

The Bulgarian Theme in Constantinople's Monuments
(A new approach to the study of Bulgarian and Byzantine cultural memory)

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The subject of this article is neither the Byzantine city from an archeological, social or strictly architectural point of view, nor Byzantine sculpture per se, nor the monuments of the capital city as its specific aspect, nor even the Bulgarian history as an autonomous historical topic. These apophatic opening remarks are partly due to the existence of fairly well known studies on both Bulgarian medieval history and Constantinople and its monuments.

The more fundamental motivation, though, stems from the particular purposes of the study : 1) to offer an interpretation of the sculptures of Constantinople not as 'collections', i.e. as artefacts, not even merely as '*wonders*' (theama), which are nonetheless perceived as artefacts, but as a kind of alternative historical narratives that constitute a durable testimony of the most significant (sometimes traumatic) images in Byzantine cultural memory; 2) to explore the substance and the functions of the monuments in the context of a particular topic – the Bulgarian theme in the 'stone memory of Constantinople'¹ – as it can be provisionally called. Thus, we could *perceive the statues as elements of a particular narrative* which – much like painting in A. Grabar's approach has its own language with respective rules, archaisms and neologisms². Such an approach will allow us to distance ourselves from the classical stand in the studies on the subject which constitutes the relation of statues to people as one between objects observed by spectators. Thus, it will enable us to pursue, as far as it is possible, a perception of the authentic role of the monuments in the construction of the cultural-historical identity and the time-space orientation of the metropolitan population. After all, let us not forget that the study of a considerable part of medieval history, including almost everything we know about Danube Bulgaria, depends on the writings of Byzantine authors who shared and transferred the images and connotations of this very cultural identity.

¹ It is a provisional notion, for the statues preserving the memory of the Byzantine past were predominantly bronze. That is why most of them have disappeared in time – most drastically and in large numbers in 1204 when dozens, if not hundreds, of statues were smelted by the Crusaders.

² G r a b a r, A. Les voies de la création en iconographie chrétienne. Antiquité et Moyen Age. Paris, 1994, p. 411 ff.

On people and statues

The proper avenue to the thus defined subject requires a brief review of the established art-critical, archaeological and historical-anthropological approaches in the study of the relation between people and statues in Constantinople³. In accordance with the tenor of the study, the brief historical review shall begin with the conclusions of Gilbert Dagron⁴. Dagron is actually the only contemporary Byzantinist that considers the issue people-monuments in Constantinople to be primarily psychological⁵. ‘Psychological issue’ is used here to denote the spectrum of individual and collective receptions of statues in the Byzantine capital where - if we may fully trust the sources – during certain periods and in particular quarters of the city statues were little short of outnumbering the residents. Therefore, the build up of such receptions was virtually impossible to avoid, as the Constantinopolitans not only had to ‘look upon’ upon those statues mounted on pedestals, but to conduct their everyday lives among these stone and metal ‘fellow citizens’. This conclusion is all the more relevant in view of an often neglected fact: the regrets of contemporary scholars that very few artifacts are preserved *in situ* (only three)⁶, are actually unjustified as far as Constantinople is concerned: since the statues in Constantinople – except those obelisks and columns which stand to this very day – never actually stood *in situ*. They were moved quite often, regularly, they were even ‘exiled’ at St. Mamas, they were ‘buried’ and ‘drowned’, taxes were paid with them and statues were even immured in church foundations. In the same line of thinking, it was just natural that personal ‘biographies’ of the statues should develop, through which they would be ‘enlisted in the city register’, and that urban legends should arise which would weave their images into the respective chapter of the history of the city.

According to most modern scholars, the predominant ideological, emotional and political tone in the reactions of the capital’s population towards the statues was related to the fact that pagan statues were being displayed in the rapidly Christianizing urban environment of

³ As far as the strictly archeological and art-criticism approaches are only auxiliary, the works of Nikodim Kondakov, Raymond Janin and André Grabar should be mentioned just as the fundament providing the grounds for consequent studies. K o n d y a k o v, N. Vizantiyskie tzerkvi i pamyatniki Konstantinopolya, Odessa, 1887 (repr. 2006); J a n i n, R. Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique, 2ème éd. Paris, 1964; G r a b a r, A. Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople, IVe-Xe siècle. Paris, 1963; G r a b a r, A. Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge. Paris, 1976.

⁴ D a g r o n, G. Constantinople imaginaire. Étude sur le recueil des “Patria”. Paris, 1984.

⁵ A similar approach was employed in the 1920s by R. M. Dawkins who was mainly interested in the magical aspect of the artifacts in Constantinople and the perceptions and usages of the statues and sculptures related to it. See D a w k i n s, R. Ancient Statues in Mediaeval Constantinople. - Folklore, 35, 1924, No. 3, 209-248.

⁶ B a s s e t t, S. The Urban Image of late Antique Constantinople, Cambridge, 2005, p. 2. As a matter of fact just six antique masterpieces were *in situ* in Rome around 1430. See in: Musée de sculpture antique et moderne, t. III (éd. Frédérik de Clarac). Paris, 1850, p. CVII.

the megapolis Constantinople. This is also the core proposition in some of the best studies on the subject discussed here, among which I shall mention the monograph by Sarah Bassett *The Urban image of Late Antique Constantinople*⁷ and the studies by Cyril Mango *Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder*⁸, Richard McGillivray Dawkins *Ancient Statues in Mediaeval Constantinople*⁹ and Helen Sarandi-Mendelovici *Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy in Byzantine Centuries*¹⁰.

As such an approach the issue suggests, the question of the attitudes towards the monuments is organically related to the issue of the metropolitan Roman legitimacy of Constantinople. Seen in this light, it may be asserted that the accelerated creation of imperial identity required large-scale import of masterpieces to the capital – power symbols and markers of civilization from all corners of the Empire. This line of thinking and conduct became predominant at the time of Constantine the Great and was maintained with varying intensity until the reign of Justinian the Great. But the creation of the image of the New Rome through the highly suggestive propaganda of the monuments¹¹ to some extent delayed the affirmation of the Christian identity of the New Jerusalem. Gradually, Constantinople appropriated the past of Rome seizing the artifacts-signs of its provenance, history and supreme moments. To some extent the same was done in relation to the past of Hellas, whereas the appropriation of Thracian history through Byzantium is recognized only by Dagron. As identity construction is a cumulative process marked by appropriation of alien cultural signs mainly at its early stages, the Byzantines noticeably began to lose interest in legitimization and propaganda through statues around the 7th century. This is a central conclusion, for example, for C. Mango who traces the stages of ‘quotation’ of three-dimensional statues – fragmentary, selective and often incorrect – in two-dimensional reliefs and eventually in plain drawings. S. Bassett does not interpret the logic of the process in the same fashion, but she also acknowledges that in Justinian’s time enthusiasm towards Antique statues was faded significantly¹². Although he uses different approach G. Dagron reaches the same conclusion.

⁷ The Urban image of Late Antique Constantinople, op. cit.

⁸ M a n g o, C. *Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder*. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 17, 1963, pp. 53-77.

