

= Orphanotrophos =

Orphanotrophos (Greek : ?????????????) was a Byzantine title for the curator of an orphanage (????????????????? , orphanotropheion) . The director of the most important orphanage , the imperial orphanage in Constantinople , established in the 4th century and lasting until the 13th century , eventually rose to become an office of particular significance and ranked among the senior ministers of the Byzantine state .

= = History = =

In the spirit of Christian philanthropy , the Byzantine world showed particular care towards the weaker members of society , including widows , orphans , the sick or the elderly . Orphans were either adopted by foster parents , or sheltered in monasteries or in orphanages , the latter often run by monasteries .

In Constantinople , the Byzantine capital , there was a particularly large orphanage in the northeastern corner of the city , at the site of the ancient acropolis of Byzantium , which eventually came under imperial patronage . According to the Patria of Constantinople , it traced its antecedents to a series of charitable establishments founded in the reign of Constans II (ruled 337 ? 361) by the patrikios and protovestiarios Zotikos , for which the latter was canonized by the Church . According to a novel by Emperor Leo I the Thracian in 469 , Zotikos was the first to bear the title of orphanotrophos . In the 5th century , the priest Nikon and Acacius , later Patriarch of Constantinople (472 ? 488) , are known to have been successively orphanotrophoi in the capital , while another future patriarch , Euphemius (489 ? 495) held the post in the provincial town of Neapolis .

The legislation of Justinian I (r . 527 ? 565) often mentions the orphanages and the office of orphanotrophos , but it was not until the reign of his successor Justin II (r . 565 ? 578) that the institution in the capital acquired its definite characteristics : Justin and his wife Sophia , with the aid of a protovestiarios also named Zotikos , built an orphanage near the Church of St. Paul (or SS . Peter and Paul according to Theophanes the Confessor) ? probably the church of the same name near the Gate of Eugenios on the sea @-@ wall of the Golden Horn mentioned by Nikephoros Gregoras ? and restored the foundation of the first Zotikos , which was possibly converted into a leprosarium . Justin bequeathed an annual stipend of 443 nomismata to the orphanage and made its possessions inalienable . It was probably then that the capital 's orphanotrophos began to be appointed by the emperors . As a result , while in the provinces , the post of orphanotrophos continued to be occupied by clergymen , in the capital , it soon became a formal office and was held by members of the secular administrative hierarchy .

In the 9th ? 11th centuries , the orphanotrophos ' role seems to have been limited to the imperial orphanage in the capital , while the provincial charitable foundations were under the supervision of two other officials , the chartoularios tou sakelliou and the megas kourator . The orphanotrophos was responsible for his wards and steward of their fortune until the age of 20 , unless they married earlier ; he was forbidden from selling his wards ' possessions unless by special authorisation ; and in case of maladministration was answerable to the Eparch of the City . According to the 10th @-@ century De ceremoniis , the orphanotrophos had the following subordinate officials :

the secretaries of the house (???????????????? ??? ????? , chartoularioi tou oikou) , probably administering the new orphanage founded by Justin II and Sophia

the secretaries of the saint (???????????????? ??? ????? , chartoularioi tou hosiou) , probably in charge of the original orphanage founded by Zotikos

a treasurer (????????? , arkarios) , apparently in common for both establishments

a number of curators (????????????? , kouratores) of unspecified function , perhaps administering affiliated institutions

In the Taktikon Uspensky of ca . 843 , the orphanotrophos holds the exalted rank of patrikios and comes 37th in precedence , immediately after the chartoularios tou vestiariou , while in the Kletorologion of 899 he comes in 56th place among the dignities conferred by decree , after the epi ton deeseon . The De ceremoniis describes the orphanotrophos ' role in certain imperial ceremonies

, often along with his wards , who were led to the Emperor 's presence , sung chants and received gifts from him . The court ranks conferred to the orphanotrophoi in the 9th ? 11th centuries were those of anthypatos , patrikios and protospatharios ; this was restricted to the secular holders of the office , however , since as a rule , ecclesiastics did not hold a court rank . Several holders of the office , however , combined it with other secular administrative offices . Most famously , the eunuch John the Orphanotrophos rose to become the virtual regent of the Empire in the late reign of Romanos III Argyros (r . 1028 ? 34) , before raising his brother Michael IV (r . 1034 ? 41) and nephew Michael V (r . 1041 ? 42) to the throne . John was named orphanotrophos already under Romanos III , and after becoming a monk soon after , he divested himself of his other secular titles and maintained only the former , by which he is known .

The imperial orphanage was restored after being damaged by earthquakes in the late reign of Romanos III Argyros , but had once more fallen into disrepair by the time of Alexios I Komnenos (r . 1081 ? 1118) , whose manifold charitable activities included its restoration and the foundation of a veritable township of charitable institutions around it for the blind , lamed and crippled , or elderly . Alexios endowed the institution with considerable revenue , and founded a school where the orphans could receive a free tuition . Alexios ' son and successor , John II Komnenos (r . 1118 ? 43) , enlarged it further . During the period of the Latin Empire , its fate is unknown , but it is likely that like most Byzantine public buildings it fell into disrepair . As part of his wide @-@ scale reconstruction of the city following its reconquest in 1261 , Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r . 1259 ? 82) erected a school " on the grounds of the old orphanotropheion " , likely indicating that it had ceased to function for some time by then .

Despite the dissolution of the imperial orphanage , the office of the orphanotrophos survived into the Palaiologan period in its fiscal capacity . As early as the Kletorologion , the orphanotrophos was classed among the fiscal secretaries , the sekretikoi (occupying the 11th place among them) , and he apparently succeeded an earlier fiscal official , the " kourator of the Mangana " , in his functions . In the early 14th century , Manuel Philes still calls him " the treasurer of imperial means " , but the mid @-@ 14th century Book of Offices of pseudo @-@ Kodinos records that the office , although still occupying the 56th place in the palace hierarchy , no longer had a particular function . According to Kodinos , his court dress consisted of a long silk kabbadion , and a domed skaranikon hat covered in velvet and topped by a small red tassel .

= = List of known orphanotrophoi = =

A number of seals of otherwise unidentified holders of the office have also survived . One records a Datos , " orphanotrophos and vestarches " , while the others cannot be certainly dated . Two seals also survive of subordinate officials , one of the deacon Michael Tetrapolites , clerk and functionary of the orphanage , and another , dated to the 13th century , of Niketas , Bishop of Ionopolis and chartoularios of the mega orphanotropheion (" great orphanage ") .