2 The Mandylion

2.1 Introduction

Of all the prized relics in the church of the Theotokos of the Lighthouse in the imperial palace in Constantinople, the so-called Mandylion[1] has the fullest record of historical and legendary mention, as well as the most developed cultic and liturgical reflection and veneration, after the Christian relic *par excellence* of the True Cross.[2] Prior to the icon-relic's[3] translation to the Byzantine capital from Edessa (present-day Şanlıurfa in south-eastern Turkey), the history of the object as presented in the fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebios of Caesarea[4] and in the fourth- or fifth-century Syriac text the *Doctrine of Addai* can be summarised as follows: a certain Syrian king named Abgar was ill and heard of the healings wrought by Jesus of Nazareth in Judaea. The king then sent an envoy to Jesus asking him to visit his palace in Syria; the Nazarene refused, saying he must stay amongst the sheep of Israel. The two

1 The term *mandylion* comes from Byzantine Greek μανδύλιον, itself an alternation of the more commonly found spelling μανδήλιον, a frequent change given the convergence of the vowels ι, η, ει, υ, οι, υι > /i/ in Medieval Greek; on this, cf. Holton et al. 2019, 10–11. The term derives originally from the Latin *mantēle* or the corresponding diminutive *mantēlium* meaning "(small) towel" (cf. *LBG*, s.v. "μανδήλιον, τό") via the Arabic *mandīl* (the plural form *manādīl* following native Arabic so-called broken plural patterns of vowel alternation between root consonants and thus attesting to the antiquity of the term's incorporation into the language; cf. Runciman 1931, 248; and Rosenthal 1971, 63–99 [cited in Krause 2022, 273]).

2 Groundbreaking in its scope and comprehensive character is the study by Dobschütz 1909, which has an entire chapter dedicated to the Mandylion ("Das Christusbild von Edessa", pp. 102–196). More recently, a complete study of the extant manuscripts, together with an edition of the text and a German translation, has been prepared by Illert 2007; even more recently, Mark Guscin has published two volumes on the traditions and texts connected to the Mandylion: Guscin 2009 and Guscin 2016. In what follows, quotations from Guscin's translations of the *Narratio de imagine Edessena* and the *Sermon* of Gregory the Referendary will be noted with both the paragraph number in the work as well as the double page span (facing Greek edition and English translation) as contained in *The Image of Edessa*. A comprehensive study of the Mandylion in comparison and contrast to the Shroud of Turin can be found in Nicolotti 2014, yet the focus there is more on understanding the links and complex transformation and intertwining of the stories and images of these two objects, rather than on the interchange and influence of the Mandylion alone on the Byzantine emperor's sacrality. For an overview of the history of the object, see Cameron 1983. The most recent study on the Mandylion and its tile copies (discussed in this chapter) is Krause 2022; cf. ibid., chapter 6, "*Acheiropoietos*: The Mandylion as 'the radiance of God's glory and exact imprint of God's very being'", pp. 273–319, and chapter 7, "Allegories of divine artistry: The Mandylion and its Multiples", pp. 320–354.

3 This term, fitting for the dual nature of how the Mandylion was treated and revered as both image and memento left by Christ, has been coined by Belting 1990, 235.

4 Cf. Eusebios of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. by Lake, 1.13.

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1240

accounts then diverge here slightly: one version says that Christ allowed his face to be painted on a cloth by the apostle Thaddaeus, while the other says that Christ washed his face and wiped it with a towel, and the divine image was miraculously imprinted onto the cloth. In both cases, the resulting image was delivered to Abgar, who was healed upon receiving it. Later in the sixth century, Euagrios Scholastikos writes of the Mandylion miraculously defending Edessa against a siege laid by the Persians under the Sasanian king Khosrow (Chosroēs) I.[5] In the following centuries, the precious cloth, bound to a board or piece of wood, was kept away as a treasure in the palace and then hidden in a niche above the gate of the city. Following the successful military campaign against the Arabs waged by the general John Kourkouas[6] during the joint reign of Emperors Rōmanos I Lakapēnos and Constantine VII Porphyrogennētos, the rulers of the city of Edessa are said to have surrendered the Mandylion to the Romans as a condition for the latter's withdrawal from the city, and the object was received with great pomp and celebration in Constantinople in August 944. At this point, the Mandylion's 'object biography'[7] fully emerges within the Middle Byzantine context and enters a centuries-long period of religious devotion, rhetorical reflection, and interaction with the figure of the emperor at the heart of the empire, beginning with the contemporaneous tenth-century account of its arrival and ending with mentions and sermons by Constantinopolitan elites on the eve of the Fourth Crusade. In examining these literary, artistic, and liturgical sources, the following questions arise: What is the precise nature of the link between relic and ruler here in the case of the Mandylion? What influence, direct or indirect, does its conjunction with the emperor have on how these sources speak of the character or nature of the emperor? And finally, is the emperor imbued with a sacred character by the Mandylion's translation and presence in the capital, and if so, how? The close reading of texts here, together with a look at the topical and tropical associations evoked by the specific image types and vocabulary employed in the sources, suggests a gradual shift over time from understanding the icon-relic as a protective palladium for the city as a whole to a specifically imperial treasure whose presence near the emperor grants the basileus a divine aura, from one *christos* or 'anointed' to another, as it were. With these lines of inquiry and interpretive tools in mind, let us turn to the first of the written sources, the translation narrative attributed to the emperor himself.

5 Cf. Euagrios Scholastikos, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. by Whitby, 4.27.

6 Kourkouas had an illustrious career on the eastern Byzantine front and was promoted around 921 to the high office of Domestic of the Schools, being dismissed later from service after the deposition of Rōmanos I and dying sometime after 946; cf. "Kourkouas, John" in *ODB* 2:1157 and "Domestikos ton scholon" in *ODB* 1:647–648. On Kourkouas's exploits under Emperor Rōmanos I, see also Runciman 1988, 135–150.

7 The notion of 'material' or 'object biographies' and examining the events in a given object's history through the stylistic lens of biography—a methodology which has been employed widely and enthusiastically especially in archaeology and anthropology—was first coined and discussed by Kopytoff 1986 in the volume edited by Appadurai.

2.2 Tenth century: *adventus* and installation

2.2.1 The *Narration* of Constantine VII Porphyrogennētos

The primary account of the icon-relic's arrival in Constantinople is provided by the so-called *Narration of the Image of Edessa* (henceforth *Narration*). Although the earliest extant manuscripts of the text date only from the 11th century,[8] the *Narration*'s authorship is attributed in the text's title to Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennētos himself,[9] setting forth the ruler already at the outset of the account as having his own reign embedded in or linked to that of Christ, the eternal king, and as having compiled this account from various sources: "A narration of Constantine, through Christ the eternal emperor, emperor of the Romans, assembled from diverse accounts."[10] The text strives to provide a full "narration" of the object's history, from the Abgar legend in first-century Syria to the festal reception of the icon-relic in tenth-century Constantinople. Yet in this early text from the Middle Byzantine period pertaining to the Mandylion, I believe that the initial connection made between relic and emperor, albeit subtle, is nonetheless determinative for the link binding relics and emperor together. Constantine writes that "[the relic] has now been transferred from Edessa to this ruling city by God's all-encompassing dispensation, for its [sc. the city's] salvation and protection, so that it may not seem to be deficient in anything, as it should always be the mistress of everything."[11] At first glance, the "ruling city" itself, rather than the emperor, seems to be the focus; but the immediately preceding title links the rule of Constantine VII directly with Christ's royal rule for the reader: "God's all-encompassing dispensation" thus encompasses the emperor, whose actions then become the focus of the story.

This link of God's activity with the rule of the Roman emperor is heightened in the next section of the tale. As the *Narration* relates, when Christ became incarnate and was physically present on earth,

> polyarchy had been disbanded and the whole inhabited world was as if under one belt—Roman rule—and subject to one ruler. And so all dealings of all peoples with others were carried out in peace and men did not appear to inhabit a divided world, but were all under one master, just as the universe is under one

8 Guscin 2009, 7.

9 The emperor might have indeed overseen the production and compilation of the text, but a personal hand in its composition is most unlikely, with the task being delegated to court scribes. For an argumentation of this view, see I. Ševčenko 1992.

10 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* title (8/9): Κωνσταντίνου ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεῖ αἰωνίῳ βασιλέως Ῥωμαίων διήγησις ἀπὸ διαφόρων ἀθροισθεῖσα ἱστοριῶν.

11 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 1 (8/9–10/11).

creator. Everybody bowed his neck in submission to the emperor and lived in peace with one another.[12]

The subtext of the *Narration*, however, makes clear that the distant past of first-century Rome and Palestine is not the only historical period meant to be understood here: the Mandylion, the authentic image of Christ, the "express image of the Father",[13] is now at hand in the present, as Constantine VII emerges from co-ruling with Rōmanos I to be sole ruler in his own right.[14] The opening historical sweep of the narration bears within itself a clear contemporary message: Constantine VII enjoys sole reign in the "inhabited world" of the empire in the presence of Christ via the icon-relic, mirroring God's supreme monarchic reign over creation.[15]

The divine face on the cloth/towel of the Mandylion and the miraculous copy made thereof by contact with a small tile (the so-called Keramion or 'Holy Tile') are given to Abgar in the story not merely as mementos or talismans, but as "symbols of salvation" (σωτήρια σύμβολα),[16] able to heal and protect both the king and his country. One such symbol at least—the Mandylion—is then said to be brought to Constantinople in the tenth century by divine will on account of the capital's prerogative over treasures and wonders, with Rōmanos still playing a part in the

12 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 2 (10/11–12/13). This same imagery of a united earthly monarchic rule being linked inextricably to the incarnation of the one monarchic God and the spread of the one true faith—including the selfsame word "polyarchy"—appears centuries later in the doxastikon at vespers for the Nativity of Christ, composed by the nun Kassianē (ca. 800/805–between 843–847): Αὐγούστου μοναρχήσαντος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἡ πολυαρχία τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπαύσατο· καὶ σοῦ ἐνανθρωπήσαντος ἐκ τῆς ἁγνῆς ἡ πολυθεΐα τῶν εἰδώλων κατήργηται. ὑπὸ μίαν βασιλείαν ἐγκόσμιον αἱ πόλεις γεγένηνται· καὶ εἰς μίαν δεσποτείαν θεότητος τὰ ἔθνη ἐπίστευσαν. ἀπεγράφησαν οἱ λαοὶ τῷ δόγματι τοῦ καίσαρος· ἐγράφημεν οἱ πιστοὶ ὀνόματι θεότητος, σοῦ τοῦ ἐνανθρωπήσαντος θεοῦ ἡμῶν. μέγα σου τὸ ἔλεος, δόξα σοι ("When Augustus had gained sole rule over the earth, the polyarchy of humans came to end; and when you had become human from the pure [Virgin], the polytheism of idols was abolished. The cities came under a single universal empire, and the nations believed in the single dominion of divinity. The peoples were enrolled by the decree of Caesar; we the faithful have been recorded by the name of the divinity of you, our God who has become human. Great is your mercy, glory to you"; translation mine). For a study on the life and sources around this rare female writer whose works have survived, as well as for the extant hymns attributed to her in the Byzantine tradition, see Tsirōnē 2002 (this hymn: p. 56).

13 Cf. Heb 1:3.

14 Constantine VII remained as sole *autokratōr* in 944 after Romanōs was removed to the Princes' Islands and forced to become a monk by his sons Stephen and Christopher, who in turn were exiled by Constantine VII. The episode is recounted in Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicle*, ed. by Wahlgren, 136.82–137.8 (pp. 339–343).

15 The connection of a single ruler with the single divinity dates from late antiquity and is very much alive in the medieval cultures of Western and Eastern Europe. On these origins, see Fürst 2006.

16 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 9 (24/25).

tale, "ma[king] it his own priority to possess this image and enrich the queen of cities" by entreating Edessa to give up the relic.[17] The Byzantine account here of imperial efforts to secure the Mandylion for the capital by handing over Muslim prisoners to the Arab authorities ruling over Edessa at the time[18] has more historical grounding than the earlier, much-debated Abgarian parts of the Mandylion's past; a contemporaneous Arabic-language chronicle also confirms that the Muslim rulers of Edessa were approached about the object and ultimately ceded it to the Byzantines to preserve the lives of their co-religionists.[19] But while Rōmanos is depicted as initiating efforts to bring the icon-relic to the city, Constantine is the one to be legitimated by the Mandylion's arrival in Constantinople, which is framed very much like a late antique *adventus* in terms of the majestic entry of the relic into the city with pauses and stations on either side of the city walls.[20]

On the way to the Byzantine capital, many healing miracles are said to occur in the wake of the Mandylion's transit: no person is said to see or touch the object, but only that "the holy image (τῆς ἱερᾶς εἰκόνος) and the letter of Christ worked many … extraordinary miracles along the way."[21] As in the days of Abgar, so now in the tenth century: the image of Christ being transported is no inert depiction devoid of agency, but rather works healings like other more typical relics of the martyrs and the saints in similar accounts of miraculous healings, such as bones, dust, or pieces of clothing—albeit solely by its presence and without any specific instance of contact. Similarly, the image is not merely carried in a travel bag or a bundle of wrappings, but is described as being borne about in a casket or chest (θήκη), the same term often used for reliquaries in the Middle Byzantine period.[22] An amalgam

17 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 21 (44/45). On the topos of 'queen of cities' for Constantinople, see chapter 1 above, n. 1.

18 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 22–24 (44/45–48/49).

19 A Muslim perspective on the events of the removal of the Mandylion from Edessa to Constantinople is found in the writings of the Abbasid government minister (*wazīr*) ʿAlī bin ʿĪsā bin Dāʾūd bin al-Jarrāḥ (AD 859–946), who was secretary under the caliph al-Muqtadir and is said to have advised the Muslim leaders in Edessa to relinquish the object, as related in Bowen 1928 and cited by Runciman 1931, 249. On this *wazīr*, see "ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Dāʾūd b. al-Jarrāḥ" in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam. Third Edition*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_24846 (accessed 15/09/2023).

20 On the origins and development of the *adventus*, i.e., the ceremonially performed and perceived arrival of the sovereign (first in imperial Rome and later in Constantinople and other medieval Western European centres), a rich literature exists. See in particular: Kantorowicz 1944, Lehoux/Guenée 1968, MacCormack 1972, MacCormack 1974, Lehnen 1997, Kipling 1998, Warner 2001, Schenk 2003, Porena 2005, Shepard 2013, and Pfeilschifter 2013 (esp. pp. 333–354).

21 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 26 (50/51).

22 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 27 (50/51). Cf. also *LBG*, s.v. "θήκη, ἡ"; Hostetler 2016, 8 and 33, where he notes the frequency of the term as used in reliquary epigrams. Evidence for the word's usage as a general term for "reliquary" also comes to us via the dictionary of Hēsychios of Alexandria (fifth or sixth century AD), where the author defines the term γλωσσόκομον (appearing twice in the New Testament in John 12:6 and 13:29) as σορός,

of paradoxes thus comes to the fore: the Mandylion is both image/depiction and yet unseen; it is a relic but no mere corporeal remnant; it remains untouched and unapproached yet effects all manner of healings; it is matter yet seemingly bears the immaterial divine presence. Concomitant with this divine presence within the Mandylion is a divine mandate of authority, which is extended in the *Narration* not to several co-reigning *basileis*, nor to the Mandylion's summoner Rōmanos I, but to Constantine VII. Near the end of the object's translation to the capital, we read the following public proclamation of the divine election of Constantine to rule:

> When they were nearing the end of their journey they came to the monastery of the most holy Mother of God, which is called *ta Eusebiou*, in the so-called theme of the Optimatoi. The casket that contained the miracle-working image was reverently placed in the church of the monastery, and many people coming forward with pure intention were cured of their illnesses. One who came in was possessed by a demon, and was used as an instrument by the evil spirit to proclaim the praises of the image and the letter just as in the past another of his kind had said to the Lord, "We know who you are, the Holy One of Israel."[23] Finally the spirit uttered the following words, "Receive your glory and joy, Constantinople, and you, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, your kingdom." The man was cured on saying this and was freed immediately from the aggression of the demon. There are many witnesses to these words—the emperor had sent the leaders of his council to honour and greet the desired object, and many bodyguards had come too, and it so happened that some magistrates and patricians as well as people from the lower ranks saw and heard it.[24]

Besides clearly linking Constantine—and Constantine alone—with rule over the city of Constantine, the demon-*qua*-divine instrument in the *Narration* also links the proclamation of Constantine VII's rule with the revelation of Christ's divinity by the demons in the Synoptic Gospel narratives, which I believe allows the reader/hearer to understand the manifestation of God-made-flesh in the Gospels as being an ancient prototype now finding fulfilment in the tale's description of the manifestation of Constantine-become-autokratōr, sole ruler.

The casket with the Mandylion arrives according to the *Narration* on August 15 in the evening, on the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, at Blachernai

θήκη ξυλίνη τῶν λειψάνων ("a coffin, a wooden container of relics"), the additional specification of the adjective "wooden" (ξύλινος) here implying that θήκη alone without any determiner was a usual term for denoting a reliquary, and that in this case, γλωσσόκομον could be described as a *wooden* kind of such a container. Cf. Hēsychios of Alexandria, *Lexicon*, ed. by Cunningham, s.v. "γλωσσόκομον".

23 Cf. the encounter of the man possessed by a legion of demons with Christ in Gerasa/Gadara/Gergesa: Matt 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39.

24 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 27 (50/51–52/53).

at the city's outskirts, where royal protocol prescribed that the emperor keep the feast.[25] There it is received and venerated by both Rōmanos and Constantine, and then given royal honours in its escort, with language describing this activity reminiscent of the Divine Liturgy of the Byzantine rite: "The emperors went up to the chest, and greeted it[26] and worshipped it although they did not open it.[27] Then they conveyed it to the royal ship with honour, due escort and many lighted lamps, and so came with it to the palace."[28] The word used for "due escort" here (δορυφορία) is at once highly militaristic in origin (literally "spear-carrying" of an imperial bodyguard) and highly liturgical, having the same lexical root as the verb used in the Cherubic Hymn at the Great Entrance to describe the invisible angelic hosts escorting the bread and wine which are to become the body and blood of Christ in the Byzantine Divine Liturgy.[29] The allusions to liturgy via vocabulary in the passage, together with the mention of the emperors actually venerating the relic (albeit via the reliquary/casket), undergird both the sacred character of the emperor as well as his exclusive access to the object as the Mandylion enters Constantinople. The Mandylion's protective and healing power is indeed brought to the city: the *Narration* continues to explain how on the following day (August 16), the object was carried around the perimeter of the city via the same royal ship "so that it might in some way preserve the city by its sea circuit."[30] Escorted after this transit from the Golden Gate in the southwest of the city back to the palace by the emperors, Senate, patriarch, and various clergy, the Mandylion continues to heal people in the crowds, much as it did on its journey through the Anatolian hinterlands.

Nonetheless, imperial exclusivity and the sacrality of the object are made here publicly manifest once again. Only the emperors Constantine VII; the sons of Rōmanos I, Christopher and Stephen (the elder Rōmanos I is said in the text to have stayed home on account of an illness); and the clergy touch the reliquary, going on foot once again "with a fitting escort" (τῇ προσηκούσῃ δορυφορίᾳ), the terminology once again laden with sacred and liturgical overtones and historical precedent.[31]

25 Ceremonial directions for this feast and the emperor's entourage are to be found in the *Book of Ceremonies* compiled during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogennētos, II.9.

26 Gr. ἠσπάσαντο, which can also mean "kiss", especially in a liturgical context such as this involving the veneration of a holy object; cf. Lampe, s.v. "ἀσπάζομαι".

27 Guscin is quite free with his translation here, whereas the Greek simply reads "and worshipped it on/from the outside" (ἔξωθεν ταύτην … προσκυνήσαντες).

28 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 28 (54/55–56/57).

29 The text of this short hymn is as follows: "Let us who mystically represent (εἰκονίζοντες) the cherubim and who sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity now lay aside every earthly care, that we might receive the king of all, who is being escorted (δορυφορούμενον) by the angelic hosts. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia." The most thorough examination of the history of this hymn is to be found in Taft/Parenti 2014, 155–256.

30 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 28 (56/57).

