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*Palace Architecture between Baghdad and Constantinople: The Reception of Foreigners and the Mobility of Ceremonial Models in Sources and Iconography (10th Century)*

The paper aims to analyze and interpret the presence and use of symbols of power in Middle Eastern ceremonies and architecture of reception during the 10<sup>th</sup> century as transcultural expression of imperial power. Court and court culture are interpreted as complex symbols, whose meaning can be understood only in a cross-cultural perspective. Court ceremonial and the relative apparatus are containers of a universal message of suzerainty, constructed according to the archetypes of antiquity. The recurrence of schemes, ideas and cultural exchanges is evident in the compared analysis of the sources related to palace ceremonial and etiquette (*Rusum dar al-Khilafa; De Cerimoniis*), as well as in the reports of historical facts and court-episodes (Histories and Chronicles, such as Ta'bari's *Tarikh*, and Theophanes' *Chronographia*; Books of geography, such as Ya'qubi's *Kitab al-Buldan*).

The focus is on a literary case study of rare importance: the report of the Byzantine embassy of 917 at the court of caliph al-Muqtadir in Baghdad, presented in various redactions throughout the ages. The narration guides the analysis towards the identification of the main ceremonial features, which determined the role and the meaning of the spaces of the reception. Both the palace and its various parts – from the entrance to the throne hall – are carefully designed and built to be the material counterpart of the ceremony, the means by which the ideology of power becomes visible. Besides, the confrontation with the Byzantine and Carolingian courts highlights the cross-cultural aspects of the theme: analogies among ceremonial models usually reveal intriguing analogies among architectural models and types. Thus, the path is traced for an innovative study of palace typology: not relying on a sterile comparison of architectural forms and plan schemes, but analyzing its substantial role as both space and emanation of a model of transcultural representation of power.