εἰς τὴν τοῦ καίσαρος ἀξίαν, ἐπιθεὶς αὐτῷ τὸ αὐτὸ καμελαύκιον. – “The prayer was recited in the Church of St. Stephen of the Palace of Daphne, and the kamelaukion which the Caesar was wearing was removed from his head, and the imperial crown was placed on him. When another prayer was recited for the ruler David, the emperor raised him to the rank of Caesar and placed the said kamelaukion on him” (*de cer*. 2.27, p. 627-623, ed. Reiske; trans. Moffatt / Tall). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Chron. Chron. Pasch. ad a. 613 (p. 703, ed. Dindorf): καὶ εὐθέως ἀνῆλθεν εἰς τὸ Ἱπποδρόμιον, κἀκεῖ στεφθεὶς προσεκυνήθη ὑπὸ τῶν συγκλητικῶν ὡς βασιλεύς, καὶ εὐφημήθη ὑπὸ τῶν μερῶν, καὶ οὕτω σὺν τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ ἐξῆλθεν εἰς τὴν μεγάλην ἐκκλησίαν, βασταζόμενος ὑπὸ Φιλαρέτουed. – “and straightaway he ascended into the Hippodrome and there, wearing the crown, he received obeisance from the senators as emperor, and was acclaimed by the factions: and so, carried by Philaretus, he departed to the Great Church with his father” (trans. Whitbys). Constantine III needed to be carried because he was still an infant. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. On the elevation of Heraclonas and David, see *de cer*. 2.27 (p. 628, ed. Reiske): συνεξῆλθεν δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ ὁ πατριάρχης, καὶ πάντων εὐφημησάντων, εὐθέως ἀπῄει ἐν τῇ ἁγιωτάτῃ μεγάλῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάντα κατὰ τὸ ἔθος ἐγένετο καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ μεγάλῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ. – “The patriarch went out with the rulers, and after everyone cheered, the emperor immediately went away to the very holy Great Church with his children, and in the said Great Church, too, everything took place as customary” (trans. Moffatt / Tall). This is confirmed by the account of the elevation to Augusta of Epiphania-Eudocia in *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 612 (p. 702, ed. Dindorf): καὶ καθεσθεῖσα εἰς δίφρον, παρακολουθούντων Φιλαρέτου κοβικουλαρίου καὶ χαρτουλαρίου καὶ Συνέτου καστρησίου, ἀπῆλθε πρὸς συνήθειαν εἰς τὴν μεγάλην ἐκκλησίαν. – “Seated in a chariot and escorted by Philaretus the *cubicularius* and *chartularius* and by Synetus the *castrensis*, she departed as is customary to the Great Church” (trans. Whitbys). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See below. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Nic. brev. 31. On Pyrrhus, see Van Dieten 1972, 57–75. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Nic. *brev*. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Cf. Nic. *brev*. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. For the events of 610, see, e.g., Stratos 1968, 80–91; Rösch 1979; Kaegi 1981, 125–136; 2003, 37–57; Viermann 2021, 93-103; Raum 2021, 29–51. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Chron. Pasch. ad a. 615 (p. 708, ed. Dindorf). Nic. brev. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. The chronology of the fighting in Constantinople is not beyond doubt; I am essentially following the sequence of events as reconstructed in Viermann 2021, 93-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Nic. *brev*. 1. John. Ant. frg. 321 (Roberto). *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 610. Heraclius kicking a cowering Phocas was not a *calcatio colli*, as has sometimes been surmised. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Nic. *brev*. 2: τέλος ὑπὸ τῆς συγκλήτου βουλῆς καὶ τοῦ δήμου Ἡράκλειος βασιλεὺς ἀνακηρύσσεται καὶ ὸν βασίλειον παρὰ τοῦ προέδρου περιβάλλεται στέφανον – “At length, Herakleios was proclaimed emperor by the senate and the people and was invested by the bishop with the imperial crown” (trans. Mango). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. John Nik. *chron*. 110.9: „On the contrary, they [sc. the people of Constantinople] conducted Heraclius against his will to the church of S. Thomas the Apostle and placed the imperial crown on his head. When he had completed his prayers, he went and entered into the palace, and all the †wise† congratulated him” (trans. Charles). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 610 (p. 700f., ed. Dindorf):Καὶ περὶ ὥραν ἐνάτην αὐτῆς τῆς δευτέρας ἡμέρας ἐστέφθη Ἡράκλειος βασιλεὺς ἐν τῇ ἁγιωτάτῃ μεγάλῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ ὑπὸ Σεργίου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (trans. Whitbys). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. On the chapel of St Stephen, see Janin 1969, 373-374. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Theoph. Conf. AM 6102 (p. 299, ed. De Boor): δὲ Ἡράκλειος εἰς τὰ βασίλεια ἐστέφθη ὑπὸ Σεργίου πατριάρχου ἐν τῷ εὐκτηρίῳ τοῦ ἁγίου Στεφάνου ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ. ἐστέφθη δὲ τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἡ μεμνηστευμένη αὐτῷ Εὐδοκία αὐγούστα καὶ ἔλαβον ἀμφότεροι παρὰ Σεργίου πατριάρχου τοὺς στεφάνους τοῦ γάμου· καὶ τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ ὁμοῦ αὐτοκράτωρ καὶ νυμφίος ἀναδείκνυται (trans. Mango/Scott). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. John of Nikiû’s account is the most obviously problematic, not least because of its complicated transmission. In John’s version, Phocas and Leontius (PLRE 3b [Leontius 29], 780), his *sacellarius* and, perhaps, *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, were seized by “the senators and the officers and soldiers” and conducted to St Thomas, where they were executed and from whence their bodies were dragged through Constantinople to be burned and their ashes thrown to the wind. This version of events is at least partly at odds with the accounts of Phocas’ end in the *Short History* of Nicephorus, the fragmentary *History* of John of Antioch, and the *Paschal* *Chronicle*, who all agree that Phocas was brought to Heraclius on his flagship in the harbour: Nic. *brev*. 1 (p. 5, ed. De Boor); John Ant. frg. 321 (p. 554, ed. Roberto) and *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 610 (p. 700, ed. Dindorf). The narrative of the *Paschal Chronicle* leaves some room for doubt, however: after Phocas is seized, he is led off “through the harbour in direction of the mansion of Sophia; after throwing him into a skiff, they [i.e., Photius and Probus] displayed him to the ships; and then they brought him to Heraclius.” [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Cameron 1967, 12. The district and palace are easily confused with the Sophianae palace, built on the Asiatic shores of the Bosporus. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Heher 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Janin 1969, 248-250; cf. Theoph. AM 6256, (p. 436, ed De Boor). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. As opposed to Hagia Sophia, obviously, but also to the church of St John Prodromos at Hebdomon, where Phocas was (perhaps) crowned emperor in 602; see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Janin 1969, 249-250. Cf. *de cer*. 2.42 (p. 642-643, ed. Reiske), which claims that Michael III re-used the sarcophagus of Justin I from the “Monastery of the Augousta, under the Church of St Thomas” (ἐν τῷ μοναστηρίῳ τῆς αὐγούστης, ὑποκάτω τοῦ ἁγίου ἀποστόλου Θωμᾶ). The sarcophagus is mistakenly identified as that of Justinian on p. 642, but rightly as belonging to Justin on p. 646. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. The fact that the later *Typikon of the Great Church* records a procession for 6 October is by no means necessarily connected to a possible coronation of Heraclius on that date, as Raum 2021, 73 has hypothesized; 6 October is one of two memorial days for the apostle Thomas in the orthodox calendar. If Heraclius was crowned on 5 October, it is even harder to see why he should then have participated in the *synaxis* of the following day. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. St Stephen was founded by the empress Pulcheria in 428 and harboured a number of important relics, inter alia of St Stephen Protomartyras himself. Cf. Theoph. Conf. AM 5920 (p. 86–87, ed. De Boor) with Janin 1969, 473–474. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. On its probable role as wedding chapel for imperial marriages, see *de cer*. 1.39 (p. 201, ed. Reiske) and cf. Rollinger 2024, 313–325. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Theoph. Conf. AM 6102 (p. 299, ed. De Boor): εἰσελθὼν δὲ Ἡράκλειος εἰς τὰ βασίλεια ἐστέφθη ὑπὸ Σεργίου πατριάρχου ἐν τῷ εὐκτηρίῳ τοῦ ἁγίου Στεφάνου ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ. ἐστέφθη δὲ τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρα καὶ ἡ μεμνηστευμένη αὐτῷ Εὐδοκία αὐγούστα, καὶ ἔλαβον ἀμφότεροι παρὰ Σεργίου πατριάρχου τοὺς στεφάνους τοῦ γάμου· καὶ τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ ὁμοῦ αὐτοκράτωρ καὶ νυμφίος ἀναδείκνυται. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Theoph. Conf. AM 6094 (p. 289, ed. De Boor). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. *De cer*. 