31 Notably, the procession of Emperor Hērakleios and his son with Patriarch Sergios I on the walls of the city with another *acheiropoiētos* image, the Kamoulianai image of Christ,

Additionally, the icon-relic in its casket is further defined for the reader: the cortège "went with the box holding the precious and sacred objects as if it were another ark of the covenant or something even greater."[32] While Constantine may have believed, as he writes, that by this holy procession "the city would be made holier and stronger, and would be kept unharmed and unassailable for all time",[33] the *mise-en-scène* of the Mandylion's public display and its final deposition not in the Great Church, but in the Pharos chapel, underscores the object's special connection beyond the city at large to the ruler of the city. Indeed, the closing sections of the *Narration* drive this particular link between ruler and relic emphatically home. Within the palace en route to the chapel, the accompanying clergy venerate the object one last time and then place the Mandylion on the emperor's throne within the Chrysotriklinos hall,

> from which the greatest decisions are usually taken. Not unreasonably, they believed that the emperor's throne would be made holy and that justice and uprightness would be given to all who sat on it. After completion of the usual litany, the divine image was taken from there again and taken to the above-mentioned chapel of Pharos. It was consecrated and placed on the right towards the east for the glory of the faithful, the safety of the emperors and the security of the whole city together with the Christian community.[34]

Besides Constantine VII's projection of his own vision for the throne onto the thoughts of the clergy, this passage is noteworthy for the described movement of the Mandylion. Although the object is brought into the sanctuary of the Great Church on its way to the palace, no specific mention is made of it being placed there on the altar or the patriarch's cathedra in the apse.[35] In the palace, however, the icon-relic of Christ the King is seated upon the imperial throne beneath the icon of Christ the Almighty in the Chrysotriklinos, the hall of the Great Palace where

during the Avar siege of the city in 626. The event is recounted by the contemporaries Theodore Synkellos, *On the Siege of Byzantium during the Reign of Emperor Hērakleios*, ed. by Mai, pp. 423ff., and George Pisidēs, *The Avar War*, ed. by Tartaglia, pp. 71–139. On the Kamoulianai image, see Kitzinger 1954, esp. pp. 111–112, and Mango 1986, 114–115, who cites the account provided in Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle*, ed. by Greatrex, 12.4. As far as I can tell, no liturgical texts commemorating this particular icon-relic survive, if indeed such were ever composed.

32 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 28 (56/57): ὡς ἄλλην κιβωτὸν μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ὑπὲρ ταύτην, τὸ τῶν ἁγιωτάτων καὶ τιμίων φρουρὸν σκεῦος παρέπεμπον, the plural here signifying the Mandylion and the accompanying letter sent along with it, which was said to have been addressed by Christ to Abgar.

33 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 28 (56/57).

34 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 30 (58/59–60/61).

35 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 29 (58/59): "When the leaders of the celebration came to the square before the Augusteion, they turned off the main street and went to the sacred precinct named after the divine wisdom of God, and placed the esteemed image and the letter in the innermost recesses of the sanctuary (τῶν ἀδύτων τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου ἐντός)."

foreign ambassadors were met and high state celebrations held.[36] The presence of the Mandylion on the throne would call to mind a common iconographic trope in Byzantium, that of the *hetoimasia* or "preparation" of a throne for God,[37] one depiction of which in Byzantine art is found in some images of church councils with a central throne, on which the book of the Gospels is placed so as to represent Christ. Here, however, the symbolism of divine sanctity is clearly associated not with an episcopal synod but with an imperial throne and an imperial person. As Évelyne Patlagean has pointed out, "La station de l'Image sur [le trône] manifestait que l'empereur est si l'on peut dire une incarnation de l'Incarnation, elle-même conçue comme empereur éternel et céleste."[38]

Admittedly, the text of Constantine's *Narration* does mention the benefits of possessing the Mandylion that extend beyond the imperial person, and not merely to the city, but also to the wider "Christian community". However, the text ends with a final focus on the emperor—this time, in the singular—and with a curious personification of the object. Written in the third person (but still the words of Constantine), the last section of the *Narration* is a prayer directed to Christ in the icon-relic, perhaps to Christ-*qua*-Mandylion:

> But, O divine likeness of the likeness of the unchanging Father (ὦ θεῖον ὁμοίωμα τοῦ ἀπαραλλάκτου πατρὸς ὁμοιώματος), O form of the Father's person, O holy and venerable seal of Christ, our God's archetypal goodness—I speak to you in faith as if you had a living soul (ὡς γὰρ ἐμψύχῳ σοι πιστῶς διαλέγομαι)—save and keep always our noble and gentle ruler (βασιλεύοντα), who keeps the feast of your coming in due fashion, the one you placed on his father's and grandfather's throne in your presence. Keep his offspring safe for the family succession and the security of rule. Bring to the people a state of peace. Keep this queen of cities[39] free from siege. Make us pleasing to your image, Christ, our God (τῷ

36 On the Chrysotriklinos or "Golden Hall" of the Great Palace, cf. Janin 1969, 115–117; "Chrysotriklinos" in *ODB* 1:455–456.

37 While this Greek term first comes into use for this depiction of a throne prepared for Christ in the 12th century, images of a seemingly empty throne symbolizing the mystical presence of the invisible divine appear from the fifth century onwards; cf. "Hetoimasia" in *ODB* 2:926. A detailed study of the motif in its earliest, pre- and early-Christian settings can be found in Vollmer 2014, esp. pp. 357–406. For the late antique and Byzantine periods, see Di Natale/Resconi 2013 and Bergmeier 2020.

38 Patlagean 1995, 31.

39 This sobriquet of the city, to me a clear sign of the capital's metropolitan character as a city claiming to be superior to all other urban centres, is frequently encountered in Byzantine writings, both sacred and profane. Here, the metropolitan character is evoked not only in conjunction with the presence of the emperor in the city, but also on account of the presence of the holy relics. This imagery of the city personified as a reigning queen (incidentally matching the grammatically feminine nouns for city in Latin [*urbs*] and Greek [πόλις], and paralleling the similarly feminine force of personified Fortune or Luck [Latin *Fortuna*, Greek Τύχη, also both grammatically feminine]) is initially

> ἀρχετύπῳ σου Χριστῷ τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν),[40] to receive us into his heavenly kingdom, praising him and singing hymns, for to him is due honour and worship for ever and ever. Amen.[41]

The addressee here in the emperor's prayer is the Mandylion itself, spoken to as though it were alive and literally embodying the divine Word of God: from the choice of vocabulary, we then have a connection and parallel created between the emperor, the "living law" (ἔμψυχος νόμος),[42] and the "living likeness" of Christ.

applied to Rome; cf. Horace, *Odes* 4.3: "The youth of Rome, queen of cities, sees fit to give me a place in the well-loved choir of lyric poets" (*Romae principis urbium / dignatur suboles inter amabilis / vatum ponere me choros*: ed./transl. by Rudd, pp. 226–227); *Epistles* 1.7, ll. 44–45 ("To Maecenas"): "Modest things are right for modest people; / Rome, queen of cities, isn't what pleases me most, / But quiet Tibur and peaceful Tarentum are" (*Parvum parva decent; mihi iam non regia Roma, / sed vacuum Tibur placet aut inbelle Tarentum*; transl. taken from Ferry 1998, 2); also Ovid, *Book of Days* 4.859–862, where the city is directly addressed: "May you rule over all and ever be under the great Caesar; may you often have more of this name, and whenever you shall stand sublime in a conquered world, may all things lie beneath your shoulders" (*cuncta regas et sis magno sub Caesare semper, / saepe etiam plures nominis huius habe; / et, quotiens steteris domito sublimis in orbe, / omnia sint umeris inferiora tuis*, translation mine). The appellation passes to Constantinople, and then comes to be applied after the Fourth Crusade especially to Paris after the Crown of Thorns is translated thither by Louis IX (recorded in the edition of post-Crusade texts by Duchesne 1649, 407–411 and cited in Papanicolaou 1980, 53). A stained-glass pane from the late 1240s depicting King Louis IX bearing the Crown of Thorns survives and is preserved today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; cf. ibid., Fig. 1; this image is also visible online at https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/471218 (accessed 16/02/2022). On this topos more generally, see the collected essays in Kytzler 1993 (esp. Beck's article therein, pp. 127–137), Herrin 2000, and James 2005. On the Crown of Thorns and the Sainte-Chapelle built to house it and other Passion relics, a detailed bibliography is provided in the initial footnotes of Cohen 2008; the holdings of the Sainte-Chapelle are also discussed in Durand/Laffitte 2001. On Paris as medieval metropolis of the West, see Oberste 2012 and Oberste 2021.

40 Guscin's translation here is a bit confusing. The Mandylion as "image" (εἰκών) is being entreated by the emperor as author to make both him and the people pleasing to the image's archetype, Christ, on which it is based. The phrasing here too recalls the writings of Origen of Alexandria, who speaks of Christ, the Word of God, as being "the archetypal image" (ἡ ἀρχέτυπος εἰκών) of all other images of the Father (*Commentary on the Gospel according to John books 1–10*, transl. Heine, 2.2.18), as well as in two sermons of John Chrysostom, where the faithful Christian is enjoined to be an "archetypal image" to those around him: "be in all things [or: amongst all people] an archetypal image" (ἔσο ἐν πᾶσιν ἀρχέτυπος εἰκών, *Homilies on Ephesians* 15, PG 62:110); "let the radiance of your way of life be set forth in the midst of all as a kind of archetypal image" (ἔστω … ἡ τοῦ σοῦ βίου λαμπρότης, εἰς μέσον πᾶσι προκειμένη, ὥσπερ ἀρχέτυπός τις εἰκών, *Homilies on 2 Timothy* 4, PG 62:684) (both translations mine).

41 Const. VII Porph., *Narration* 37 (68/69).

42 In the *Basilika* (AD 888), Justinian writes that "God has sent the emperor to earth as animate law" (*Basilika*, ed. by Scheltema/Holwerda/Wal, 2.6.2; cited in Vryonis 1997, 5). A search on *TLG* shows instances of the phrase being used in the homilies of John

The deposition of the Mandylion in the Pharos church first mentions the faithful Christian people and then the emperors; here in the final prayer, the people and city come after the royal line of succession and the single ruler,[43] who alone has been placed by God on the ancestral imperial throne.

The realpolitik of Constantine VII's consolidation of power as sole emperor is framed in the context of this intercessory prayer to the Mandylion-*qua*-Christ as simply the result of divine election and providence, I would argue, and the primary request of the prayer here is for the protection of the sovereign. The *Narration*, far from simply relating the tale of a relic's retrieval from far-flung Edessa to central Constantinople, intimately ties relic to ruler—and this in a text composed at imperial behest. Furthermore, the reliquary-relic ensemble is conceived here not merely as a combination of sacred content and container, but rather is elevated to the level of ark (κιβωτός), a word rich in scriptural allusions of sanctity and exclusivity, calling to mind both the central divine 'reliquary' housing the tablets of the Covenant in the Old Testament (linked especially to the prophetic, priestly, and royal personages of Moses, Aaron, and David) and the Theotokos, the patroness par excellence of Constantinople who served as an animate ark for the presence of the divine in the New Testament.

At this juncture, we can summarise that the *Narration* establishes a clear link between the emperor Constantine VII and the translated icon-relic of the Mandylion. The holiness of the object finds expression in miraculous healings and prophetic utterances, and an intimate connection is made between ruler and relic by the latter's deposition not in the city cathedral but in the Lighthouse chapel next to the royal bedchambers. What the reader sees here in the brief mention of the icon-relic as being something surpassing even the holy ark of old is a rhetorical seed that will bear much fruit in later reflection on relics and rulers in the Middle Byzantine period. One such fruit is already present in the contemporaneous sermon preached by Gregory the Referendary upon the arrival of the Mandylion in Constantinople in 944. But how is this rhetorical fruit given as spiritual/rhetorical 'food' to Gregory's hearers? How is the sacrality of the Mandylion evoked, and how is this sacred character linked to the emperor? It is to this speech and these questions which we shall now turn.

Chrysostom (*Homilies on Repentance* 2, PG 49:286, where the example God makes of Cain after the latter had slain his brother Abel is said to be an ἔμψυχος νόμος for those who would learn of divine judgment; *Homilies on 1 Timothy* 13.1, PG 62:565, where Chrysostom interprets Paul's injunction to Timothy to become a model for the faithful [τύπος γίνου τῶν πιστῶν, 1 Tim 4:12] in part as being for Timothy to become "just like an animate law" [ὥσπερ νόμος ἔμψυχος]), which same passage, interpretation, and wording are all taken up later by Theodoret of Cyrus, *Interpretation of the Fourteen Epistles of Saint Paul*, PG 82:816.

43 The text here reads βασιλεύοντα in the singular, rather than the plural βασιλεύοντας, which would imply co-emperors.

2.2.2 The *Sermon* of Gregory the Referendary

A second contemporary text pertaining to the Mandylion's translation to Constantinople is the sermon preached by Gregory, an archdeacon and referendary[44] of the Great Church in Constantinople. The preface of the sermon, which mentions Gregory's titles, is also noteworthy for confirming the date (AD 944)[45] and for specifying neither Constantine VII nor Rōmanos I as the mastermind behind the translation: the text simply states that the icon-relic was brought to the city "by the zeal of a pious emperor" (σπουδῇ βασιλέως εὐσεβοῦς).[46] Little is known of Gregory besides these official titles. Dubarle posits that he might have been some sort of guardian of relics on account of the referendary's listing of certain Passion relics in the sermon;[47] yet as archdeacon of the Great Church, Gregory would have been separate from the palace clergy and not necessarily in charge of any palatine chapel. Nonetheless, it is nearly certain that the elite circle of nobles and ecclesiastical functionaries with access to the palace and the emperor—including Gregory as archdeacon—would be aware of the specific treasures and Passion relics kept in the Pharos church, such that a mention of these need not entail specific responsibility for or access to them.

More peculiar here is the lack of a specific name for the emperor at any point in the text. On the one hand, this onomastic omission could hint at political savvy on Gregory's part. While the Mandylion was brought to Constantinople in August 944, Rōmanos I remained senior emperor and was not deposed by his sons Stephen and Constantine until December of that year; from the *Narration*, we can see a clear focus placed on legitimising Constantine VII as sole ruler while making mention of the senior emperor only to point out his illness and absence from the final procession to the Great Church and Great Palace. Gregory, as a visible public figure involved in the affairs of church and state, might not have wished to offend either party by connecting a specific name with the translation festivities. In seeking to pin down the date of the homily, Dubarle claims that the (yet again) unnamed emperor in the concluding paragraph of the sermon is Rōmanos I, and thus that the homily must of necessity date from before the December deposition.[48] As noted above, however, nowhere in the text is a specific emperor named, and other rhetorical cues suggest that the homily was indeed delivered on August 16: the text speaks in vivid terms of

44 The office of ecclesiastical referendary (Gr. ῥεφερενδάριος, from Lat. *referendarius*) was normally held by a deacon or archdeacon who served as a liaison between the patriarch and palace; cf. "Referendarios" in *ODB* 3:1778.

45 *Sermon* 1 (70/71): "A sermon by Gregory the archdeacon and *referendarius* of the Great Church at Constantinople … about how three patriarchs have declared that there is an image of Christ that was brought from Edessa 919 years afterwards … in the year 6452 (ἐν ἔτει ϛυνβ′)."

46 *Sermon* 1 (70/71).

47 Dubarle 1997, 6.

48 Dubarle 1997, 11–12.

"the assembly of people … [that] has come together", using a word for the crowd denoting a solemn celebration (πανήγυρις) and the perfect tense rather than the aorist in the verb form (συγκεκρότηται) to demonstrate present-moment relevance; shortly thereafter, Gregory speaks of the present condition of his hearers as being prepared to hear his words, which preparation would make sense on that day of the festal celebration itself.[49] Determining which emperor is meant here on the basis of the received text is thus not possible in my view.

On the other hand, the lack of a specific name here could also be a rhetorical feature linking the events of the translation to the emperor in general: that is, to the figure or office of emperor, above and beyond the specific individual holding that office at any given time. While a generalising interpretation of the first anonymous mention of the emperor in the title is somewhat attenuated by the specific mention of the year, this mention is before the inaugural request for a blessing to speak ("Bless, O Lord", Gr. Κύριε εὐλόγησον) at the start of the homily, and thus unlikely to have been uttered aloud.[50] For the audience hearing the words of the homily in its context, then, the generalisation would have held true: no emperor is mentioned by name, and thus *every* emperor could be implied as a result. Yet even here, we see in Gregory's sermon clear links between the emperor and prototypical figures of the past, as well as personifications of the Mandylion implying a specific, unique divine presence in this sacred object.

After the brief introductory remarks to his hearers, Gregory (like Constantine VII in the *Narration*) rehearses the Mandylion's history—its origins and the various accounts of its past—before continuing to describe the present day on which the icon-relic is escorted by candlelight to the Pharos chapel.[51] Suddenly, though, past and present are conflated rhetorically by the referendary. He speaks of God's "ancient ark" (ἡ πάλαι σου κιβωτός) that was held captive by the Philistines in the days of David the king, who danced before it at its triumphant return amidst the people of Israel.[52] But the next sentence refers to this same object, the ark, now being united with God's chosen people along with their other treasures: namely, the other Passion relics housed in the Pharos chapel that served to transmit mercy and grace to all.[53] The lack of any rhetorical conjunctive or disjunctive particles at the start of this sentence, such as μέν or δέ, makes extremely vivid the identification of actors

49 *Sermon* 4 (77/78): "And so, now that you have suitably prepared the condition in which the soul presents itself to hear such things, I will continue so that you can listen" (Ἤδη οὖν, ἐπεὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐσκευάσατε ἱκανῶς τὰ δι' ὧν ἡ ψυχὴ πρὸς τὴν τῶν τηλικούτων ἀκρόασιν ἀπαντᾷ, συνιστῶ καὶ ἀκούοιτε). In his English translation, Guscin follows the emendation to the text suggested by Dubarle, who credits this to Joseph Paramelle: "Le ms. porte ἅπαντα avec l'esprit rude (= tout) ce qui ne donne pas de sens. La correction ἀπαντᾷ donne un verbe à la phrase" (Dubarle 1997, 33).

50 *Sermon* 1 (70/71).

51 *Sermon* 14 (80/81).

52 Cf. 2 Kgdms 6:10–15.

53 *Sermon* 15 (80/81).

in the first sentence (ark, Philistines, David, Israel) with those of the second (reliquary, Muslims, emperor, Christians/Constantinopolitans).[54] The application of Old Testament prototypes is made even more explicit in the paragraph immediately following: like the dancing David, "the radiant emperor marches in front, beautified more by walking on foot than by the crowns of state." The emperor leads the way, followed by patriarch, clergy, and crowds of people,[55] who are then addressed as "the portion of Christ's heritage".[56] All the actors in the procession, translation, and deposition of the Mandylion, borne aloft in its "ark", embody and exemplify Constantinople as a new 'Jerusalem', a trope extensively studied and applied to the city as a whole by many scholars.[57] Yet within this new Jerusalem, the sacred temple in which the divine presence comes to dwell is not the Great Church, I would argue, but rather the Pharos chapel within the imperial palace and immediately next to the emperor's apartments, as my close readings of sources in this chapter will show.[58]

Like Constantine VII in the *Narration*, Gregory the Referendary highlights this personal presence of God made specifically manifest in the Mandylion at the end of his festal homily. The uniqueness of the Mandylion as bearing an imprint "not made by hands" (ἀχειροποίητος, that is, not fashioned or created by human agency but directly by God)[59] set it apart from, even outside, the category of holy images per se. Gregory writes that Christ, through his sweat touching the cloth, transfers his prototype to the likeness[60] and the two become one, such that the object can be addressed in a final prayer directly as Christ himself:

> But O pure Son of the pure Father, Word, Wisdom, image (εἰκών), imprint (ἐκμαγεῖον), radiance (ἀπαύγασμα)—for I call you all of these things as I am sanctified by recalling them and the other similar names of you who are above

54 In Classical or Atticising Greek, such as one finds in this homily, the phenomenon of no connective or disjunctive particle being present between two or more sentences, called rhetorical *asyndeton* (Gr. ἀσύνδετον, "not bound together"), serves to express emotion or liveliness as well as give an explanatory or clarifying reason or result for the previous clause. Cf. Smyth 1984, 484–485; Delgado 2018.

55 *Sermon* 16 (80/81).

56 *Sermon* 17 (82/83): Ἀλλ' ὦ σχοίνισμα κληρονομίας Χριστοῦ.

57 Extensive research has been done on the topos of Constantinople and/or the Great Palace as being a 'new Jerusalem'; here, we can mention: Carile 2012, Guran 2009, Lidov 2006, Pahlitzsch 2011, and Savage 2019.

58 On the Pharos church in general, cf. Janin 1969, 232–236; Janin further notes that the church was called "la chapelle du Palais, puisqu'elle avoisinait les appartements de l'empereur" (p. 235).

59 On images "not made by hand" in general, see "Acheiropoieta" in *ODB* 1:12; Belting 1990, 64–70; Brubaker/Haldon 2011, 35; and Krause 2022, 273–277. On the acheiropoiētos image from Kamoulianai, see this chapter above, n. 31.

60 *Sermon* 22 (86/87): "And for the prototype to be transferred to the likeness, he does this himself with the sweat of the human form he deigned to bear" (Καὶ γὰρ ἵνα μετάγοιτο πρὸς τὸ ὁμοίωμα τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, ἐκ τῶν ἱδρώτων τοῦτο ἧς φορέσαι μορφῆς ἠξίωσεν αὐτουργεῖ).

