



*Pseudo-Kodinos and the  
Constantinopolitan Court:*

*Offices and Ceremonies,*

Ruth Macrides, J. A. Munitiz and  
Dimitar Angelov

(Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

Review by: Alexandra Karagianni

*Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies*. By Ruth Macrides, J.A. Munitiz and Dimitar Angelov. Farnham, Ashgate, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-7546-6752-0. xxii + 540 pp. £85.

The fourteenth-century *Pseudo-Kodinos* is split into two sections: the offices and the ceremonies. In this edition Ruth Macrides, J.A. Munitiz, and Dimitar Angelov provide additional information concerning the eighty-two offices and dignities, as well as the ceremonies of the Byzantine Court of the fourteenth century. These titles have ecclesiastic, military, or administrative service that give extensive privileges, great prestige, and power to their holders, although some of them fell gradually into disuse or were devalued. The authors also review the developments that took place from the tenth to the fourteenth century in the area of offices, attire, insignia, hats and gear of the officials, from the emperor to the least title holder. The authors make a valuable contribution to future research by creating an orderly record of all the offices and ceremonies of the Byzantine Empire.

An advantage of this research is that the text is presented for the first time in English translation with facing page Greek text and with an in-depth analysis in the form of commentary. In the introduction the authors give a complete picture of *Pseudo-Kodinos* and they point out the errors, omissions, and contradictions in the text that take the reader back and forth in time. *Pseudo-Kodinos* refers several times to the ceremonies without giving protocols, or in other cases he gives more than one.

Angelov deals with the chapter on hierarchy of titles and does most of the commentary on that section. He refers to eighty ranked titles and two unranked ones with an unknown position. It is a fact that the Byzantines inherited a complex system of bureaucracy from the Roman Empire with a plethora of officials and functionaries that serve the imperial system. He relies on *Pseudo-Kodinos*' court list as well as on the seven hierarchical lists of court titles edited by Jean Verpeaux in *Treatise on Offices*, written in 1966. The seven hierarchical lists are found in Constantine Harmenopoulos' *Hexabiblos*, Matthew Blastares' verified list, Vaticanus gr. 952, Parisinus gr. 1783, Xeropotamou 191, the ranking of the emperors and archontes of Trebizond, as well as in an anonymous list, all dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Furthermore, Angelov analyzes various court titles and highlights the differences between *Pseudo-Kodinos*' court hierarchy and the seven lists, between which there are a number of discrepancies in the way of omissions and additions at the lower end of the hierarchy. The eighty-two titles present a mixed picture of tradition and innovation in terms of their history. Angelov differentiates the old and the new ranked titles that were introduced in the eleventh, twelfth, or thirteenth centuries, as well as the titles attested in the

“Empire of Nicaea,” or in the Palaiologan period.

In chapter two Angelov explores systematically and in great detail the attire of the holders of court titles. He refers mainly to the *skiadion* and the *skaranikon*, the hats worn by the emperor and the officials. He talks about the staff which was the symbol of patriarchal authority and was handed to the patriarch by the emperor at his appointment. The emperor in general wore the *stemma*, the *sakkos* and diadem (*loros*) and held the cross and *akakia*. Angelov concludes that Pseudo-Kodinos’ presentation of the attire of members of the court indicates many differences from earlier times. Some of these differences are lexical, changes in the words used to designate elements of dress: *seia* instead of *prependoulia*, *kabbadion* instead of *skaranikon*, *sakkos* for *divetesion*. In other cases, the original meaning of the word has changed.

The three authors study broadly the three main ceremonies mentioned in the *Pseudo-Kodinos* treatise, the *parastasis* (reception of court title holders that took place twice a day in front of the emperor), the *prokypsis* (appearance of the emperor and his son, from the knees up, on a platform in the courtyard of the palace) and the *peripatos* (the walk of the emperor from his chamber to the palace church on Palm Sunday). They comment on and analyze them, providing answers to questions that researchers are likely to have. They also explore earlier sources, such as the *Book of Ceremonies*, attributed to Emperor Constantin VII Porphyrogenetos, as well as the current sources where the ceremonies appear, and discuss their development over time. *Pseudo-Kodinos* gives an account of the ceremonial coronations and promotions of high dignitaries, the installation of the patriarch, and the reception of a foreign imperial bride-to-be in Constantinople, but without mentioning the actual wedding.

We conclude that it is a well-written book with a comprehensive survey and rich bibliography. It includes lists of plates, tables, maps, plans, hierarchical lists, and a list of abbreviations. It offers an English translation alongside the authentic middle-Greek text, a complete overview of the offices and the Byzantine court ceremonies, as well as a precise and concise commentary that will serve the scholarly community well. It is a valuable contribution to Byzantine studies.

ALEXANDRA KARAGIANNI  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki