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The Image of the Emperor Heraclius in the works of the Byzantine Authors

Extended summary

Introduction, Methodology

“... The saviour of the world Heracles,
He went down to the gates of Hades
He stifled the rage of the omnivorous hound...
He killed the bloodthirsty dragon
And now Heracles has really come
Having taken the golden apples and all the cities...
And now another life is being created
Another world and the new creature”¹

This text is not a narrative on the deeds of Heracles. Neither is it an eschatological account on the End of the world and creation of the new and better one. It is a description of the victorious Persian war of the Emperor Heraclius (610–641) by his friend, companion in arms and court poet George of Pisidia (d. 630th).

Investigating the image of Heraclius in the works of the Byzantine authors, I confront the problem of division, correlation and interaction of history and rhetoric. The most valuable part of my sources is highly rhetoricized texts of the contemporaries of Heraclius – poems, sermons, *visiones* – like the fragment cited above. But these sources contain the historical information not less than the plain chronicles. History means in this context *reales Geschehen*, i.e. events actually happened in the past, and rhetoric implies any verbal / textual formalization of the thought. History answers the question, *what* happened, and rhetoric — *how* was it represented.

¹ «... τὸν κοσμορῦστην εὐλόγως Ἡρακλέα / Κατήλθεν οὗτος ἄχρι τῆς Ἰδίου θύρας, / τὴν λῦτταν ἤγξε τοῦ κυνὸς τοῦ παμφάγου... / ἀνεῖλε τὸν δράκοντα τὸν μαιφόνον... / καὶ νῦν προῆλθεν Ἡρακλῆς τῷ πράγματι / λαβὼν τὰ χρυσᾶ μῆλα, τὰς πόλεις ὅλας... / καὶ δεῦτερος νῦν κοσμοποιεῖται βίος / καὶ κόσμος ἄλλος καὶ νεωτέρα κτίσις». Heraclias. P. 198. (all the poems of George of Pisidia are cited according to the following edition - Carmi di Giorgio di Pisidia / A cura di Luigi Tartaglia. Torino, 1998.)

As for the importance of rhetoric in Byzantium, the most prominent expert on it, George Kustas, called rhetoric the “key element in the Byzantine *Weltanschauung*”². The British scholar Mary Whitby nearly equated the terms “Byzantine” and “rhetorical”³.

So, I regard as one of the most interesting features of the image of Emperor Heraclius the *interaction* of history (historical Heraclius) and rhetoric (narratological techniques of the authors). As the legal document besides the necessary schemes contains also the matter⁴, so my sources contain both structures and history. And it is only interaction of them both, which creates the image of Heraclius.

Besides the rhetorical (classical) element in the representations of the Emperor, there was also the Christian one, which goes back to the Bible and patristic writings. My sources are not only highly rhetoricized, but also “highly christianized”, full of biblical allusions and quotations. Especially the later monastic chronicles, which are nearly devoid of the classical framework, readily take on the narrative technique based on the Christian background. But also the Byzantine intellectuals tend to use this technique in combination with the classical one. This *synthesis* can be very complicated, as it was shown in the above mentioned fragment about Heraclius / Heracles, where the Christian (and only Christian) word “κοσμορρύστης” (saviour of the world) applies to the ancient Greek hero Heracles and means therefore Byzantine Emperor Heraclius.

Because of the complexity of the image the historical and literary approaches seem to be insufficient. I believe that it’s the *way of thinking*, influenced by both rhetoric and Christianity, that shaped the narrative techniques of the authors. So in my dissertation I apply also to the methods of the *history of reception, intellectual history*⁵, and partly to the methods of the *hermeneutical school*.

The way of thinking always includes the static and the dynamic elements. It is also true for the political sphere. There can be noticed two tendencies in the reception of the Emperor Heraclius by the Byzantines: *tradition* and *innovation*⁶. *Tradition* refers to the narratological, rhetorical

² Kustas G. *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*. Thessaloniki, 1973. P. 1.

³ Whitby M. *Rhetorical Questions // A Companion to Byzantium* / Ed. by L. James. Oxford, 2010. P. 240.

⁴ I thank Prof. Rustam Shukurov for this accurate comparison.