> all names and deeds—behold the crown which the pious zeal of the emperor places on the radiance (ἀπαυγάσματι) of your face [and adorn it with diadems of grace as with diadems of imperial authority].[61]

The direct address of the object as though it were Christ himself is a departure from official post-Iconomachy orthodox theological teaching on icons and images—which held that the latter are to be venerated as representing a prototype or person, but not to be worshipped as such—but not from actual post-Iconomachy practice;[62] this form of interaction with the Mandylion in the text underscores a primary understanding of it precisely as relic and physical 'remnant' of Christ-God, and not merely as a sacred image. Here, the archdeacon—hardly a figure one would presume to be ignorant on such theological matters—does not only venerate the Mandylion as representing Christ, but also addresses it and prays to it as though *being* Christ made manifest in this form. A key word in this concluding prayer is "radiance" (ἀπαύγασμα). As Karin Krause has noted, this Greek term is the one most frequently used in both the *Narration* and the *Sermon* to refer to the Mandylion.[63] Moreover, we see here in the list of select epithets of Christ

61 *Sermon* 23 (86/87). The final section in brackets is my own translation. The Greek text here is: καὶ ὡς τοῖς αὐτοκρατορικοῖς καὶ τοῖς τῶν χαρίτων ὡράϊζε διαδήμασι. Guscin conflates this somewhat clunkily with the previous clause ("… on the radiance of your face and along with the imperial crowns, beautify it with diadems of grace on it like those of absolute sovereignty", ibid., p. 87), whereas Dubarle in his edition and French translation is more accurate ("Et, comme des diadèmes du pouvoir absolu, orne-le aussi des [diadèmes] des grâces", Dubarle 1997, 28).

62 Cf. the Definition from the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787); see below this chapter, n. 115. Interestingly, despite such canonical prohibitions, similar direct address of other relics enters the lived practice of the Byzantine church, especially in hymnography related to the True Cross. Some instances can be found in the akolouthia for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) in the received Byzantine tradition, in particular the hymns for the litia and the aposticha at Great Vespers (cf. Μηναῖον Σεπτεμβρίου, ed. by Ἀποστολικὴ Διακονία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, 231–234). One of these is attributed to Emperor Leo VI, and while this ruler is known for his homilies and other writings, making a genuine attribution of any particular hymn (and there are many) in the Byzantine hymnographic corpus to Leo VI is difficult. For more on Leo VI and his literary pursuits (and issues of attribution), see Antonopoulou 1997; at present, a definitive study on the emergence and development of Byzantine hymnography for the Exaltation of the Cross remains a *desideratum* in the study of the history of the liturgy. Parallel Western instances of early popular pious devotion personifying the Cross can be found in the Old English poem *The Dream of the Rood*, preserved in the tenth-century manuscript known as the Vercelli Book (for Old English original text and Modern English translation, see Foys et al. 2019, available online: https://oepoetryfacsimile.org/ [accessed 20/09/2023]), and in Ælfric of Eynsham's (ca. 955–ca. 1010) *Lives of the Saints* composed in Old English, where for the Exaltation of the Cross, he writes of Emperor Constantine calling out to the Cross directly and entreating it to remember the faithful to Christ; cf. Ælfric of Eynsham, *Lives of the Saints*, ed./transl. by Skeat, 150–153.

63 Krause 2022, 301.

mentioned by Gregory those of "image" (εἰκών)[64] and "radiance".[65] The two terms are also found connected in scripture in a single passage from the Old Testament referring to the wisdom of God: "For she[66] is a reflection (ἀπαύγασμα) of eternal light and a spotless mirror of the activity of God and an image (εἰκών) of his goodness."[67] The image and radiance here of Christ, the Son of God, are linked essentially to his person as quasi-names or core characteristics, allowing the archdeacon and the emperor to speak of and treat the Mandylion not merely as icon/image or holy relic, but also as the divine Lord himself, whom the referendary proclaims to be dwelling now in the form of the Mandylion within the palace of the divinely appointed emperor.

Another important aspect of both the *Sermon* and the *Narration* is that the actual icon-relic remains hidden from view: only the casket or "ark" containing the sacred treasure is seen and venerated, with the Mandylion escaping actual description or gaze. Given the perceived heightened divine character of the Mandylion vis-à-vis the other Passion relics, this is not surprising: rather, the context here calls to mind the Old Testament episode of God on the cusp of revealing his glory to Moses before the giving of the tables of the law and protectively hiding the prophet in the hollow of a rock, since "a person shall never see my face and live."[68] To behold the glory of God in his face and to live, one could reason, would mean that a person would have to be more than merely human: indeed, to some degree divine.

Such a rhetorical thread vis-à-vis the emperor appears in the textual tapestry of the chronicle compiled by Pseudo-Symeon. Extant in a single medieval manuscript copied in the 12th or 13th century (MS Parisinus gr. 1712),[69] this otherwise unknown author's account of the Mandylion's arrival is also singular in a vignette it presents on Constantine VII and the icon-relic. While the *Chronicle* of Symeon proper

64 This word appears several times in the New Testament texts where it is linked to Christ: Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15.

65 This word appears once in the New Testament, where it is specifically linked to Jesus Christ (Heb 1:3).

66 The reference here is to the wisdom (Heb. *ḥokmâ*, Gr. σοφία) of God, which in both Hebrew and Greek is grammatically feminine and mentioned in numerous locations in both Old and New Testaments; in the writings of Paul, Christ is called both the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24) and the locus of all wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3); later patristic writers interpret the Old Testament passages speaking of the divine wisdom as referring typologically or allegorically to Christ. Cf. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Kittel/Friedrich and transl. by Bromiley, s.v. "σοφία, σοφός, σοφίζω"; *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd revised edition, ed. by Cross/Livingstone, s.v. "wisdom".

67 Wis 7:26; Krause mentions the verse in her lecture (Krause 2020).

68 Exod 33:20; Krause mentions the verse in her lecture (Krause 2020).

69 For more on this author, see "Symeon Magistros, Pseudo-" in *ODB* 3:1983; a digitised copy of MS Parisinus gr. 1712 is available online: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10723288w.image (accessed 15/04/2021).

(also known as the Logothete and/or Magister[70]) maintains a pious sobriety with regard to the icon-relic, calling it "the holy towel of Christ" (τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἅγιον ἐκμαγεῖον) and relating briefly the reception of the relic at Blachernai, the procession on foot led by the junior emperors, the veneration in the Great Church, and the deposition in the palace,[71] Pseudo-Symeon adds a seemingly miraculous detail. Here, the co-emperors are described as looking at the object itself, but not discerning any specific facial features—save in the case of Constantine VII:

> While they all were looking at the immaculate image (χαρακτήρ) on the holy towel of the Son of God, the sons of the emperor said that they could not see anything save for a face alone, but their brother-in-law Constantine said that he could see eyes and ears. The renowned Sergios[72] also said to them, "Both of you had a good look." They said in return, "And what is the significance of the difference [sc. in sight] of each of us?" He replied, "It is not I, but the prophet David who says, 'The eyes of the Lord are on the just, and his ears are towards their petition, but the face of the Lord is against evildoers, to destroy their remembrance from the earth' [Ps 33:16–17]."[73]

Once again, the figure of the prophet-king David is joined to both God and emperor here, with the prelate quoting the Psalms in this account so as to demarcate good and bad, blessed and cursed: Constantine can see the Lord's eyes, which fall upon him as the righteous ruler, while a visible countenance of divine opposition "faces" the "evildoing" sons of Rōmanos I. "A person shall never see my face and live": indeed, shortly after this episode, Rōmanos I is overthrown and exiled as a monk to the Princes' Isles, while his sons Stephen and Constantine are also sent into exile,

70 The terms 'logothete' (Gr. λογοθέτης) and 'magister' (Gr. μάγιστρος, from Lat. *magister officiorum*) are generic terms applied to several high-ranking offices in Byzantium; cf. "Logothetes" in *ODB* 2:1247 and "Magistros" in *ODB* 3:1267.

71 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronikon*, ed. by Wahlgren, 136.80–81. The *Chronikon* does not mention the Pharos chapel, but merely that the emperors "brought the image up from thence [sc. the Great Church] to the palace" (ἐκεῖσε ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ἀνήγαγον).

72 Janin identifies this Sergios as being both a favourite of Rōmanos I in the mid-tenth century as well as being the later Sergios II, Patriarch of Constantinople from 1001–1019. As Kazhdan notes, the time gap here and the extreme old age this would imply for the patriarch while in office make the connection highly unlikely; cf. "Sergios II" in *ODB* 3:1878.

73 Pseudo-Symeon, *Chronographia*, PG 109:812D–813A: πάντων καθιστορούντων τὸν ἄχραντον χαρακτῆρα ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ἐκμαγείῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἔλεγον οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ βασιλέως μὴ βλέπειν τι ἢ πρόσωπον μόνον, ὁ δὲ γαμβρὸς Κωνσταντῖνος ἔλεγεν βλέπειν ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ὦτα. πρὸς οὓς καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἀοίδιμος Σέργιος· Καλῶς ἀμφότεροι εἴδετε. οἱ δὲ ἀντέφησαν· Καὶ τί σημαίνει ἑκάστου τούτου ἡ διαφορά; ἀπεκρίθη· Οὐκ ἐγώ, ἀλλὰ Δαβὶδ ὁ προφήτης λέγει· Ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου ἐπὶ δικαίους, καὶ ὦτα αὐτοῦ εἰς δέησιν αὐτῶν, πρόσωπον δὲ κυρίου ἐπὶ ποιοῦντας κακὰ τοῦ ἐξολοθρεῦσαι ἐκ γῆς τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτῶν (translation mine). Passage mentioned in Dubarle 1997, 7. A detailed study of Pseudo-Symeon's text can be found in Markopoulos 1978.

where they perish.[74] But the one who discerns not only a face, but the eyes and ears as well—recognising the divine person in the image, that is—is Constantine, now sole ruler and, in my reading of Pseudo-Symeon's snippet, also presented as somewhat divine himself, as one who lives after having seen the face of God.

Despite the divine words of warning to Moses and the mystique around the Mandylion, the icon-relic does not wholly escape depiction itself, but instead comes to be a model for numerous copies adorning later Byzantine churches. One important artistic witness to this sacred object, however, also dates from the mid-tenth century: namely, the Sinai icon of King Abgar receiving the Mandylion from the apostle Thaddaeus. More than just a well-made icon, this work bears specific details in its programme that are instructive for understanding the close link made in these Middle Byzantine sources between ruler and relic, the human and the divine in the person of the emperor.

2.2.3 The Sinai icon of Abgar and the Mandylion

Preserved in the Monastery of Saint Catherine on the Sinai Peninsula, this icon consists of two vertical panel icons, probably originally the side panels around a centre icon as part of triptych, with framed dimensions of 36.9 × 25.3 × 2.5 cm (see Fig. 1).[75] At the top of the left-hand panel sits the apostle Thaddaeus, the icon-relic's Christ-commissioned courier to Abgar in the early legends, while the upper right-hand panel depicts King Abgar, seated and receiving the Mandylion from the apostle's hands. The lower portions of the panels depict various saints famed for their teaching and asceticism: on the left, Paul of Thebes and Anthony the Great; on the right, Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and Ephrem the Syrian.

Though the reasons behind the selection of the saints in the lower panel portions remain hidden to this day, scholars have been fascinated for decades by the depiction of Abgar on the upper right panel. In the 1960s, Kurt Weitzmann noted the facial similarity between Abgar on the Sinai icon and Constantine VII Porphyrogennētos on other contemporaneous items, such as the famed Moscow ivory (Fig. 2) and the gold solidus on which the Byzantine emperor is depicted alone (Fig. 3).[76] While interpreting the Sinai icon as "hav[ing] only one meaning: to represent Constantine in the guise of King Abgarus as the new recipient of the Mandylion",[77] Weitzmann posits the icon (together with Constantine's *Narration*) as merely part of a propaganda push to portray Constantine VII "as the pious emperor whose spiritual concern is the collection of famous relics in the palace chapel of the Virgin of the

74 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronikon*, ed. by Wahlgren, 137.1–8.

75 Dimensions, a historical précis, and photographs available in Labatt 2006, 134–135.

76 Weitzmann 1969, 181.

77 Weitzmann 1969, 183.

Fig. 1: Two wings from a triptych. Constantinople/Sinai, tenth century. Holy Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Fig. 2: Christ crowning Constantine VII Porphyrogennētos. Constantinople, tenth century. Pushkin Museum, Moscow.

Fig. 3: Constantine VII Porphyrogennētos (r. 913–959). Gold solidus, 945 (?). Mint of Constantinople.

Pharos".[78] The resemblance of Abgar to Constantine VII on the basis of these other surviving material objects is also noted by Johannes Koder.[79] For his part, Hans Belting writes that the artistic union of the figures of Abgar and Constantine VII underscores the divine approbation of the latter's possession of the object[80] and further proposes that the icon was personally commissioned by Constantine VII himself.[81] Besides noting other physical aspects of Abgar's appearance in the icon, however,[82] later scholars have detected greater significance in the icon's portrayal of both Constantine-as-Abgar as well as the Mandylion itself.

Karin Krause, following Belting, has remarked that the Mandylion was more than the sum of its constitutive 'parts' of icon and relic, in that it "signified [the] divine presence" of Christ in the capital city rather than merely serving as a holy object associated with the Son of God.[83] Examining in detail the iconographic programming of the Abgar portion of the icon, Krause notes that the Mandylion itself is depicted not as a firm, rectangular tablet on which a cloth bearing the divine image

78 Weitzmann 1969, 183.

79 Koder 1989, 169–170.

80 Belting 1990, 236: "Aber Abgar ist mit den Gesichtszügen Kaiser Konstantins VII. dargestellt, der die Reliquie 944 nach Konstantinopel überführte. So sind die apostolische und die byzantinische Ära, der alte und der neue Abgar in eins gesetzt, womit die Kontinuität im Besitz der Reliquie zum Argument wurde. Der byzantinische Kaiser, so argumentieren die Bilder, hat das Porträt ebenso mit Einwilligung Christi erhalten wie einst der syrische König."

81 Belting 1990, 236.

82 The presence of pearl chains on Abgar's crown, very much reminiscent of the Middle and Late Byzantine *prependoulia* on imperial crowns, are mentioned by Krause 2020 and Peers 2021, something left out in both Weitzmann's and Belting's treatments of the Sinai icon.

83 Cf. Krause 2020; Krause 2022, 296; cf. Belting 1990, 234.

is affixed, but as a flexible, loose textile with fringes visible on the lower edge.[84] The detailed depiction of the cloth here precisely as something *textus*—woven—could also allude to Christ himself, whose human and divine natures are said to be 'woven together' in the womb of the Virgin at the incarnation; on this, I agree with Krause in her reading of patristic texts that take up this imagery.[85] The icon-relic would thus make plain for veneration here the mystery safeguarded in the incarnation: both the interweaving of divine and human natures on the 'loom' of Mary's womb, as well as the manifestation of Christ's 'true image' within the 'womb' of the Pharos church, where human nature meets the divine, both in the Divine Liturgy celebrated there and in the grace perceived to effuse from the Passion relics housed there.

In seeking to understand how the Mandylion transmits or imbues the emperor with holiness, contemporary scholars have also proffered new readings of the interplay of relic and ruler here. For instance, the art historian Glenn Peers has recently presented a queer reading of the depiction of Abgar/Constantine VII and the Mandylion on the Sinai icon.[86] Like Krause, Peers draws attention to the fringes on the Mandylion cloth, linking these however not with the interweaving of Christ's human and divine natures, but to the veil of the Jerusalem temple, which the *Protevangelion of James* describes as having been woven by the Virgin Mary.[87] The veil in the temple separated the Holy of Holies—in which the glory of God was said to abide and to which only one person, the high priest, had once-yearly access—from the rest of the temple precincts and from the rest of the people of God. According to Peers, an allusion in the Sinai icon to this veil would simultaneously hint at the Virgin's handiwork and special relation/access to Christ, as well as to the

84 Cf. Krause 2020; Krause 2022, 293.

85 Cf. Krause 2022, 323–325. The theme of creation in the womb being compared to weaving, a trope that builds on language already found in scripture (cf. Ps 138:13–15) and in apocryphal sources such as the *Protevangelion of James* (cf. n. 87 below), is taken up in later patristic writings, notably by Proklos, archbishop of Constantinople (d. 446), who speaks of Mary's womb as a 'textile loom' in several homilies (esp. 1 and 4); on this image, see Constas 2003, 125–272, esp. p. 126 (the volume also contains critical editions and English-language translations of these homilies). Additionally, there are many extant Byzantine icons for the feast of the Annunciation on which the Virgin Mary is depicted weaving the fabric to make the temple veil, as is also narrated by the *Protevangelion*; cf. the study by Evangelatou 2003. This thematic imagery, especially vis-à-vis the flesh of Christ as divine-human *textus*, continues into the Late Byzantine period; see here Evangelatou 2019, esp. pp. 304–308.

86 Peers 2021. On queer readings and the application of queer theory to the disciplines of medieval and Byzantine studies more broadly, see: Dinshaw 1999, Burger/Kruger 2001, Hollywood 2001, Ringrose 2003, Burgwinkle 2006, Helvie 2010, and Betancourt 2020. Of note is also the current work being undertaken by the group "New Critical Approaches to the Byzantine World Network" at the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities: https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/new-critical-approaches-to-the-byzantine-world-network#/ (accessed 22/02/2022).

87 Peers 2021; cf. *Protevangelion of James*, ed./transl. by Elliott/Rumsey, 10.1.

Fig. 4: Detail of triptych icon showing King Abgar (seated) holding the Mandylion. Constantinople/Sinai, tenth century. Holy Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

emperor's special relationship to God, given his depiction in the icon "behind" the Mandylion-*qua*-veil (in Peers's reading). Peers then offers another reading of the icon, seeing in the fringes also an allusion to the *ṭāllît*, a prayer shawl worn by married Jewish men and given to grooms as a wedding present.[88] Though he does not present any sources showing that either the monks on Sinai housing the icon, or the ostensible Constantinopolitan iconographer who painted it, were familiar with such shawls in particular or Jewish piety in general, Peers posits that via the gifting of the Mandylion, understood by him here as a kind of relic-shawl, a "queer marriage" can be seen to take place between Christ, present in the Mandylion-*qua-ṭāllît*, and Abgar/Constantine, bringing about a divine union between the Almighty and the autokratōr (see Fig. 4).[89] In such a marriage, Christ and the emperor would "become one flesh",[90] and the emperor would come to share more fully in the characteristics of the divine—which, in the Christian tradition, does include some specifically

88 On the history and function of this prayer shawl in Judaism, see "Tallit" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, ed. by Berenbaum/Skolnik, 19:465–466; available online: https://link-1gale-1com-1008967m007e7.emedia1.bsb-muenchen.de/apps/doc/CX2587519534/GVRL?u=bayern&sid=GVRL&xid=5eeae764 (accessed 13/04/2021).

89 Peers 2021.

90 Cf. Gen 2:24, Matt 19:5, Mark 10:8, and Eph 5:31.

feminine traits applied to the divinity in scripture.[91] Following the thread of this reading of queer/feminine imagery in association with the royal iconographic portrait, Peers finally suggests that one read Abgar/Constantine, enthroned with the position of the Holy Face on the stomach, as depicting Christ in the "womb" of the emperor, moving thus beyond the nuptial imagery of a union between God and emperor to the imagery of the Annunciation, with the emperor bearing God within himself.[92]

This strong set of readings by Peers, though novel, is unconvincing: not merely on account of the anachronistic eisegesis of the queer topoi here into a Middle Byzantine iconographic context in which feminine or non-socially-standard traits for a man, much less a male ruler, would be highly suspect and unacceptable for such a high-profile depiction of the emperor,[93] or on account of these topoi being absent from contemporary patristic understandings of the aforementioned womb/loom imagery, but also on account of his anachronistic understanding of *ṭāllît* as wedding garments, something only arising in medieval Ashkenazic contexts and not extant in the late antique context of the Abgarian legends depicted in the Sinai icon. More convincing is Krause's understanding of the Mandylion as the 'radiance' of Christ following the account of the *Sermon* of Gregory the Referendary, just as Christ himself is the 'radiance' of God the Father.[94] Such an understanding of the Mandylion as a bearer of divine energy[95] helps to explain the presence of the icon-relic in the Pharos chapel next to the emperor's bedchamber: as the Father fills the Son with his divine radiance, so Christ can fill the emperor with his divinity through the Mandylion's proximity. Krause further notes that the translation of

91 Here I am thinking for instance of God comforting his people as a mother comforts her children (Isa 66:13), Jesus yearning to gather the people of Jerusalem under his wings like a mother hen (Matt 23:37, Luke 13:34), and Paul talking of giving birth to his followers and being in birth pangs (Rom 8:22–23, Gal 4:19); cf. Gempf 1994. A study on this female imagery as seen in Western medieval monasticism can be found in Bynum 1984, esp. chapter 4, "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some Themes in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Writing", pp. 110–169; and more recently as applied to Christ as divine Logos, see Pentcheva 2004.

