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From Chariots to Light in Komnenian Imperial Celebrations (1139–1159)*

with one plate

ABSTRACT: The ways in which the Byzantines celebrated their emperors changed from those in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* to the fourteenth-century protocols of Pseudo-Kodinos, from chariot-racing to brightly lit imperial appearances with poetic accompaniment. When did this occur? Was it a result of the Latin Empire? When were bright appearances first regularly used for some of the most solemn moments in the imperial calendar? This article answers these questions using poems of “Manganeios Prodromos” (MP). The first evidence dates from 1148, during the Second Crusade: MP poems 21 and 22. The best evidence is from MP poem 4, which is a first-person account of the poet’s participation with Manuel I in a *prokypsis* (spring, 1150). Many of the Manganeios poems are in the public domain, but in an edition which seems provisional and careless. After examining several other poems and listing some of the many questions that remain, we end by adding one example of another approach, now using material culture, in fact sculpture. The answer to the question set above is “after 1148”, less than a decade after the last poem of Theodore Prodromos which gives no hint of an impending break in the continuity of chariot racing.

KEYWORDS: Imperial Celebration; Komnenian Dynasty; Manganeios Prodromos; *prokypsis*

All those with an interest in Byzantium will know something of the Hippodrome ceremonies in honour of the Byzantine emperor. Most will be able to say a little of their derivation and history, mentioning the Roman Colosseum, Justinian and the bloody Nika Riot, and recognising the excitement of the chariot races which entertained and boosted the loyalty of the citizens of Constantinople for many centuries. Detailed prescriptions for the races and their attendant ceremonial are preserved in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*¹, in which its author/compiler, the emperor Constantine VII, includes a historical dimension. He incorporates details from previous treatises on this area of imperial ceremonial. Constantine’s chief purpose, expressed in two brief prefaces², was to find parts of the ceremonial which had been confused or forgotten and restore them to regular use. As a result, there is no description of all ceremonies occurring in the Hippodrome at any specific period, disappointing historians of ceremonial. The prescriptions in the *Book of Ceremonies* were often disregarded in practice, sometimes resulting in major riots by the chariot-racing fans who followed the charioteers and other leaders of the factions or demes which competed in the races. The book has recently received a new and magnificent French edition and study.

Less well-known, even to professional Byzantinists, is the *prokypsis*, the ceremony which had largely replaced Hippodrome activity before the Palaiologan period. This was much less expensive in money and time than its predecessor but cannot have been as boisterous and exciting for the audience. Its dominant feature was light, a dramatic appearance of the emperor and/or co-emperor high up and brightly illuminated. The ceremony was regularly accompanied by poems in fifteen-syllable “political” verse, often speaking of height and light. The most prominent are a series of

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* This article is the first prepared for publication by Michael Jeffreys but based on long-term research in which the late Elizabeth Jeffreys (d. September 2023) played at least as important a role as her husband. More such papers are planned. This particular article was always designed by both Jeffreys as a dedication to the late Wolfram Hörandner, who stressed the tradition linking Komnenian ceremonies to their Palaiologan successors.

¹ G. DAGRON – B. FLUSIN – D. FEISSEL. Constantin VII Porphyrogénète: Le livre des cérémonies (CFHB 52/1–5). Paris 2020.

² Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Le livre des cérémonies (ed. DAGRON et al., see above n. 1), vol. 1, 3–5; vol. 3, 15–17.

short poems by Manuel Holobolos praising the emperor(s)³. The name πρόκυψις (prokypsis) first survives in writing from Nicaea in 1241 and is frequent in a fourteenth-century collection of protocols made by a shadowy courtier, known as Pseudo-Kodinos. The word prokypsis, despite its imperial links, was an uncouth neologism, of a sort all those taught to write were educated to avoid⁴. As we shall see a form of the ceremony existed many decades before its name was written down in surviving respectable discourse. In the Palaiologan ceremonies covered by Pseudo-Kodinos there are frequent contradictions between preserved details, showing that here too no attempt was being made to picture the whole ceremonial carried out at a single date. Pseudo-Kodinos also has recently been splendidly re-edited and translated in Birmingham, with commentary and studies of the main issues⁵.

At some time or times between the tenth and fourteenth centuries the first of the above patterns of honouring the emperor was replaced by the second: chariot racing gave way to light. Clearly the break was not complete and immediate, because races in the Hippodrome appear in the sources up to 1204 and occasionally into the Palaiologan period; but there are signs—difficult to pin down—that this practice was increasingly reserved for special occasions like the need to impress foreign visitors, not used as a regular ceremony. It is still uncertain when this change began, when a light-based alternative to chariot-racing was first regularly used to celebrate solemn Byzantine state occasions. This is the problem we will address in this paper.

We shall begin by adding some detail to the above sketch of developments in imperial ceremonial between Constantine VII and Pseudo-Kodinos. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, just after the compilation of the *Book of Ceremonies*, the factions of the Hippodrome which dominate it are rarely found in the sources. The eleventh century saw several popular uprisings, of a sort which in the past, when the factions flourished, had been led by them⁶. But there is no mention of their participation in the eleventh century. One might think they had disappeared. It is therefore a great surprise to find, in eight poems of Theodore Prodromos written for the emperor John II in the decade of 1130, the words τοῖς δήμοις (tois demois) “for the factions (demes)”. Thus the factions’ activity appears to be in full swing in the organisation of the racing, almost as in the *Book of Ceremonies*⁷. We are shown a system operating smoothly, with no sign of the riots of the past.

In the early 1140s, with the transition from John II to his son Manuel I, a rather traditionalist emperor gave place to a successor who often boasted of his innovations. There was around the same time a gradual movement of the imperial residence away from the Great Palace towards the Blachernai Palace in the north; as a result, the Hippodrome must at times have been replaced as ceremonial performance space by the much smaller courtyard of Blachernai, with a different pro-

³ Manuel Holobolos, ed. in J.F. BOISSONADE, *Anecdota graeca V* (1833) 159–182. The historical importance of Holobolos’ understudied work is now being examined in detail: see C. CUPANE, “Perché tramonti, o sole?” La poesia di Manuele Olobolo per la prokypsis di Anna di Ungheria. Linguaggio metaforico e rilevanza politica in L. SILVANO – A.M. TARAGNA – P. VARALDA (eds.), *Virtute vir tutus*, Studi di letteratura greca, bizantina e umanistica offerti a Enrico V. Maltese, Ghent 2023, 183–206. There is also a promising general research project: C. PARAVANO, *Poetry, Ceremonial, and Legitimacy under Michael VIII Palaiologos. Manuel Holobolos’ Prokypsis Poems and Their Contexts*, in *Poetry in Late Byzantium*, ed. K. KUBINA (*The Medieval Mediterranean* 139) Leiden – Boston 2024, 123–146. This last reference, and several other clarifications, are owed to Ugo Mondini, fruit of several long and generous discussions.

⁴ M. JEFFREYS, *The Komnenian Prokypsis. Parergon N.S. vol. 5* (1987) 38–53; see also M. JEFFREYS, ‘Rhetorical’ texts, in *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. E. JEFFREYS. Aldershot 2003, 87–100.

⁵ R. MACRIDES – J.A. MUNITIZ – D. ANGELOV, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies 15)*. Farnham 2013.