2.27; *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 612-613 (p. 702-703, ed. Dindorf). Perhaps the Orthodox tradition of the wedding crown (*stephanoi*) placed on the couple’s head, which Theophanes uses to tie both events together, also played a role in the confusion, [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Phocas and Leontia: Theoph. Conf. AM 6094 (p. 289, ed. De Boor): τῇ δὲ πέμπτῃ ἡμέρα Λεοντίαν, τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα, ἔστεψεν αὐγούσταν. Heraclius and Martina: Theoph. Conf. AM 6105 (p. 300, ed. De Boor): ὁ δὲ Ἡράκλειος τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ ἔγημε Μαρτῖναν καὶ ἀνηγόρευσεν αὐτὴν αὐγούσταν στέψας αὐτὴν εἰς τὸν Αὐγουστέα, στεφθεῖσαν ὑπὸ Σεργίου πατριάρχου. Though admittedly phrased in a way that would indicate that Sergius acted as coronator of Martina, from context and phrasing, I would argue στεφθεῖσαν must here again refer to the wedding crowns presented by the patriarch, not to the imperial diadem. However, the source tradition concerning Heraclius’ wedding to Martina is notoriously unclear and the participation of the patriarch is in any case surprising, given his opposition to the incestuous marriage. Cf. Viermann 2021, 171-172 and Viermann (in press). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Viermann 2021, 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Viermann 2021, 119. Kaegi 2003, 51 at least admits the possibility. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. De cer. 1.91 (p. 413–417, ed. Reiske). Cf. Rollinger 2024, 401–405; 520–527. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Cf. specifically for the late imperial adventus Rollinger 2024, 484–527. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. The very fact that Heraclius chosen to arrive by sea, instead of land, attests to the fact that this was no lightning strike which toppled the universally hated tyrant, but a multi-year campaign; the land approach to Constantinople was protected and defended. On the Heracleian campaigns, see Stratos 1968, 80–91; Olster 1993, 117–138; Kaegi 2003, 37–52; Pfeilschifter 2013, 584–605; Viermann 2021, 93–101. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. For an analysis of Maurice’s fall and Phocas’ usurpation, see Pfeilschifter 2013, 252-293; Viermann 2021, 80-93, with Kaegi 1981, 120-137; Whitby 1988, 24-27; Olster 1993, 53-57. The coronation itself is described in Theoph. 8.10.5-6; *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 602 (p. 693, ed. Dindorf); John Ant. frg. 318; Theoph. AM 6094 (p. 289, ed. De Boor). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Olster 1993, esp. 1-22. Cf., e.g., Bury 1889, 197-198: “By contemporaries Phocas was regarded as a fell monster, without a palliating virtue or a redeeming grace, and the character which he has transmitted to history is that of a ‘remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain.’” On the problems with our sources, which date to his successor’s and thus have to grapple with how to present the delegitimized predecessor of Heraclius, see Meier 2014; Booth 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Theoph. 8.10.5-6; *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 602 (p. 693, ed. Dindorf); John Ant. frg. 318; Theoph. AM 6094 (p. 289, ed. De Boor) [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 602 (p. 693, ed. Dindorf): Φωκᾶς … στεφθεὶς ὑπὸ Κυριακοῦ πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως εἰς τόν σεβάσμιον οἶκον τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου ἐν τῷ Ἑβδόμῳ. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. John Nikiû, *Chron*. 103.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Theoph. 8.10.6: Περιβάλλεται τοίνυν τὸν βασίλειον στέφανον ὁ παλαμναῖος ἐκεῖνος ἀνὴρ ἐν τῷ νεῷ τοῦ προφήτου καὶ βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου. Theoph. Conf. AM 6094 (p. 289, ed. De Boor): ἡ δὲ ἀναγόρευσις τοῦ τυράννου εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου ἐγένετο. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Zon. 4.14 (p. 3:299, ed. Dindorf): ὅς σὺν αὐτοῖς [i.e. the Greens] ἐν τῷ Ἑβδόμῳ παραγενόμενος ἐκεῖ παρὰ τοῦ πατριάρχου ταινιοῦται τὴν κεφαλήν. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. John Ant. frg. 318 (ed. Roberto): ἀνήγαγον τὸν Φωκᾶν εἰς σκουτάριν ἐν τῷ τριβουναλίῳ τοῦ κάμπου καὶ ἀνηγόρευσαν αὐτὸν βασιλέα. Trampedach 2005, 280–281. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. I see no reason to doubt the historicity of the account, as Speck 2003, 248-249 has; cf. Olster 1993, 53; Pfeilschifter 2013, 271; Viermann 2021, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Cor. *in laud. Iust*. 2.84–141. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Theoph. 8.10.1; Theoph. AM 6094 (p. 289, ed. De Boor). Cf. Pfeilschifter 2013, 265-268 [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. The Greens were possibly also inspired by the example of Basiliscus in 475; Viermann 2021, 114 and cf. Pfeilschifter 2013, 536-544. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. McCormick 1985 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Theoph. Conf. AM 6094 (p. 289, ed. De Boor). The terminology is not clear in all aspects; in de cer. 1.38, the “proclamation” (ἀναγόρευσις) is set apart from the “coronation” proper (στεψίμον) and it may be that Theophanes uses it in this sense. Particularly during the Palaiologian period, there seems to have been a stricter separation between proclamation and coronation, which could be separated by weeks, months, or even years; cf. Macrides / Munitiz / Angelov 2013, 424. The synonymity of ἀναγόρευσις with “coronation” seems to have been a development in medieval Byzantine Greek: Failler 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Janin 1969, 413-415. Its remains were discovered during French excavations in the 1920s, but have since then disappeared due to the construction of a nearby hospital. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. As, e.g., in n. 50 ad loc. AM 5094 in the translation of Theophanes by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (p. 417). Mango and Scott write that the “church of John the Baptist at the Hebdomon had been used for the proclamation of various emperors in the 5th cent.” This is only true, if the meaning of “proclamation” is different from “coronation”, and even then it is stretching the evidence (cf. n. 110). [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. *De cer*. 1.91 (p. 413, ed. Reiske). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. The *Papilion* was likely a temporary canvas/tent chapel erected near the tribunal, as Sode 2013, 805-809 has surmised, though it is unclear if this was a regular part of the adventus ceremony or an artefact from the specific adventus on which this section of *de cer*. 1.91 is based. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. For a wider discussion, see Rollinger 2024, 401–405; 488–510. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. *De cer*. app. 1 (p. 498-499, ed. Reiske). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. As Tiftixoglu 1973 and Sode 2013 argue, there is a noticeable break in the middle of the chapter, both stylistically and contextually, which indicates that the section containing the *adventus* was a separate account of a different, unconnected *adventus*, inserted into the dossier to provide a template for an *adventus* following an accession ceremony at Hebdomon, if that should be necessary. Cf. the note at the end of *de cer.* 1.91 (p. 417, ed. Reiske), in the voice of (probably) Peter the Patrician himself: καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἡ ἀρχαιότης. … ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἐνομίσαμεν καὶ ἑτέρων βασιλέων ἀναγορεύσεις ἐν ἐπιτόμῳ γράψαι, ἵνα ἕκαστος τὸ εὐτακτότερον καὶ ἀρέσκον αὐτῷ, καιροῦ γινομένου … ἐπιλέξηται. – “This is the ancient practice … However, we thought it necessary also to write a summary of the proclamations of the rest of the emperors, so that each may choose the one more suited and pleasing to him when the time comes”. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Such a mistake has been posited, e.g., by Viermann 2021, 119 in the case of Theophane’s account of Heraclius’ coronation, which he locates in the chapel of St Stephen in the Great Palace complex. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. For descriptions of (in some way unusual) imperial investitures as polemics against ‘tyrants’, see Icks 2011; 2012; 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Howard-Johnston 2010, 181-189. Originally written in Coptic (or, less likely, Greek) at the end of the seventh century, it only survives in a sixteenth-century Ethiopic translation based in turn on an earlier Arabic translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Treitinger 1956, 27; Meier 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Olster 1993, 168-169. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Viermann 2021, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. *De cer*. 1.91 (p. 311, ed. Reiske): Λέων αὔγουστε, σὺ νικᾷς, σὺ εὐσεβὴς, σὺ σεβαστός· ὁ Θεός σε ἔδωκεν, ὁ Θεός σε φυλάξει· … χριστιανὸν βασίλειον ὁ Θεὸς περιφρουρὴσει; 1.92 (p. 424, ed. Reiske): Κύριε, ἐλέησον· υἱὲ Θεοῦ, σὺ αὐτὸν ἐλέησον. Ἁναστάσιε αὔγουστε, τούμβηκας· εὐσεβῆ βασιλέα ὁ Θεὸς φυλάξει· ὁ Θεός σε ἔδωκεν, ὁ Θεός σε φυλάξει (trans. Moffatt / Tall). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Lendon 2006, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Cf. Meier 2014 for Heraclian distortion of the past, with a particular emphasis on the depiction as ‘tyrant’ and concomitant de-humanization of Phocas as a malignant animal. As Booth 2019 has shown, Heraclian propaganda (to use a slightly problematic term) has also warped the portrayal of Maurice. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Such a conception of acceptance is not coincidentally related to the much-misunderstood Weberian concept of legitimacy; in Weber’s view, too, “a leader either has legitimacy or he does not: and if not, there is very little he can do about it”, as Lendon 2006, 58 has put it. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Olster 1993, 59; 65, although his argument for their abandonment of Maurice is the fact that there is no trace in our sources of any attempts on their part to quell the riots, which, in Olster’s view, would have been successful. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. In Theophylact’s account, it is the Constantinopolitan mob, and particularly the Green fraction, that is responsible for Maurice’s overthrow; in the fragmentary account of John of Antioch (Frg. 318, ed. Roberto), by contrast, it is an unnamed group within the city; cf. Olster 1993, 57-58. Maurice’s loss of support and his fall was a result of his own actions and decisions over a twenty-year rule, not of treason by the Greens or Phocas’ monstrous ambition, as Theophylact would have us believe. Olster 1993, 49. On Maurice’s unpopularity, see ibid., 49-52 but cf. 64: “Maurice’s inept handling of the army was not due solely to his own malfeasance, but was the outcome of nearly a century of gradual disenfranchisement of the field army.” His unpopularity with the city inhabitants is clear from events in AD 602, recounted by Theophanes (AM 6096, p. 283, ed. De Boor): Maurice, participating in a night-time litany and going barefoot as a sign of his imperial humility, was pelted with stones and was the subject of crude protests: a man who bore resemblance to Maurice was strapped to the back of an ass and ribald songs that targeted the emperor’s sexual morals and tyranny were sung. Cf. Theoph. Sim. 8.4.11-5.4 [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Cf. Theoph. 8.10.1. Theoph. Conf. AM 6094 (p. 289, ed. De Boor). Zonaras 4.13 (p. 3:299, ed. Dindorf) adds that the riots became worse once news of Maurice’s flight spread through the city and that the inhabitants wildly cursed him. The army itself, including Phocas, had previously offered the throne to Theodosius (III) or Germanus; it only decided on Phocas once the offer of Green support had been made. See, however, Olster 1993, 61-62, who argues that Germanus’ attempt for the throne, described by Theophanes, is an invention of Theophylact. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. *Chron. Pasch*. ad a. 602 (p. 693, ed. Dindorf):, μηδενὸς ὅλως ἀντιστάντος, ἀλλὰ πάντων εὐφημούντων. Cf. Theoph. 8.10.8: πολλοὶ δὲ παρὰ τῶν δήμων κρότοι εὐχαί τε καὶ εὐφημίαι τοῖς ὠσὶ τοῦ τυράννου περιεκέχυντο. – “Loud applause, prayers, and acclamations from the factions flowed around the tyrant’s ears.” [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. John Nikiû, *Chron*. 103.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Siebigs 2010, II 707-727; Rollinger 2024, 415–432. Other scholars, however, still follow Enßlin 1947 in hypothesizing that Leo I was the first emperor to be crowned by the patriarch; for a nuanced view, see Becker 2022, 97. The most recent effort is Begass 2021, which has the virtue of including the much-ignored *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodore Anagnostes in the argument. Enßlin 1947 has shown that the patriarch Anatolius was not involved in the accession of Marcian, as had previously been thought (e.g., Sickel 1898; Treitinger 1956, 8; Alföldi 1970, 174). [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Theoph. Conf. AM 5982 (p. 136, ed. De Boor). Evagr. *HE* 3.32. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Euphemius was a well-known opponent of Anastasius in the city; on one occasion he had even thrown the *silentiarius* out of the Hagia Sophia: Theoph. Conf. AM 5982 (p. 134, ed. De Boor). [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Pfeilschifter 2013, 165-177; cf. Sode 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. In this case, a seemingly insignificant detail of the ceremony assumed a larger importance. Justin was raised in the hippodrome or *kathisma*, as was already customary at the time. Earlier emperors - Leo, Anastasios - were concealed under a shield roof formed by soldiers during the donning of the purple and the diademing, which, significantly, was probably performed by themselves; in any case, it was not the patriarch. Justin's diademing took place *coram publico*, at least as far as the court was concerned - no shield roof was formed, everyone was supposed to be able to observe the process and, for special emphasis on concord, it was the patriarch who performed the diademing. What had been a hidden act in earlier 'coronations' had to be public if doubts about the unanimity of the decision could arise. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Viermann 2021, 106: “soziale Integrationsleistung … Moment gesellschaftlicher Selbstvergewisserung”. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Sode 2009, 445. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)