92 Peers 2021.

93 Several recent studies have explored the ways in which gender was understood in Byzantium, and in particular how "bravery" or "manliness" (Gr. ἀνδρεία) stood at the heart of all normative virtue, such that bold or virtuous women, especially in liturgical texts, come to be praised for such manliness and for leaving their womanliness behind. Given this cultural context, the association of overly female imagery with the emperor would be highly unusual, if not suspect or disdained. Cf. James 1997, Garland/Neil 2013, Constantinou/Meyer 2019, and L. Neville 2019. A similar situation obtains for the medieval West, especially regarding virtue and sanctity; cf. here Cullum/Lewis 2004. On how gestures in Byzantine art from this period could signal and correspond to gender identities, see Brubaker 2020.

94 Krause 2022, 303, who cites *Sermon* 10 from Guscin's edition here.

95 Krause 2022, 300, who cites John of Damascus's comment that relics are "receptacles of divine energy" (θείας ἐνεργείας εἰσι δοχεῖα [*On the Sacred Images*, ed. by Kotter and transl. by Louth, 3.34]).

both the Mandylion and the Keramion to Constantinople in the tenth century was likely part of "targeted initiatives of the court, motivated by aims of deploying these *acheiropoieta* to support the rulers' propaganda of Byzantium as the new Israel."[96] The empire and its people as new Israel, and the capital of Constantinople as new Zion (as discussed above), would be thus complemented by the physical embodiment of Christ himself via these icon-relics 'not made by hands',[97] an embodiment that would irradiate with divine light the emperor himself as a new David, new Moses, and new Christ/'Anointed'.

Nevertheless, the later text of the *Didaskalia* by Constantine Stilbēs from around AD 1200 does speak of the cloth of the Mandylion fused with the divine image of the Holy Face as being more efficacious and healing than the "fringe"[98] of Christ's raiment, touching which the woman with the flow of blood was healed.[99] Although womb imagery in my view goes too far in associating holiness with the emperor, the treatise by Stilbēs provides us with evidence from the end of the time period under investigation here that cloth(ing) imagery was indeed linked to the Mandylion—namely, that of Christ's own robe, through which the healing power of the divinity entered the haemorrhagic woman. Earlier texts under consideration in this study do not make such an explicit link, but I do not believe it to be impossible that Stilbēs, in making use of such textile imagery, was in fact tying into earlier threads of interpretation and allusion on the Mandylion as also being a holy cloth or fabric, not least of which would include the presence in the city of the robe or veil (μαφόριον) of the Mother of God, which was said to protect Constantinople as a sacred palladium.[100]

Be that as it may, one indisputably anachronistic and cross-cultural feature present in the Sinai icon is the use of royal imagery contemporary to the tenth century: namely, Constantine VII's own visage, pearl-encrusted imperial red shoes, and a crown with descending pearl chains.[101] In so doing, I posit that the painter has merged past and present in the tenth-century icon to create a clear visual link between the emperor and Christ that goes beyond the connections made in either Constantine's *Narration* or Gregory's *Sermon.* If in the latter two texts, allusion is made to the emperor as fulfilling the type of Davidic kingship, or even possessing

96 Krause 2022, 354.

97 Krause 2022, 354.

98 The *Didaskalia* uses here the Greek term κράσπεδον, which can also refer to the tassels or fringes worn on Jewish garments and is the word used in Matt 9:20; cf. LSJ, s.v. "κράσπεδον, τό".

99 This healing is recounted in all of the Synoptic Gospels: Matt 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48.

100 The robe/veil of the Theotokos is said to have come to Constantinople in the fifth century and was highly revered as being a protective talisman able to save the city from siege and invasion; cf. "Maphorion" in *ODB* 2:1294. On the Mother of God as special defender of the city, cf. Baynes 1949, 172–173; Mango 2000; and Pentcheva 2003.

101 These chains (πρεπενδούλια) were a particular signal of imperial status; cf. Parani 2003, 28–30.

divine characteristics in terms of being able to see the Holy Face (and live), the Sinai icon presents a polyvalent and ambiguous constellation of possible interpretations for king/emperor, icon/relic, and donor/recipient. What we find in the sources dating after this icon—liturgical offices for the annual commemoration of the icon-relic's translation—is less polyvalent and much more strongly theologically concerned with understanding how the Mandylion embodies and transmits divine grace, if not the divinity itself. How do these liturgical texts speak of the object? What understanding do they present of its holiness and the communicability of that holiness to the emperor? To find answers to these questions, we must wrap up our consideration of the Sinai icon and closely read these hymns for the Mandylion's translation.

2.3 11th century: liturgical reflection and development

Although liturgical texts besides homilies might have been composed on or shortly after the entrance of the Mandylion into Constantinople in 944, the earliest extant texts containing such material date from the 11th century: namely, several short hymns called either *kathismata* or *stichēra*,[102] two *kanones*,[103] and other short commemorative notices for the day of the feast contained in listings of daily saints called synaxaria.[104] As we shall see, however, a date later in the 11th century seems most likely, given the highly developed theological reflection in the kanones, the range of vocabulary used in reference to the icon-relic, certain politico-ecclesiastical controversies involving emperor and bishops at century's end, and the mention of the feast in the *synaxaria* of the Great Church. A close reading of these texts against the backdrop of imperial and ecclesiastical developments in the 1080s and 1090s reveals a deepening of the understanding of the Mandylion's immanent divinity vis-à-vis the emperor, even in the case of imperial objection to the proponent of such notions, and the spread of this idea even despite the subsequent introduction of alternative liturgical texts. First, we shall examine the writings of the bishop Leo of Chalcedon on the Mandylion, before examining the liturgical texts for the

102 A kathisma (Gr. κάθισμα) in the context of hymnography meant something like 'supporting unit' and was intercalated as a hymnodic unit between other units of psalmody. Stichēra (Gr. στιχηρά, sg. στιχηρόν), meanwhile, were verses or stanzas of text inserted after lines from the Psalms in liturgical offices; see Parenti 2016, 279. On some of the other uses of this term in Eastern Orthodox hymnography, see Mary/Ware 1969, 553; for a general overview of the genre, see Giannouli 2019.

103 Kanones (Gr. κανόνες, sg. κανών) are poetic compositions of short strophic hymns or *troparia* (Gr. τροπάρια, sg. τροπάριον) relating to the saint or feast celebrated on a given date and modelled on the nine scriptural odes or poetic songs taken into early Christian worship from the Old and New Testaments. Each troparion in a given kanōn matches the metrical pattern of the leading hymn or *heirmos* (Gr. εἱρμός) of the ode. See Parenti 2016, 300–301; Mary/Ware 1969, 546–548.

104 Cf. "Synaxarion" in *ODB* 3:1991. Greater detail is provided in Luzzi 2014.

translation, so as to find clues as to the nature of the icon-relic's sanctity and to the 11th-century understanding of imperial sacrality via this object.

2.3.1 Leo of Chalcedon and the earlier festal kanōn for the Mandylion

Leo was the bishop of Chalcedon near Constantinople at the end of the 11th century and known for his vociferous opposition to the melting down of church treasures—patens, chalices, metal icons and other implements—by order of Emperor Alexios I Komnēnos in the latter's efforts to replenish the imperial treasury as a result of the conflict with the Normans under Robert Guiscard.[105] One of the driving factors behind Leo's opposition was his very high view of the special identity of Christ in his images and the perceived sacrilege committed by the emperor in destroying such images for material gain. This high view of the presence of Christ in images of the Son of God allowed Alexios to discredit Leo as a heretic at the Council of Blachernai in 1094, forcing the metropolitan bishop to choose between remaining in exile as an outcast of the faith or returning to good (political) graces by recanting his views and submitting to the will of the council (and of the emperor).[106] Leo ultimately chose the latter option and saved face, but this recanting also had liturgical consequences. As Venance Grumel notes in the introductory comments to his edition of the earlier kanōn, the liturgical texts which Leo extolled in support of his views prior to the council of 1094 vanish from the Greek manuscript record, surviving only in a partial citation of the text in a letter penned by Leo to Nicholas, his nephew and the metropolitan bishop of Adrianople (present-day Edirne),[107] and (fully) in a single manuscript, MS Coislin 218, currently in the holdings of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.[108] These texts, however singular a lens they be on the cultural and theological understanding of the Mandylion, retain nonetheless a unique importance for the clear emphasis they place on the icon-relic's immanent divinity, the variety

105 Alexios I's reforms and measures taken to fill the Byzantine coffers in the conflict against the Normans is related by Anna Komnēnē, *Alexias*, ed. by Reinsch/Kambylis, 5.1.4–5.2.6. On the Byzantine-Norman conflict, see McQueen 1986 and Theotokis 2014. A comprehensive study of Leo and his politico-theological activity can be found in the recent dissertation by Bara 2020; see also Stephanou 1943, Stephanou 1946, Carr 1995, Krausmüller 2018, and Barber/Jenkins 2022.

106 The council, its vindication of Alexios I's actions, and its condemnation of Leo's teachings is noted in Anna Komnēnē, *Alexias*, ed. by Reinsch/Kambylis, 6.3.1–3; cf. also Gautier 1971. As Gautier notes (ibid., p. 216), the imperial adjudication here (Gr. σημείωμα) survives in BNF MS Coislin 36, fols. 307–311v, as well as in MS Sinaiticus 1117, fols. 231v–232v, both of which date to the 14th century and whose text can also be found in PG 127:972–984.

107 Cf. Grumel 1950, 135. Further study and documentation on the episode of Leo can be seen in Grumel 1946; Stephanou 1946; Bara 2020, 107–116; and Barber/Jenkins 2022, 6–23.

108 Cf. Grumel 1950, 137–142. BNF MS Coislin 218 has been fully digitised and can be viewed online: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10037899s/f106.item (accessed 22/04/2021).

of vocabulary used in exploring this theme, and the unexpected survival of these texts despite what appears to have been official censorship.

In his letter from exile to his nephew, Leo lays out his theology of icons in defence of his opposition to the emperor's campaign of confiscating church treasures.[109] The prelate bases himself on scripture, stating that several persons have been called an "image" (εἰκών) therein—notably Jesus Christ as the image of God the Father, Adam as an image of God, and Seth as an image of his father Adam—thus establishing a unity and correlation of person to image.[110] Furthermore, Leo claims support for his position in several documents of later church tradition, namely Canon 82 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (the Third Council of Constantinople in 680/681) and the closing statement or so-called *synodikon* of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (the Second Council of Nicaea in 787).[111] Yet the bishop writes that the image/icon of the divine-human Christ is of a different quality or nature than those representing merely human saints, which allows for true adoration to be directed towards it:

> But the divinely hypostasized *character* of Christ, which exists in the very hypostasis of the Son of God, and is therefore itself also God, existing according to the substance of the Son, who is joined to it and unified together with it, [this *character*] is inseparably and indivisibly revered and worshipped in terms of adoration in His holy images as God. … Honorable and relative veneration is afforded to other images, just as affection is owed to the other offerings on account of [their] common Lord. But to the holy *character* of Christ adoration [is afforded], which is appropriate for His divine nature alone. For the divinity of Christ, as has been said, remained indivisible from the whole and wholly unmingled, even though at the time of His death His holy soul was separated from His holy flesh, and everything of His flesh was separated from His holy *character*. It follows then that His holy *character* is also God (ὅθεν Θεός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἅγιος αὐτοῦ χαρακτήρ) and is worshipped in terms of adoration (λατρευτικῶς προσκυνεῖται) even in His holy images.[112]

109 Leo of Chalcedon, *Letter to Nicholas of Adrianople*; an edition is available in Lauriōtēs 1900; this Greek text has been reprinted and is accompanied by an English-language translation in Barber/Jenkins 2022, 24–37. In citations of the *Letter* here, I first list the page number in Barber/Jenkins where the Greek text is reprinted, and then the page number in the same where the English-language translation is to be found; in parentheses is the page number from the edition by Lauriōtēs, also provided by Barber/Jenkins.

110 Leo of Chalcedon, *Letter to Nicholas of Adrianople*, transl. by Barber/Jenkins, 26–27 (414b).

111 Leo of Chalcedon, *Letter to Nicholas of Adrianople*, transl. by Barber/Jenkins, 26–27 (415). Recent editions of the conciliar texts mentioned by Leo in his letter may be found in Riedinger 2011, Riedinger 2012, Lamberz 2012, Lamberz 2013, and Lamberz 2016. An English-language translation of the acts of the Second Council of Nicaea has recently appeared: Price 2018.

112 Leo of Chalcedon, *Letter to Nicholas of Adrianople*, transl. by Barber/Jenkins, 26–28 (415a–415b).

Here, the image of Christ is exalted above all other cultic images on account of its special status: it shares essentially in the divine nature, and in Leo's understanding is not merely an image or "imprint" (a more literal meaning of the word χαρακτήρ[113]), but rather the personal substantiation of the Son of God: one might say, not merely the *incarnate* God, but the *imprinted* God.[114] Leo undergirds his own theological interpretation by quoting the aforementioned Nicaean synodikon: "So we think, so we speak, so we proclaim Christ the true God and his saints; in words we honor [them], in writings, in thoughts, in offerings, in churches, in images (εἰκονίσματα), venerating and revering Him as God and Lord, but honoring them on account of their common Lord and as his noble servants and affording [them] relative veneration."[115]

The statement from the conclusion of an ecumenical council would have been regarded in church and at court in 11th-century Constantinople as unimpeachable orthodox theology, which Leo deftly incorporates into his argument. He is not, of course, the first bishop or theologian to make a very close association between Christ and his χαρακτήρ, which would prove to be uncomfortable for later Byzantine/orthodox Christianity. Theodore of Stoudios, an avid supporter of images after the Seventh Ecumenical Council, writes that the faithful who venerate an icon of Christ should not hesitate to call the icon merely and plainly "Christ", although he does maintain a strict distinction between the divine nature and the divinely-graced matter of the icon.[116]

Yet Leo takes two additional steps. First, at the beginning of the *Letter* to Nicholas, Leo uses precisely the example of the king or emperor (βασιλεύς) to stress the unity of person with image (χαρακτήρ):

113 Cf. LSJ, s.v. "χαρακτήρ, ὁ"; Lampe, s.v. "χαρακτήρ, ὁ".

114 Leo's opinions here, as well as the ensuing ecclesiastical controversy over how to properly understand the divine presence in the icon-relic, forms a chronological parallel to the discussions and debates taking place in Western Europe during the tenth and 11th centuries regarding the Eucharistic host and its transubstantiation at the Mass; cf. Macy 1984, Radding/Newton 2003; and going beyond this initial period into the later Middle Ages, see: Adams 2010.

115 Leo of Chalcedon, *Letter to Nicholas of Adrianople*, transl. by Barber/Jenkins, 28–29 (415b); cf. Lamberz 2016, 852–858.

116 Theodore of Stoudios, *Poems*, ed. and German transl. by Speck, 30: "The image that you see happens to be of Christ; call it also 'Christ', but only similarly in name, for they are identical in appellation, but not in nature. Yet for both there is a single veneration without division. Whoever then venerates this [image] reveres Christ, for whoever should not revere it is utterly his enemy, since being filled with hate against him, he does not wish that his depicted incarnate appearance be revered" (Ἥνπερ βλέπεις εἰκόνα, Χριστοῦ τυγχάνει· / Χριστὸν δε καὐτὴν λέξον, ἀλλ' ὁμωνύμως· / κλήσει γάρ ἐστι ταυτότης, ἀλλ' οὐ φύσει· / ἀμφοῖν δὲ προσκύνησις ἀσχίστως μία. / Ὁ τοίνυν ταύτην προσκυνῶν Χριστὸν σέβει, / μὴ προσκυνῶν γὰρ ἐχθρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ πάνυ, / ὡς τὴν ἀναγραφεῖσαν ἔνσαρκον θέαν / τούτου μεμηνὼς μὴ σεβασθῆναι θέλων). English-language translation here mine. Poem cited by Belting 1990, 565.

> Adam is also called an image of God … namely, in the ruling and kingly sense, … In addition to these, an image is said to be uniquely a character written in matter (εἰκὼν λέγεται παρὰ ταῦτα καὶ μόνως ὁ ταῖς ὕλαις ἐγγραφόμενος χαρακτήρ), as Basil the Great and the great theologian Gregory claim. The former says that a king "is also called the image of a king, and both are kings since the kingdom is not split nor is the glory divided,"[117] and the Theologian says, "Let one be gold, the other iron, both rings have inscribed the same imperial image."[118,119]

This language of the image or 'character' of the king being undivided seems to suggest that Leo understood both the Mandylion *and* the emperor as representing the divine nature in a specific, tangible way, which would serve to connect the icon-relic closely to the basileus if both are understood to be divine χαρακτῆρες.

Second, the bishop claims that this controversial statement of identity between image and incarnate God is not restricted to a small circle of elite theological writers, but rather forms part of a universal ecclesial tradition centred on a specific image of Christ, namely, the icon-relic housed in the emperor's palatine Pharos chapel. The bishop explains to Nicholas: "For this reason, people sing everywhere in the holy churches in honour of the divinely inscribed form (ἡ θεοχάρακτος μορφή) of Christ, which was imprinted upon the holy Mandylion, thus", and the example of such hymnody is a short hymn or troparion taken from the kanōn extant in MS Coislin 218. The assertion of this text and/or the kanōn as a whole being sung everywhere (ᾄδεται πανταχοῦ) could be yet another instance of the hyperbole typical of much medieval rhetoric.[120] But this statement could also betoken a more widespread distribution of the text of this kanōn, which disappears from the manuscript record after the Council of Blachernai in 1094 and comes to be replaced by a different one entirely in extant collections of Greek daily liturgical texts (so-called *mēnaia*[121]). Evidence for the earlier kanōn's broader reach—if not "everywhere", then certainly beyond the Greek-speaking confines of the empire—hails from the then-Slavonic-speaking areas of present-day Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Macedonia/Thrace in Greece, and Serbia. Several manuscripts dating from the 12th to 14th centuries preserve a Slavonic translation of the kathisma hymn "O compassionate Saviour, who came down from heaven …" that is found in conjunction with the kanōn texts in MS Coislin 218

117 Barber/Jenkins note the source of this quotation as Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 18.45.

118 Barber/Jenkins note the source of this quotation as Gregory the Theologian, *On Baptism* (*Oration* 39), PG 36:396.

119 Leo of Chalcedon, *Letter to Nicholas of Adrianople*, transl. by Barber/Jenkins, 26–27 (414b).

120 Cf. "Hyperbole" in *ODB* 2:964; cf. also Lausberg 2008, 281–282.

121 On this term, cf. "Menaion" in *ODB* 2:1338. A breakdown of the different types of these texts in the time period under study here can be found in Krivko 2011; for the historical development here, see Nikiforova 2012.

which otherwise disappear, thus bearing witness to the geographical range of these texts *before* such disappearance or potential suppression took place around 1100, after which time translations into Slavonic would have been nearly impossible to make.[122]

At this juncture, it might seem odd at first glance to find evidence for these texts hailing from far beyond the imperial capital, while hardly anything similar is extant in the texts used at the Great Church of Holy Wisdom just outside the Great Palace complex. I believe this to be a red herring, however. On the one hand, the liturgical rites of the Great Church and the chapels of the palace were very different at this time, with services in Hagia Sophia normally only using one short hymn specific to the given saint or feast of the day, rather than a longer poetic text such as the kanōn in question.[123] On the other hand, the enduring presence of these texts outside Constantinople and the Greek-speaking areas of the empire, but *within* Slavonic-speaking areas, can also be explained by the fact that the Bulgarian church, upon its founding as a daughter church by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, was granted the Hagiopolite rite (i.e., that of the imperial palatine chapels, where the Mandylion was venerated and where the kanōn formed a part of the liturgical services) rather than the Ecclesiastic rite (i.e., that used in the Great Church and which, by contrast, had been granted to the church of the Rus' in Kyiv and Moscow).[124] Beyond geographical range, however, the text of the kanōn cited by Leo is also rich in the range of vocabulary it applies to the icon-relic, its ideas of divine presence, its implications for the understanding of the figure of the emperor, and the identifications it makes between the emperor and various scriptural figures. It is to these aspects of the kanōn that we now give ear.

2.3.2 The earlier stichēra and kanōn for the Mandylion: MS Coislin 218

The earlier liturgical texts for the feast of the translation of the Mandylion to Constantinople survive (in their original Greek) in a single medieval manuscript, BNF MS Coislin 218, fols. 102v–105v. This manuscript is a complete mēnaion for the month of August (fols. 1–190v), accompanied by corresponding menological and liturgical texts (fols. 191–231v). Grumel's edition of the texts for the translation only contains the kanōn, whereas other types of hymns for the feast, such as kathismata and stichēra, were not printed or examined in his article. Nonetheless, these short

122 Krivko 2012. A study of the Slavonic tradition of these hymns is also available in Lutzka 2016.

123 Examples of this can be seen in the edition by Mateos 1962. A new and fully revised edition of these hymns is available in Tucker 2023.