⁶ One thinks of the violence of the reign of Michael V, and several episodes in the rise of the Komnenian dynasty from 1057 till the establishment of Alexios I on the throne in 1081.

⁷ Surprise was certainly the reaction of Alan Cameron when Michael showed him in 1975 the poems in the edition of W. HÖRANDNER (*Theodoros Prodromos. Historische Gedichte [WBS 11]*. Vienna 1974, poems IV–V, IX–XIV), then newly published. A final page or two was added to A. CAMERON, *Circus Factions*, Oxford 1976, 307–308, before that too was published.

gramme of ceremonies and a much smaller audience⁸. After the accession of Emperor Manuel I, Theodore Prodromos was supplanted in writing for these ceremonies by an anonymous poet now known as Manganeios Prodromos⁹. The second element of this man's modern, artificial name indicates that he continued many of Theodore's poetic roles. The first element of the name refers to the Mangana monastery in the capital, where the poet hoped to secure a privileged place with the help of the sponsors who dominate his poetic work¹⁰. These are the sebastokratorissa Eirene, the widow of Andronikos, Manuel's elder brother, and Manuel himself. Much of the rest of this paper will be based on details of Manganeios' poorly edited or unedited poems, which are huge, numerous and varied. We shall concentrate on several which show ceremonies in the late 1140s and 1150s quite different from those seen in Theodore's works from the 1130s; chariot racing has almost disappeared. For the decade after 1147 we have quite a rich collection of datable ceremonial poems from which to attempt reconstruction of the ceremonies to which they were attached. Though many details of the ceremonies remain elusive, the texts and historical circumstances of performance are nearly as well-documented as for the *Book of Ceremonies* and better than for the Palaiologan *prokypseis*.

Manganeios' surviving poems cover the period up to and including Manuel's descent to Antioch in 1159¹¹. It is assumed that death or serious illness stopped his writing soon after. The last two decades of Manuel's reign show little or no sign of the new ceremonies earlier revealed by Manganeios. The chaos after Manuel's death and the bloodstained reign of Andronikos I reveal little of the development of ceremonial. Not much more can be gleaned, despite scholarly attempts, from the subsequent death-throes of Komnenian dynastic rule up to the loss of the capital in 1204¹².

Ceremonial life in Constantinople under Latin rule is a complex and insufficiently studied subject which we will not approach here, because it seems to have had little influence on subsequent developments¹³. Most useful for present purposes is evidence from Nicaea, where (as noted already) the *prokypsis* was first mentioned by name in a poem by Nikolaos Eirenikos in connection with the marriage of an imperial bride in 1241; unfortunately it provides little more than the vital name¹⁴. We have suggested that this late writing of the word was simply a question of linguistic acceptability. Equally, the offensive noun could easily be avoided by using a very respectable cognate verb with a long pedigree, προκύπτω (*prokypso*, I peep out, appear). If a writer makes an emperor appear using προκύπτω, his imperial majesty might well be making a *prokypsis*. Later uses of

⁸ MACRIDES – MUNITIZ – ANGELOV, Pseudo-Kodinos 367–378.

⁹ Manganeios' poems will be referenced by "MP" and the poem number used in nearly all modern discussions, followed, where appropriate, by line numbers. The poem numbers are from E. MIONI, *Bibliothecae divi Marci Venetiarum Codices Graeci Manuscripti*, vol. 3 (*Indici e cataloghi. Nuova serie* 3). Rome 1973, 116–131, and the detailed listing of P. MAGDALINO, *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos*. Cambridge 1993, 494–500.

¹⁰ Poems seeking the Mangana adelphaton were edited and translated by S. BERNARDINELLO, *Theodori Prodromi de Manganis (Studi bizantini e neogreci* 4). Padua 1972, as works of Theodore Prodromos. Bernardinello hoped that twelve poems on one subject (MP 5, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19, 30, 36, 37, 40, 61, 62) could be arranged in order and easily dated. In our experience they are among the hardest to date, and his attempts are unreliable. Bernardinello's edition does not include the relevant MP 4, which would have made his dating easier (though his book much longer). These poems, certainly by Manganeios, are still attributed to Theodore Prodromos, even in the *TLG* (consulted July 2024).

¹¹ We have edited MP's poems from 1159–1160 (MP 9–10, 23, 34–35) in E. JEFFREYS – M. JEFFREYS, *A Constantinopolitan poet views Crusader Antioch. Crusades* 14 (2015) 49–151 (henceforward: "JEFFREYS, Crusader Antioch").

¹² E.g. the Christmas show of Alexios III in 1196 did not impress German envoys, as they thought it unwarlike and feminine. It may have been a *prokypsis* but was not certainly so; see Niketas Choniates (ed. J.-L. VAN DIETEN, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia [CFHB 11]*. Berlin 1975), 477–478; MAGDALINO, *Manuel Komnenos* 13.

¹³ In the words of MACRIDES – MUNITIZ – ANGELOV, Pseudo-Kodinos 361: "The hiatus brought about by the Latin conquest of 1204 creates a void in our knowledge of ceremonial life in the Byzantine Empire". The paragraph continues, explaining that the void is nearly as great in places where a form of Byzantine administration continued as in the capital itself, where more fundamental changes were made.

¹⁴ MACRIDES – MUNITIZ – ANGELOV, Pseudo-Kodinos 405–406.

this noun and verb are often accompanied by the words γίγας (*gigas*, the giant sun-emperor who appears), δίσκος (*diskos*, some kind of circular frame around the emperor), or σκηνή (*skene*, a platform on which he appears). When any or all of γίγας, δίσκος or σκηνή are found near προκύπτω, this permits a firm hypothesis of a *prokypsis*. These combinations of words may act as triggers for the historian of ceremonial¹⁵.

We propose that several of the poems of Manganeios were written to describe or accompany performances of the *prokypsis*. Rather than using chronological order, we will begin with the best evidence and then support it with less explicit details dated earlier or later. We will republish poem 3 of Manganeios Prodromos, who claims that it was written soon after the poet's participation in an imperial ceremony which was an innovation of Manuel I: it was performed in spring 1151, little more than a decade after the last of Theodore Prodromos' deme-poems. The ceremony shows no sign of horses, chariot-racing, or the Hippodrome: it is dominated by light, having a good deal in common with later compositions connected to the *prokypsis*. Briefer references will then be made to other poems in the Mangana corpus dated to the late 1140s and the 1150s. This will establish the existence of a tradition of poetry which described itself as novel, was filled with light and pictured attractive tableaux rather than providing continuous narrative. Most occasions concerned celebration of military successes and births and marriages in the imperial family, as with Theodore Prodromos' deme-poems. Manganeios' poems probably took over the role of Theodore's works in a new and different ceremonial framework.

The gap in evidence for regular ceremonial in the second half of the twelfth century has largely been filled with examples of the survival of chariot racing in the Hippodrome. A list is provided by Paul Magdalino, extending past the death of Manuel I until the eve of the Latin conquest. Magdalino claims the old Great Palace was a major reason for maintaining the custom there:

“His [Manuel's] magnificent diplomacy, warfare and domestic patronage were devoted to creating the image of a truly imperial, oecumenical and apostolic monarch in the old grand manner. The more the image belied the substance, the more it needed superficial lustre, and an authentic frame such as only the palace of Constantine could provide.”¹⁶

Yet this claim does not solve the abovementioned problem of regular ceremonial versus special occasion. Magdalino's formulation of “diplomacy, warfare and domestic patronage” could refer either to regular ceremonies or to occasional entertainments designed for visitors.