⁵ See *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives* / Ed. by D. La Capra and S. Kaplan. New York, 1982; *Toews J.E. Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turns: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience* // *AHR*. 1987. Vol. 92. P. 879–907; *White H. Metahistory. The historical imagination in the Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore, 1973.

⁶ The problem of tradition and innovation in the Byzantine political thought was actively studied by F. Dvornik, M.T. Fögen, D. Angelov, J. Haldon, G. Dagron and others.

and, since rhetoric was taught to the Byzantine intellectuals from the cradle, – mental categories (τόποι) of the authors, influenced by the ancient logic and philosophy, by the Roman-Byzantine imperial idea and the Christian faith. The “traditional” view concentrates on the common and not on the individual; in this view there doesn’t exist the definite emperor, there exists the emperor in general, the ideal and saint emperor who is perceived and depicted with a nimbus surrounding his face. On the other hand, *innovation* applies to the categories of reception of the emperor that were unique for Heraclius and weren’t used for portrayal of any other emperor. These elements, as I think, are rooted in the historical reality of the first half of the seventh century.

The combination of the analysis of tradition and innovation in the image of Heraclius aims to answer the following questions: what is static (“traditional”) and what is dynamic (“historical”) in the image of Heraclius? What refers to Heraclius, and what — to the ideal emperor? How have the later authors worked with the earlier texts? Which way and with which intention were the earlier models of the representation of the emperor modified by the Byzantine authors? Which aspects were kept by them, and which aspects were omitted? These questions are in fact parts of a huge problem of bringing the representations of Heraclius in correlation with the Byzantine narrative tradition.

Such a set of questions is made possible by the phenomenon of *intertextuality*. The Byzantine intellectuals till the 7th century inclusive, before the severe decline of education and culture connected with the Arabic conquest, still used definite modes of thinking shaped by Hellenism⁷. The combination of Hellenism and Christianity was by the time of Heraclius already so complicated and intricate, that it could produce such sophisticated thinkers as the above-referenced George of Pisidia. The narrative and descriptive techniques, the forms of logic and the ways of structuring the reality were then quite similar throughout the whole Empire. It’s not exactly intertextuality, rather is it a form of *hypertext* created by the cultural milieu. The later chronicles, on the other hand, represent actual intertextuality, containing the passages about Heraclius, which are very similar lexically. Here the issue is easier: the chroniclers used the good old method of rewriting. Still, very rarely did they rewrite literally; usually some changes were made, which remain very interesting to observe, and analysis of these textual changes could contribute to the *history of reception* of the Emperor Heraclius.

Sources

⁷ Kaldellis A. Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformations of the Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition. New York, 2007. P. 389–397.

I've divided my sources on Heraclius into two groups: *first*, the sources contemporary with the epoch of Heraclius or written later, but inspired by the events of his reign; *second*, the later Greek chronicle tradition. In my dissertation I am going to examine the correlation between these two groups, the level of usage of the earlier sources on Heraclius by the classical middle-Byzantine chroniclers.

- *George of Pisidia (d. 630th)*

The most important author in the first group is the above-mentioned court poet George of Pisidia, the friend and companion in arms of Heraclius. George served as deacon, *skeuophylax* and *referendarios* in Hagia Sophia at Constantinople⁸. He accompanied Heraclius in his Persian campaigns. Most of his iambic poems are dedicated to the Emperor and eulogize the deeds of the first (i.e. pre-Arabic) part of his reign: accession to the throne and overthrow of Phocas (*In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem*), the Persian campaigns (*Expeditio persica, Heraclias*), the restoration of the Cross (*In restitutionem Crucis*). Parts of the other poems (*In Bonum patricium, Bellum avaricum, Hexaameron*) are also devoted to the deeds of the Emperor. George died before the Arabic invasion⁹. The style and mood of his poems usually remain no less creative than in the fragment cited above. That leads to the problems of interpretation, as it was acknowledged by the major scholars who studied the works of the Pisidian poet¹⁰.