124 On the terms 'Hagiopolite' and 'Ecclesiastic' in reference to variant liturgical rites in Constantinople, cf. Tucker 2023, 2–6; on the history of the granting of the Hagiopolite rite to Bulgaria, cf. Frøyshov 2020, 365–367.

hymns are also informative for our understanding of both the icon-relic and its relationship to city and emperor, and thus have been included here.[125]

Telling from the outset is the description of the feast: "On the 16th of the month [sc. of August]: [commemoration of] the most majestic and undefiled image, not made by hands, of the Son of our true God, which was translated from Edessa; and of the holy martyr and wonderworking healer Diomēdēs." In the intervening century, the attentive reader sees that the date of the feast has not changed, but subtle details in the description show the special position of the translation feast. Firstly, the term used here for "not made by human hands" is not the expected ἀχειροποίητος, but instead ἀχειρότευκτος. This word is much rarer in extant Greek literature prior to the 11th century than is the former, and noteworthy for two reasons: (1) it is a word explicitly associated with the iconodule Theodore of Stoudios, found in his letters and in the liturgical canon he composed for monastic funerals, whose belief in the very close connection of Christ to his images has been noted;[126] and (2) the meaning is slightly different, emphasizing at once the craftsmanship and artistry in the image and its coming into being (with the verb τεύχω) rather than merely being "made" (with the verb ποιέω).[127] Secondly, no agent behind the translation is named: the reader simply finds mention of the Mandylion's transportation. Neither Rōmanos I (as per Symeon the Logothete's *Chronikon*) nor Constantine VII (as per the *Narration* and Gregory's *Sermon*) are named here, and thus the attention is shifted away from a specific emperor back to the movement of the object itself. Thirdly, the feast of the object's translation is followed by another commemoration, that of the martyr Diomēdēs. The feast of the martyr was the original sanctoral celebration on August 16 in Constantinople, as shown by the *kanonarion-synaxarion* of the Great Church, which also outlines a procession through the city in commemoration of the historical deliverance from siege and earthquake. This procession went from the Great Church via the Forum to the Golden Gate and concluded with the *synaxis* or liturgical celebration at the church of the Theotokos "at Jerusalem",

125 An English-language translation of Grumel's edition of the kanōn is included in the appendix. The Greek text of the kathismata and stichēra hymns, preserved in BNF MS Coislin 218 but not included in Grumel's edition, is also provided there.

126 The rarity of the term can be determined from a lemma search online via *TLG*, which lists only two instances of the term before 1200 (Michael Psellos, *Encomium on Patriarch Constantine Leichudēs*, ed. by Sathas, p. 415; George the Monk, *Brief Chronicle*, PG 110:992) and only one in later periods, from the 14th century (Ephraim of Ainos, *Chronicle*, ed. by Lampsidēs, l. 2733. The *LBG*, however, does provide several other key occurrences prior to 1200. Besides the instances mentioned in the *Letters* of Abbot Theodore of Stoudios (ed. by Phatouros, 292.46 and 481.22) and the funerary kanōn composed by the same (text in Magrì 1978/1979, 230), *LBG* also lists: Stephen the Deacon, *Life of Stephen the Younger*, PG 100:1101B (ninth century) and Peter of Sicily, *Second Sermon against the Manichaeans*, PG 104:1333C (ninth century); cf. *LBG*, s.v. "ἀχειρότευκτος".

127 "Constructed" is also a possible meaning, and thus might emphasise the construction of the entire entity of icon-relic together with its concomitant reliquary; cf. Ramelli 2019, 186.

where the martyr's relics were preserved.[128] Yet by the 11th century, BNF MS Coislin 218 lists the Mandylion first in the title of commemorations for this date and places all hymnography for the icon-relic (kathismata and stichēra hymns as well as the kanōn) before the respective texts for the earlier commemoration of the martyr on the same date. While the memory of the early-third-century martyr alone was the primary sanctoral commemoration in the Great Church,[129] one can infer from this ordering of hymns that over the course of the 11th century, the feast of the Mandylion had eclipsed the earlier commemoration, both within the palace and elsewhere, in terms of importance.

Beyond the title of the feast, the liturgical texts themselves provide evidence of rich reflection on the importance of the object for its new home in the imperial capital. If in the tenth-century texts, reference to the Mandylion was made primarily via the terms "radiance" (ἀπαύγασμα) and "image" (εἰκών) alone,[130] the 11th-century texts in BNF MS Coislin 218 exhibit a plethora of terms for the icon-relic. These include the aforementioned terms "radiance" (ἀπαύγασμα)[131] and "image" (εἰκών),[132] as well as "depiction" (ἀπεικόνισμα),[133] and the related verb "to represent" (εἰκονίζω,[134] ἐναπεικονίζω[135]); "image/imprint" (χαρακτήρ),[136] the key word in Leo's theological argument, and "divinely imprinted" (θεοχάρακτος);[137] words meaning "type" (τύπος)[138] or "likeness/imprint(ing)" (ἐκτύπωσις[139] and ἐκτύπωμα[140]) and related verb forms (ἐκτυπόω);[141] "form" (μορφή)[142] and related forms of the verb "to shape,

128 Cf. Mateos 1962, 372–377. On this church and its appellation, see Janin 1969, 95–97, 259.

129 Cf. Mateos 1962, 376–377. Other saints are listed in MS Hagios Stauros 40, but all come after the martyr Diomēdes. Interestingly, the troparion listed for the procession is for the deliverance of the city from siege and earthquake ("Blessed are you, O Christ our God, for you have wondrously manifested your mercy in the city of your immaculate mother … ", text in ibid., 372–373, translation mine), while the troparion sung at the Attalos Gate and upon arrival at the church of the Theotokos at Jerusalem are, as one might expect, centred on Mary rather than on the martyr (ibid., 374–375). The 11th-century *praxapostolos* manuscript Vladimir 21/Savva 4, however, does assign a generic *martyrikon* (hymn for martyrs) on this date for Diomēdes; cf. Tucker 2023, 302.

130 Cf. Krause 2022, 298–305.

131 Ode III, troparion 1.

132 Commemoration title of feast; Kathisma 2; Stichēron; Ode III, troparion 3; Ode IV, troparion 3; Ode VI, troparion 3; Ode VIII, troparia 1 and 3; Ode IX, troparion 1.

133 Ode V, troparion 2.

134 Ode VI, troparion 2.

135 Ode VII, troparion 2.

136 Ode I, troparion 2; Ode III, troparion 2; Ode V, troparion 4; Ode VI, troparia 1 and 2.

137 Ode VI, troparion 4.

138 Ode I, troparion 4; Ode IV, troparion 2; Ode V, troparion 1; Ode VIII, troparion 2.

139 Ode I, troparion 3.

140 Ode V, troparion 5.

141 Ode VI, troparion 3.

142 Kathisma 1; Ode III, troparion 1; Ode IV, troparion 1; Ode V, troparion 2; Ode VII, troparion 3; Ode IX, troparion 3.

form" (μορφέω,[143] ἀπομορφόω,[144] διαμορφόω[145]); "towel/cloth" (ἐκμαγεῖον);[146] the word used for "likeness" in many of the Christological debates (ὁμοιότης);[147] and a form of the verb "to write, paint" (γράφω).[148] The panoply of descriptors in these liturgical texts serves to underscore the connection of the icon-relic both with the person of Christ himself and with the scriptural vocabulary and imagery used in conjunction with him.[149] Furthermore, the application of terms used in scripture for Christ to the Mandylion in these texts draws attention to the unique status of the icon-relic. Rather than being merely a depiction of the divine God-human, it is liturgically exegeted as being the very imprint and form of Christ: the diverse terms employed are united in the context of a common liturgical worship by being applied in common to the Mandylion.

'Common' is indeed a key word here, since the texts—despite their focus on the veneration of a palatine chapel treasure—make no mention whatsoever of the more exclusive locations of the palace or the Pharos church. Much like the title, with its lack of specific focus on the emperor, the hymns speak primarily of the city and people, and God's relationship to them in and through the Mandylion. The first kathisma hymn, also contained in the Slavonic manuscripts,[150] praises Christ for actively storing up as a treasure "the holy and undefiled form" of his flesh: not in the palace, but "in the city that honours you and in a people named after Christ."[151] The second such hymn continues this theme, positing the "queen of cities" rather than the emperor as the recipient of God himself, who "comes to you … as a human through his divine and majestic image", thus creating a further identification of Constantinople as a new Zion receiving the heavenly king.[152] Following this, the single stichēron for the feast speaks of Christ as bringing "divine things of goodness near to all" and bestowing his image as a treasure on "those who honour you". Of course, given the background of the *Narration* and *Sermon*, one can imagine here the emperors, Senate, courtiers, and palace clergy as being those who render homage; yet the remainder of the hymns and the use of words such as "all" extend the beneficent work of the Mandylion to the city at large. The troparion quoted by Leo

143 Ode V, troparion 1.
144 Ode IX, troparion 2.
145 Stichēron.
146 Ode V, troparion 3.
147 Ode VI, troparion 2.
148 Ode V, troparion 2.
149 For recent studies on this language in the context of the New Testament, see: R. Neville 2001, esp. 18–23, 128–141; Mackie 2008; Sterling 2012; Small 2014; and Dunn 2019.
150 Krivko 2012, 76.
151 Full texts of the hymns analysed in this section can be found below in the appendix.
152 Cf. Isa 62:11, "Say to the daughter of Zion: 'Behold, your saviour is present to you'", and Zech 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; proclaim, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your king comes to you". These texts are explicitly interpreted in the Gospels as pertaining to Christ: cf. Matt 21:5 and John 12:15.

in his letter to Nicholas (part of Ode I of the kanōn) states that Christ has "granted to those who venerate you in orthodox manner as God and human the divinised image of your flesh",[153] stressing both the immanent presence of God in the object and the broad circle of those who are said to possess the image. In Ode III, the Mandylion is said to be restored upon its translation to the capital not to the emperors, but "to a God-loving people and city who bear the name of Christ."[154] If David is usually seen in Middle Byzantine hymnography as a prototype of the emperor, Ode IV has David leaping before the ark of the covenant mirrored by a plurality of persons, and not merely the basileus: "Previously, David leapt before the ark as he danced in song, but we rejoice as we mystically leap before the image of Christ",[155] a clear reference and thematic link between the Israelite king's triumphal entry with his retinue into Zion with the recovered ark of the covenant,[156] and the emperor with his assembled people at the reception of the Mandylion into New Zion (for the text, see below). Here, we see the parallels of David/people of the city and ark/image. Ode V mentions the icon-relic as a help to all of Christ's "inheritance"[157] and Ode VI speaks of Christ coming home via his image "to an imperial city and a God-bearing people."[158] Only in the final three odes of the kanōn do imperial figures appear, and here but vaguely; additionally, the exclusive status of the capital city is also marginal in these texts. Ode VII speaks of the icon-relic arriving in Constantinople, described as "the city of God … shown today as another new Zion."[159] Other than the (for this time period) unambiguous epithet of "queen of cities" in the first kathisma hymn, Constantinople is not mentioned explicitly anywhere in the text; these hymns thus indicate in my view that the capital's status is not that of the singular, definitive heavenly city on earth, but merely that of "another new Zion" among other possible such locations manifesting God's holy dwelling place.

Contrary to much of the recent work by Alexei Lidov,[160] who views the Pharos church in the Great Palace as the New Zion *par excellence* and *sans pareil*, there exist several references to other locales and buildings being referred to as "new Zion(s)" in Byzantine texts and inscriptions. In late antique patristic authors such as Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, and Proklos of Constantinople, "Zion" is applied to a wide range of referents, including the angelic life, the church as a whole, the highest attainable virtue, the Old Testament saints who sought out Christ before his incarnation, and the word of the gospel.[161] The Middle Byzantine

153 Ode I, troparion 2.
154 Ode III, troparion 2.
155 Ode IV, troparion 3.
156 Cf. 2 Kgdms 6:1–23.
157 Ode V, troparion 4.
158 Ode VI, troparion 3.
159 Ode VII, troparion 1.
160 Cf. especially Lidov 2009 (esp. pp. 117–119) and Lidov 2012.
161 Cf. Lampe, s.v. "Σιών, ἡ".

period also records numerous such instances. Christopher of Mytilene (11th century) speaks of the translation of the relics of Stephen the Protomartyr as taking place "from Zion to the other Zion, the ruling city",[162] with a clear emphasis on the city rather than the palace, and the city being *another* Zion. The Great Church of Hagia Sophia is itself given the appellation of "New Zion" in a 12th-century oration by Gregory Antiochos, some of whose work will be discussed below in chapter 4.[163] "New Zion" without any article is mentioned in the liturgical texts composed by George Skylitzēs for the translation of the Holy Stone, also discussed below in chapter 4, but the context is ambiguous as to the true referent.

Further afield, texts from outside Constantinople also make reference to locations being conceived of as heirs to the name Zion. The *typikon* for the monastery founded by Neophytos the Recluse on Cyprus in the 12th century calls the hermitage "new Zion";[164] Michael Chōniatēs calls Athens a "New Zion" in addition to the sobriquets of "city of God" and "ark",[165] while there is also an inscription commemorating the rebuilding of the Byzantine city walls of Ankyra during the reign of Emperor Michael III (r. 842–867), which describes those entering this city in central Anatolia as saying, "Rejoice, city of the Lord, the New Zion, inscribed with divinely-written [or painted?] tablets."[166] On this last instance, Andreas Rhoby notes that the language and imagery used here is very Constantinopolitan, and he wonders if the inscription were simply made in a workshop in the capital and used in a provincial city without the scribe knowing where the work would end up.[167] Rhoby, however, admits in the same passage that another location on the walls of Ankyra speaks of the city being "strengthened by stones trodden by God" (θεοστίβοις λίθαξιν ἐστηριγμένη), with this "most probably meaning that precious stones from the Holy Land were also bricked in the wall." Nonetheless, these two inscriptions provide mutual support in proclaiming the rebuilt Ankyra as new Zion filled with divine images (icons? perhaps other acheiropoiēta?) and holy stones—and supply further evidence that the appellation of "Zion" was not restricted to Constantinople alone.

162 Gr. ἀπὸ Σιὼν πρὸς τὴν βασιλεύουσαν ἑτέραν πόλιν Σιών. Metrical liturgical calendar for August, Ode I, troparion 2, in: Christopher of Mytilene, *Metrical Calendars*, ed. by Follieri, p. 470.

163 *Oration* 1: οἳ ἐγώ, μῆτερ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, θεοῦ σοφία, νέα Σιών, ed. by Sideras, p. 63. On the person of this Gregory, cf. Darrouzès 1962.

164 Prooimion: Νεοφύτου πρεσβυτέρου μοναχοῦ καὶ ἐγκλείστου τυπικὴ σὺν θεῷ διαθήκη περὶ τῆς ἰδίας ἐγκλείστρας, νήσου Κύπρου τῆς Παφηνῶν ἐπαρχίας, τῆς καὶ Νέας Σιὼν ἐπονομασθείσης; ed. by Tsiknopoullos, p. 71.

165 *Oration* 18: Ἤ, ἵνα οἰκειότερον λέγοιμι, νέα Σιὼν Ἀθῆναι νομίζονταί μοι καὶ ἄλλη πόλις θεοῦ, περὶ ἧς δεδοξασμένα λελάληται, εἴ περ ναὸς θεοῦ χάρισιν ἱερωτέραις πολλῷ σεμνυνόμενος καὶ κιβωτὸς μυστικωτέρα δεῦρο ἐνίδρυται; ed. by Lampros, 1:317.

166 Πόλις Κυρίου, χαῖρε, Σιὼν ἡ νέα / θεογράφοις πίναξιν ἐγγεγραμμένη; text in Lauxtermann 2003, 340 (no. 20).

167 Rhoby 2012, 745.

The capital is not the only centre removed from focus in the earlier hymnographic materials for the Mandylion's translation. The first troparion on Ode VII proclaims that the Mandylion is "glorified by faithful emperors and every breath of mature faithful [persons]"—the emperors are not even set apart here, but situated amidst the whole assembly of Christian faithful—while Odes VIII and IX each contain one mention of the object serving as a "victorious weapon" and "shield" for "those who now rule by your providence" and "those who in your good pleasure rule the earth", respectively.[168] What matters in these troparia is not who the emperors are (much less who any given single autokratōr is), but who grants victory and by what means: Christ God, through his image, to his appointed regents.

From this close reading, one can see more clearly why the texts found in BNF MS Coislin 218 posed a problem for church and court in the late 11th century. On the one hand, the explicit divinity ascribed to the Mandylion and the very close identification of "salvific symbol" with the Saviour himself contributed to the accusations of idolatry levelled against Leo at the Council of Blachernai in 1094. On the other hand, the imperial role in the Mandylion's translation and the close connection between ruler and relic appears at best neglected, and at worst undermined, by the prominence given to the people and the city in the texts. Notions of the divine essence being present in the icon-relic and the emperor were far from eradicated by the replacement of these texts in the early 1100s, as my readings will show in the following chapters. But more importantly than preserving a pro-icon/anti-idol orthodoxy, I would argue that the replacing of the earlier liturgical texts for the Mandylion's translation with new ones served to remove an embarrassing contradiction for the emperor: hymns sung on a feast celebrating one of the most important relics in the Christian world, housed next to the emperor's own chambers no less, yet almost completely sidelining the basileus. The presence of the Mandylion in Constantinople was certainly felt to provide spiritual and physical protection, and was a mark of pride for the city as a whole, as Constantine VII notes in his *Narration*. But even more important for the emperor specifically was the presence of the Mandylion in the palace, brought thither by imperial command and strengthening above all the emperor as divinely instituted ruler. This viewpoint is what comes to the fore in the texts that replace those quoted by Leo and which survive in all other medieval Greek mēnaia manuscripts.[169]

168 Ode VIII, troparion 2; Ode IX, troparion 3.

169 Both the contemporary Byzantine rite texts in Greek and Slavonic for matins on August 16 employ a canon in plagal second mode (which the Slavonic tradition calls sixth mode), ascribed to Patriarch Germanos (I) of Constantinople (r. 715–730) and bearing the acrostic "I venerate the official copy of your countenance, O Saviour" (Gr. Σῆς ἐκσφράγισμα Σῶτερ ὄψεως σέβω, text available in Μηναῖον Αὐγούστου, ed. by Ἀποστολικὴ Διακονία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, 213; translation mine), which in the Slavonic tradition is not maintained via the initial letters of the kanōn's troparia, but is translated and provided as "I venerate your portrayed visage, O Saviour" (Slav.

2.3.3 Less Leo, more monarch: the later liturgical texts for the Mandylion

The kanōn present in the other early Greek mēnaia, the earliest extant manuscripts of which date from the 13th–15th centuries and contain material for August 16 and the feast of the Mandylion's translation, displays several characteristics aligning it more fully with a pro-imperial agenda. The heirmoi of the kanōn quoted by Leo are in plagal fourth mode, and while the entire text is not present, from the extant incipits these appear to be identical to the heirmoi used still today in the received Byzantine tradition at matins on Friday in plagal fourth mode week according to the rotating use of modes in the musical texts of the *oktōēchos*.[170] In the year 944, August 16 fell on a Friday, and following the calculation of the date of Pascha for that year, this would have indeed been Friday in a week during which the daily cycle of hymns would have been sung according to this mode. Perhaps the presence of heirmoi in this mode are simply a sign of a feature of the daily cycle of services as celebrated in the palatine chapels (i.e., we should understand that this element of matins was static, related to the day and tone of the week, and not influenced by other feasts); perhaps one finds here an explicit choice made by the hymnographer(s) to disconnect somewhat the feast of the Mandylion's translation from the great feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos celebrated the day before, which choice would emphasise the former's unique character and importance by avoiding any duplication or reference to that great feast's hymns. In the otherwise extant kanōn, however, the heirmoi incipits for August 16 seem to be identical to those used in the second kanōn for the feast of the Dormition on August 15 and attributed to John of Damascus.[171] Besides simply continuing the custom of re-using

Напечатаннаго твоего Спасе зрѣния почитаю, text available in Миніа Мѣсяцъ Аугустъ, ed. by Kiev Caves Lavra, p. 308; translation mine). This attribution cannot be correct, however, given the Mandylion's arrival in the city only in 944. In his doctoral dissertation on the hymns attributed to Germanos, Kosta Simic notes the variety of texts (impossibly) ascribed to this patriarch as part of a later Byzantine impetus to enhance the authority of the hymns composed and to ensure their widespread distribution under the pen-name of a historical church figure revered as a hymnographer; see Simic 2017, 21–23.

170 The oktōēchos or "eight modes" is a system of musical texts used in the daily cycle of liturgical services in the Byzantine rite, dating back at least to the eighth and ninth centuries in nascent form. The date of Pascha serves to restart the eight-week cycle each year; cf. "Oktoechos" in *ODB* 3:1520. On the Byzantine musical modal system in greater detail, see Tillyard 1916/1917–1917/1918 and Strunk 1942.