⁹ D a w k i n s, R. Op. cit.

¹⁰ S a r a n d i – M e n d e l o v i c i, H. *Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy in Byzantine Centuries*. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 44, 1990, 47-61. See also the part dedicated to Constantinople statues, particularly to their descriptions and usages, in: *Musée de sculpture antique et moderne*, t. 3, op. cit. CXVII-CLXIX.

¹¹ In addition to the authors and works already cited, see also: S o d i n i, J.-P. *Images sculptées et propagande impériale du IV^e au VI^e siècle : recherches récentes sur les colonnes honorifiques et les reliefs politiques à Byzance*. – in : *Byzance et les images*, Paris, 1994, 43-94;

¹² B a s s e t t, S. Op. cit., 121-136.

If we are to summarize the numerous examples systematized and commented by Dagron, it appears that in the Byzantine mind the fate of the statues of Constantinople was inextricably linked to the fate of Constantinople itself. And as the trend from the 6th century onward was for constant reduction in the number of statues (sometimes destroyed in drastic ways), the historical perspective of the citizens of the city was not merely eschatological and apocalyptic, but downright ‘catastrophical’¹³.

As for the relation statues-citizens-city, the conclusions reached by Dagron can be further substantiated with more examples. Nevertheless, the claim of the gradual disappearance of statues in the urban environment may be challenged. Such a challenge can be based on some quite indicative, but often underestimated facts: in the 10th century Liutprand admired the exquisite mechanical statues of the Sacred Palace, and in the 13th century Robert de Clari claimed that the statues of the Hippodrome were still able to move. In other words, two quite different Western authors, being about 250 years apart, paid attention not to the Hellenic or Roman statues, but to the typical Byzantine artifacts in the style of “the age of Theophilus (829-842)” just as they were described by Theophanes Continuatus.

In the 14th century already Russian pilgrims in Constantinople would be completely unaware of the antique masterpieces brought by Constantine, but quite familiar with the urban legends of the miraculous statues erected by Leo VI the Wise¹⁴. At in the beginning of the 15th century Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo¹⁵ would only be able to identify the equestrian statue of Justinian, but would discuss many other beautiful anonymous statues of humans and animals that decorated the streets, porticoes and parks of Constantinople. Arab chroniclers from the 10th through to the 13th century would marvel at the exquisite artifice of the Byzantine sculptors who were allegedly ‘able to produce any form out of any material’¹⁶.

To summarize, Constantinople did not lose its statues or the interest in them. Rather the *foreign* antique statues were gradually replaced by *indigenous* ones. It is not by accident that the list of ‘The Seven Wonders of Constantinople’ compiled by Constantine the Rhodian (Kephalas) in the 10th century did not include any antique, i.e. pre-Constantine, artifacts¹⁷.

Moreover, Constantinople did not simply ‘replace’ alien artifacts with its own; *these new statues* (actually not necessarily newly made) were conjoined in *new narratives of new*

¹³ Ibid. 143-150.

¹⁴ Anonimnoe hozdenie v Tzarigrad. See in: P r o k o f i e v, N. I. Russkie hojdeniya XII—XV vekov.- Literatura Drevnei Rusi i XVIII v. Moskow, 1970. Appendix 1, 235-252.

¹⁵ R u y G o n z a l e z d e C l a v i j o. Historia del Gran Tamorlan, a Russian translation and commentary available at: <http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus8/Klavicho/frametext4.htm>

¹⁶ See in more detail M u h a m m a d, T. M. Can ΠΑΡΑΣΤΑΣΕΙΣ ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΙ ΗΡΟΝΙΚΑΙ be considered a real Guide to the Sculptures of Constantinople during the Isaurian period. - Byzantinoslavica, LXIV, 2006, p. 78 ff.

¹⁷ M a n g o, C., Op. cit., p. 67.

memory and new imageries about the past, the present and the future of the city. A good, if not the best example in this respect are the “Bulgarian” (as we may call them) statues in Constantinople. This study will focus on them.

A close examination of the picture reflected in Constantinople’s monumental memory could, on the one hand, reveal new, unexpected aspects of Bulgarian-Byzantine relations from the 5th to the 13th century, a period when the ‘Bulgarian trace’ in the fate of Constantinople artifacts can be clearly followed. On the other hand, our initial proposition that at least some particular artifacts were not just trophies, decorations or exhibits from collections, but that they constituted an *integral narrative that sometimes nuances, on other occasions substantially complements and quite often significantly revises the information from written sources*, could offer a new approach in Byzantine studies as a whole and the study of Byzantine cultural memory in particular.

Because of the limited size of this article, the full list of the ‘Bulgarian’ monuments will be given here. The proposed research method will be demonstrated through a detailed analysis of just one monument along with the particular alternative historical narrative which it embodies – the golden-roofed Basilica, “where Tervel often used to stand”. Here is the catalogue of monuments:

1. The statue of the Bulgarian at the Bread market / Artopoleia (late 5th century);
2. The place of khan-kaisar Tervel of Bulgaria (695-721) at the Golden-roofed Basilica;
3. The ‘Beheaded’ Tricephalous statue from the time of emperor Theophilus (829-842) and patriarch John VII Grammarian, linked almost certainly to Bulgarian-Byzantine relations under khan Malamir, khan Presian and kaukhan Isbul that are only vaguely described in the sources;
4. The statues ‘stolen’ by khan Krum of Bulgaria in the raid of St. Mamas monastery (812) and the intention of the Bulgarian ruler to ‘stick his spear into the Golden Gates’;
5. The ‘Beheaded’ statue of tsar Symeon of Bulgaria (26-27 of May 927);
6. ‘The Guardian/Protector in the hoof of the horse of Bellerophon/ Joshua (destroyed in 1204 by the knights of the 4th Crusade);
7. The silver frontier guards in Thrace (a charm against ‘Huns, Sarmatians and Goths’ in the writing of patriarch Photius and the statue of Gerodian in the Brief Historical Expositions)¹⁸.

¹⁸ All monuments included in the list are studied in detail and interpreted in my book ‘Blank Spaces in Bulgarian Cultural Memory’ according to the model suggested in this paper.

This list might be complemented by the specification that *de facto* virtually all known stories related to the magical use of Constantinople statues are, one way or another, related to the Bulgars and the Bulgarian lands. To some extent the following example which is not included in the list – the legend of the moving of the statues of the Byzantine woman and that of the Hungarian woman during Manuel Comnenus’ rule – is also similar. According to the account of Nicetas Choniates, the Emperor was informed of the alarming position of the statues that were prophesizing victory for Hungary in the forthcoming war and he therefore commanded them rearranged while residing in Serdica (present-day Sofia, Bulgaria).

The Memory of Kaisar-khan Tervel

According to the cited list of ‘Bulgarian’ monuments, khan-kaisar Tervel is chronologically the second Byzantine memory of the Bulgars, and is the first personalized one. The text relating this memory is included in the description of the First Wonder of Constantinople and belongs to the *Parastaseis syntomai chronikai* (‘Brief Historical Expositions’)¹⁹ compiled around the middle of the 9th century. In this particular case, our attempt to reconstruct the possible chain of events memorized in the respective monument will face two major challenges. The first lies in the characteristics of the “Brief Historical Expositions” that bear all the features of a patriographic text and thus, if not complemented with additional material, would render the effort a mere provisional conjecture. The second is related to the well known fact that to recreate images and situations on the grounds of the information from an ekphrasis is always a rather tricky endeavour which only delivers approximate results²⁰. It has to be noted as well that in this particular description *Parastaseis syntomai chronikai* have surpassed even the most poetic ekphrasis in allegory and vagueness:

„Περὶ θεαμάτων.

37 Θέαμα α'. Τὸ ἐν τῇ Βασιλικῇ σειρᾷ τῇ χρυσορόφῳ ἀνδρείκελον ἄγαλμα ὑπάρχον χρυσέμβαφον (ἐνθα τὸ ἕξαμον Ἡρακλείου τοῦ βασιλέως κατεσκευάσθη), τὸ γονυκλινές, Ἰουστινιανοῦ ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸ δεύτερον <αὐ>τοῦ τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν τυραννήσαντος, καὶ πλησίον αὐτοῦ τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ, ἀδελφῆς Ἰβουζήρου Γλιαβάνου, μετὰ τὴν ἦταν Τιβερίου τοῦ Ἀψιμάρου· ὅτε καὶ Φιλιππικὸς, ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ τόπῳ τῆς χρυσορόφου Βασιλικῆς ἀπεδοκιμάσθη,

¹⁹ *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai*. Ed. P r e g e r, T. - in: *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanum*. Leipzig, I-II, 1901-1907, t. I, 19-73.

²⁰ Alice Donohue gives valuable insights on this issue in her study of ekphrasis of some of the most famous female sculptures in Hellas. See D o n o h u e, A. *Greek Sculpture and the Problem of Description*, Cambridge, 2005.

Τερβέλι τοῦ Βουλγαρίας ἐκεῖσε πολλάκις καθίσαντος καὶ Γλιαβάνου Χαζάρι· πάκτα οὖν οὐκ ὀλίγα ἐκεῖσε ἐδόθησαν, ἔνθα αὐτοῦ τοῦ τυράννου καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς τὰ ἀγάλματα”²¹.

The text mentions in succession: The golden-roofed Basilica, which used to be in the very centre of the city near Hagia Sofia and was a spectacle in its own right; the ‘Examon’ of emperor Heraclius (610-641), i.e. a copper statue of two hands holding the standard measure of the modium and implying the sinister message that whoever tampers with measures will be punished by cutting off his hands; the statues of the ‘tyrant’ Justinian II (685-695; 705-711) and his Khazar wife; the dethroning of Tiberius III Apsimarus (698-705) and Philippikos (711-713) and finally - Tervel of Bulgaria and Gliavan the Khazar (Busir Gliavan, Khazar khagan and brother-in-law to Justinian II²²). In addition to being a harrowing mix of facts and names that span a period of more than a hundred years, it seems that there is no way to translate this text so that it would be both grammatically correct and at least to some extent logical. According to the most grammatically correct translation, accepted by most modern scholars, the phrase of interest should be: ‘Tervel of Bulgaria stood there often/on many occasions [in the golden-roofed Basilica at the statues of Justinian and his wife] with/and Glavan’ (Tervel of Bulgaria and Gliavanos the Khazar took their places there on many occasions ... at the site of the statues (*agalmata*) of the tyrant and his wife”).

Let us first to understand what characteristic feature of Byzantine cultural memory the monuments described in the text reveal? The cited paragraph is indisputable evidence for the fundamental absence of a tendency for ostentatious destruction of statues on the part of the Byzantines, even of those of discredited, openly loathed former dignitaries. Justinian II was definitely one of the Byzantine emperors most loathed by people – a rank he worked hard to attain, particularly during his second rule (705-711). The parallel account of the four emperors and Justinian Rhinotmetus’ Khazar relative is evidence also for the Byzantines’ refusal to hierarchize memory of the people that ruled their fate in the past. In this context, suddenly and

²¹ „Spectacle number one. The gilt statue (*agalma*) of a man in the golden-roofed Basilica colonnade (where the measure of the Emperor Heraclius was set up) - the kneeling one, is of Justinian when he was tyrant of Constantinople for the second time, and next to him is his wife, the sister of Ivouzeros Gliavanos, after the defeat of Tiberius Apsimar, when Philippicus also was censured in that part of the golden-roofed Basilica. Tervel of Bulgaria and Gliavanos the Khazar took their places there on many occasions, and so large payments of tribute were made here, at the site of the statues (*agalmata*) of the tyrant and his wife”. (*Parastaseis syntomai chronikai*, 37). It has to be pointed out that despite its many merits, the new edition and translation of the *Expositiones* by Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin (Cameron, A. and Herrin, J. *Constantinople in the early eighth century: the Parastaseis syntomai chronikai*. Leiden 1984, 96-98) where the above text is derived from, also has some disturbing weaknesses. One of them being the unwarranted omission of the ‘statue of the Bulgarian’ at the Artropoleia (Spectacle four, *Ibid.*, 106-108, on the arguments for the translation and text see *ibid.* 3-9).

²² According to some authors Glavan is father-in-law to Justinian.

in a somewhat inappropriate place, the text claims that Tervel of Bulgaria, who was neither a Byzantine ruler nor a royal relative, was often a guest in Constantinople. With a bit of imagination, one might suppose that Tervel sometimes visited together with the Khazar Gliavan. The latter, being Justinian's brother-in-law, could have made such visits simply on the grounds of being a relative. But what was the relation between the Khazar and the Bulgarian ruler as well as what was Tervel's relation to Justinian himself? This is not referred to in the *Parastaseis syntomai chronikai*. This rather mysterious concealment of the reason for mentioning Tervel among the royal group at the golden-roofed Basilica is all the more puzzling when we take into account the explicitly underlined frequency of Tervel's visits to the capital and his 'seating' at the same place: the 'often/on many occasions' sojourn of Tervel in Constantinople is so frequent that one of the most central places in the city (the golden-roofed Basilica) is identified by 'where Tervel often used to stand'. As thus far the hermeneutic reading of *Parastaseis syntomai chronikai* is not yielding more useful information, let us trace where and how is this theme represented and interpreted by other Byzantine sources.

In the *Suda* Lexicon from the 10th century, under the heading 'Basilica' the same golden-roofed Basilica is discussed. Here the Khazar connection is neglected and it is just reported that in the Basilica there was 'a gold-plated statue of the usurper Justinian on his knees', 'the Examon from the time of Heraclius' and there 'Tervel gave a speech in front of the people'²³. Even more devoid of details is the account in 'De signis' by Codinus. Here not only the addition of Gliavan the Khazar is missing²⁴, but also the reference to the statues of the tyrant Justinian and his wife. More importantly, there is no clarification as to who Tervel is, as the explanatory 'from Bulgaria' or 'the ruler of the Bulgars' is omitted²⁵. The only conclusion that follows from this 'simplification' of the narrative is this: from the 10th century on Byzantine authors have no inhibitions in referring to Tervel as a prominent public figure in Constantinople and to identify the place at the golden-roofed Basilica solely with Heraclius and Tervel: 'there was Heraclius' Examon' and 'there Tervel gave a speech'. This apparently unexplainable attitude towards the Bulgarian khan can be understood if we try to see how much the citizens of the capital know about Tervel personally.