Statements about an alternative, novel means of celebrating the emperor, are much fewer, and so it is hard to match Magdalino's sentences above on Constantine's palace. The best summary we have found is in the late Wolfram Hörandner's introduction to his *Historische Gedichte* written long ago, where he links Theodore Prodromos' deme-poems as much to the future of Byzantine ceremonial, reaching forward to Pseudo-Kodinos, as to the past of the *Book of Ceremonies*:

“... die Deme-Hymnen des Prodromos sind in Symbolgehalt, Motivschatz und formaler Gestaltung sowohl den nur wenig späteren Hymnen im Marc. 524, als auch den Gedichten von Nikolaos Eirenikos, Manuel Holobolos und Manuel Philes aufs engste verwandt. Sie sind, um bei einem äußeren, aber nicht unwesentlichen Merkmal zu beginnen, durchwegs in politischen Versen abgefaßt.”¹⁷

¹⁵ This methodology was accepted by W. HÖRANDNER, Court Poetry: questions of motifs, structure and function, in: E. JEFFREYS, *Rhetoric* 75–87.

¹⁶ P. MAGDALINO, Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace. *BMGS* 4 (2015) 101–114, reprinted in P. MAGDALINO, *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium (Collected Studies Series 343)*. Aldershot 1991, article V.

¹⁷ HÖRANDNER, *Historische Gedichte* 82.

Elsewhere he adds to this tradition the poems of Manganeios Prodromos (especially those in political verse), which will play a major role in what follows here¹⁸.

The year 1150 is celebrated in Greek historians and especially the poems of Manganeios as very successful for Byzantine arms. The last act of 1149 had been a Serbian revolt against Byzantium, funded by Roger II of Sicily to delay a threatened Byzantine invasion of Italy. Manuel I reacted by invading Serbian lands, and the Serbs responded by tactical withdrawal into the mountains for the winter.

The first act of 1150 replayed the Byzantine invasion of Serbia and the Serbian withdrawal, which Byzantine writers portrayed as a terrified rout. However, this time the Hungarians, also paid by the Sicilians, joined the Serbs in revolt. Later there was a fierce battle on a mountain-top, narrated in more than one Byzantine text as a Homeric struggle between a few heroes on each side¹⁹. Manuel disabled the Hungarian leader (a giant), despite wounds to himself and his companions, one of whom lost fingers. After a quick dash home, Manuel returned to exploit the absence of much of the Hungarian army, with their king, raiding the territory of the Rus': Manuel then depopulated the "island", a rich area between the Danube and Tisza rivers, driving off large numbers of people and livestock. Serbian and Hungarian prisoners, the mountain-top, the giant, the fingers and the "island" all serve as allusions to the year 1150 in various poems of Manganeios. MP 1–4 are especially relevant. MP 1–2 both summarise the campaigns of 1150: both use an alphabetical acrostic form and describe events more to praise the emperor rather than narrate the campaign. The reason for two poems rather than one is uncertain. The heading of MP 3 claims it as another encomium of Manuel I, also written by Manganeios: it concentrates on the poet. The last six lines of MP 3 seek leave to write an encomium at greater length, and MP 4 is surely that encomium, dated by the allusions just mentioned and preserving more lines than any other in the corpus. The Byzantine forces involved got back to Constantinople at the end of 1150 and early 1151, and triumphs were celebrated in the spring²⁰. We believe that MP 1–2 record *prokypsis* texts (with appropriate trigger words) written for this celebration, while MP 3 dramatises the poet's personal participation in the ceremony and MP 4 elaborates his encomium at much greater length. Manganeios' corpus contains several clumps of consecutive poems like this, linking works on similar subjects or dealing with similar dates, though the order of poems overall is not well regulated.

We will re-edit and translate MP 3 here. Several others of Manganeios' poems use *προκύπτω*, *γίγας*, *δίσκος* and *σκηνή* more than MP 1–4, though there are enough examples in these four poems (especially MP 2) to support the occurrence of a *prokypsis*. But none of Manganeios' poems other than MP 3 details the content of the ceremony combined with an emphasis on its impressive lights and connection with Manuel I.

The beginning (MP 3, ll. 1–30) describes the ceremonial light as vivid and unusual and emphasises its effect on the poet, which is both puzzling and psychologically and physically regenerative. The light seems double, radiating from the sun above and the emperor below. Circular motion is somehow involved (ll 6 and 28, cf. l. 66). The innovator of this new ceremony is identified as Manuel I. Paron, a late antique Pythagorean of dubious authenticity, is called on to defend his view

¹⁸ Hörandner, from his first treatment of the Mangana corpus in 1967 (Theodoros Prodromos und die Gedichtsammlung des Cod. Marc. XI. 22. *JÖB* 16 [1967] 91–99) up to his criticism of Bernardinello's work (Marginalien zum 'Manganeios Prodromos'. *JÖB* 24 [1975] 95–106), treats Manganeios as separate from Theodore, not only dividing their authorship of twelfth century poems but also making points which link Manganeios with Palaiologan ceremonial poetry. These views were elaborated to me in oral discussion.

¹⁹ E.g. John Kinnamos, *Epitome* (ed. A. MEINEKE, Ioannis Cinnami epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum [CSHB]. Bonn 1836, 104–113), and several Manganeios poems.

²⁰ F. MAKK, *The Árpáds and the Comneni: political relations between Hungary and Byzantium in the 12th century*. Budapest 1989, *passim*, describes the extreme complexity of Hungarian politics, negotiating between the pressures of Western Europe, Byzantium and the constantly shifting alliances with the various Rus' principalities.

that past forms are always better than the present: this doctrine is untenable in the time of Manuel I, the great renewer, as the poet confirms from current personal experience.

By line 52 the poet has left Paron, told his speech to be serious and returned to the ceremony, comparing it to Moses meeting God on Mt. Sinai. Moses' experience of God was impeded in many biblical ways (Exodus 19.16), while Manganeios had immediate contact with the emperor, though in a humility-topos the vast difference in status is repeatedly underlined. The poet was deep in a chasm but rose, the emperor was on high and remained so. Manuel spoke first to lofty nearby stars, but with massive condescension tempered his fiery rays and came to meet the poet on level terms. By speaking appropriately to his emperor, Manganeios gained the greatest honour a professional poet could win. The rest of the encomium expands from external description to picture Manuel's inner virtues, before asking leave to write MP 4 (ll. 120–125).

Τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν βασιλέα ἐγκώμιον²¹

Καινόν μοι τὸ σελάγημα τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας·
 ἀκτῖναι γὰρ χρυσοειδεῖς ἐπανατέλλουσί μοι
 καὶ σέλας μοι φαιδρότερον κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς εἰσβάλλει.
 Τίς ὁ φωσφόρος ὁ καινός; Τίς ὁ φωστήρ ὁ ξένος,
 5 ὁ ταύταις ταῖς ἐπιτολαῖς κατακτινοβολῶν με;
 Τοῦτο τὸ κυκλοφόρημα παράδοξον ὄραται,
 ὑπέρ τε σύνηθές ἐστι, τέρπει, λαμπρύνει, φαίνει·
 τοῦτο φωτίζει λογισμόν, τοῦτο χαράν μοι νέμει,
 τοῦτο σκεδάζει θύελλαν καὶ νέφος ἀθυμίας,
 10 τοῦτο χειμῶνα τῶν φρενῶν καὶ ζάλην ἐκδιώκει,
 ἀνακαινίζει τὰ σαθρά, ῥωννύει παρειμένα,
 τοῦτο τὸ σέλας, ἀρχηγέ, Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτορ,
 τοῦτο τὸ καινοτόμημα τῆς γαληνότητός σου
 καὶ τῆς χρυσῆς ἐλλάμπσεως καὶ τῆς μαρμαρυγῆς σου.
 15 Ἀνεκαινίσθην σήμερον, ἠλλάγην, μετημεΐφθην,
 ἀνεχωνεύθην εὐμαρῶς, μετεχαλκεύθην ὄλος.
 Οὗτος τῆς ἀλλοιώσεως παράδοξος ὁ τρόπος·
 βλέπω γὰρ φῶς φανότερον, ἀλλὰ καὶ φῶς ἄλλοιον.
 Διττόν μοι τὸ σελάγημα τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας·
 20 ἄνωθεν καταλάμπει με φωτάρχης οὐρανόθεν
 καὶ κάτω καταστράπτει με σελάρχης χρυσοβόλος.
 Ἀστράρχα σελασφόρε μου, τὸ σέλας προσκυνῶ σου,
 σέβομαι τὰς ἀκτίνας σου, τιμῶ σου τὰς ἐλλάμπεις.
 Ἦλιε Ῥώμης, Μανουήλ, λατρεύω τῷ πυρί σου,
 25 οὐ Περσικῶς ἀλλ' εὐσεβῶς—ἀπέστω πόρρω μῶμος·
 θεὸς γὰρ σὺ καὶ βασιλεὺς θεῶν τῶν ἐπιγείων.
 Ὅρατε φῶς παράδοξον, χρυσάκτινες ἀστέρες·
 τοῦτο τὸ κυκλοδρόμημα τοῦ καθ' ὑμᾶς φωσφόρου
 ἐλέγχει καὶ τὸν Πάρωνα ψευδόμενον ἐκεῖνον.
 30 Εἰπέ γάρ, Πάρων, ἂν παρῆς, τίνας ἂν εἶπες λόγους;
 Εἰπέ, σοφέ, τὸ δόγμα σου παρὰ τῆ θέμιδι μου.
 Ἴδου γὰρ θρόνος θέμιδος καὶ βάσις ἀληθείας
 καὶ βασιλέως τοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱὸς ἐξηρημένος,

²¹ Previous preliminary edition: E. MILLER, *Poèmes historiques de Théodore Prodrome. Revue archéologique*, n.s. 14, vol. 26 (1873) 153–157.

35 εὐθύτητας καὶ κρίματα δικαιοσύνης κρίνων.
Ἄρα τὸ δόγμα σου στερρόν, ἄρα μὴ μεταπίπτον;

The same writer's encomium to the same emperor

Today's illumination is new to me: for rays like gold are rising before me and a more brilliant glow is shining in my eyes. What is this new light-source? What is this strange celestial light which lights me brightly with these rising gleams? This circular motion appears incredible, it is out of the ordinary, it charms, illumines, shines; this lights up my reason, this gives me joy, this scatters the storm and the cloud of despondency, /¹⁰ this banishes winter and storm from my mind, it renews what is decayed, strengthens what is feeble—this glow, commander, emperor of the Romans, this innovation by your serenity and your golden brightness and effulgence. I have been renewed today, changed and altered, I have been neatly melted down and completely reforged. The method of this change is incredible: for I see a brighter light, but a light of a different kind. Today's illumination is a double one: /²⁰ from heaven above the sun, ruler of light, illumines me and from below a ruler of brightness brightens me with golden rays. My ruler of stars with your own light, I revere your brilliance, I am in awe of your rays, I honour your illuminations. Sun of Rome, Manuel, I worship your fire, not like the Persians but reverently—let there be no scandal; for you are a god and emperor of the gods of the earth. Stars with golden rays, you see an incredible light: this circular path of your celestial light also convicts the famous Paron for telling lies. /³⁰ Tell me, Paron, if you were here, what words would you have said? Tell me, wise friend, your decision at my seat of judgement. For look, the throne of justice and pedestal of truth, and an exalted son of King David, who judges rightness and legal issues. Surely your decision is firm, surely it is unchanged?

Οὕτως ἀεὶ τυγχάνουσι τὰ πέρυσι βελτίω,
 ἀεὶ τὰ προγενέστερα τῶν μετ' ἐκεῖνα κρείττω.
 Ἄρα βελτίων ἀληθῶς ὁ παραρρεύσας χρόνος;
 Ὡ πόσος μοι παρέρρευσε μετ' ἀθυμίας χρόνος·
 40 ὦ πόσος κύκλος ἡμερῶν, πόσων ἡλίων δρόμος
 παρήλθεν οὕτως ἀτυχῶς καὶ μάτην παρερρύη.
 Ἦδη γὰρ γέρων ἔγωγε καὶ πολιά μοι μάρτυς,
 ἀλλὰ τὸ σελασφόρημα ταύτης τῆς νῦν ἡμέρας
 ὄρα μοι πῶς ὑπερτερεῖ τοῦ παρελθόντος χρόνου,
 45 καὶ πόσον εὐτυχέστερον τοῦ προπαρωχημένου.
 Οὐχ ὅσον τιμώτερα τὰ χρύσεια χαλκέων;
 Οὐχ ὅσον λίθος σμάραγδος ὀστράκου τοῦ τυχόντος,
 καὶ μάργαρος διάλευκος παρερριμμένου λίθου;
 Ναί, Πάρων, ἀναντίρρητον ὡς τὸ παρὸν μοι κρεῖττον·
 50 ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ καινίζομαι μετὰ τοσοῦτον χρόνον,
 καὶ πάλιν οἶον ἀνηβῶ, καὶ πάλιν ἐνακμάζω,
 καὶ σήμερον ἐκδύομαι τὴν παλαιότητά μου.
 Ἄλλ' ἄγε μοι μετάβηθι καὶ σεμνομύθει,²² λόγε,
 καὶ τὸ παρὸν εὐτύχημα τῆς νῦν χρυσιῆς ἡμέρας
 55 ἔξαιρε, μέλπε, θαύμαζε, γέραιρε, φιλοσόφει·
 Μωσῆς γὰρ νέος γέγονα, βλέπω χριστὸν Κυρίου,
 οὐκ ἀπὸ πέτρας καὶ σκιᾶς καὶ παραπετασμάτων,
 ἀλλ' αὐτοψεῖ καὶ καθαρῶς, ἀλλ' ἀπαρακαλύπτως.
 Οἶαν ἐξ οἷας σήμερον ἀλλάσσομαι τὴν τύχην·
 60 ἦρθην, ἐπήρθην αὐθωρόν, ὁ χθαμαλὸς ὑψώθην·
 ἐφάνην αὐθημερινός, ἀρτιφανής, εὐδαίμων.
 Τί γὰρ εὐδαιμονέστερον τοῖς ζῶσι κατὰ λόγον
 τοῦ κατοπτεύειν γίγαντα τοσοῦτον ἐν ἰσχυῖ
 καί, βασιλεῦ, δωροφορεῖν τοὺς λόγους τοὺς οἰκείους;
 65 Εἶπω καὶ τὸ καινότερον τῆς νῦν κυκλοφορίας;
 Ὑπὲρ ἐκεῖνον εὐτυχῶ, κἂν τολμηρὸς ὁ λόγος,
 τὸν πρὶν ἐπ' ὄρους τῷ Θεῷ φρικτῶς ὠμιληκότα·
 ὀρῶ γὰρ τὸν δεσπότην μου, τὸν αὐτοκράτορά μου,
 ἐξ οὐρανοῦ τῆς δόξης σου καὶ τῆς ὑπεροχῆς σου,
 70 εἰς χθαμαλὴν ἐσχατιὰν συγκαταβεβηκότα
 τοῦ χαμαιζήλου λόγου μου καὶ τοῦ περιπεζίου,
 καὶ βλέπω συγκατάβασιν ὑπεραπορομένην.
 Συμμετριάξεις γὰρ ἐμοὶ καὶ κατασπᾶς τὸ πῦρ σου,
 καὶ τὸν αἰθέρα τῶν χρυσῶν ἀκτίνων σου βαρύνεις,
 75 καὶ τὸ μετάρσιον αὐτοῦ καὶ κοῦφον ἔδαφίζεις
 ἐπὶ τῆς εὐτελείας μου τὴν πατουμένην κόνιν,
 προσομιλῶν ὡς ἥλιος κευθμῶνι φαραγγῶδει,
 κἂν πάλιν μένης ὑψηλὸς ὡς γίγας βαίνων κάτω.
 Ἀπ' ἄκρων γὰρ τῶν οὐρανῶν ἄχρις ἐσχάτων ἄκρων,