171 Much hymnography is attributed to John of Damascus, and much study has been undertaken to determine which portions of this body of hymnography can be regarded as genuine works by the eighth-century author. Wading into the deep waters of this body of scholarship is beyond the scope of the present study, but suffice it to say that there are a number of extant authentic homilies by John on the feast, and the language of the canon closely corresponds to that of these sermons, allowing for a plausible acceptance

material from a feast during its afterfeast,[172] these heirmoi for the Virgin on the feast of the Mandylion have as another common point of reference the emperor, who usually attended divine services on this feast at the shrine of the Virgin located in Blachernai.[173]

The hymns in these texts composed after the Council of Blachernai, like their predecessors, abound in vocabulary to describe the Mandylion, although these later texts specifically mention the Mandylion as such in the title of the kanōn, in contrast to the texts cited by Leo.[174] Nevertheless, the emphasis is subtly different: while words referring to the object as image (εἰκών),[175] likeness (ἐμφέρεια,[176] ὁμοίωσις[177]), type (τύπος,[178] ἐκτύπωμα,[179] τυπόω[180]), and writing/painting/recording (γράφω,[181] ἐγγράφω[182]) appear, the newer hymns stress the form (μορφή)[183] and shape (εἶδος)[184] of the Mandylion when referring to the object, and distinguish the depiction of the divine image from the cloth bearing it.[185] This distinction, though, does not diminish the perception of a divine presence at hand. All of creation,[186] and prophetically

of Damascene authorship here. Cf. Shoemaker 2002; on the correspondence of language, see Pokhilko 2004, 19.

172 In the Byzantine rite, several high-ranking feasts are preceded by several days on which the hymnography anticipates the feast (the so-called forefeast) and are followed by several days on which the feast continues to be celebrated and hymns from the feast continue to be sung: the so-called afterfeast. On the latter term, cf. *LBG*, s.v. "μεθεορτή", "μεθεόρτιος", and "μεθέορτον"; on the phenomenon in general, as well as a listing of the great feasts of the Byzantine rite together with their respective fore- and afterfeasts, cf. Mary/Ware 1969, 41–44; see also in general Baumstark 1954. The Old Georgian K'larjeti *mravaltavi* liturgical manuscript, compiled in the tenth century on the basis of seventh-century sources, prescribes festal homilies for August 13–17 related to an extended celebration of the Dormition. On this manuscript and its contents, see: Esbroeck 1974, Esbroeck 1975; Shoemaker 2002, 120. The Old Georgian text can be found in Mgaloblišvili 1991, 12. On the *mravaltavi* genre of texts in the Georgian tradition more generally, see Gippert 2016.

173 See above this chapter, n. 25.

174 Albeit in the variant spelling μανδήλιον; cf. ed. by Proiou/Schirò, 12:163. An English-language translation of the kanōn is available below in the appendix.

175 Ode I, troparion 2; Ode VII, theotokion.

176 Ode I, troparion 1.

177 Ode I, troparion 2.

178 Ode III, troparion 1.

179 Ode I, troparion 3.

180 Ode V, troparion 1.

181 Ode I, troparion 2.

182 Ode V, troparion 2; Ode VII, troparion 2.

183 Ode IV, theotokion; Ode V, theotokion; Ode VI, troparion 2; Ode VII, troparion 2; Ode IX, theotokion.

184 Ode V, troparion 2; Ode VI, troparion 2; Ode VIII, troparion 2 (twice).

185 Cf. Ode V, theotokion: "you placed your form on a woven cloth."

186 Cf. Ode I, troparion 1: "O heavens, exult today with brightness; O mountains, leap, O hills, clap your hands! You of divine mind, venerate in faith the likeness of Christ's acquisition."

David the psalmist-king,[187] hail the arrival of the icon-relic in "the queen of cities", which is considered to be like Mary, pregnant with the divine Logos;[188] the "new Zion";[189] and metropolis/mother-city of God.[190] In these texts we see that a divine presence is regarded as being especially present in the icon-relic, a presence that finds correspondence not only in form but in activity. Just as the infant Christ was detained in Egypt away from murderous Herod,[191] so we hear in the hymns, so too is Edessa said to have been host to the Word of God himself while it harboured the relic.[192] Through the acquired form of his icon-relic,[193] Christ "has come as though on foot" from Edessa to Constantinople, and "comes to what is his own"—his own people, the new Israel of the Christian empire—"through a recorded form"[194] that bears not only the divine image, but the divine essence as well.[195] Scriptural images of Christ's earthly sojourn are re-enacted and re-presented through the Mandylion's arrival in the city in the texts; a re-enactment which I believe was not a one-time event, but which would continually be underscored every year liturgically when this feast was celebrated anew.

Just as the city in these hymns becomes again mother and virgin, queen and Zion, and just as Christ once again becomes palpably present in the holy relic, so too does the emperor appear more fully in the newer texts. The final troparion of the first ode proclaims: "David related most clearly the power of the mystery, crying out: 'The God and Lord who is coming has also appeared to us; arrange a universal feast of joy!'" The feast might be for all, but the central figure of David here serves to allude to the emperor, the fulfilment of the Davidic type. Furthermore, the hymn celebrates that the Lord Christ, in the form of the Mandylion, has indeed "appeared to us", as recounted in Constantine VII's miraculous ability to see the divine face when others could not.[196] The emperors again have pride of place in greeting the

187 Mentions of or allusions to David are found in: Ode I, theotokion; Ode III, troparia 1 and 2; Ode VI, troparion 1 and theotokion; Ode VIII, theotokion; Ode IX, theotokion.

188 Ode III, troparion 1.

189 Ode III, troparion 2.

190 Cf. Ode III, troparion 2, and notes in the appendix there on the pun in the Greek here.

191 Cf. Matt 2:13–23; reference to the sojourn in Egypt is also made explicit in Ode VI, troparion 3.

192 Ode III, troparion 3.

193 Twice, the later kanōn speaks of Christ's "acquisition" (πρόσλημμα) without defining this term any further (Ode I, troparion 1; Ode VIII, troparion 2); the word is used on its own in patristic literature, however, to refer specifically to Christ's acquisition of human nature in the incarnation. Cf. Lampe, s.v. "πρόσλημμα, τό".

194 Ode VII, troparion 2: δι' ἐγγράφου μορφῆς.

195 Cf. Ode V, troparion 2, which speaks of the Mandylion as being "God's recorded essence" (ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔγγραφος οὐσία).

196 Cf. n. 73 above. While the familiarity of the composers of these liturgical texts with this episode as recounted in Pseudo-Symeon cannot be determined with any certainty, the large number of surviving manuscripts, and the fact that this text was translated into various Slavic dialects, indicates a greater-than-normal popularity, and thus a familiarity

object on its arrival before the clergy and laity,[197] and receive the gift of victories from Christ ahead of the granting of peace to the remaining people;[198] the only place where this is not the case is also the only instance of hymnography taken over from the texts referred to earlier by Leo (namely, the kathisma hymn, which is placed after Ode III). What is more, the emperor is allusively likened to God the Father and thus hinted at being divine himself: as the Father called Jesus back to the Promised Land from his Egyptian exile,[199] so too do we hear that "therefore a father has once again called for [Christ] to return, as to another fatherland": not to Jerusalem, but "to this city which has given birth to you" in bearing the record of Christ's flesh.[200]

From the similarly wide-ranging vocabulary and the common unabashed emphasis on the physically tangible presence of Christ in the Mandylion, the later post-conciliar kanōn from the early 1100s does not seem in my view to have replaced Leo's theological understanding of the icon-relic with a more tempered explanation of the divine presence in the object. Rather, I believe the replacement (if not outright suppression) of the earlier texts served to do away with textual materials associated with Leo—a man who had been officially condemned at a church council—and to prevent the potential yearly embarrassment in the palatine chapels of emperor, clergy, and court hearing once again words linked to a recognised imperial opponent. Furthermore, the new composition, while underscoring the special sacred character of the icon-relic, restores a primary and even divine role to the emperor(s) in the feast. Here, the emperor's initiative is what is key in the Mandylion's translation from Edessa, and this initiative serves to reveal his own holy character. Nevertheless, the emperor in these later texts remains nameless, and thus any emperor—indeed, every emperor—could be understood as fulfilling this sacred, paternal role.

Liturgy and literature are important witnesses to the development of the understanding and interpretation of both the Mandylion and the emperor as sacred, divine figures in the Middle Byzantine period, as the close reading of the foregoing texts and hymns has shown. But such compositions are not the sole witnesses to this phenomenon; one artistic depiction in particular from the tenth century in conjunction with these texts also gives shape to how Byzantine elites perceived and portrayed this object, imperial sanctity, and the expression of both beyond the confines of the palace to the far corners of the empire.

with the text and the tale within the elite circles of Byzantine hymnographers cannot be excluded. On the history of the manuscripts and their translations, cf. Markopoulos 1978, 30–38, 185.

197 Ode VII, troparion 3.

198 Ode IX, troparion 2.

199 Cf. Matt 2:19–20.

200 Ode III, theotokion.

2.3.4 The Mandylion in MS Vat. Cod. Ross. 251: matter and spirit

A depiction of the Mandylion, mentioned by Lidov in his work on sacred spaces,[201] is found in the MS Vatican Codex Rossianus 251, dating to the mid-11th century and containing an illustrated copy of the early-seventh-century ascetical classic *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by John, abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai.[202] In addition to this more common title, the treatise is also entitled in some manuscripts as being the "Spiritual Tables" (πλάκες πνευματικαί),[203] and this name also appears in translation in some of the earliest printed copies of the Latin translation of the text in the late 15th century.[204] However, this sense of the thirty steps of John Klimakos's ascetical ladder as also being "spiritual tables" akin to the tables of the law or the Ten Commandments, according to which a monk should order his life, is shifted by a visual marker in the manuscript under discussion: namely, a depiction of the Mandylion and its tile copy, the Keramion, beneath this title (Fig. 5). In his work, Lidov is keen to explore the spread of iconographic depictions of the Mandylion in Byzantine art and church decoration,[205] and notes the miniature in Codex Rossianus 251 as one of the earliest depictions of the Holy Face and Holy Tile as a sacred image apart from any narrative of the Pharos chapel and the imperial relic treasury.[206] Yet the significance of this depiction in its context is absent from his interpretation. Within a manuscript on the ascetical life, referred to metaphorically as containing "spiritual tables" to follow, this depiction of the Mandylion and its copy alongside the title lends weight to a different metaphor, albeit via a literal reading. The "spiritual tables" here are no longer the thirty steps of John's *Ladder*, but the divine icon-relic and its miraculous copy, both "not made by hands"

201 Lidov 2009, 114.

202 On this manuscript, cf. Menna 2008. The manuscript has been fully digitised and can be viewed online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Ross.251 (accessed 26/04/2021). The classic study in the field on the *Ladder* and its manuscript/image tradition remains Martin 1954; cf. also Corrigan 1996.

203 Cf. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, ed. Smith, s.v. "Climacus, Joannes".

204 Cf. Coblentz 2020. In her blog post, Coblentz mentions the 1492 Venetian edition of the *Ladder* published by Christophoro da Mandelo, which is held at the New York Public Library and includes a note on the double names in its preface: "This sacred book has two names. One of its names is *Tavola spirituale* [Spiritual Table]. … The other is *La santa scala* [The Holy Ladder] … And from this name 'Scala' ["ladder"] the saint who wrote it is called San Giovanni Climaco [Saint John Climacus], that is, San Giovanni della Scala [Saint John of the Ladder], since 'Climax' in Greek and Latin means 'Scala' [in Italian]" (*Scala paradisi*, 3; translation by Coblentz).

205 Cf. Lidov 2009, where an entire chapter is dedicated to the icon-relic and artistic depictions thereof throughout Byzantium, the Balkans, and Russia/Ukraine ("Мандилион и Керамион: Иконический образ сакрального пространства" [The Mandylion and the Keramion: an iconographic image of sacred space], pp. 107–132).

206 Lidov 2009, 114.

Fig. 5: Depiction of the Mandylion (left, with fringe below) and Keramion (right) before the first *Step* of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Codex Rossianus 251 (mid-11th century), fol. 12v. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

and written/painted (both senses of γράφω coming here into play) by God himself. The divine tables after which the monk should pattern himself are concretised to be the person of Christ, who—as has been seen in the hymnography from the 11th century—was believed to be ontologically present in the Mandylion, and who could thus cause his very image to become manifest in the earthen clay of the human monk, tested like a tile in the kiln of the ascetic life. But while the singular importance of the physical presence of the object in the Pharos chapel within the Great Palace is not questioned or mediated here—in fact, as Krause argues, the two icon-relics as new 'divine tablets' serve to buttress an understanding of Byzantine Christian society as a new Israel with the capital city as a new Zion[207]—the metaphorical presence of these precious relics, and their 'translation' outwards from the metropolis of Constantinople, becomes possible everywhere via their divine 'spiritual' character, which is present in the copy: present in the Keramion, the *Urkopie*, yes; but also present in any other copy made: be it the human clay of the monk, or the pigment painted on walls or parchment.

207 Cf. above this chapter, n. 96.

Such proliferation of Mandylion images is in fact encouraged and enjoined by heaven in the post-Blachernai kanōn: "Angels now rejoice and cry out today: 'Lift up the gates, O churches,[208] receive the form, not depicted by hands, of God's recorded essence, and make copies of it for yourselves in accordance with the archetype,[209] O faithful!'"[210] Furthermore, this copying is to be done "in the churches" without further definition or restriction, thus allowing the possibility of an artistic campaign of exportation and a personal campaign of imitation throughout the empire and beyond its limits. Evidence exists that such spread indeed took place: already in the 11th century, examples of Mandylion depictions can be found in Cappadocia[211] and North Macedonia,[212] while the transition from the 11th to the early 12th century sees copies in Rila, Bulgaria,[213] and near Pskov in present-day Russia,[214] with the same phenomenon of spread documentable in Western Europe as well.[215]

The diffusion of Mandylion copies beyond the walls of Constantinople and the inner sancta of the palace certainly bears witness to the ability of a metropolis, such as the Byzantine capital, to export specific depictions of religio-cultural identity well outside the geographical boundaries of such a centre. But two features of these depictions stand out under closer inspection. First, the depictions of the Mandylion are not placed simply anywhere on walls or other flat services. In one instance—the miniature in Codex Rossianus 251—the Mandylion and Keramion appear to be situated either on a wall or within an open box. The latter interpretation would mirror that of the earlier accounts of both items coming to the city in reliquary containers, as well as later accounts and depictions from the turn of the 12th century, which describe the icon-relic and its copy being carried in box-top containers.[216]

208 Cf. Ps 23:7, 9.

209 The term 'archetype' here has the meaning of model, pattern, or original; cf. LSJ, s.v. "ἀρχέτυπον, τό". The word does not occur in either the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament or in any New Testament text, yet the *TLG* database shows that it is taken up by several early Christian authors in their apologetical and dogmatic works from the centuries up to and including the time period under study, ranging from Clement of Alexandria to the Cappadocian Fathers, Maximos the Confessor, John of Damascus, and Michael Psellos in the 11th century.

210 Ode V, troparion 2.

211 Lidov 2009, 118–119 (Mandylion copy in apse niche above the prothesis, the so-called 'Dark Church' [*Karanlık Kilise*] at Korama [present-day Göreme, Turkey]). On this church and its imagery, see Schroeder 2008.

212 Lidov 2009, 120–121 (Mandylion copy over entrance to the cathedral of Saint Sophia in Ohrid, North Macedonia).

213 Lidov 2009, 123 (altar apse, church of the Archangel Michael in Rila, Bulgaria).

214 Lidov 2009, 108–109, 112–113 (copies of Mandylion and Keramion facing each other on opposite arches below a cupola in the katholikon at the Spaso-Preobrazhenskiy Mirozhskiy monastery [dedicated to the feast of the Transfiguration and located on the banks of the Mirozha River] in Pskov, Russia).

215 Cf. Kessler 2000, esp. chapter 4, "Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face", pp. 64–87.

216 See the 12th-century *Madrid Skylitzēs* manuscript miniature in Fig. 7.

Additionally, such a reading in my view would drive home the association of 'spiritual tables' with the tables of the law and the ark of the covenant, an association already noted by Kessler vis-à-vis the tapestries said to cover the ark:[217] if every church can be seen as a new Zion, the home of the new Israel (as explained above in this chapter), then every church should also bear within itself as miniature Zion and temple the tables of the law, made manifest in the copied image of the Mandylion-*qua*-Christ the Lawgiver[218]—and, I would venture, the ultimate embodiment of the ἔμψυχος νόμος and new law. Just as Christ was made manifest in the flesh at the incarnation, so too can he be seen now 'spiritually' in the icons of him, and especially so in copies of the Mandylion. Nevertheless, the actual physical body and fleshly presence of Christ after his ascension into heaven[219] is hidden from (nearly) all until the Second Coming, yet this hiddenness of Christ also finds parallel in the relative hiddenness of the actual Mandylion, sheltered as it was behind palace walls and in its reliquary within the Pharos chapel.

Second, however, the depictions situate the Mandylion copies high above in cupolas and arches, or suspended on walls above tables and altars: in other words, the images appear to 'hang' from the walls or domes. Engaging a patristic/associative reading here of the copies' depictions and positions, I suggest that Jesus in the Gospels is also seen 'hanging' on the wood of the cross,[220] and it is precisely this kind

217 Kessler notes that in iconographic depictions, the woven fabric on which the Holy Face was manifest was interpreted to represent the screens of the Old Testament tabernacle in the wilderness and their successor, the veil before the Holy of Holies in the Temple. On this, see Kessler 2000, 81; cf. also the essays contained in Kessler/Wolf 1998. Alexei Lidov has also noted depictions of the Mandylion on veils used in conjunction with ciboria in Kyivan Rus' in the 12th century as well as other iconographic depictions of Christ himself as the temple veil; cf. Lidov 2014, 50–52.

218 The identification of Christ with God in terms of being the one who gave the law to Moses on Sinai is made as early as the second century AD in the writings of Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 4.4.1–2) and Origen (*Homily 1 on Psalm 77*). Editions and translations of Irenaeus are available in: Brox 1997 and Rousseau et al. 2006; for Origen: Trigg 2020.

219 Cf. Luke 24:50; John 3:13, 6:62, 20:17; Acts 1:9–11.

220 Cf. Gal 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who hangs (πᾶς ὁ κρεμάμενος) on a tree'", the verse itself referring to Deut 21:22–23: "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang (κρεμάσητε) him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man (πᾶς κρεμάμενος) is accursed by God; you shall not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance." The same imagery is very salient in the 15th antiphon sung at matins of Holy Friday in the Lenten texts of the Triodion, which begins "Today is hung on the cross he who hung the earth upon the waters …" (Σήμερον κρεμᾶται ἐπὶ ξύλου ὁ ἐν ὕδασι τὴν γῆν κρεμάσας …). Taft, in his *ODB* entry on the Triodion (3:2118–2129), notes the development of the texts of this hymnographic collection over the centuries and mentions the summary work by Meester 1943. The latter text does mention the hymn Σήμερον κρεμᾶται in the context of the Holy Friday matins (p. 45), but Meester provides no footnotes, sources, or bibliography in his (alas, much cited) work. More

of association which the 11th-century kanōn for the translation of the Mandylion also takes up, when it speaks of Christ 'hanging' in his image: "Bearing your image like an adornment, O Christ, your bride the church cries: 'Behold the inexpressible beauty of your life hanging before your eyes (ἀπέναντι κρεμάμενον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ὑμῶν), and you all shall live.'"[221] This imagery of suspension would appear to find confirmation in the extant sources on the Mandylion proper: both Robert of Clari's account of the Pharos chapel at the time of the sacking of Constantinople in 1204,[222] as well as Nicholas Mesaritēs's description of the chapel's treasures in the course of the attempted coup by supporters of John the Fat in 1200,[223] speak of the Mandylion and Keramion being suspended from above within the chapel, facing each other and housed in golden cases. The hanging icon-relic and its miraculous copy in the Pharos chapel then serve not only as the pattern for all other 'copies' made "in the churches", but also as the key to interpreting this depiction. If the Mandylion and Keramion are to be seen as 'spiritual tables' contained within the new ark of the covenant that is situated amongst the new Israel of the Christian commonwealth, they also then represent in my reading the new law made tangibly present in the objects: Christ, and the emperor who is to be patterned exactly after the divine image in terms of sovereignty and virtue.[224] Against this backdrop, one should also recall here the Byzantine legal idea of the emperor as "embodied law",[225] which

informative, with abundant notes and documentation, is Janeras 1998, 124–136, who locates the text of this hymn in several Middle Byzantine manuscripts: MS Vat. gr. 771 (11th century), MS Grottaferrata Δ. β. 10 (1137), and MS Chilandar 207 (late 12th century) (ibid., p. 133).

221 Ode VIII, troparion 1; the text also alludes to Num 21:9, where Moses is instructed by God to raise up a bronze serpent (a cursed animal, cf. Gen 3:14), and to tell the Israelites afflicted by snake bites to look on the image of the serpent hanging on the pole, so that they might be healed.

222 As noted in Robert of Clari's description of the Pharos chapel and the Mandylion/Keramion: "there were two rich vessels of gold hanging in the midst of the chapel by two heavy silver chains. In one of these vessels there was a tile and in the other a cloth" (*The Conquest of Constantinople*, ed./transl. by McNeal, 83 [p. 104]). Lidov posits that the objects were suspended from the dome and facing each other (Lidov 2009, 116), but the text by Clari does not specify this detail.

223 Nicholas Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 14 (55). Note: here and in what follows, citations to Mesaritēs's account will list first the paragraph number from the Heisenberg edition used by Angold, followed by the page number in parentheses or square brackets as appropriate.

224 On the notion of imperial imitation of the divine, see: Hunger 1964, 58–63, cited in Magdalino 1983, 341, where the latter also mentions an early-13th-century text by Dēmētrios Chōmatēnos that speaks of the emperor executing justice for the common good as being "in imitation of God" (θεομίμητος).

225 A rich bibliography on this notion in Byzantine political philosophy in late antiquity and the medieval period in Byzantium exists; see among others Steinwenter 1946; Dvornik 1966, 716–722; Lanata 1984, esp. p. 181; and Maas 1986. Kekaumenos, in his late-11th-century *Treatise on Strategy*, equates the emperor with the law: "Since some say that

could further serve to establish a special link or relationship between the emperor on earth and Christ, the heavenly king and the divine law made flesh, the Mandylion as divine *Urbild* and the emperor here as miraculous, divinely-touched *Urkopie*. The proliferation of copies of the Mandylion throughout churches and beyond imperial borders might thus serve not only to fulfil the injunction of the kanōn, but could also stand as a 'spiritual' reminder of the earthly emperor as well. Instead of—but in continuity with, I would argue—the late antique imperial portraits found throughout the Roman Empire,[226] one could now find the image of Christ/emperor-in-heaven, the incarnate divine law, hanging before the eyes of all in the churches and monasteries throughout the inhabited world (i.e., not just the Greek-speaking lands of Byzantium) in the form in which he was especially present in the imperial Pharos church. This juxtapositioning of Christ in heaven and his *christos* or anointed sovereign in Constantinople by means of an image common to both—the Mandylion 'painted' by God and possessed by the emperor—continues in text and image into the 12th century, right up to the fall of the city and the end of the Middle Byzantine period.

2.4 12th century: rhetors of the new ark

2.4.1 Constantine Stilbēs and the *Didaskalia*

The end of the Middle Byzantine period provides us with two Constantinopolitan texts mentioning the Mandylion. The first of these is the so-called *Didaskalia* (Gr. διδασκαλία) or "teaching" of Constantine Stilbēs, who held the official post of teacher[227] in the city while serving as a deacon, before being elevated to the episcopal throne of Kyzikos and concomitantly taking the name Cyril upon

> the emperor is not subject to the law, but rather is the law, I also say this: but whatever he should do and legislate, he does it well and we obey him" (ἐπεὶ λέγουσί τινες ὅτι ὁ βασιλεὺς νόμῳ οὐχ ὑπόκειται, ἀλλὰ νόμος ἐστί, τὸ αὐτὸ κἀγὼ λέγω· πλὴν ὅσα ἂν ποιῇ καὶ νομοθετῇ καλῶς ποιεῖ καὶ πειθόμεθα τούτῳ) (translation mine). Text in: Vasil'evskij/Jernstedt 1965, 93; cited by Burns 1988, 65. Yet for Kekaumenos, the comparison does not stop there; the strategist speaks of the emperor as being divine and able to do as he wishes in a direct address to the ruler, manifesting a more keenly felt divine character on the part of the sovereign as shall be explored especially in chapter 4 below vis-à-vis Manuel I Komnēnos: "O holy master, God has caused you to ascend to the imperial rule and by his grace, so to speak, has made you a god on earth, to do and make what you wish" (δέσποτα ἅγιε, ἀνεβίβασέ σε ὁ Θεὸς εἰς τὴν βασίλειον ἀρχὴν καὶ ἐποίησέ σε τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι, τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον, Θεὸν ἐπίγειον, ποιεῖν καὶ πράττειν ἃ βούλει) (translation mine) (Vasil'evskij/Jernstedt 1965, 93). A newer critical edition and Italian translation of this treatise has been prepared by Spadaro 1998.

226 On such portraits as part of imperial programmes of propaganda throughout the empire, see Grabar 1971, passim; and Kazhdan 1983.

227 Cf. "Didaskalos" in *ODB* 1:619; also Kazhdan/Epstein 1985, 126–130.

monastic tonsure.[228] The *Didaskalia*, like several of the other key documents of this era examined in the present study, survives in a single manuscript from the late 13th or 14th century: MS Barocci 25, fols. 273–275, originally kept at the Barozzi Library in Venice and now housed at the Bodleian Library.[229] Based on textual clues and other documentation pertaining to Constantine Stilbēs's titles and residences, both Flusin and Ceulemans fix the date for this oration as being August 16 between the years 1194 and 1197.[230] Despite being pronounced two hundred and fifty years after the Mandylion's translation to the city, the *Didaskalia* envisages the object's arrival as a present-day reality. The transportation of the icon-relic is cast into the present tense, as though the object were arriving this very day in the city: the Christian people, "the spiritual Israel goes before in procession and guards as a treasure" the icon-relic, which is allegorised by Stilbēs as "the ark of grace … the very holy [ark]";[231] the movement of the Mandylion is not commemorated as a long-past event, but "solemnly celebrate[d] today" as a returning, recurrent festival.[232] The present-day festivities soon fade from the rhetorical foreground and give way to a historical narration; but Stilbēs does not recount here the arrival of the icon-relic to the Queen of Cities. Rather, he recounts the 'original' historico-legendary story of Abgar receiving the image not made by hands. Well documented in sources from the tenth and 11th centuries, as seen in the foregoing sections, it would appear to be an old and time-worn tale to explain yet again the Edessan provenance of the precious relic—and this on an otherwise unique occasion, Stilbēs's first official 'teaching' after being named to the office.[233] After the proemial exclamations, though, the deacon proclaims that on such a solemn occasion, "the story" he is about to relate "is new, and not common knowledge to all."[234] The flesh and bones of the tale of translation all seem to be those of the old Abgarian legend; yet

228 As narrated in the title of the *Didaskalia*, cf. my translation in the appendix.

229 Introduction and historical information on the text, along with a transcription of the Greek text with accompanying French translation, can be found in Flusin 1997; the manuscript has been digitised and can be viewed online: https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/2ca2a9fe-9777-4646-a75a-1aa5b4598498/ (accessed 27/04/2021). Translations of portions of the *Didaskalia* can be found in Guscin 2009, 163, 208–209, and in Nicolotti 2014, 104–105. Additional commentary, a reprinting of the Greek text edited by Flusin, and a fuller—yet still partial—English-language translation of the *Didaskalia* have also been published in Ceulemans 2022. Hereafter, citations of the *Didaskalia* will be followed by section number, as provided by Flusin and noted in my translation in the appendix below, and then by the page number in Flusin's article where the Greek text may be consulted.

230 Flusin 1997, 57; Ceulemans 2022, 727.

231 *Didaskalia* 1 (66).

232 *Didaskalia* 10 (78).

233 I follow here Flusin 1997, 57, who posits that Stilbēs's nomination to the post of *didaskalos* is the occasion for the piece; Ceulemans 2022, 727, does not link the *Didaskalia* specifically to Stilbēs's gaining of this office.

234 *Didaskalia* 2 (68).

the new spirit enlivening the textual body, I argue, is in Stilbēs's textual approximation of Abgar the king not merely to the person of Constantine VII (as was the case in the tenth-century icon preserved at Sinai), but rather to any and every Byzantine emperor, who is both generalised and sanctified in Stilbēs's speech.

While still in his introductory remarks, Stilbēs speaks of the person carrying the Mandylion-*qua*-ark in unambiguously religious terms:

> See him who bears the ark in his hands and provides for its transport: our more sublime Aaron, the great sacrificer and hierarch, the worthy bearer of vessels for objects so great as these[235] and who escorts them into the sanctuary,[236] who speaks well before Pharaoh[237] on behalf of Israel which we are, and who by his words of teaching thunders at him but sets us aright. The oracular breastplate he bears[238] is more mystical and more secret … He is adorned with a more remarkable turban and a plaque on his forehead gleaming like gold: for both things are united in the understanding of the archpastor, which is near his head and full of light, since he is exceedingly perceptive.[239]

In the context of a sermon-like oration pronounced in a church and not at an official celebration within the Great Palace, the words "sacrificer" (θύτης), "hierarch" (ἱεράρχης), and "archpastor" (ἀρχιποίμην) would seem most naturally to refer to the patriarch of the Great Church and the city. Naming the figure as "Aaron" might also allow for an allusion to the emperor, as was done at the beginning of the tenth century by Arethas of Caesarea in an oration describing Emperor Leo VI and the translation to Constantinople of the relics of Lazaros, whom Jesus raised from the dead before his own crucifixion and resurrection according to the Gospel of John.[240] In a homily written for that occasion, Arethas describes the emperor escorting the relics around the city on the royal barge (as is later repeated by the co-ruling emperors in 944 with the Mandylion), in the course of which Arethas variously describes Leo as being another Moses, Aaron, David—and even Christ.[241] However, Stilbēs makes

235 Cf. Num 3:31; 4:9, 12, 16; 18:3; 31:6.

236 Cf. Lev 16; Exod 28.

237 Cf. Exod 7:1–2.

238 Cf. Lev 8:8; Exod 28.

239 *Didaskalia* 1 (66).

240 Cf. John 11:1–44.

241 Cf. Arethas of Caesarea, *Homily* 58, edition in Westerink 1972. According to Westerink's introductory notes, the homily was preached in the Great Church on October 17, 901 (ibid., 7). In *Homily* 58, the city receives "the emperor who enters the truly Holy Land [i.e., Constantinople] and who carries the bones of the beloved [Lazaros] like a new Moses" (ὡς ἄλλον Μωϋσέα τὸν αὐτοκράτορα τὰ τοῦ ἠγαπημένου ὀστᾶ εἰς τὴν ἀληθῶς ἁγίαν κομίζοντα γῆν εἰσδεχόμενον, ibid., 9). A year later, in *Homily* 59 preached on May 4 at the consecration of the church of Saint Lazaros, Arethas speaks of the emperor bearing the relics on the royal barge as being "some kind of holy Aaron" (ὡς Ἀαρών τινα ἱερόν,

no clear, unambiguous connection between Aaron and emperor to allow such an allusion to stand. The sacred object of the Mandylion is what receives full focus here, and the rhetor stresses the object's role as a "new ark", a new sign of divine protection and election for the entire New Israel of God, and not just the emperor.

This same lack of definition in terms of the actors described in conjunction with the Mandylion—and thus the openness of their application—is found throughout the rest of the text in terms of imperial office. The historical setting is established in Stilbēs's narrative by mentioning Edessa, Syria, Jesus, and Abgar. Abgar, however, is only named twice, and always slightly bracketed off from his royal designation,[242] while the apostle Thaddaeus of the *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Narration* is replaced by two generic figures in the conflation of two narrative strands here,[243] with Christ promising to send "one of his chosen disciples" to Abgar,[244] and Abgar "dispatch[ing] a swift courier to Jesus".[245] Elsewhere throughout the text, mention is made only of the otherwise unnamed "king" (βασιλεύς). While this term was rarely used by Byzantine authors for non-Roman/Byzantine rulers in the early Byzantine period,[246] it came to be more generally applied to foreign rulers by the end of the 12th century.[247] The application of the title of basileus to Abgar in the *Didaskalia*, declaimed before a late-12th-century Constantinopolitan audience, would thus not sound too jarring, while at the same time providing an aural marker of continuity in the history of the object: just as a basileus once received the object from Christ himself, so too now does a basileus have the object in his palace. Moreover, Stilbēs directly addresses the sovereign near the end of the *Didaskalia*, borrowing verbatim from the Psalmist: "And now kings, understand" (καὶ νῦν βασιλεῖς σύνετε).[248] The plural "emperors/kings" here, however, could not be referring to multiple contemporary co-ruling emperors; Isaac II Angelos was on the throne from 1185–March 1195, and thus would be the only ruling emperor if the *Didaskalia* were publicly expounded in 1194; Alexios III Angelos was sole ruler after

ibid., 12); "he descends [from the barge] therefore an emperor, but looks divine, and even more divine given the order of the accomplished [rites]" (κάτεισι μὲν οὖν βασιλεὺς αὐτός, ἔνθεος μὲν ἰδεῖν, ἐνθεέστερος δὲ τὴν τῶν δρωμένων διάθεσιν, ibid., 13), is compared to both Moses and now Jesus as well (ibid., 13), and is likened to David bearing the ark (ibid., 15) (all translations here mine).

242 *Didaskalia* 3 (68): "behold a certain regional ruler or king of Syrian Edessa and the neighbouring regions of no small repute (for this was the renowned Abgar)" (καί τις χωράρχης ἢ βασιλεὺς τῆς κατὰ Συρίαν Ἐδέσσης καὶ τῶν ὁμόρων αὐτῇ οὐκ ἀνώνυμος—Αὔγαρος γὰρ οὗτος ὁ μεγαλώνυμος); ibid., 9 (76): "A prophet and king issues an order, and Abgar swiftly grasps the command" (προφήτης ἐπισκήπτει καὶ βασιλεύς—, καὶ ὀξὺς ἁρπάζει τὴν ἐπίσκηψιν Αὔγαρος).

243 Flusin 1997, 58–60.

244 *Didaskalia* 5 (70).

245 *Didaskalia* 6 (72).

246 Cf. Chrysos 1978.

247 Cf. "Basileus" in *ODB* 1:264; Zuckerman 2010; Scholl/Gebhardt/Clauß 2017.

248 Ps 2:10, in *Didaskalia* 9 (76).

him from March 1195–July 17/18, 1203, and thus throughout the rest of the possible time period. The lack of any grammatical adjustment from the plural basileis to the singular basileus in the usage of the Psalm verse here could thus also be a rhetorical tool used to underscore precisely this kind of generalised link between emperor and icon-relic.

2.4.2 Nicholas Mesaritēs

The second text from the end of the Middle Byzantine period mentioning the Mandylion is a recounting of the events surrounding the attempted coup launched by John Komnēnos in 1200 or 1201 and written by Nicholas Mesaritēs. Mesaritēs held the office of imperial *skeuophylax*[249] and vividly describes the attempt by men sent by John Komnēnos to storm and plunder the Great Palace and the Pharos church, as well as his own key role (according to himself, at least) in preventing the planned looting.[250] In the course of the assault on the palace, Mesaritēs recalls that he "became breathless at the thought of the possibility that the rabble would reach the church of the Mother of God [sc. the Pharos chapel] and desecrate the holy relics."[251] Reaching the palatine chapel before the marauders do, the skeuophylax harangues the armed intruders via an ekphrasis of sorts, describing to them the sacred character of the Pharos chapel and the holy relics it contains. Yet the description is no mere literal recounting of silver, gold, and porphyry within the chapel walls, but rather a shifted staging of the chapel as manifesting the holy places from both Old and New Testaments:

> Keep away from the holy church, because you are guilty of profanity; keep far away from it, because you are guilty of sacrilege. This is the gate of Eden and here is the flaming sword, which cuts down and consumes those who insolently assault it.[252] I beseech you, brothers, who have all been born again through the Holy Spirit and baptism, do not proceed any further; turn around or depart in

249 The skeuophylax was a priest or deacon usually in charge of managing the holy vessels and/or relics in a church; the skeuophylax of the Great Church was appointed by the emperor and held second place in the palatial hierarchy of senior servants; cf. "Skeuophylax" in *ODB* 3:1909–1910. In his account of the attempted coup, Mesaritēs calls himself "Nikolaos Mesarites, *epi ton kriseon* [a type of judge; cf. "Epi ton kriseon" in *ODB* 1:724–725] of the most holy Great Church and sacristan [σκευοφύλαξ] of the holy churches in the Great Palace" (Nicholas Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 1 [42]).

250 Cf. Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 1–17 (42–59) for the entire account of the assault on the palace and the restoration of order afterwards. The Greek text is available in the edition by Heisenberg 1907, 19–49.

251 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 10 (50).

252 Cf. Gen 3:24, where cherubim with a flaming sword are set to prevent Adam's re-entrance into the holy garden of paradise.

> another direction, for I fear you will suffer a similar fate to Uzzah[253] or to the man who touched the bier of the Mother of God as she was ascending into the heavens.[254] Within these precincts lies another ark: another Shiloh,[255] an ark, which contains in however different fashion the Ten Commandments.[256]

Mesaritēs then proceeds rather rhetorically (and apparently without much haste, considering the surrounding violence of the narrated coup) to delineate these treasures, urging the attackers to "[l]earn now the names of the Ten Commandments which are stored in here."[257] These "commandments", as the skeuophylax explains, turn out to be the various relics of Christ's Passion housed in the Pharos chapel.[258] Yet Mesaritēs sets the Mandylion and Keramion apart from this sacred number: "People, you have the Ten Commandments and now I place before you the lawgiver himself in [the shape of] his image stamped on the Holy Towel and transferred to the fragile Holy Tile by superhuman artistic skill."[259] The ark in this instance must be an image applied to the chapel as a whole, and yet the Pharos chapel also contains within it Christ himself as the Lawgiver-*qua*-law, divinely inscribed on the cloth of the Mandylion and its ceramic complement. Inasmuch, then, as it is the dwelling place of God himself, Mesaritēs has no problem in designating the church as any number of the Holy Places associated with Jesus's earthly sojourn: "This church, this place is another Sinai, Bethlehem, Jordan, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethany, Galilee, Tiberias, Holy Basin, Last Supper, Mount Tabor, the praitorion of Pilate, and the place of the skull, or Golgotha, when translated into Hebrew."[260] This church, as has been noted above,[261] was immediately adjacent to the emperor's own apartments and connected to them by a passageway, permitting the sovereign literal/physical and metaphorical/spiritual access to the places where Christ's presence was made known—and indeed, where his presence was still felt to be contemporary and actual.

253 2 Kgdms 6:7; in the scriptural account, Uzzah saw that the cart transporting the ark of the covenant might crash on account of the ox stumbling and put out his hand to steady the ark; not being a priest or otherwise authorised to touch the sacred vessel, "God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the ark."

254 Various apocryphal texts relate that at the burial of the Virgin, a Jew sought to overturn the bier of the Theotokos, for which an angel appeared and cut off his hands (later restored whole upon the Jew's repentance and conversion). For the history of these texts and select translations from Gəʿəz, Syriac, and Greek sources, see Shoemaker 2002, esp. pp. 328–331.

255 Josh 18:10.

256 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 12 (53).

257 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 12 (53).

258 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 13 (53–55).

259 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 14 (55). Angold translates the Greek phrase ἐν ἀχειροποιήτῳ τέχνῃ τινὶ γραφικῇ as "superhuman artistic skill".

260 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 14 (55).

261 Cf. above this chapter, n. 58.

The skeuophylax, after describing the Pharos church via this palette of sacred sites, then proceeds to describe Christ's saving activity as being accomplished in the present space: "Here he is born; here he is baptised, walks on water, goes on foot, works his extraordinary miracles, and abases himself [by washing the apostles' feet]."[262] As mentioned above, the Mandylion and Keramion were suspended in golden containers from above within the chapel; applying such ambulatory imagery to these relics would seem quite far-fetched. However, the emperor's physical and spiritual proximity to Christ allows the attentive reader/hearer to recall here the sovereign: the legitimate emperor born in the purple is indeed born and often baptised in the palace; he walks on foot in its precincts, many of the floors of which were made of marble, a material considered in the late antique and Byzantine eras to be solidified water;[263] the various manifestations of the emperor in court ceremony could be considered as marvellous sights (another meaning of the word θαῦμα here); and the emperor had the custom of himself washing the feet of twelve poor persons on Great and Holy Thursday before the great feast of Pascha.[264] Mesaritēs's rhetoric in this narration mentions Christ and God by name, but alludes extensively to the activity and setting of the emperor. With such a resonance of divine imagery being applied to the emperor in mind, the skeuophylax's concluding statement to those wishing to enter also takes on new imensions, I believe: "This is the dwelling of God; the palace of the Pantokrator; the house of the Pantanassa. This is the

262 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 14 (55). Cf. Angold's note 74 here for the reasoning on supplying the foot-washing to make sense of the passage.

