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# Documents, Acts and Archival Habits in Early Christian Church Councils: A Case Study

**Abstract:** The paper presents a case study for the handling and archiving of documents and acts related to church councils during Late Antiquity. At a sequence of interrelated events—both before assemblies of bishops and in meetings convened by imperial officials—in the run-up to the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) a wide range of documents was examined and utilised. Administrators of church and empire and their staff paid meticulous attention to the characteristic features of textual objects before them and inferred their validity, provenance and previous handling. The terminologies for such documents and acts employed by these ancient practitioners also reflect careful consideration of their status. The paper shows how observation of divergent textual formality and retrieval from different sources combined to reveal different 'loci' and modes of authority, and detects a range of administrative practices underlying their use.

At the beginning of the fourth century, the Christian churches emerged from persecution and instead found themselves, beginning with the reign of Constantine, increasingly in receipt of the favour—materially and ideologically—of emperors and government officials. Among its many effects this change sparked a rapid and intense development of the institutional features of the churches; matters of church organisation across regions and provinces, of office holding, the control of finances and of the employ of resources became more urgent. Central to these developments, a major new institution for the regulation of disputes emerged in the form of church councils or synods.[1] Church councils also became a focal point and prism for the production and handling of significant amounts of texts, both theological and administrative in nature. The manifold efforts at disciplinary regulation internal to the churches, often, but not exclusively conducted at councils,

1 The meetings are in the Greek speaking parts of the empire commonly referred to as a *synodos*, while Latin authors either use the loanword *synodus* (fem.) or more commonly employ the term *concilium*. Importantly both terms are used interchangeably in the ancient world and do not denote a difference in authority and reach.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110541397-009, 

found expression in decisions that were recorded, extracted and collected as canons and eventually lead to the emergence of canon law as a specialist branch of legal learning and activity. Bishops also found themselves involved in the imperial legal system where they were tasked to hear and adjudicate disputes—the so-called *episcopalis audientia*.[2] To these (quasi-) juridical responsibilities an emerging ecclesiastical bureaucracy is of central importance. Inevitably such activities of churchmen resulted in paperwork, which required 'professional' skills in producing and handling the documents. Specialist personnel for taking and keeping records—usually called 'notaries'—soon make their appearance in Christian sources; theirs is a new, distinct clerical function. By the turn of the fifth century, major episcopal sees like Alexandria, Antioch or Rome boast 'chief notaries' who, we may infer, oversee a larger bureau with a number of subordinate office staff, all of whom were engaged principally in textual production and record-keeping.[3]

In the doctrinal disputes that motivate the convening of major empire-wide church councils a similar, and increasing, focus on records and documents can be observed. There is no good reason to separate artificially the working practices in councils between matters of a doctrinal nature on the one hand and those of a disciplinary nature on the other. On the contrary, very frequently the negotiation of doctrinal differences takes the form of a hearing to uncover and condemn the alleged heterodoxy of an incriminated individual in the style of a trial. Legal scholars, thus, have amply demonstrated the similarities of conciliar transactions to the conduct of court cases.[4] The proceedings of these councils have also been likened to those of the imperial senate or regional assemblies.[5] Even if they fall short of explaining sufficiently the character of church councils in other respects, both analogies capture some of the mechanics at work and alert us to the fact that in order to function effectively these important events almost inevitably required a developed bureaucratic machinery. The deliberations and decisions of councils

**2** For the much discussed question of the precise legal scope of this institution, see Steinwenter 1950, 915–917; Selb 1967, 162–217, and the recent brief survey by Sirks 2013, 79–88, see also Humfress 2013, 1817–18.

**3** See, for the relevant functions in the late antique and early byzantine church Leontaritou 1996, *s.vv*. See also Graumann 2017a.

**4** The classic example is Steinwenter 1934, 1–116. For a wider discussion about the judicial character of synods, see Girardet 1975.

**5** Beginning with Gelzer 1907, 142–155 (first printed in 1900). Though Gelzer acknowledged the serious lack of sources for senatorial procedural conventions, he felt confident to point out numerous parallels. The complete consonance between the institutions that Gelzer, and other scholars since, wanted to detect significantly overstates the case and neglects many particular features of councils.

produced, and dealt with, large amounts of documents and texts. They are not just of a church-historical interest. The historian Fergus Millar has recently pointed out that the surviving records of the four major church councils held between 431 and 451 CE in the reigns of the Emperors Theodosius II (408 to 450) and Marcian (450 to 457) provide the most detailed and dense documentation for the workings of Roman imperial government of any period of roman history, showing the constant intersection between imperial and ecclesiastical (textual) communication in the context of these events.[6] Archival practices and document keeping, thus, become a main interest for the understanding of the background operations of conciliar bureaucracy, yet it has thus far been almost entirely neglected in scholarship.

Significant documentary records of church councils were already produced over the course of the fourth century (and sporadically even before that).[7] These, however, survive only in part and indirectly; they are usually embedded in a secondary textual context, for example in polemical treatises and historical narratives, rather than being preserved in their original shape and context.[8] The use of such texts in polemical and historical treatises proves their availability to the interested (near-)contemporary reader and writer. Yet how those original council records were stored for safekeeping and future use is uncertain. Writing in 375/6, Jerome, for example, speaks of 'church-papers' (*ecclesiarum chartae*) stored in 'public archives' (*scrinia publica*)[9] in which he found the records of a particular controversial instance, and he invites the readers of his treatise to be assured of his account's veracity by ascertaining the original acts from the archive.[10] He does not mention which archive stored the relevant record, but since at the time of writing he sojourned in the East, moving between Antioch and Constantinople, there is a strong likelihood that the file in question could be found in one of these

**6** Millar 2006.

**7** For a very helpful listing of conciliar documents in the Latin-speaking west of the empire, see now Weckwerth 2013; for the Greek east, see Geerard 1980.

**8** A significant number of pertaining documents is being edited in the collection *Dokumente zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streites* (=Athanasius Werke, Bd. 3, Lfg. 1–2: *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streites* 318–328, ed. Opitz 1934 (repr. 2012); Lfg. 3: *Bis zur Ekthesis Makrostichos*, ed. Brennecke/Heil/von Stockhausen/Wintjes 2012; Lfg. 4: *Bis zur Synode von Alexandrien 362*, ed. Brennecke/von Stockhausen/Müller/Heil/Wintjes 2014; additional volumes are in preparation.

**9** Hieronymus, *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi* 18 (154,37–41, Canellis 2003): Quod si quis a nobis fictum putauit, scrinia publica scrutetur. Plenae sunt certe ecclesiarum chartae; recens adhuc rei memoria est. Supersunt homines qui illi synodo interfuerunt et, quod ueritatem firmet, ipsi Ariani haec ita ut diximus gesta non denegent. (156,51–53, Canellis 2003): Quae si quis plenius discere cupit, in Ariminensis synodi actis reperiet, unde et nos ista libauimus.

**10** For an interpretation of Jerome's evidence with respect of the modes of synodical procedure seen from the vantage points both of theological and cultural expectations, see Graumann 2017b.

great centres.[11] Another example where archival storage of ecclesiastical documents can be traced is provided by a colloquium or conference (called *collatio* in the sources) between bishops of two conflicting churches—conventionally called Donatists and Catholics respectively—in North Africa, held in Carthage in 411 CE.[12] The colloquium was convened on imperial orders and chaired and overseen by an imperial official; its minutes were deposited on his orders in the public archives, perhaps those of the provincial governor (but this is uncertain).[13] Since we are dealing here with a case of imperial adjudication, albeit on a matter of competing religious claims, the acts find their place in a public archive quite naturally, rather than in an ecclesiastical one. Just as church matters had become a concern for imperial governance generally, and ecclesiastical decision-making processes were both shaped by and, in turn, resulted in, imperial law making, the records, specifically, of administrative and ecclesiastical bodies were not always strictly separate. We may ask whether this was also the case in relation to the storage of such records and the keeping of archives.