²³ *S u i d a e* Lexicon. – in: Greek sources for Bulgarian history (GSBH), t. 5, 1964, p 309 ff.

²⁴ By the same logic some Byzantine sources completely neglect the 'Khazar connection' and claim that Justinian II was not married to the daughter (sister) of the Khazar khagan, but to 'Theodora the daughter of the Bulgarian ruler Tervel'. This is not a case of 'forgetting' though, but rather of 'retelling' the story as Justinian was not married to Tervel's daughter, however there have actually been negotiations over a dynastic marriage between Tervel and Justinian's daughter Eudoxia. There are no reports on the outcome of these negotiations though.

²⁵ *G e o r g i i* *C o d i n i* *Excerpta de antiquitatibus Constantinopolitani*. Rec. I. Bekker, Bonn. 1843, p. 39. § 8.

If we accept the most popular dating of the rule of khan Tervel (700/1-718) and taking into account the assistance he gave to Justinian II in relation to his second enthronement, we could suppose that the Bulgarian ruler, proclaimed to be Byzantine kaisar by Justinian II in 705, had grounds and opportunities to visit the Byzantine capital if not quite often so at least several times. When we add the information from Suda with the same level of confidence we can presume that Tervel chose to stand in one and the same place in the entire city every time – where he probably ‘gave a speech in front of the people’ when he was proclaimed kaisar. This picture becomes all the more plausible if we estimate that Tervel ruled until 721 and he is the Bulgarian ruler whose army slaughtered between 22 and 30 thousand of the Arabs besieging Constantinople in 718. For the time between 705 and 721 and taking into account the great number of contracts made and the joint military initiatives, khan Tervel surely had the opportunity to stand in his favorite place at the golden-roofed Basilica several times.

The scheme gets much more complicated if we concur with a less popular dating of Tervel’s rule, which was proposed by Mosko Moskov, a dating accepted in the scholarly community and probably more accurate. According to Moskov, Tervel was khan from 695 to 714 and afterwards until 721 Bulgaria was ruled by two other rulers (his sons?), that are referred to as “Unknown I and II” or Kormesiy I and Kormesiy II²⁶. The problem is that according to this timeframe, Tervel neither concluded the treaty of 716 that actually constituted the first modern border in Europe, both restricting and permeable, between Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire, nor did he aid Constantinople in 718. His only ‘merit’ seems to be that he was most probably baptized, because otherwise it would not have been possible to negotiate a marriage between the daughter of Justinian II and Tervel²⁷ or to give the Bulgarian ruler the title of ‘kaisar’ – details of Tervel’s biography that are described in detail by patriarch Nicephoros.

But are these features of khan-kaisar Tervel’s biography sufficient grounds for the discussed identification of the golden-roofed Basilica with his visits to the capital and for him to be declared the founder of Danube Bulgaria by some Byzantine authors in the 10th century²⁸ and to be later characterized by Western and domestic sources as St Trivelius the Baptist or saint king Trivelius²⁹? This is rather unlikely since, according to the account of John bishop of

²⁶ Moskov, M, *Nominalia of Bulgarian Khans (a new interpretation)*. S., 1988, 240-282

²⁷ Actually, it is most probable that this marriage wasn’t contracted for objective reasons. See Heald, C. *Justinian II of Byzantium*. Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1972, 106-110

²⁸ It is significant that this claim is made by one of the most informed about the Bulgarian theme Byzantine authors – Leo Deacon. See Leonis Diaconi, *Historiae*, GSBH, t. 5, p 252.

²⁹ On this topic see Tapkova – Zaimova, V., Zaimova, R. *Tervel – Trivelius – Theoktistes*. - *Palaeobulgarica*, 27, 2003, 4, 92-97.

Nikiu³⁰, Tervel's grandfather – khan Kovrat/Kubrat was also baptized, had the title *patricius* and was like a guardian to the children of emperor Heraclius from Martina. Still, it has never been reported that Kubrat liked standing often somewhere in Constantinople, nor that he had given a speech in front of the citizens of the capital, nor that he had christened the Bulgars. Tervel for that matter is not only mentioned in the contexts referred to above, but also had a personal seal bearing the inscription “Holy Virgin, protect the kaisar Tervel”. The latter fact is usually referred to by scholars, but often accompanied by a reminder, that giving Tervel the title *kaisar* Justinian II was quick to proclaim his Khazar wife and underage son ‘augustes’. Still, no reflection has been attempted at the question: What were the actual consequences of the fact that their ruler being proclaimed kaisar for the Bulgars themselves?³¹ The sole attempt to address this issue is the rather unpopular proposition that the Bulgars received and interpreted the awarding of the title kaisar to Tervel by Justinian II like the Francs received the award of the title *Patricius Romanorum* to Pepin the Short by Pope Stephan II (28 of July, 754).³² While comparing two titles of quite a different rank, this proposition is nevertheless much more plausible than the frivolous conclusion made by S. Runciman: “(Tervel) did not know the subtleties of Byzantine history and protocol. It was only clear to him that the emperor wants (and is perhaps even obliged) to confer on him a title of great value and place him together with himself”, etc in the same vein³³. Actually, there is similarity not in the titles, but in the fact that Pepin the Short carried two titles simultaneously: *Rex Francorum* through which the deposition of the last Merovingian ruler Childeric III was sanctioned (and which was made possible by the blessing of Pope Zachary in 751) and *Patricius Romanorum* – through which Pepin was drawn (but not associated!) into the hierarchy of Roman ranks. In this respect the scene is much alike the situation in 632 when Heraclius gave the title ‘patricius’ to the ‘chief of the Bulgars’ Kubrat. If we are to compare the status and behavior of khan-kaisar Tervel with those of another high-ranking ‘barbarian’ Roman magistrate, it should

³⁰ The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu. Translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text Charles, R. H., & Li t t, D. D, London, 1916, CXX, 47, p. 197.

³¹ To be fair, P. Angelov discussed Tervel's ‘frequent sitting’ at the golden-roofed Basilica and his popularity in Constantinople, but does not relate this to the kaisar title acknowledged to the Bulgarian ruler in 705. (Angelov, P. Bulgaria and the Bulgars through Byzantine Eyes, S. 1999, 156-158 ff). Behevliev on his part draws attention to the fact that from 714 on it seems that Tervel had Kormesiy as co-ruler (kapkhan) but he attributes this to Tervel's advanced age or an illness (see Behevliev, V., Proto-Bulgarian Epigraphic Monuments, S. 1979, p. 106 ff)

³² See Curta, F., op. cit., where the author quotes this claim by Beshevliev as being shared by Bulgarian historians. Curta himself surely shares it as he further develops the comparison between the Merowing and the Bulgarian practice with some probably overstated, but yet not impossible parallels and borrowings. Bulgarian medievalists as a rule perceive the Caesar/Kaisar title as a token of respect and therefore honorary, i.e. as an acknowledgement of the power of the respective country and an argument for future ambitions (see the brief account on the title Caesar in Bakalov, G. The Bulgarian Medieval ruler. Titles and insignia, S., 1995, p. 117).