263 On this notion, see the foundational article by Barry 2007.

264 This rite is mentioned in the 14th-century text on court ceremony compiled by Pseudo-Kōdinos; cf. the edition and translation in Macrides/Munitiz/Angelov 2013, 176–177: "Before the liturgy of Holy Thursday, the Washing [of the Feet] takes place in the following way. They prepare in advance twelve poor people and dress them in shirts, breeches and shoes. After a basin has been placed in the chamber of the emperor, the *protopapas* who is outside, at the door, makes a blessing and says the trisagion. Then the gospel is read by him and when he says, 'He poured water into a basin' (John 13:5), the emperor pours the water into the basin. Then they bring one by one the poor people who have been prepared in advance, each one carrying a lit taper. When each poor man sits down, the *protopapas*, as mentioned, reads the gospel and says, 'Jesus began to wash the disciples' feet' (John 13:5), and he says this many times until all have been washed; the emperor washes the right foot of each [person] and dries the washed foot with a cloth hanging in front of him and he kisses it. When this has taken place, the rite of the Washing of the Feet ends. Three gold coins are given to each one of them. Thereupon the liturgy begins. The emperor wears whichever article of forementioned clothing he might wish to wear, but each holder of a court title wears his customary clothing. After the dismissal, the emperor goes to his chamber. There is no meal." Despite the later date of this text, Macrides convincingly argues that many of the practices in Pseudo-Kōdinos date from the Komnēnian era; see Macrides 2015, esp. p. 615. More generally on the history and development of this rite, see: Beatrice 1983; Lossky 2001; Myers 2002; Nikiforova 2018; and Tucker 2023, 185–189, 475–482.

chamber of the Mother of God—the Oikokyra[265]—and we are her bodyguards. Our emperor sleeps, but if he were fully awake he would deal out justice to his enemies and those that hate him."[266] The habitation of God is thus linked to the bedchamber of the emperor. The emperor (in this case, Alexios III Angelos) is said to be sleeping, but would rouse himself against those who hate him; in my patristic/associative reading here, this language is very reminiscent of the Byzantine hymnography for Holy Week and Pascha,[267] which incorporates both the imagery of Judah, the son of Abraham and ancestor of David/Christ, who is described as a sleeping lion whom none should dare to rouse,[268] as well as verses from the Psalms mentioning the Lord rising from sleep[269] and scattering his enemies and haters.[270] Jesus Christ is mentioned by Mesaritēs as being crucified, being buried, and rising in the church,[271] and the emperor also 'rises' from sleep next door every day in his chamber. The text does not spell this association out in detail, but these hints would fit well into a literary retelling of the events for an educated Byzantine audience who would expect and be attentive to such veiled imagery.[272] At the end of the Middle Byzantine period in the heart of the palace complex, we see in this text the living Law (Christ) merge in a way with the 'embodied law' (the emperor) in a complex literary exposition that pivots around the special role of the Mandylion as the embodiment of Christ's presence in the Pharos chapel; this role and presence in my view enables allusions to a divine status to be made with regard to the emperor. The physical connection between emperor and God, however, is not only found in textual witnesses. One manuscript in particular contains two artistic representations of the

265 The reference here is to an icon of the Theotokos as "lady of the house" (οἰκοκύρα), which was also kept in the Pharos chapel. On this icon and its long history in the Middle Byzantine period and beyond, see Bacci 1998.

266 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 16 (57).

267 On the hymns and structure of services on Holy Friday, see: Janeras 1988, passim; and on the 15th antiphon at matins of the same day: ibid., 133. Evidence of the existence of the Holy Saturday communion hymn (κοινωνικόν), "The Lord awoke as one asleep, and arose, saving us, alleluia" (Ἐξηγέρθη ὡς ὁ ὕπνων κύριος καὶ ἀνέστη σῴζων ἡμας, ἀλληλούϊα) can be found in the tenth-century kanonarion-synaxarion of the Great Church; see Mateos 1963, 90–91. The manuscript itself calls this text the 'new' communion hymn for the day, replacing the more ancient and common one of Ps 148:1.

268 Cf. Gen 49:9.

269 Cf. Ps 77:65.

270 Cf. Ps 7:6, 67:2–3.

271 Mesaritēs, *The Coup of John the Fat*, transl. by Angold, 14 (56). Angold translates the latter two of these events in the life of Christ in the past tense ("In this place was he buried… In this place too he rose again…"), whereas the Greek text for all three actions is present indicative (cf. Heisenberg edition, p. 32: ἐνταῦθα **σταυροῦται**… ἐν τούτῳ περ **θάπτεται**… ἐν τούτῳ περ καὶ **ἀνίσταται**) (emphasis mine).

272 This is especially the case in the Middle Byzantine period and later, when numerous sound changes (cf. above this chapter, n. 1) and the loss of distinctive vowel length leads to the emergence of numerous near and full homophones, which are exploited by elite authors in texts and inscriptions; cf. Krausmüller 2006.

Mandylion together with the emperor: MS Graecus Vitr. 26–2, the illuminated manuscript of the *Synopsis of Histories* by John Skylitzēs kept in Madrid at the Biblioteca Nacional de España and hereafter called simply the *Madrid Skylitzēs*.

2.5 Hidden in plain sight: the Mandylion in the *Madrid Skylitzēs*

The *Madrid Skylitzēs* is a richly decorated vellum manuscript of the *Synopsis of Histories* or *Chronicle* by John Skylitzēs with 574 extant miniatures accompanying the text. The document measures 35.5 × 27 cm and was produced around the year 1150.[273] On account of the codex's unorthodox choices and omissions in terms of miniatures that adorn the text, scholarly consensus no longer situates the creation of the manuscript in Komnēnian-era Constantinople, but rather in a Norman scriptorium in Sicily, possibly Palermo,[274] and quite probably commissioned by Roger II of Sicily.[275] As Elena Boeck has shown in her extensive study of the *Madrid Skylitzēs* manuscript and artistic programme, the document and its depictions of patriarchs and rulers in Constantinople offer the text of the Skylitzēs chronicle but recast the setting of Constantinople and the person of the Byzantine emperor in a negative light: "In the Madrid Skylitzes the city is comprised of perilous places and is inhabited by emperors who were surrounded by danger and treachery. Just as these rulers did not make a habit of performing good deeds, divine power did not intervene in their messy affairs."[276] The appropriation of a Greek-language chronicle and Byzantine iconographic and artistic styles in the *Madrid Skylitzēs* is not only evidence of pre-modern metropolitanism, with Constantinople's artistic tropes and historical texts able to be exported abroad and imported into a Norman-Sicilian

273 The current definitive study of the text has been published by Boeck 2015. Dimensions and photographs available in Anderson 1997, 501–502.

274 Cf. Anderson 1997, 501. The *editio princeps* of the Chronicle text itself is available in Thurn 1973 (henceforth: Skylitzēs, *Chronicle* [first number listed is section in the edition, followed by page numbers from Thurn's edition in parentheses]), while the illustrations have been more recently published in Tsamakda 2002. Research on the origin of the images themselves via comparison with other extant copies of the text of the *Chronicle* has been done by Burke 2007, while an extensive analysis of the pictorial programme that rejects imperial patronage in Constantinople for the manuscript can be found in Boeck 2015 and her earlier article, Boeck 2009. The entire manuscript has been digitised by the Biblioteca Nacional de España and can be viewed online: http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000022766 (accessed 06/05/2021), while a full colour facsimile has been published by Tselikas 2000.

275 Boeck 2015, 76.

276 Boeck 2015, 249. Boeck contrasts Roger's maligning of city and emperor in the *Madrid Skylitzēs* with the positive appropriation of Byzantine history by Ivan Alexander in the Vatican Manasses manuscript's programme as part of a "long argument for the tsar's succession to the *imperium*, with the city of Constantinople playing a key visual and ideological role" (ibid.).

propaganda campaign; it also affords us a chance to see how the icon-relic of the Mandylion and its relationship to the emperor was imagined by contemporaries familiar with the Byzantine court and yet who sought "to demolish the Byzantine façade of imperial legitimacy"[277] through a manuscript's art, hence my inclusion of this work in the present study.

Amidst the wide variety of events and personages encountered in illuminated form in the *Madrid Skylitzēs*, the Mandylion appears twice in two very different guises, both of which underscore the intimate link of icon-relic with the emperor. The first depiction of the Mandylion in the text is found on fol. 131r, which depicts the arrival of the icon-relic into the city in 944 (Fig. 6). A close examination of the image shows both continuity and discontinuity with earlier depictions of the Mandylion in both art and narration from the tenth and 11th centuries. The text of John Skylitzēs's *Chronicle* mentions the emperor receiving the icon-relic and refers to it both as "the holy towel of Christ" and "the divine imprint",[278] identifying thereby both the object's materiality and content. Yet while the translation of the image to Constantinople is situated in the *Chronicle* within the chapter pertaining to Rōmanos I Lakapēnos, this emperor is not mentioned at all by name here: only the courier, the *parakoimōmenos*[279] Theophanēs, is named outright. Such an omission of the emperor's name in the text while including that of a high court official would be in keeping with the disdain for and bias against the Byzantine rulers on the part of Roger II of Sicily, as Boeck elucidates. Nevertheless, the presence of an unnamed emperor in the miniature also maintains continuity with the earlier liturgical texts applying the feast of the translation to any and every emperor in their similarly anonymous mentions of an otherwise unnamed basileus. This depiction of a generalised emperor bearing the image is continued in the miniature, as we see: neither the textually-named Theophanēs nor the textually-anonymous emperor is spelled out here; only the image is identified in writing as "the holy Mandylion" (τὸ ἅγιον μανδύλ[ιον]). The emperor appears here without a crown, wearing simply an everyday *chlamys* rather than any festive garment,[280] the only outright pictorial clue to his status being the red imperial shoes.

Other details in the miniature also show continuity with earlier depictions in the Middle Byzantine period: the left edge of the Holy Towel shows visible fringe, consonant with the depiction of the object on the Sinai icon. Theophanēs's eyes

277 Boeck 2015, 250.

278 Skylitzēs, *Chronicle*, ed. by Thurn, 37 (281): τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκμαγεῖον … τὸ θεῖον ἐκτύπωμα.

279 The parakoimōmenos was a chamberlain and eunuch whose responsibilities varied throughout the centuries but who had intimate access to the emperor; cf. "Parakoimomenos" in *ODB* 3:1584.

280 The chlamys was a form of state dress worn by the emperor and other courtiers and distinguished rank by the colouring; interestingly, it seems to have been a garment associated only with men, or perhaps political power, since the only woman entitled to wear a chlamys was the empress. Cf. Parani 2003, 12.

Fig. 6: Translation of the Mandylion to Constantinople and presentation to the emperor. MS Graecus Vitr. 26–2 (*Madrid Skylitzēs*), fol. 131r. Biblioteca Nacional de España.

seem to be looking upward at the emperor, and not at the Mandylion; could one suppose here as well in this 12th-century image a purposeful depiction, so that only the emperor 'sees' the face of Christ? Yet unlike in the Sinai icon from the tenth century, the face of Christ and that of the emperor here seem remarkably similar:[281] if such a similarity were intentional, the identity would no longer be that of emperor and Abgar, and thus emperor-*qua*-recipient of the gift, but rather that of emperor and Christ, and thus emperor-*qua*-imprint. Be that as it may, all the faces here reveal similarity one to another on close examination, which would undermine such a reading and could also simply bear witness to a lack of technical skill and artistic finesse on

281 Krause 2022, 296 takes the similarity of the faces to be a sign of animacy or liveliness, describing the face of Christ on the cloth as "seem[ing] to pop up from the cloth rosy-cheeked and looking very much alive, similar to the faces of all the others present on the occasion." Why the similarity should lead one to view the image as animated and bearing agency is not clear from Krause's reading. She also states that it is the parakoimōmenos Theophanēs who is "caress[ing] Christ's face" here (ibid.), and it is true that the legend above the image (cf. Fig. 6) describes the icon-relic being brought "by the parakoimōmenos Theophanēs" (διὰ τοῦ παρακοιμωμένου Θεοφάνη), yet from the manuscript miniature itself, one can see that the figure embracing the icon-relic is clearly wearing red shoes, and in fact is the only person clad thus. Such shoes were a feature of court dress reserved to the emperor (cf. Parani 2003, 30), which contradicts Krause's reading here (alas, the reproduction of this miniature in her book on p. 297 is in black-and-white and thus the point is obscured for readers/viewers there).

the part of the illustrator. The divine countenance here is even turned towards the emperor, meeting him in an intimate kiss/greeting face to face that recalls the many mentions of such "kissing" (ἀσπασμός, ἀσπάζομαι) in the liturgical texts, whereas the tenth-century texts speak of the emperors kissing/greeting the outside of the object (meaning either the reliquary casing or perhaps the edge of the icon-relic) when mention of such veneration is made. Though the emperor is not named here—consonant with Boeck's explication of Roger II's motives behind the commissioning and creation of the *Madrid Skylitzēs* manuscript and the Norman's denigration of Byzantine rule—this miniature can be seen in my view as still manifesting continuity with regard to the prevailing Middle Byzantine tradition and understanding of the icon-relic vis-à-vis the emperor. The depiction anonymises the emperor in possession of the relic, making such possession a general characteristic of any sovereign sitting on the throne, while still making explicit the intimate connection and even divine characteristics of the emperor in his special unmediated access to Christ in the icon-relic.

The second depiction of the Mandylion in the *Madrid Skylitzēs* comes later in the chronicle's narrative at fol. 210v. Here, the context is that of two processions made during the reign of Michael IV the Paphlagonian (r. 1034–1041), when an intense drought was plaguing Constantinople: one is led by the emperor's brothers, while the other is headed by the patriarch and clergy. Neither of the solemn progresses through the city achieved their intended aim, according to the chronicle text:

> After a drought had arisen, when for six whole months no rain fell, the emperor's brothers made a procession: John carried the holy Mandylion; the great *domestikos*,[282] Christ's letter to Abgar; and the *prōtobestiarios*[283] George the holy swaddling bands. They went on foot from the Great Palace and arrived at the church of the most-holy Theotokos at Blachernai. The patriarch, meanwhile, made another procession with the clergy. But not only did it not rain; great hailstones fell down, breaking the trees and tile roofs of the city. Hunger took hold of the city, and John bought one hundred *chiliades*[284] of grain from Hellas and the Peloponnese and thereby gave relief to the city's inhabitants.[285]

282 The great domestikos (Gr. μέγας δομεστικός) was the chief military commander in the Middle Byzantine period; cf. "Megas Domestikos" in *ODB* 2:1329–1330.

283 The prōtobestiarios (also spelled: protovestiarios) was the second-highest-ranking palace eunuch after the parakoimōmenos; the responsibilities of the role increased greatly in the 11th century; cf. "Protovestiarios" in *ODB* 3:1749.

284 On this measurement, cf. Morrisson/Cheynet 2002, 832, n. 48: "The treatises of fiscal geometry explain clearly what a *chilias* was, but they do not all provide the same definition. The likeliest solution proposed corresponds to an area comprising between 2 *modioi* 32 *litrai* and 3 *modioi* 18 *litrai*." In Byzantine times, a *modios* consisted of forty *litrai*, and a *litra* ranged in weight in the Byzantine era between 319–324 grams. Thus, one hundred *chiliades* of grain would represent a modern weight of somewhere between 35.7–44.7 metric tons of grain. On these measurements, see: "Litra" in *ODB* 2:1238 and "Modios" in ibid., 1388.

285 Skylitzēs, *Chronicle*, ed. by Thurn, 10 (400). Translation mine.

Fig. 7: Procession with the Mandylion and other Passion relics during a drought. MS Graecus Vitr. 26–2 (*Madrid Skylitzēs*), fol. 210v. Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Again, the failure on the part of the emperor and his sons to achieve their pious aims fits into Boeck's analysis of Roger II's anti-imperial propaganda campaign. Yet apart from the historical and economic details in this passage, the *Madrid Skylitzēs* provides its reader here with another miniature, namely of the courtly procession (Fig. 7).

On the far right of the image is a church, most likely that of the Theotokos at Blachernai, the destination of the procession as per the chronicle text. Walking behind two servers and the other imperial siblings, we see on the left preceding the clergy John, who is holding the Mandylion—but we only know this from the text. All three imperial brothers are carrying their relics hidden in boxes/reliquaries. Unlike icons, with the face of Christ or the saints immediately identifiable and visible, relics in the Byzantine empire were most often hidden from sight in their caskets and reliquaries, only exposed at certain times, to certain individuals, and only to a certain extent.[286] In the greater context of the Middle Byzantine period, this later depiction of the Mandylion in the *Madrid Skylitzēs* manuscript is not unusual; the relics are carried solemnly in some kind of casing and hidden from casual view. Yet in conjunction with the earlier depiction from the translation of the icon-relic examined above, the viewer/reader of text and image in this 12th-century manuscript is presented with an array of interpretations on the connection of relic to ruler and

286 The common pre-schism heritage of the Christian East and West seems to have preferred to keep relics hidden under covers/veils/containers, with transparent crystal or glass reliquaries only developing later in the Middle Ages and Renaissance in the West. The foundational and exhaustive study of reliquaries and their contents remains that of Braun 1940; the function of reliquaries vis-à-vis their contents will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, but see above in the introduction, n. 64, for literature. On visibility, Gia Toussaint takes a slightly dissenting view in claiming that relics were more readily visible in the East and influenced Western see-through reliquaries: cf. Toussaint 2005.

the proper place of the former. In the first image, the emperor alone greets Christ face to face in the icon; to the rest of the world, this sacred object retains power yet lies hidden behind the material veil of its container. The arrival of the Mandylion in the city is described textually as a victory for Constantinople and the capitulation of Edessa, but the transfer of the Mandylion and other sacred relics out and away from the Pharos church, the imperial chapel *par excellence*—unlike the movement of the relic of the True Cross, which is examined in the next chapter—not only does *not* result in blessing, but rather incurs damage and loss; in fact, it is the unusual parading of this normally stationary icon-relic throughout the city that would stand out to the contemporary viewer.[287] Yet even though Roger II's artistic programme in the manuscript breaks with normative Byzantine narratives on imperial sacrality to show instead imperial failures, the miniatures of the Mandylion in the *Madrid Skylitzēs* continue the Middle Byzantine norms of depicting the form of the Mandylion, its connection to the sovereign, and its hiddenness from the average viewer within its container.

2.6 Concluding thoughts

If in the texts and images from the tenth and 11th centuries, the icon-relic is envisaged as being a popular, pan-urban palladium, the textual and artistic witnesses to the object from the end of the Middle Byzantine period suggest an exclusive connection of the Mandylion to the emperor as such, whoever he may be at any given time, and the abiding blessing of Christ's presence in the city being contingent upon his divine image remaining in the palace in the immediate vicinity of the

287 Ceulemans 2022 in the prefatory material to his partial translation of Stilbēs's *Didaskalia* (p. 727) states that both the Mandylion and the Keramion were "celebrated with an annual procession throughout Constantinople", yet he provides no source for this statement. There is no mention of either the Mandylion or Keramion on August 16 mentioned in the so-called Typikon of the Great Church (cf. Mateos 1963, 376–377), nor of any liturgical rubrics prescribing a public procession involving the icon-relic and its copy. But this comes as no surprise. Of the two surviving complete manuscripts of the kanonarion-synaxarion ('typikon') relevant here, the first—MS Patmos 266— is dated to the late ninth or early tenth century (cf. Tucker 2023, 98), which would entail production prior to the arrival of the Mandylion in Constantinople, thus explaining why the manuscript would not bear any record of the icon-relic's integration into the liturgical cycle. The second relevant manuscript is MS Jerusalem Timiou Stavrou 40, dated to the mid- to late tenth century (cf. Tucker 2023, 123). This later dating falls after the arrival of the Mandylion in the Byzantine capital in 944, but since the icon-relic was translated to the Pharos chapel, which was outside the purview of the patriarchal churches of the city and had its own typikon (no copies of which survived the Ottoman conquest of the city), it makes sense that a typikon for the patriarchal churches would not concern itself with the rite and liturgical practices of the palatine chapels. On the liturgical rites used in the churches of the Great Palace, see Frøyshov 2020, 360–363.

emperor's own quarters. As this last image shows, the Mandylion was not the only sacred object held within the Great Palace and understood to have a special connection to the emperor, either in terms of a specific emperor personally or more generally to anyone reigning on the throne. This connection is made increasingly explicit over the Middle Byzantine period in the texts and objects examined in this chapter, all of which bear witness to a sense of divine presence and power abiding in the icon-relic and that this divine presence and power is connected most closely not to the city, not to the people, not even to the Christian church as a whole or the Great Church of Hagia Sophia in particular, but to the imperial person himself. Besides this special case of the icon-relic, however, most other relics associated with Christ and/or his Passion did not receive lengthy commentary or reflection via extensive ceremonial or homiletic/liturgical texts. Two exceptions exist, however, one each from near the beginning and end of the time period examined in this study: the complex tenth-century assemblage of relics, art, and reliquary known as the Limburg Staurotheke; and the Holy Stone, which was brought to Constantinople in 1169. The next chapters will look closely at each of these objects in turn to see how Passion relics more specifically continue the trend of the exclusive imperial connection to the divine discerned in this chapter vis-à-vis the Mandylion, while also allowing for innovation and disjunction in turn with regards to the Middle Byzantine understanding and expression of imperial sacrality.