²² 53 σεμνομύθει Miller: σεμνωμύθει M. Since Miller's preliminary editions of Manganēios' poems have been largely unchallenged in the public domain for a century and a half, their readings (sometimes careless) of the MSS, nearly always Venice, Marc. gr. XI, 22 (M), must be noted with unusual care to avoid misunderstanding over variations in our own texts. We have used the MS accentuation in the rare cases (e.g. ἀκτίνας, 23) where it differs from conventional rules.

Thus “Yesterday’s ways always turn out better, always older patterns are preferable to what follows them.” So is time that has passed really always better? Ah, how much time has passed me by in despondency! /⁴⁰ What a circle of days, how many yearly circles of the sun have passed thus unhappily and been wasted in vain! For I am already old, and my white hair is my witness; but the light-show of this present day, see how for me it is superior to the past, and how much better than what used to happen? Is not gold more valuable than bronze? Or an emerald stone than common pottery, or a translucent white pearl than a chance pebble? Yes, Paron, it is undeniable that the present for me is better, /⁵⁰ for in this moment I am renewed after so long a time, and again, as it were, I am returning to my youth, again I am in my prime, and today I am shedding my old age.

But come, my speech, change the subject and be serious, and for the present happiness of today’s golden day celebrate, sing, admire, honour and make philosophy. For I have become a new Moses, I see the anointed of the Lord, not hidden by rock and shadow and curtains, but in direct view and clearly, without concealment. How completely today am I changing from one lot to another! /⁶⁰ I rose, I was immediately raised up, I who am lowly was placed on high; it seemed I was new-born, just appeared, happy. For what is more blessed for those who live according to reason than to behold so mighty a giant in all his strength and, emperor, to bring you gifts of appropriate words? Shall I tell you the most novel part of this circling display? I am even more fortunate—though the statement is bold—than him who once in terror conversed with God on the mountain; for I see that my lord, my emperor, from the heaven of his glory and his superiority, /⁷⁰ has come down to me, to the extreme lowliness of my creeping and prosaic speech, and I witness a condescension which is truly baffling. For you regulate your fire for me and reduce it, and you weigh down the sky of your golden rays and bring down to earth its airy lightness as far as the trampled dust of my insignificance, as if the sun were conversing with the depths of a ravine, though you still remain lofty like a giant, despite descending low. From the extreme height of heaven as far as the extreme depths,

80 ὥσπερ νυμφίος ἐκ παστοῦ τῆς δόξης σου προβαίνων,
 καὶ πρώτως ἀκτινοβολῶν εἰς τοὺς ἐγγυὺς ἀστέρας,
 μέχρι περάτων ἔφθασας τῆς χθαμηλότητός μου.
 Ἄλλ' ἵνα μὴ τοῖς ἔξωθεν ὁ λόγος ἐμβραδύνων
 καταναλώσῃ τὴν ἰσχὺν ὡς τούτοις ἐγχερόντων,
 85 ἐπὶ τὴν ἔσω δόξαν σου τὸν λόγον μοι τρεπτέον·
 ἐπιθυμῶ γὰρ κατιδεῖν καὶ τὴν κρυπτὴν σου χάριν,
 καὶ κατοπτεῦσαι τὸ λαμπρὸν τῶν ἀρετῶν σου φάρος,
 καὶ τῷ κατόπτρῳ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸν νοῦν ἐπιστηρίξαι.
 Ἀρκτέον τοίνυν ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πρώτου καὶ καλλίστου·
 90 γνωμοδοτῶν ὁ Πίνδαρος ὁ λυρικός ἐμμέτρως
 ἀρμόζον ἔλεγε ποιεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς πρακτέου.
 Λαμπρότατον τὸ πρόσωπον τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων·
 τοῦτο περιφανέστατον ἐν σοὶ καταλαμβάνω·
 τῆς γὰρ σεπτῆς οἰκοδομῆς καὶ τῆς συναρμογῆς σου,
 95 ὥσπερ τι πρόσωπον λαμπρὸν προτέθηκε προφαῖνον
 εἰς τὴν ἀνδρόφην πῆξιν σου τὴν ἀρμονικωτάτην,
 τὸν νοῦν ὡς ἄλλον ἥλιον ὁ μέγας ἀρχιτέκτων·
 ὁ λόγος οὐ κολακικός, ἐρρέτω κολακεία.
 Ἐν τῇ στερεῇ συμπήξει γὰρ τῆς διαπλάσεώς σου
 100 ὁ νοῦς σου προπηγνύεται τύπον προσώπου φέρων,
 καὶ προπορεύεται τελῶν τῆς δόξης σου τὸν δρόμον,
 καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἀρμόζοντας οἰκονομεῖται λόγους.
 Εἰ μὴ γὰρ τρόπιν ἐν νηὶ προὔποθῆσει τέκτων,
 καὶ παρὰ ταύτη τὰς πλευρὰς καὶ τὰς σανίδας πῆξει,
 105 πῶς ἂν ἐκεῖνη τὰ μακρὰ πελάγη διαδράμοι;
 Εἰ μὴ πρὸ κλάδων ῥίζωθῆ καὶ στηριχθεῖ κέδρος,
 εἰ μὴ πολὺ²³ κυπάριτος εἰς βάθος ῥίζωθεῖ,
 πῶς ἂν ἀνταγωνίσαστο πρὸς τοὺς σφοδροὺς χειμῶνας,
 καὶ πρὸς ἀγρίους λαίλαπας καὶ πρὸς πνοὰς μεγάλας;
 110 Οὕτως εἰ μὴ βαθύπρεμνον τὸν νοῦν ἐπήξατό σοι
 ὁ πρῶτος νοῦς ὁ πανδερκής, ἢ πρὸ τῶν ὄντων γνῶσις,
 οὐκ ἂν τοσοῦτου πράγματος οἰκοδεσπότης ὤφθης,
 οὐκ ἂν ἐζώσω κοσμικὴν ἀρχὴν ὡς μονοκράτωρ,
 οὐδ' ἂν εἰς τόσους μερισμοὺς εἷς ὁ μόνος ἐμερίσθης
 115 ἔθνων τοσοῦτου κλύδωνος ἀντικαθισταμένου,
 καὶ συρρευσάντων ἐν ταῦτῳ γενῶν πολυσπερέων·
 οὐδ' ἂν ἐξήρκεσας αὐτὸς κατὰ ταῦτὸ καὶ μόνος
 πρὸς πλῆθος ἀντιτάττεσθαι τριττῶς διηρημένον,
 πρὸς νήσους καὶ πρὸς ἥπειρον καὶ πρὸς ληστὰς θαλάσσης.
 120 Ἄλλὰ γὰρ δότε μοι μικρὸν τοῖς πρὶν ἐνδιατρίψαι,
 δότε τοῖς διηγήμασιν αὐτῶν παρατρυφῆσαι,
 αἰτοῦντι συγχωρήσατε παρακερδῆσαι ταῦτα,
 ὅσα καὶ χρόνος καὶ σπουδὴ καὶ τύχη τοῦ κρατοῦντος
 ἀνεξαλείπτως ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐνέγλυψαν εἰς βάθος,
 125 ὡς ὑπεραναβαίνοντα τὸν χρόνον καὶ τὴν λήθην.