³³ Runciman, S. History of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, S., 1993, p. 42.

not be with Pepin III or other Frank ruler, but with the Gothic rex and Roman consul Theodoric as will be further elaborated towards the end of this article. The Franks have always been far removed – literally and figuratively speaking – from the immediate interests of Constantinople. It is in such a context that we could seriously look into and answer the question:

Was Tervel an honorary or a valid kaisar?

To every scholar that is acquainted with the subject of Byzantine institutions such a question is simply rhetorical. The Kaisar title³⁴ immediately follows the title of basileus and is not merely the second highest ranking title in the Byzantine court, but implies actual power and the possibility for taking up the imperial throne.

Despite the fact that even in the time after Justinian I a certain anxiety towards the rather ‘Roman’, ‘military’ and ‘unchristian’ connotation of the epithet ‘kaisar/caesar’ used in the title of ‘by the grace of God Emperor of the Byzantine’ (under Heraclius the title was abolished) still ‘kaisar/caesar’ remains a synonym to ‘basileus’ under certain circumstances³⁵. In addition, this also implies that giving this title to a foreign ruler can be seen as recognition of royal rank. Taking into consideration the rather vague account of the ‘insignia’ given to Tervel by Justinian Rhinotmetus in Theophanes the Confessor, this particular case could be interpreted along those lines. Still, it is most certain that in this case there (also) was an official induction of Tervel into the office of Byzantine Kaisar – a hypothesis confirmed by the detailed description of the public ceremony of Tervel’s kaisarean investiture in the “Brief History” by patriarch Nicephorus³⁶. Actually, considering khan Tervel’s situation in 705 being the ruler of Bulgaria and continuing to rule for ten more years after the discussed ceremony, it may well be that it was both a recognition of his royal rank and an induction into the office of Kaisar³⁷. Both aspects undoubtedly required him to be a Christian. In this regard, although modern historiography provides some faint accounts of ‘Tervel being baptized for political reasons’³⁸, a

³⁴ Bréhier, L. *Le Monde Byzantin. Les institutions de l’empire byzantin*. Paris, 1970, 41-43.

³⁵ Cf. Moravcsik, G. *Studia Byzantina*. Budapest, 1967, 267-274 = *Zbornik radova Vizantoloshkog Instituta*, 8, 1963. Moreover, in Bulgarian and Russian medieval literature ‘kaisar’ remains the most commonly used title of the Byzantine emperor.

³⁶ Nicephorus Patriarcha, *Breviarium*. - GSBH, t. 3, S., 1960, p. 297. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*. - GSBH, t.3, S., 1960, p. 267.

³⁷ Later, in 912, an identical situation occurred. Simeon I was negotiating with the Regency in Constantinople both over a tsar/basileus title and a basileopator title, the latter dependent on a dynastic marriage between Simeon’s daughter and the underage Constantine VII. In Simeon’s case, his behavior suggests that he intended to keep the Bulgarian throne, while influencing the Constantinopolitan agenda through a strong Bulgarian lobby. On this issue, see: Vachkova, V. *Simeon the Great – the road to the crown of the West*, S., 2005, 54-90.

³⁸ Probably, there still are upholders of the proposed about the mid-20th century by Gantscho Tzefonoff in his book ‘Krovatian Bulgaria and Christianization of the Bulgars’ (1937, repr. S., 2004).

suggestion of an actual double official Christianization of Bulgaria – under Tervel and under Boris Michael, cannot be found. It is widely known that Paisius of Hilendar for example was deeply convinced of such a double Christianization and reprimands the Bulgars of ‘leaving this great Bulgarian enlightener, saint and blessed king Trivelius without memory, service and holiday. They did poorly’³⁹ (Il. 1, 2).



Il. 1 St Trivelius - Theoktiste (Samokov, 18th - 19th century)



Il. 2 St Trivelus the Bulgarian Tsar. Mural painting by Zachari Zograf (19th century)

hypothesis for an even earlier Baptism under Kubrat/Krovat, but those opinions are not represented in proper academic publications.

³⁹ Paisius of Hilendar, *Istoria slavyanobalgarska*, facsimile and tradition by P. Dinekov. S., 1998, p. 240. See also Zografhe Bulgarian history. Ivanov, J. *Balgarski starini iz Makedonia*. S., 1970 (repr.), p. 632 and p. 641

It is well known among experts that in European history instances of repeated Christianizations are not so uncommon. For example, even a superficial reading of Bede the Venerable shows that the rulers of the different ethnic groups in Britain (up to the time of Bede's writing (in the first quarter of the 8th century these are mainly Celts/Britons, Picts, Saxons, Angles) were baptized in different moments, with some kingdoms remaining Christian for decades or centuries, then returning to paganism and later proclaiming themselves Christian again, etc. The suggestions discussed in this context could resolve at least two questions neglected so far: 1) Why did Boris Michael not receive from his Byzantine godfathers a new title after the official Christening, but retained his previous rank of 'archon' (with the addition of 'by the grace of God, which appeared under khan Omurtag'⁴⁰), while Tervel was thus titled even in the inscription under the Madara Horseman?; And 2) Why did the Bulgars consider the 'kaisar' title so inherent that even after Peter, the son of Symeon, was acknowledged as 'basileus', they, without exception, adhered to using the title 'kaisar', transcribed as 'tsar'⁴¹. If nothing else, the hypothetical scenario of the first Christening of Bulgaria under Tervel explains the otherwise incoherent behavior of the Bulgars who, according to the Byzantine authors, suddenly 'conspired and killed those who had hereditary power over them, and made the so-called Telesius'⁴² (Telets from the Ugain clan according to the 'Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans') their chieftain'. This sudden 'conspiracy' could easily be interpreted as an anti-Christian reaction as the same wording is used in the descriptions of restoration rebellions against Christian rulers in Bede and the other early Anglo-Saxon chronicles. Regardless of the motivation behind it, this reaction occurred long after the death of Tervel (whether he and his people were baptized or not) whose title Kaisar imposed upon him obligations and rights that had no relation to the Christening of Danube Bulgaria. And because, as it has already been pointed out, the question of the actual consequences of the promotion of Tervel to the rank of Byzantine Kaisar has never been raised in historical studies, it would be useful to briefly remind what this title (which was strictly reserved for the sons of the emperor at least until the end of the 8th century) used to represent.

⁴⁰ On this subject as well as facsimiles and translations of the inscriptions referred to see: B e s h e v l i e v, V: Proto-Bulgarian Epigraphic Monuments', S., 1979; particularly on the title ο εκ Θεου αρχων, see 70-72.