- *Theodore Syncellus (1st half of the 7th century)*

The sermon on the liberation of Constantinople from the siege, on the defeat of the Avars, Slavs and Persians near the capital in 626 was delivered by Theodore Syncellus on the first anniversary of the event, on the 7th August 627¹¹. The author was presbyter and *skeuophylax* in Hagia Sophia at Constantinople. The homily is a good example of combination of the classical rhetorical techniques, biblical imagery and historical reality.

⁸ ODB. P. 838.

⁹ Though David Olster argues that George witnessed the first Arabic raids, and must have died after 636. *Olster D. The Date of George of Pisidia's "Hexaameron" // DOP. 1991. Vol. 45. P. 169.*

¹⁰ *Frendo J.D. The Poetic Achievement of George of Pisidia // Maistor: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning / Ed. A. Moffat. Canberra, 1984. P. 159–188; Whitby M. The Devil in Disguise: The End of George of Pisidia's Hexaameron Reconsidered // JHS. 1995. Vol. 115. P. 115–129.*

¹¹ Traduction et commentaire de l'homélie écrit probablement par Théodore Le Syncelle sur le siège de Constantinople en 626 / Texte traduit par Ferenc Makk. Szeged, 1975.

- *Patriarch Sophronius (c. 560–638), Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662)*

Sophronius of Jerusalem and Maximus the Confessor, venerated as saints in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, were two greatest advocates of the doctrine of the two wills, and opponents of the imperial Monothelitism in the age of Heraclius or later. Important for me are two Sophronius' sermons on the Restoration of the Cross by Heraclius¹². I've also used Maximus' letters¹³.

- *The early chronicles*

Not many Greek chronicles are preserved from the seventh century. It's a pity that a detailed and professionally written chronicle of Heraclius' court historian *Theophylact Simocatta* doesn't touch the reign of our Emperor, but is dedicated to the reign of Maurice (582–602). Though, here and there some valuable information about Heraclius can be found. The *Paschal chronicle*, written soon after 628, is a typical monastic chronicle, and includes a valuable document – letter of Heraclius to Constantinople after his Persian victory¹⁴. The Armenian bishop and church historian *Sebeos* (2nd half of the 7th century) composed a chronicle which portrays quite detailed the reign of Heraclius, especially his wars.

- *Apocalyptic literature*

The Greek, Syrian and Latin apocalyptic writings resemble each other and make up together a huge apocalyptic corpus. The problem of dating is very acute. I have used only the famous *sibylline texts* edited by E. Sackur¹⁵ and the Greek or Syrian texts which can be dated back to the 7th or 8th century – the Greek Pseudo-Methodius, the apocryphical visions of Daniel¹⁶, the Syrian

¹² PG. Vol. 87.3. Col. 3147–3200.

¹³ PG. Vol. 91. Col. 362–650.

¹⁴ *Chron. Pasch.* P. 701–737.

¹⁵ *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen. Pseudomethodius, also und die Tiburtinische Sibylle* / Hrsg. von E. Sackur. Halle, 1898.

¹⁶ *Истрин В.* Откровение Мефодия Патарского и апокрифические видения Даниила в византийской и славяно-русской литературах. Исследование и тексты. Т. 2. Тексты. М., 1897. С. 5–162

sermo de fine extremo by Pseudo-Ephraem¹⁷ and the Syrian “Christian Legend of Alexander the Great”¹⁸.

Most of sources of the *second* group are chronicles of the 9th–12th centuries.

- *Theophanes Confessor (c. 750–818) and Patriarch Nicephoros (c. 760–828)*

Most important of the Middle Byzantine chronicles are those of *Theophanes* and *Nicephoros*, both written in the beginning of the 9th century. *Theophanes*’ representation of Heraclius’ reign is, without doubt, more detailed and more valuable than any other source of historiographic genre, including the earlier chronicles. *Theophanes* used the works of George of Pisidia, but the level of interrelation between the two authors still needs to be investigated¹⁹. *Nicephoros* has a reputation of a rational and logical narrator, not very bothered about religious problems (in comparison to *Theophanes*). But the account on the Emperor Heraclius doesn’t leave an impression of a coherent text; the fragments seem to be chosen randomly, without internal logic.