²³ 107 πολὺ Jeffreys : πολλὴ M

^{/80} you advance like a bridegroom from the chamber of your glory and, shedding light first on your nearby stars, you have reached the extreme depths of my insignificance. But so that my speech should not dwell on externals and waste its strength by spending time on them, I must turn the subject to your inner glory, for I desire also to perceive your hidden grace, to behold the brilliant lighthouse of your virtues and to concentrate my mind on the mirror of your soul.

We must start from the first and best point. ^{/90} Pindar, the lyric poet, giving advice in verse, said we should do what is appropriate in every action. The façade of buildings is their brightest part: I understand that this is your most conspicuous trait, for in your revered construction and articulation there is set in front, shining like a brilliant face in your manly and most harmonious configuration, your intelligence like another sun, placed there by the great architect—these words are not flattery, away with flattery! For in the sturdy configuration of your structure ^{/100} your intelligence is first set in place, bearing the stamp of a countenance, and goes before you, fulfilling the path of your glory, and is managed according to appropriate reasons. Unless a shipbuilder first sets a keel in his ship, and on this fixes the ribs and the planks, how will it traverse far-flung seas? Unless a cedar takes root and establishes itself before the branches, unless a cypress roots itself to a great depth, how could it stand against harsh winters, against wild storms and against severe gales? ^{/110} Thus, had not a deeply-set intelligence been implanted in you by the first intelligence, the all-seeing, the knowledge before existence, you would not have proved manager of so large an establishment, you would not have been invested with universal power as sovereign, nor would you, one man on his own, have been divided into so many parts, against the opposition of this great storm of foreign peoples, and the confluence at the same spot of widespread tribes; you would not have sufficed, engaged as you were on your own in this matter, ranged against a host divided into three parts, against islands, the mainland and the pirates of the sea. ^{/120}

But grant me the chance to dwell a little on past times, let me indulge myself in their narration, concede my request to exploit at length all the events which time, care and our ruler's good fortune have carved deeply and indelibly on our hearts, as they overwhelm time and oblivion.

This poem demonstrates one of the chief problems we have faced in editing and translating the poems of Manganeios Prodromos: his texts are full of light—real or symbolic—a very difficult distinction to make, but vital when translating the poems and especially when discussing the ceremonies linked to them. He uses far more words expressing light of every kind than Theodore Prodromos, who certainly does not avoid light and so is a viable comparator, particularly in the use of fifteen-syllables. Words in Manganeios’ wide vocabulary of light are used more frequently than in Theodore’s poetry, and one senses a tendency (totally unprovable) to select such words indiscriminately, using side by side, e.g. words usually connected with jewels or the brilliance of the sun or fire, or reflections from polished surfaces. In translation it is hard to maintain specificity of e.g. shining or flashing or glittering; one suspects that metrical shape has played as large a role in Greek word selection as has precision of meaning. MP 4 is a poem which insists on the physical reality of light in a ceremony more than most of the others, where light clearly plays a more symbolic role.

When did this ceremony first appear in Manuel’s reign? We believe that the two earliest surviving examples are MP 21 and MP 22, which may both be dated to early 1148 by connections to the Second Crusade. Priority between the two is uncertain. They are songs to be performed during the weddings of two siblings, a nephew and niece of Manuel I. Both mention several times as their latest event²⁴ the arrival of the western crusaders at Constantinople, called a Byzantine military victory on the contemporary Byzantine assumption that the crusade was aiming at conquest (MP 21, ll. 15–18, 73 and 83; MP 22, ll. 54–56, 73, 84 and 89²⁵). Both poems, especially MP 22, insist on the plurality of the kings who arrived, suggesting composition at the end of 1147 or later, when Louis VII of France had followed Conrad III of Germany into the area of the capital²⁶.

The wedding celebrated in MP 22 was one of the few positive results of the Second Crusade. Henry “Jasomirgott” of Babenberg, Margrave of Austria and at that time also Duke of Bavaria, half-brother of Conrad III, married Theodora Komnene, the youngest daughter of Manuel I’s deceased elder brother Andronikos. Theodora’s high Byzantine lineage later helped Henry to claim the *privilegium minus*²⁷ from Frederick Barbarossa, and thus to cement a special position for himself and his wife in Austria, as well as for Austria in the Holy Roman Empire. Manuel, Theodora, Henry and Conrad are all addressed in the poem as present at the performance. This surely points to the few weeks at the beginning of 1148 when the German crusader nobles had accepted Manuel’s invitation to rest in the Byzantine capital and recuperate from their crushing defeat by the Turks beyond Dorylaion in autumn 1147 and exhausting subsequent marches. It is clear from other evidence that this was when the international marriage took place²⁸. MP 22 may be easily dated, but it only warns Manuel not to shine too brightly on Henry, so that Byzantine brilliance should not completely blot out western mediocrity. This hints at a *prokypsis* situation without providing substantial evidence.

²⁴ Manganeios regularly writes poems on the most recent events, hence the latest dated event in each poem nearly always approximates to the date of its writing.

²⁵ For the crusade as a whole, see J. PHILLIPS, *The Second Crusade, Extending the Frontiers of Christendom*. New Haven CT 2007. He discusses Byzantine expectations of western conquest at 169–170 without the contemporary evidence of MP 20, which has since been provided by Roche (see next note).

²⁶ For the Germans in the crusade see J. ROCHE, *The Crusade of King Conrad III of Germany*. Turnhout 2021, especially chapters 4 and 5, “The Army in the Balkans and its Arrival at Constantinople” and “The Army at Constantinople” (pages 111–175). At Roche’s request, we supplied him with our unpublished texts and translations of MP 20 and MP 24, which he uses extensively and with full references. Neither of these poems has direct relevance to the subject of this paper.

