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Imperial sainthood? Justinian’s body between the Terrestrial and Heavenly spheres

In a memorable episode from his panegyric *buildings*, Procopius of Caesarea describes how a chest with martyr relics found in the foundations of *Hagia Eirene* is opened on the knees of the sick Emperor Justinian: The ruler himself experiences immediate healing, and as proof of the divine power a holy oil flows out of the vessel, moistening the emperor’s purple robe and turning it into a remedy for all who will be hopelessly sick in the future (Procop. *aed.* I 7,7-11). The theme that Procopius uses here has its roots in hagiographic wonder episodes. At the same time, the passage is only one out of several contemporary testimonies that approach Justinian’s bodily appearance and *habitus* to that of an ascetic taking part in wondrous deeds – *i.e.*, a holy man. The body of the ruler in his purple ornate, embodying, in the early Byzantine empire, the monarchy itself, here seems to transcend the limits between the terrestrial and the heavenly sphere. The paper strives to investigate this phenomenon in the context of contemporary Christian discourse and to investigate in how far the orientation towards models of holiness, visible here in an exemplary manner, shaped the evolvement of the Byzantine monarchy.

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