⁴¹ For arguments for the title 'tsar' having 'definitely ... a vernacular character and then [being] introduced in literary language' and a review of the main literature on the subject, cf B a k a l o v, G. op.cit. 156 – 159. In opposition to such an assertion, the previously mentioned in a different context, fact that since the last quarter of the 6th century, i.e. precisely when according to popular ideas the Slavs have entered in close contact with the Empire, the title *kaisar* was no longer relevant to Byzantine emperors can be emphasized.

⁴² N i c e p h o r u s P a t r i a r c h a, op. cit., p. 303.

In the course of time the title 'kaisar' was increasingly assigned to the father, the fathers-in-law, the brothers, uncles or sons-in-law of the emperor, rather than to his own sons mainly because they were often declared co-emperors even in infancy. Perhaps this is the reason why some accounts by authors like Anastasius the Librarian⁴³ (mid-9th c.) and Johannes Zonaras⁴⁴ (early 12th c.) claim that Justinian Rhinotmetus promised Tervel not to give him his daughter as a bride, as patriarch Nicephorus writes in the beginning of the 9th century, but rather to take Tervel's daughter to be his wife. In *Patria Constantinopoleos* it is explicitly (but probably incorrectly) stated that Justinian II was married to Tervel's daughter – Theodora⁴⁵. This, however, does not change the fact that in its very essence the title 'kaisar' cannot be honorary just as titles like *Parakoimomenos* and *Domestikos tōn Scholōn* can never be honorary. In terms of functions the kaisar is a kind of 'vice-basileus' like the *Domestikos tōn Scholōn* who is a kind of vice-emperor, i.e. first deputy commander-in-chief, and who quite often was an acting commander-in-chief. It is no accident that the Domestics were often among the pretenders for the throne.

The difference between the title 'kaisar' and other high-ranking offices lies in something other than the particular sphere of their activities. A *Kaisar* is a person explicitly associated with the throne and this association implies being personally involved with a particular emperor and his heirs, one of which is the Kaisar himself. The Kaisar office is a kind of long-term guarantee to power and training for taking up the throne since 128 when the emperor Septimius Severus prior to proclaiming his son Caracalla as august, proclaimed him a caesar. The characteristics of the title remain the same during the Tetrarchy (from 285 on) when, in principle, the two caesars were obliged to serve for 20 years before assuming the position of the two augusts. Therefore, at least until the title *basileopator* was established under Leo VI (and later the titles *sebastokrator* under Alexios I and *despotes* under Manuel I Komnenos) the kaisar was the only magistrate who under certain circumstances could legitimately substitute the basileus. It is conceivable that the depersonalization of the title under the first rulers of the Komnenos dynasty was in direct relation to the ill-fated attempt of kaisar Nicephorus Bryennius, husband of the regal writer Anna Komnena, to take over the throne of his father-in-law Alexios I. Despite that and already two centuries later, Isaac II Angelos successfully used the effects of being associated with power through the Kaisar title.

⁴³ Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Chronographia tripartita* : - Latin sources for Bulgarian history (LSBH), t. 2, S., 1960, p. 252.

⁴⁴ Ioannis Zonarae *Epitome historiarum*. - GSBH, t. 7, C., 1968, p. 156.

⁴⁵ Scriptor anonymus. - GSBH, t.5, S. 1964, p 325. As pointed out in footnote 7 above this is most probably confusion with the daughter of the Khazar khagan. After all, Gliavan's name is only known from the Brief Historical Expositions and there is no clarity in Byzantine sources whether the referred to Theodora was sister or daughter of the khagan.

To neutralize the Norman threat Isaac married his sister Theodora to Conrad (son of William V of Montferrat) and proclaimed him a Kaiser. Kaiser Conrad was not only quite helpful in negotiating with the knights of the West and in giving crucial support in the suppression of Alexios Branas' rebellion but was even prepared to violate his Crusader oath due to his obligations to the Byzantine emperor⁴⁶.

In summary, a Kaiser is a high-ranking official who could be 'too ambitious', 'good', 'characterless' and even 'incompetent', but a Kaiser could not be 'formal', i.e. 'honorary'. However, an examination of the sources considering the possibility that there was another 'true' and 'valid' Byzantine Kaiser in parallel to Tervel from 705 to 718/721 would not be redundant, for, while it was not a normal practice, the proclamation of two kaisars was also not exceptional. For example, Constantine I proclaimed as caesars his three sons, while later Michael II bestowed the same title on both his uncles. It is a fact, however, that in the *Chronographia* by Theophanes the Confessor, which provides the most detailed account of the period in question, many patricians, magisters, eparchs, curopalates and domestics of schools are mentioned, but not a single kaiser⁴⁷. The account in patriarch Nicephorus' *Brief Chronicle* is identical. From 704 to 719 the Bulgarian position and the Bulgarian military support, in particular, were crucial in tipping the balance in favor of one or another pretender to the Byzantine throne. This pattern became obsolete only after the unsuccessful attempt at coup d'Etat in the beginning of Leo III's reign in 718/719.

Both in the context of internal Byzantine power struggles and the organization of the repulse of the Arabs in 717-718, Tervel's name disappears and reappears at times in the sources. This mysterious 'disappearance' was also recognized by Vasil Zlatarski in relation to the contract between Theodosius III and Kormesiy of Bulgaria (716), which was explained as 'confusion' between the names of Tervel and Kormesiy. This very 'disappearance' is an explicit, core argument for Mosko Moskov, too, in the construction of his chronology which establishes the end of Tervel's rule in 714. Does this suggest, however, the „confusion of names in the sources” referred to or rather „the death of Tervel in 714”?

If we combine the accounts in *Parastaseis syntomai chronikai*, *Suda*, according to which 'under Justinian Rhinotmetus Tervel, the sovereign of the Bulgars, was at the peak of his prosperity', the 'Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans' where Tervel is said to have ruled for 21 years, as well as fragmentary implicit references in numerous other Byzantine, Western and domestic sources, the only reasonable answer is: Tervel became khan in 695 and was

⁴⁶ Details on this story in: *City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*. Transl. Harry Magoulias. Detroit, 1984, 382-393. I am grateful to my colleague V. Ninov for supplying me with this example.

⁴⁷ Theophanes however also does not explicitly refer to the 'kaiser title' given to Tervel, but to him being endowed with 'regal insignia'.

proclaimed kaisar in 705. He was simultaneously a Byzantine kaisar and khan of Danube Bulgaria until 716, when his son Kormesiy (who had probably been too young before) succeeded him on the Bulgarian throne. Tervel himself, probably from as early as 714 (according to the account in *Parastaseis syntomai chronikai* – ‘*after Philippikos was deposed*’, i.e. after 713) until his death (after 718) resided predominantly in Constantinople as a Byzantine kaisar. Such a reconstruction allows for Tervel at the same time to stay often in the golden-roofed Basilica, to give a speech in front of the citizens, to rule for 21 years, to be succeeded by his son in 714, as well as to have his name related with the 716 treaty and the crucial Bulgarian-Byzantine victory over the Arabs in 718. The proposed reconstruction also provides an explanation to why Tervel was labeled the first Bulgarian Baptizer in both Bulgarian and Western sources and as the only Bulgarian ruler-saint other than Boris Michael. Without this image of Tervel – the Christian-and-Baptizer-tsar, his status as Byzantine kaisar and victor over the Arabs seemed simply illogical to the medieval writer and reader.