²⁷ See MAGDALINO, *Manuel Komnenos* 62.

²⁸ The evidence mainly derives from Manganeios’ poems mentioning Theodora and/or her new German family which may be dated before the crusaders set out for home, especially MP 55. We plan to publish (or republish) these poems soon.

MP 21²⁹, by contrast, gives intriguing information relating to the *prokypsis* while not being clear or easy to date. The marriage of the young Theodora may have reminded the Komnenian authorities that her elder brother John needed a wife. Varzos, the prosopographer of the Komnenian dynasty, makes him unusually old for a noble Komnenian bridegroom—more than twenty years of age at his young sister’s marriage³⁰. Moreover, John’s dynastic position was important; among his titles in MP 21 is *διάδοχε* (*diadoche*) “heir”. 140). As the elder son of a deceased elder brother, he was a likely heir presumptive to Manuel’s throne. Perhaps the childless Manuel, though married only two years, needed a prominent heir presumptive: the emperor had played a role in deposing the patriarch Kosmas II, who in turn cursed the womb of Manuel’s new German empress Bertha-Eirene, to stop her bearing a son. John’s marriage in early 1148 in the presence of Conrad, the Western emperor-in-waiting, would show how Conrad’s Eastern equivalent and rival was taking precautions against the curse. Equally there was to be no further chance for Manuel to celebrate John’s wedding in the capital before 1150³¹. Thus the poem, which follows the arrival of the crusaders in the capital, was almost certainly performed in early 1148, before the German nobles left on Byzantine ships to continue the crusade in Syria and Palestine.

MP 21 begins by asking mythological musicians to sing, play and dance in honour of the bridal escort, the emperor Manuel I, Rome’s sun (ll. 1–10). To light up the bridal pair and their chamber, he brings pure bloodless light from the bloodless defeat of the Latin crusaders: there are hints of a *prokypsis* (ll. 11–20). We discover that the scene is a mixture of indoors and open air, a wedding-chamber in a building giving access to a broad, complete view of events from heaven down to earth. Manuel is urged to light up one part of the scene after another, with a rather confusing spotlight, beginning from the bridal pair. He illumines John the bridegroom, to shine on his fellow star, the bride, and help the pair to provide new shoots for the Komnenian dynastic vine (ll. 21–31). The dynasty is traced from the late John II and his deceased sons Alexios and Andronikos to the present groom, Andronikos’ son John. These four Komnenians are distinguished by the colours of their imperial ranks, brightening the noble bride by their gleams (ll. 32–48). The building shines like heaven, lit up by the imperial sun and his empress-moon. The heavenly sun is also summoned above, to see the emperor, his rival earthly sun, rising against him. The marriage-chamber is the sky, with the bridal pair as stars on it (ll. 49–55). Their prominence was recent: the groom was campaigning with the emperor, while the bride lived in maidenly seclusion, till captivated by John and keen to marry him. He is praised again, with the colours of youth and high rank (ll. 56–71).

The poet now returns to Manuel I’s handling of the crusaders and his need to nurture John the bridegroom within the Komnenian vine. All elements of Byzantine society applaud Manuel for honouring his brother Andronikos’ orphan son, asking God to reward him with a long and happy life (ll. 78–95). The scene now changes to heaven, to the courts of the meek, where John II and Andronikos parallel the earthly ceremony, delighted and thankful for Manuel’s generosity to the bridegroom John. Andronikos need no longer worry about his orphan children (ll. 96–119). The city’s earthly celebration gradually merges with its heavenly parallel, congratulating Manuel in

²⁹ Editions: E. MILLER, *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens grecs*, vol. 2. Paris 1881, 288–293; C. CASTELLANI, *Epitalamio di Teodoro Prodromo per le nozze di Giovanni Comneno e ... Taronita*. Venice 1890, 8–30.

³⁰ K. VARZOS, *Ἐ genealogia tōn Komnēnōn*, vol 2. Thessaloniki 1984, 147, makes him born in 1126. We would suggest two years later, following Varzos’ own tacit assumption, one basis of his convincing overall chronology, that Komnenian sons were married by around eighteen years of age.

³¹ HÖRANDNER, *Historische Gedichte XXX–XXXIII* (performed at Christmas 1149), mark a single unexpected return of Theodore to the role he had played in the 1130s in celebrating recent victories. The poet makes Manuel complain that he has been absent from the capital for some three years (XXX, l. 13). This is questionable, since we know that he entertained the Germans there at the beginning of 1148. However, Manuel’s claim must at least mean that he had not visited the capital during most of 1149; thus he was unlikely to have arranged a satisfactory wedding for his nephew John in that time, especially if he was to exploit the presence of the Germans.

both. John's bride too is envied by all women for her beautiful husband. The poet first praises the bride (ll. 154–159), then dramatises their mutual attraction in a ten-line scene addressing John:

- 160 Πανευειδέστατε Νιρεῦ, παγκάλλιστε νυμφίε,
κατάκομε ταῖς χάρισι, κατέπληξας τὴν κόρη·
τοξεύεις ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ὡς Ἔρωσ τὴν παρθένον·
βέλος ἐστὶ τὸ κάλλος σου καὶ πῦρ οἱ βόστρυχοί σου.
Ἐπίσχεσ ταῦτα, Κομνηνέ, καὶ φείδου τῆς συζύγου·
165 νενίκηται τῷ κάλλει σου, κἄν ἔστι παγκαλλίστη·
λειποθυμεῖ, μὴ σκληρυνθῆ, ἀγκάλισαι τὴν κόρη·
μόλις ἐκπνεῖ, μὴ παρεκβῆς, ἀντέχου τῆς παρθένου·
στάλαξον μῦρον εἰς αὐτὴν ἐκ ῥόδων σῶν χειλέων,
εἰς ῥῶσιν, εἰς ἀναψυχὴν, εἰς ἄκραν εὐθυμίαν.

/¹⁶⁰ Most beautiful Nireus, most handsome bridegroom, luxuriant with graces, you have surprised the girl. You are firing arrows at the maiden from your eyes like Eros: your arrow is your beauty, and your fire is your curling hair. Hold them back, Komnenos, and spare your wife! /¹⁶⁵ She has been defeated by your beauty, all-beautiful as she is; she is fainting—don't be cruel—embrace the girl! She is all but expiring—don't be boorish—grasp the maiden! Distill perfume into her from the roses of your lips, to strengthen, to revive her, to bring her to great happiness.

Does this striking scene show an early stage in the history of the *prokypsis* which had no sequel, or did it become a regular scene-type of the developed *prokypsis* poems? Likewise, did these two palace-bred adolescents on a platform stare blankly forwards like church mosaics, or were they tempted to act out the embrace while it was being described in the ceremony? After further praise of the bridal pair, the poet stresses that the bride is familiar with the imperial vine, since she belongs to the family of the Taronitai, closely allied to the Komnenians—but with enough degrees of separation to avoid illegality³².

Beyond the victories of 1150 and issues connected with the Second Crusade, there are two other twelfth-century events which give rise to groups of Manganeios' poems showing signs of the celebration of *prokypseis*. The first is the birth of Manuel's first child, Maria, in March 1151 or 1152³³. This gave rise to five poems: the earliest is MP 12, in which two versions of the future upbringing of the child are given, male and female, with other indications that it was written before the birth. The other poems show commendable skill in concealing the disappointment which must have ensued when she turned out female. There are also MP 13 (dominated by an indisposition of the empress which may very well relate to childbirth), MP 18 (in which Maria is still a suckling infant), MP 29 (which gives thanks for the longed-for birth) and MP 30, the most interesting. This refers to the introduction of the very young Maria by a procession, involving *prokypsis* triggers, into a building which Manuel had had reconstructed. The situation revealed in this poem has puzzled some interpreters³⁴. Why should a baby be solemnly introduced into a reconstructed building? Our solution, partly informed by reactions seen in the British royal family to appearances of newborns on the balcony of Buckingham Palace in London, is that the rebuilt building was designed as the site of future *prokypseis*; the baby was now to be ceremonially introduced to the public with one or

³² Though the rules were too confusing and too often changeable to be discussed here, this may have been the first year in which descendants of Alexios I and his siblings (like these two) were canonically allowed to intermarry.

³³ The year of Maria's birth is contested. Despite others' expressions of certainty, we prefer to leave the question open.

³⁴ Particularly BERNARDINELLO (De Manganis, poem III, 11–12), who published the first modern edition of this poem.

both of her parents to begin her role as a future heir or, as it turned out, the wife of an heir, in Manuel's public relations.

A later pair of poems with the necessary trigger words relates to Manuel's expedition to Antioch in 1159. These two *prokypseis* on the Syrian coast break the rule which seems to be observed much later by Pseudo-Kodinos restricting this ceremony to Constantinople³⁵—but there is no reason to extend this prohibition back to 1159. The two poems concerned are MP 8, ll. 263–278 on the dazzling and humiliation of Renauld de Chatillon and MP 10, ll. 87–90 at the climax of the *adventus*-like narrative used to dramatise the taking over by Manuel of the city of Antioch. These and several others we have recently re-edited with translations and largely historical commentaries, which also discuss their relevance to the *prokypsis*³⁶.

Up to this point we have discussed subjects in a detailed way or referred to detailed discussion elsewhere. From now on, we will be dealing with issues that we have not examined sufficiently to present them in detail. Our purpose here is to inspire conclusions on Manganeios' poetry and its attendant ceremonial. There are many comments in the poems which suggest details of the ways in which these ceremonial poems were performed. These comments are usually (but not always) brief references towards the beginnings of the poems concerned. Here is a small selection:

- 1 Music and dancing: many twelfth century poems (not only those by Manganeios) introduce to the poetic stage choirs, dance troupes, and various musical instruments. Many of the performers were female mythological creatures. Was any attempt made to stimulate the audience's visual and audial senses, or was all left to the text and their imagination?
- 2 There is constant visual identification and transfer between human shapes and astronomical bodies. Both are said to be involved in circular patterns. Were there visual clues to help the audience? One possibility is mentioned later.
- 3 The poet in MP 6 says he is happily motionless, talking of a land-battle, after being storm-tossed in describing sea-battles in MP 4. Were there differences in the posture and gait adopted by participants during these different presentations?

For the last case we shall leave poetry aside and turn to a single example of material culture³⁷. For two years in the decade of 1980, we both signed in almost daily at the old library of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington under the watchful eye of the porter. His authority was buttressed by a huge roundel built into the wall of the lodge behind him, made from a circular section of a large ancient column. Much of the surface of the column section had been expertly chiseled away to leave a roundel of a half-size imperial figure in high relief, with a quatrefoil pattern filling the background behind the emperor. The quatrefoils emphasise the circularity of the whole work as the sculptor clearly used a compass to position them and left his guidelines very prominent. Whenever we read the word *δίσκος*, often used by Manganeios in connection with Komnenian imperial ceremonial, our reaction is visual, remembering that small ceremony of signing in at the library and its imperial observer; we cannot but wonder about the connection between the roundel and Manganeios' *prokypseis*.

³⁵ MACRIDES – MUNITIZ – ANGELOV, Pseudo-Kodinos 442–448.

³⁶ See JEFFREYS, *Crusader Antioch*.

³⁷ We claim no originality in linking the roundel to imperial ceremonial, see E. KANTOROWICZ, *Oriens Augusti*. *Lever du roi*. *DOP* 17 (1963) 117–177, and its numerous progeny of other studies. However, the use of the word *δίσκος* by Manganeios does suggest a more precise connection between the roundel and the *prokypsis* ceremony. Little extra light is shed on this possible link by the articles in N. ZORZI – A. BERGER – L. LAZZARINI, *I Tondi Di Venezia e Dumbarton Oaks / The Tondi in Venice and Dumbarton Oaks: Arte e Ideologia Imperiale Tra Bisanzio e Venezia / Art and Imperial Ideology Between Byzantium and Venice*, 21. Rome 2019.

The bejewelled costume worn by the emperor in the roundel is very precisely portrayed, as are the symbols of power held in his hands. Imperial costume and regalia have been the subject of extensive chronological study, and so the roundel may be dated with certainty to the twelfth century, probably the first half. In the most recent catalogue entry available to me³⁸ the figure is identified as John II. There is another sculpture in Venice which is very similar, but with enough differences to indicate that the creator of the second work (whichever was created second) was not aiming at an exact facsimile but a companion piece, perhaps to be used in a combined display: see **plate 1**. The Venetian work has been tentatively identified in Buhl's catalogue as portraying Alexios I, John II's father, who shared the throne for some years with his son. Some discussions suggest possible reasons for the creation of one or both of the roundels to form companion pieces in Constantinople before the Fourth Crusade, or in Venice after it. The assumption is that at least one of the two was taken from Constantinople as Venetian loot. The heavy stone roundels themselves are unlikely to have played any role in the *prokypsis* ceremony, but they could have become well-known as imperial ceremonial symbols, easily reproduced in some more convenient material and suggestive shape—say, a mask of fabric or beaten metal. Their circularity could have helped in the human-to-heavenly body transformations required by the poetic texts.



Plate 1: Roundel in Campiello Cà Angaran' (Dorsoduro, Venice).

We illustrate the Venetian roundel in its current, more "authentic" location rather than the Dumbarton Oaks museum exhibit (photograph courtesy of Alberto Ravani)

The question we set ourselves—when a light-based alternative to chariot-racing was first regularly used to celebrate solemn Byzantine state occasions—has been answered: such a light-based form was often used from 1147 onwards, within a decade of the last deme-poem of Theodore Prodromos (no. XIV), which Hörandner dates to 1139. But the solution is partial and temporary. Manganaios Prodromos is the only poet we have found to have written texts appropriate to the new cer-

³⁸ Dumbarton Oaks: The Collections, ed. G. BUHL. Washington DC 2008, 166–167.

emony. Some conservative rivals probably continued with the old patterns, giving rise to the examples on Magdalino's lists (see footnote 16) and probably many others. We have found no evidence that the innovation outlasted Manuel's punitive expedition to Cilicia in 1159, and so it might well have come to an end then, or soon after, when its sole surviving poet ceased writing. However, it must have continued in a form leaving a distinct memory at some level of Byzantine culture, since the Komnenian pattern we have analysed bears quite a close resemblance to the Palaiologan pattern appearing in Pseudo-Kodinos.

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PLATE

Plate 1: Roundel in Campiello Cà Angaran' (Dorsoduro, Venice) (photograph courtesy of Alberto Ravani).