- *Rhetorical and Patristic writings*

There exists also the *third* group of my sources, which don’t have anything common with Heraclius, but help me to put in context the representations of Heraclius, to bring them into correlation with the Byzantine narrative tradition²⁰, to answer the question, what is “traditional” and what is “innovative” in the image of Heraclius. Since the classical (rhetorical) and the Christian element were predominant in the Byzantine *Weltanschauung*, I use a number of late antique rhetorical treatises composed by Hermogenes of Tarsus, Menander Rhetor, Libanius and Aphthonius. I use also the early Christian church histories by Lactantius, Sokrates Scholastikos, Euagrius Scholastikos, the biographical works on some other famous emperors: Constantine – *Vita Constantini* by Eusebius of Caesarea, Justinian – Procopius’ *Anekdota* and *Wars* and Agathias’ of Myrina *Historiarum libri quinque*, Basil I – *Vita Basilii imperatoris* by Constantine

¹⁷ Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones // CSCO. Vol. 321. SS. T. 139. Louvain, 1972. S. 79–94.

¹⁸ A Christian Legend Concerning Alexander // The History of Alexander the Great. Being the Syriac Version, edited from five manuscripts, of the Pseudo-Callisthenes. With an English translation and notes / Ed. by E.A. Budge. Cambridge, 1899. P. 144–158.

¹⁹ *Sternbach L.* De Georgii Pisidae apud Theophanem aliosque historicos reliquiis. Cracow, 1899; *Idem.* Studia philologica in Georgium Pisidam. Cracow, 1900; *Speck P.* Das geteilte Dossier. Beobachtungen zu den Nachrichten über die Regierung des Kaisers Herakleios und seiner Söhne bei Theophanes und Nicephoros. Bonn, 1988.

²⁰ See the articles of R. Scott and M. Mullett in the best work on this subject, *Byzantine Narrative. Papers in Honour of Roger Scott.* / Ed. by J. Burke. Melbourne, 2006, and the corresponding chapters in: *A Companion to Byzantium* / Ed. by L. James. Oxford, 2010.

Porphyrogenitus or his scribe, Alexius I Comnenus – *Alexiad* by his daughter Anna Comnena. Some patristic writings which address to the emperors or deal with the imperial idea are also taken into consideration (e.g. Gregory's of Nazianzus *Contra Julianum imperatorem*, John's Chrysostom *Comparatio regis et monachi* etc.)

Historical Heraclius

In the modern historiography there was written quite much on historical Heraclius. The history of his reign was reconstructed with high reliability in the works of N. Baynes²¹, G. Ostrogorsky²², A. Stratos²³, J. Howard-Johnston²⁴, I. Shahid²⁵, J. Haldon²⁶ and in the monograph of W. Kaegi²⁷.

Heraclius was son of the exarch of Africa. During the reign of Phocas (602–610), who was considered to be a cruel tyrant, he made a revolt against him, sailed from Africa to Constantinople, deposed Phocas and became an emperor. In 610–628 he waged a long war against the Persians, who have been enemies of the Greeks and Romans for a thousand years. The war was hard: once even Constantinople was under siege. In the end Heraclius led the military campaign to the heart of Persia. The decisive battle was fought near ancient Ninevia in 628, and Heraclius succeeded to win. Then he restored the True Cross at Jerusalem and entered Constantinople in triumph. Soon after that appeared the new enemies, the Arabs. The Roman

²¹ Baynes N. The First Campaign of Heraclius against Persia // EHR. 1904. Vol. 19. P. 694–702; *Idem*. The Restoration of the Cross at Jerusalem // EHR. 1912. Vol. 27. P. 287–299; *Idem*. Some Notes on the Historical Poems of George of Pisidia // The Classical Quarterly. 1912. Vol. 6. No. 2. P. 82–90.

²² Ostrogorsky G. Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates. Dritte Auflage. München, 1963. S. 73–103.

²³ Stratos A. Byzantium in the seventh century, 602–711 / Trans. from Greek by M. Ogilvie-Grant, H. Hionides. Vol. 1–2. Amsterdam, 1968–1970.