Actually, Tervel’s figure, if devoid of the denoted roles and as described in works by many authors from patriarch Nicephorus’ and Theophanes’ to Blasius Kleiner and Paisius of Hilendar, must seem contradictory to contemporary readers, too. Perplexing as it might seem, most modern authors and readers do not feel an urge to reflect on questions such as: How is it to be explained that a pagan Bulgarian khan used to stand so often near the Sacred Palace in Constantinople that his place at the golden-roofed Basilica was remembered by Constantinopolitans even five centuries after his death? Why did writers from the 9th to the 18th century perceive Tervel as a Christian and the first Baptizer of the Bulgars? How was it possible for the image of Tervel to outlive the reminiscence of the Gothic usurper Apsimar, or of the short-lived rule of the Armenian Philippikos and even of the long scandalous reign of Justinian Rhinotmetus, who actually proclaimed the Bulgarian ruler as Kaisar, in the memory of Constantinople’s citizens?

Certainly, satisfactory answers to all these questions will hardly be found, not least because some of those answers are related to unrecorded and therefore long-forgotten details of the dramatic and contradictory events in the period 705-721. Still, to the central question of how the memory of Tervel survived at least three answers could be given, equally reasonable, but concerning three distinctive levels and three different subjects of memory:

1) For the Western authors Tervel was a Christian and Baptizer not just because under his command the Bulgars slaughtered 30 000 Saracens and saved Constantinople, but also because he supported Justinian II. In relation to this, it has to be pointed out that Latin authors do not actually share the extremely negative position of their Greek, Syrian and Armenian counterparts on Justinian II since he proclaimed himself an Orthodox Christian during his

second rule and was in close relation with Pope Constantine. Since authors from the Bulgarian Revival period mostly used historical studies by Catholic writers, it is conceivable that their position (which also informed the iconography of St. Trivellius) adopted the Western tradition.

2) The Bulgarian memory of Tervel did not need additional stimuli as there was the colossal bas relief at Madara, cast under the ruler's commission and 'narrating' his great accomplishments. This aspect of the issue was recently highlighted by Florin Curta⁴⁸. The author, however, generally neglects the debates surrounding the identification of the famous Madara Horseman, relating the artifact with either Mitras or the Great Mother Goddess or the Thracian Heros, or khan Tervel or khan Krum⁴⁹. Curta's arguments though warrant particular attention as he is reconstructing the height of the ideological debate between Bulgaria and Byzantium in the 8th century on the grounds of two monuments – the Madara Horseman and Tervel's lead seal, i.e. similarly to the approach of this investigation, he is looking for the *narrative* embodied and memorized in those two artifacts. In the 8th century (actually up to the end of the 10th century) the main cultural contact between Bulgaria and Byzantium was indeed on the level of the exchange of symbolic messages and ideological codes. And among those messages and codes, as Curta persuasively proves, it is more than reasonable to highlight the demonstrative mobilization of *one's own* subjects in the creation of the remarkable Madara monument (under Tervel), the establishment of the title *αρχων* (*εκ θεου αρχων*) instead of the formally recognized *καισαρ* or the later introduction of the title ΚΑΝΑΣΥΒΙΓΙ as literal translation of *μεγας βασιλευς* (under Omurtag, 814-831)⁵⁰. The monuments and the new titlature were undoubtedly devices powerful enough to sustain the memory of the victorious archon Tervel in Bulgarian cultural memory.

3) Let us now see how this recollection was established in Byzantine memory. Theophanes and Nicephorus persistently (too persistently indeed!) claim that after endowing Tervel with regal insignia and opulent gifts, Justinian sent him back to his motherland. Therefore, it seems that Tervel left a vivid trace in the memory of the capital's population through the single speech he gave. If that is so, we can only regret that this striking speech is

⁴⁸ Curta, F. Qagan, Khan, or King? Power in early Medieval Bulgaria (Seventh to Ninth Century), - *Viator*, 37, 2006, 486-535. / <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/fcurta/qagan.pdf>

⁴⁹ I also consider doubtful Curta's claims that Tervel's long hair both on the Madara Horseman and the seal were depicted *à la Mérovingua*, and the monument cast in the sacred mountain of the ritual complex Madara was designed for Byzantine spectators. These claims however do not diminish the heuristic value of the article. A synthesized overview of opinions on the period and nature of the Madara relief and interesting analysis can be found in the article by Tzv. St e p a n o v 'Madara and the cliff relief (on old and new approaches to the issue)'. –in: *Studies in Bulgarian Medieval Archeology. Collection in honour to prof. Rasha Rashev, Veliko Tarnovo, 2007*, 44-54.

⁵⁰ Taking into the account the usage of the title 'archon subigi' under Krum (cf B e s h e v l i e v, V. *Proto-Bulgarian epigraphic monuments*, pp 108-111) it can be suggested that 'khana subigi' means not merely *basileus*, but rather 'μεγας βασιλευς'.

among the above-mentioned ‘unrecorded and thus unremembered’ fragments of the history of the period. The problem is that Nicephorus and Theophanes do not actually refer to any speech given by Tervel. Obviously, referring to Nicephorus’ account of the Vlaherna ceremony in 705 to provide an explanation as to why the golden-roofed Basilica was at least until the 12th century related to Tervel’s name (as G. Dagron is doing)⁵¹ does not make much sense.

The speech is accounted for in the sources describing ‘the wonders of Constantinople’, in the part dedicated to the first ‘wonder’ - The Golden-roofed basilica. But these on their part do not consider it necessary to connect Tervel with the kaisar title given to him by Justinian. Therefore, the Byzantine memory of Tervel is clearly separated in two: *memory in historiographical writings* and *memory in ekphraseis and patriographic literature*.

It is relatively safe to suppose, due to the reconstruction of Tervel’s activities after 705 made above, according to which from a certain moment on he often resided in Constantinople, that not only did Tervel give his first speech as kaisar near the golden-roofed Basilica, but was later often seen there by the Constantinopolitans. Still, it would be frivolous to think that just seeing a kaisar often near a capital church would lead to the church being perceived as being somehow ‘his place’ in the capital. Such a conjecture would be as superficial as supposing that the church would be identified as ‘Tervel’s place’ merely because he once gave a speech there. People tend to forget, and people in luxury multiethnic megapoleis – where the saying ‘no wonder lasts more than three days’ is neither used in metaphorical sense, nor as a hyperbole - forget particularly quickly. Therefore, the memory relating Tervel to the golden-roofed Basilica long after the relation with Justinian II and Gliavan ceased to be made, must have had an alternative carrier different from the narrative sources. Bearing in mind the pronounced inclination of Byzantine emperors throughout the 7th and 8th centuries (and also later on) to erect statues of themselves and their entourage, it is safe to suppose that there used to be a statue of Tervel near the golden-roofed Basilica. The memory of Tervel, confined as it was to a particular place, could only be reliably preserved through such a monument. It was most probably commissioned by Justinian II in 705 together with his own and his wife’s statues. In this case the issue whether it was a new statue or a reuse of an older artifact is irrelevant as is the question of whether a portable ceremonial statue was used. The fact that at some point (before the mid-9th century when the ‘Brief Historical Expositions’ were written which retain the memory, but do not describe the monument) this statue vanished, was renamed (i.e. yet again reused), destroyed or moved, is also irrelevant. For, in Constantinople, statues once positioned were always to remain there – as a name and as a memory – regardless of how long their physical presence *in situ* was.

⁵¹ D a g r o n, G., Op. cit., p. 44 et n.83.

As for what the statue might have looked like, it is also quite conceivable that if it had been a new statue, it would have closely followed the portrait features of the depicted, similarly to other statues of highest-ranking magistrates. An account in Suda casts additional light on the probable posture of kaiser Tervel. It is the often-quoted description of how Tervel: ‘was filling caskets with gold and silver coins and handing them out to the soldiers, giving away gold with his right hand and silver with his left’⁵². Doubtlessly and as P. Angelov⁵³ has explicitly emphasized, such a description suggests that Tervel ‘did not use to be a niggard, but rather demonstrated notable generosity’. The issue, however, does not pertain to the personal qualities of the Bulgarian ruler. What has to be highlighted is that: in Suda Tervel is not simply described as generous, prospering and an ideal tsar. Tervel is rather depicted in the traditional posture of an emperor performing *largitio* – the inevitable ceremonial giving away of money by the emperor to his dignitaries and the army. In so far as we have the image preserved on the Arch of Constantine in Rome which depicts the emperor performing *largitio*⁵⁴ (Il. 3), the statue of kaiser Tervel, remembered as ‘giving away gold with his right hand and silver with his left’ was most probably created in the style and spirit of the same canon (Il. 4).



Il. 3. *Largitio*. Arc of Constantine, Rome 4th c.

⁵² S u i d a e Lexicon. - GSBH, т. 5, 1964, p. 310

⁵³ A n g e l o v, P. Bulgaria and the Bulgars through Byzantine eyes, S., 1999, p 158

⁵⁴ Cf the commentary of the image of Constantine and the relation between the iconography of *Largitio* and the one of Christ in Glory in: G r a b a r, A. Les voies de la création en iconographie chrétienne. Antiquité et Moyen Age. Paris, 1994, p. 84.



Il. 4. Presumable outlook of statue of kaisar Tervel in Constantinople (reconstruction Th. Alexieva).

Finally, if we are to suppose that ‘Tervel’s statue’ was a reused Antique statue, it must have been either in the style of the image described above or a statue of an orator, philosopher, or emperor depicted as an orator and philosopher (i.e. in the style of Septimius Severus’ statues). Such a design would be best suited to reflect the specific reminiscence of Tervel as a prominent public figure who ‘has given a speech in front of the citizens of the capital’.

In conclusion, it seems most appropriate to point out that it would be natural for a statue of kaisar Tervel to exist in Constantinople. It is quite evident, even if we only consider the accounts in the Brief Historical Expositions or patriarch Nicephorus’ Brief History that it used to be not just warranted but rather traditional to erect statues (often several) not only of the members of the imperial family – wives, sons-in-law, etc. – but of other high-ranking magistrates. As for the objection that Tervel was ‘a foreigner and a barbarian’, two counterarguments can be immediately provided. Firstly, it has to be emphasized that Tervel’s royal lineage is as extensive as Justinian Rhinotmetus’, while the pretenders against whom he assisted his ‘protégé’ were of rather humble, respectively Gothic (probably) and Armenian,

origins. Secondly, it will be useful to recall the account by Isidoros of Seville on how in 511 the Roman Senate decided to put up a gold-plated statue of Theodoric. About 511 Theodoric was a former Gothic *kuningaz*, former king of Gothic Spain (yielding his throne to his grandson Amalaric in order to take charge of the Roman office), Roman consul and *rex Italiae* (once acknowledged by emperor Zeno), and the Senate's gesture was a token of gratitude for the help Theodoric provided in the restoration of the city walls⁵⁵. It therefore seems quite easy to imagine Justinian II having even stronger motives to erect a statue of Tervel as he owed his throne to the military assistance of the Bulgarian khan. The same is true of the citizens of Constantinople who must have been rather grateful to him for saving their city from the Arabs in 718. It isn't difficult to imagine that kaiser Tervel was quite keen on transferring the responsibility of the Bulgarian throne to his heir as soon as possible, so that he himself could follow closely the events in Constantinople in the context of significant internal instability and grave external danger to Byzantium, including monitoring the Byzantines' adherence to the duties towards Bulgaria assumed under the contracts of 705 and 716.

Surely, in this context the main function of Constantinople's statues should also be remembered – to 'appropriate' the sublime moments and the emblematic figures from the past of the nations, whose fate was organically connected to the cultural-historical self-identification of the Byzantines. Through the erection of Tervel's statue near the golden-roofed Basilica, if I can put it this way, Tervel was rendered less a Bulgarian khan and more a Byzantine Kaiser⁵⁶. The remarkable durability of *this* Byzantine memory of Tervel (preserved for 5 centuries!), despite all historical details being forgotten, is an irrefutable proof of the crucial role that the son of Asparuh played in the life of the New Rome in the first quarter of the 8th century.

⁵⁵ Aera DXLIX, anno XXI imperii Anastasii, Theudericus Junior, cum jamdudum consul et rex a Zenone imperatore Romae creatus fuisset, peremptoque Odouacro rege Ostrogothorum, atque devicto fratre ejus Honoulfo et trans confinia Danubii effugato, XLIX annis in Italia regnasset, rursus exstincto Gisaleico rege Gothorum, Hispaniae regnum XV annis obtinuit, quod superstes Amalarico nepoti suo reliquit. Inde Italiam repetens, aliquandiu omni cum prosperitate regnavit, per quem etiam urbi Romae dignitas non parva est restituta. Muros namque ejus iste redintegravit, cujus rei gratia a Senatu inauratam statuam meruit. S a n c t i I s i d o r i Hispalensis episcopo de Origine Gothorum et regno Sueborum et vandalorum (39). Ed. M i g n e, J-P. Patrologiae cursus completus series latina. t. 83, col. 1057. 39

⁵⁶ The same trend is reflected in the Byzantine-made lead seal bearing Tervel's image (depicted in the classical pose and outfit of a triumphant emperor) and the inscription: 'Holy Mother of God, protect the kaiser Tervel'. According to F. Curta (op.cit) by using the title 'archon' in the inscription under the Madara Horseman Tervel 'ironically underestimated himself', and this in the context discussed suggests that Tervel insisted more on being a 'Bulgarian archontos' rather than a 'Byzantine kaiser'.