²⁴ Howard-Johnston J. Heraclius' Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the East Roman Empire: 622–630 // War in History. 1999. № 6 (1). P. 1–44; *Idem*. The Destruction of the Late Antique World Order // Current Research in Sasanian Archaeology and History. Durham, 2006; *Idem*. The official history of Heraclius' Persian campaigns // The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East / Ed. E. Dabrowa. Cracow, 1994. P. 57–87.

²⁵ Shahid I. Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century. Vol. 1. Part 1: Political and military history. Harvard, 1995; *Idem*. The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius // DOP. 1972. Vol. 26. P. 293–320; *Idem*. On the Titulature of the Emperor Heraclius // Byz. 1981. Vol. 51. P. 288–296.

²⁶ Haldon J. Byzantium in the Seventh Century: the Transformation of a Culture. Cambridge, 1997; *Idem*. The Reign of Heraclius. A Context for Change? // The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation / Ed. by G. Reinink and B. Stolte. Leuven, 2002. P. 1–16.

²⁷ Kaegi W. Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium. Cambridge, 2003.

armies were defeated, and in 634–641 the Empire under Heraclius lost forever half of its territory. In these years Heraclius also led the policy of church unification, which was later called Monothelism and condemned as heresy. The second wife of Heraclius was his niece Martina, and this marriage seemed to be illegitimate for most of the Byzantines. In 641 Heraclius, despaired because of his inability to confront the Arabs, died after a serious illness, surrounded by traitors and enemies.

From the History to the Image

No other emperor has won and lost so much. The Byzantines have actively thought over his reign. For me it's the interconnection of history and image, the influence of history on the imagination that is most exciting.

- *Origins*

Historical Heraclius was the basis and archetype for the formation of the image. According to Gregory of Nyssa, “ἡ εἰκὼν πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον σχηματίζεται”²⁸. As the modern historiography has shown, this *iconological* concept can apply not only to the religious image, but also to the way of imagining the universe²⁹, including the political sphere: the emperor can act as an icon (εἰκονίζεῖν) of such biblical characters as Moses, David or Solomon³⁰. On the other hand, the image of the particular emperor in historiography is necessarily shaped by its archetype — whether it be Constantine, Justinian or Heraclius.

- *Revolt of Heraclius*

Reflecting upon Heraclius, the Byzantines have recalled the Pre-Arabic part of his reign more than the Arabic one. In all the chronicles and in the poems of George of Pisidia the narrative on Heraclius begins with the story of his plot against the Emperor Phocas and his voyage from Africa to Constantinople in 610. The common idea of most of the sources (except *Chronicon paschal* and some others) is to represent the overthrow and cruel murder of Phocas as a revenge for his tyrannical rule. Portraying the actions of Phocas only with dark colors permits the

²⁸ “The image is formed by the archetype”. Sancti Gregorii episcopi Nysseni oratio de mortuis // PG. T. 46. Col. 509.

²⁹ Лидов А.М. Иеротопия. Создание сакральных пространств как вид творчества и предмет исторического исследования // Иеротопия. Создание сакральных пространств в Византии и Древней Руси / Под ред. А.М. Лидова. М., 2006. С. 9–31.

³⁰ Rapp C. Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium // Magdalino, Old Testament. P. 195–196.

Byzantine authors to legitimize the *coup d'état* led by Heraclius. The story of the revolt, surrounded by the adventurous, romantic and folklore details, seems to be partly mythical, and partly goes back to the poems of George of Pisidia. The reliability of these fragments cannot be proved for sure.

- *The Persian war of Heraclius*

Most part of the narrative on the Pre-Arabic part of Heraclius' reign is taken by the Persian war. However, the Persian war of Heraclius was not very successful till its last year (627/628). So we cannot assume that the Byzantine authors described only the fortunate moments of Heraclius' reign. They didn't avoid defeats and retreats, but in a sophisticated way of Byzantine intellectuals they made them look like "moral victories" or "military tricks" invented personally by the wise Emperor to mislead the enemies. Only driven into a corner by the necessity to narrate about the loss of half of the Empire to the Persians in 610–622, they didn't try to make anything up but mentioned laconically the lost cities. Heraclius' Persian campaigns are described in detail, and it's not the final victory that attracts the narrators, but the tensions of the long and difficult war, the epic of suffering and overcoming. The Persian war of Heraclius is depicted in a "black-white" scheme with some apocalyptic features (it depends on the genre of each source): the Roman side seems to represent the sons of light, and the Persian side — the sons of darkness.

- *Restitutio Crucis*

The symbolic event which marked the climax of Heraclius' life — the return of the True Cross from Persia to the Empire and its restoration in Jerusalem³¹ — takes quite little place in the Byzantine sources. Dedicated to it is only one small poem of George of Pisidia (*In restitutionem Crucis*), two sermons of Patriarch Sophronius³² and a few laconic and not enthusiastic at all lines in the later chronicles. The Byzantine church also didn't pay special attention to this event: the feast of 14th September was in fact feast of the first *Exaltatio Crucis* made by Constantine and Helena and not of the other one made by Heraclius³³. It is astonishing, given the fact that in the

³¹ Clear is the day (29th March), but not the year. It may have happened in 629, 630 or 631. See *Болотов В.В.* К истории императора Ираклия // ВВ. 1907. Т. 14. С. 96–97; *Baynes N.* The Restoration of the Cross at Jerusalem // EHR. 1912. Vol. 27. P. 299; *Frolow A.* La Vraie Croix et les expéditions d'Héraclius en Perse // RÉB. 1953. Т. 11. P. 99; *Grumel V.* La Reposition de la Vrai Croix à Jerusalem par Héraclius. Le Jour et l'Année // BF. 1966. Bd. 1. S. 149; *Drijvers J.* Heraclius and the Restitutio Crucis: Notes on Symbolism and Ideology // The Reign of Heraclius... P. 178.

³² PG. Vol. 87.3. Col. 3302–3316.

medieval West reflection on this event developed into a rich textual, iconographic and liturgical tradition³⁴.

- *Heraclius as the Last Emperor*

Connected with the image of Heraclius as *victor* in the Persian war and *restitutor* of the Cross was his image as the Last Emperor. Seventh century was very influenced by eschatology, and the spiritual climate after the victory over the old enemy and *Exaltatio Crucis* was shaped by the apocalyptic expectations. Heraclius' victory seemed to be final, seemed to mark the end of history. One of the main deeds of the Last Emperor, according to the popular apocalyptic tradition, should have been baptism of the Jews. Our sources (letters of Maximus the Confessor etc.) testify that after the Restoration of the Cross Heraclius gave direct orders to baptize the Jews. So, "Last Emperor" seems to be not only image, but also "self-image" of Heraclius. And Heraclius was expected not only to accomplish the baptism of the Jews, but also to lay down his diadem in Jerusalem and surrender his imperial power to God³⁵. That was the atmosphere preceding the Arabic invasion.

- *Heraclius and the Arabic conquest*

The representation of the Arabic part of Heraclius' reign in the Byzantine sources (mostly, chronicles) leaves more questions open, than it gives answers. The authors seem to be totally confused by the Arabic conquest, and their writings leave an impression of a total chaos. Even the clear-minded *Theophanes* and *Nicephoros* produce texts without any internal logic or structure. They were in fact not very interested in describing the sequence of these events, though it may seem for us to be their responsibility as chroniclers. Interpreting the reasons of the Arabic conquest, among others they mention the mysterious sand-storms, the strange tactics of the Arabs who used the camels as fortifications, and, of course, φόβος κυρίου (*timor Domini*) which affected the Romans so that they couldn't fight³⁶.

And, what's more exciting, the Byzantine chroniclers don't make Heraclius responsible for the defeats of his Empire. The Arabic invasion seems to be caused by the sins of the Christians, citizens of the Empire, and by the Divine Wrath, but not by the sins or mistakes of the Emperor

³³ Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae / Ed. H. Delehaye. Reproduction anastatique. Louvain, 1954. P. 43–46.

³⁴ Kretzenbacher L. Kreuzholzlegenden zwischen Byzanz und dem Abendlande. München, 1995.

³⁵ Откровение Мефодия. С. 45–46.

³⁶ Себеос. С. 118.

himself. Of course it's connected with the Byzantine ideology: the Emperor is always νικητής (victor) and τροπαιοῦχος (triumphator)³⁷, so the defeats of the Empire, if they occur, cannot be attributed to him, and are usually attributed to his people.

Some later chroniclers even try to detach the “glorious” Heraclius from the sad and gloomy age of the Arabic invasion. They simply describe the whole history of this Arabic war (beginning with Muhammad!) in the chapters following after the death of Heraclius³⁸. Thanks to this technique it seems that Heraclius had nothing common with the time of the Arabic conquest.

Yet, if the Byzantine authors wanted to accuse Heraclius of incurring the Divine Anger on the Empire, they would have enough reasons. He was heretic, according to the Orthodox view, and he committed incest. But, first, the issue of his heresy is controversial. The attitude of the Byzantine authors towards it depends mostly on the time when they lived.

- *Heraclius' heresy*

Heraclius' heresy was in fact policy of church unification, based on the doctrine of the two θελήματα (wills) in Christ and destined to unite the Monophysites of Syria, Egypt and Armenia with the imperial Church. It was considered to be completely Orthodox among the Byzantine intellectuals³⁹ during the most part of the 7th century. Only at the Sixth Ecumenical council in 680-681 this policy was called Monothelism and condemned as a heresy. However Heraclius, the main supporter of Monothelism, was not condemned⁴⁰. Nevertheless since 681 all the chroniclers, narrating about his reign, mention his heretical policy.

- *Heraclius' incestuous marriage*

Marrying his niece Martina in the beginning of the 620th, Heraclius committed incest. It was already his second marriage. In spite of the opposition of the whole clergy, he didn't leave her. All their children were born either mentally or physically disabled. But as for denunciation in historiography, it appears only in the 9th-century chronicle of *Nicephoros*⁴¹, and laconically in

³⁷ Jus graeco-romanum / Ed.C. Zachariae a Lingenthal. Pars III. Novellae constitutiones.

Leipzig, 1858. P. 34; see also *Rösch G.* Ὄνομα βασιλείας. Studien zum offiziellen Gebrauch der Kaisertitel in spätantiker und frühbyzantinischer Zeit. Wien, 1978. S. 45–46.

³⁸ *Georg. Mon.* P. 697; *Glycas.* P. 514.

³⁹ Except Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Maximus the Confessor

⁴⁰ Mansi. Vol. 11. Col. 621.

⁴¹ *Nicephoros.* P. 14–15.

some others. The authors of the 7th century⁴² were more tolerant in this point. Moreover, the narrative on the second marriage of Heraclius in the later chronicles usually goes along with the story of his heresy. Without this connection it loses meaning. The moralistic approach is alien to most of my Byzantine authors.

- *The composite image*

Such a composite image of the Emperor Heraclius, which includes different and often opposite components, existed in the imagination of the Byzantine authors. Heraclius ascended to Calvary to restore the Cross, and fell into heresy. Heraclius won over the Persians, but couldn't overcome his own vicious passion. Heraclius thought to revive the Empire, but couldn't resist the "miserable nomads".

- *Historical development of the image*

The image of Heraclius underwent some changes throughout the Byzantine. It concerns first of all the "negative" elements in the image. Whereas most of the seventh-century Byzantines don't notice – or don't blame the Emperor for his heresy and incestuous marriage, the later chroniclers both notice and blame him without problem. As for the Arabic conquest, both the early and the later authors cannot explain Heraclius' inability to confront the Arabs and don't blame the Emperor. But some of the later chroniclers go further and correct the history: they spread the idea that Heraclius simply didn't live in the age of the Arabic conquest.

Concerning the "positive" elements in the image (Dethronement of a tyrant, Persian triumph, *Restitutio crucis*), they seem to be less variable. But this point needs further research.

The Ways of Narrating. Heraclius and the Narrative Tradition

Bringing the representations of Heraclius in correlation with the Byzantine narrative tradition means answering the following questions: What is *typical* for the Byzantine tradition of portrayal of the Emperor in the representations of Heraclius? And where do the roots of this similarity lie?

My point is that *typical* are the ways of narrating the emperor, which witness the ways of thinking and are shaped by the classical rhetorical element and by the Christian / biblical element.

⁴² Except Antiochus Stratigius

The structure of my dissertation corresponds to this division. The *first chapter* will be devoted to the classical element in the representations of Heraclius; *the second one* will be dedicated to the Christian element. Inside each chapter and each section I will discuss the interaction between the tradition and innovation in the representations of the Emperor, the influence of history on the image and the historical development of the image.

- *The First Chapter*

As the main function of the classical rhetoric is formalization of the thought, my first chapter will deal with the formal elements in the representation of the Emperor: first, the literary *genre* of panegyric, its structure (the relevant section is called “Praising Heraclius: The antique panegyric in the Byzantine age”), second, the *cardinal virtues* of the Emperor (the antique wisdom, courage, justice and temperance in the Byzantine age in relation to Heraclius), third, the *antique imagery* in the Byzantine sources (comparisons of Heraclius with Heracles, Perseus, Jason, Orpheus, Achilles, Ajax, Hector). Since the classical mode of narrating the Emperor seems to be natural and prominent among the intellectuals only till the 7th century, most of my sources for the first chapter derive from the 2nd–7th centuries (George of Pisidia and Theodore Syncellus on Heraclius; the late antique rhetors and classical writers as representatives of the tradition).

- *The Second Chapter*

The Christian element was even more prominent among the Byzantines than the classical one, because it touched anyone, not only the intellectual elite. The Bible was of course the most popular reading of the Byzantines⁴³, so all of my sources including both the sophisticated pisidian poet and the plain Georgius Monachus are shaped by the biblical mode of narrating. This mode, which implied eternal concentration on the Bible, narration of any event only putting it in context with the sacred history, citing the same verses in another age, under new circumstances, and with new sense — this mode shaped, among other things, a special way of narrating the emperor. In the second chapter I am going to find⁴⁴ and analyze the biblical expressions and quotations in the works of the Byzantine authors on Heraclius, the biblical comparisons of Heraclius with Noah, Moses, David, Solomon. I am going to examine the portrayal of Heraclius as a *pious* emperor, and uncover the ways of depicting piety (Heraclius’

⁴³ The Old Testament in Byzantium / Ed. by P. Magdalino and R. Nelson. Washington, 2010. P. 1–3.

⁴⁴ Using the on-line database of the Greek texts *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, and the electronic version of the edition *Biblia Patristica* – database *BiblIndex*.

prayers and speeches, the image of Heraclius with the icon and with the Gospel, the “pious way” of waging war, *Restitutio Crucis* and comparison with Constantine⁴⁵, *χριστομίμησις* etc).

- *The Third Chapter*

The third chapter is still under consideration. It should be dedicated to the ways of combining the classical and the biblical narrative techniques concerning Heraclius, and to the other elements of his image. The comparison of Heraclius and Alexander the Great, i.e. the *τόπος* of the universal empire is to be considered in this chapter as an example of the Christianization of Hellenism.

List of Abbreviations

AHR – American Historical Review

BF — Byzantinische Forschungen

Byz. — Byzantion

Chron. Pasch. - Chronicon Paschale / Ed. L. Dindorf. Vol. 1. Bonn, 1832.

CSCO — Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium

CSHB — Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae

DOP — Dumbarton Oaks Papers

EHR — English Historical Review

Georg. Mon. — *Georgius Monachus*. Chronicon / Ed. C. de Boor. Vol. 2. Leipzig, 1904

Glycas — Michaelis Glycae Annales / Recognovit I. Bekkerus // CSHB. Bonn, 1836.

JHS — Journal of Hellenic Studies

Magdalino, Old Testament - The Old Testament in Byzantium / Ed. by P. Magdalino and R. Nelson. Washington, 2010.

Mansi — Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio / Ed. J. D. Mansi. Firenze; Venezia. 1757–1798

Nicephoros - Nicephori episcopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica / Ed. de Boor. Leipzig, 1880.

ODB - The Oxford dictionary of Byzantium / Ed. by A. Kazhdan. New-York; Oxford, 1991

PG — Patrologia graeca

RÉB — Revue des études byzantines

Себеос - Себеос. История императора Иракла / Пер. с армянского К. Патканяна. СПб., 1862.

⁴⁵ New Constantines: Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries / Ed. by P. Magdalino. St Andrews, 1994. P. 1–10.