The convention of archival storage as such is, at any rate, in evidence from the acts emanating from church councils, but we know very little about the internal workings or organisation of church archives—or libraries—over the course of the fourth century. By contrast, at least a glimpse into archival practices and concerns is afforded by the records of church councils from the reign of Theodosius II in the first half of the fifth century. They reveal a situation that is very likely specific to the capital Constantinople, where much of the dispute to which these records relate played out, but they may have wider implications for our question and can be supplemented by sporadic observations from other localities. Importantly the records of

**11** Jerome for a time assisted Pope Damasus in a secretarial function (see Hieronymus, *Epistula* 123,9 [82,14f., Hilberg 1918]: cum in chartis ecclesiasticis iuuarem damasum, romanae urbis episcopum, et orientis atque occidentis synodicis consultationibus responderem [...]). This gave him insight, Jerome claims, into the workings of the papal 'court' (he may have overstated his familiarity with the Pope and his proximity to the centre of power), but unfortunately he uses no technical terminology for the institution or space—whether library, archive or office—, in which he served.

**12** For the conference and its context in the Donatist Schism, see the brief introductions in Lancel/Alexander 1996–2002, 606–638; Schindler 1977, 648–700, esp. 654–668. Of the abundant scholarship on the issue, see for example, Lancel 2002 (French original: 1999), 275–305, for the events leading up to and including the conference esp. 287–300; Frend 1952, on the conference 275–289; and generally Kriegbaum 1986; as well as Grasmück 1964. For the Donatist 'standpoint' in the meeting, see also Graumann 2011.

**13** The deposition of the original acts in *publica monumenta* is stated CTh XVI 5,55 (constitution by Emperor Honorius of 30 August 414). Both Tengström (1962, 27–30) and Lancel (1972–1991, at vol. I.351f.) consider the use of the proconsular archive for this purpose more likely than that of any municipal archive.

these meetings survive not just in extracted form like so much of the fourth-century material but in their entirety—or at least in their original shape.

It is not necessary for our purposes to present in detail the theological and hierarchical disputes from which these records arise.[14] Suffice to briefly sketch the circumstances under which records were produced and used on these occasions. After disputes about the understanding of the incarnation of Christ had raged since 428 CE and an imperial council in Ephesus in 431 CE (the later so-called Third Ecumenical Council) had initially failed to solve the conflict, subsequent negotiations achieved an uneasy truce, which was ratified in 433 CE. Relative calm was restored on the surface for some fifteen years, even though propagandistic writing continued. In 447/8 CE, after the death of many of the original protagonists of the dispute, the crisis broke out afresh, and with renewed vehemence. Against this background, in 448 CE a monastic leader (archimandrite) by the name of Eutyches was accused of heterodoxy before the bishop of Constantinople, Flavian.[15] His case was heard before what is called the 'resident' or 'standing synod' of the church in the capital (*synodos endemousa*). This synod was composed of bishops present in the capital on other business and spontaneously convened whenever a matter for deliberation and adjudication arose.[16] The synod found Eutyches guilty of heterodox teaching, and deposed and excommunicated him. This hearing produced a record pertaining to eight meetings or sessions, where the interventions of participants were minuted and a number of pleas and documents were read out and entered into the files. However, soon after this verdict Eutyches and his supporters accused the synod of procedural improprieties and of a blatant falsification of its records. An imperial commission revisited the records of the synod. The commission conducted three meetings in Constantinople in the spring of 449 CE; from two of these meetings minutes survive.[17] Some discrepancies in the records were discovered and some circumstances of the synod's activities remained questionable but no clear verdict as to any manipulation of the records could be reached. After the imperial investigation about the correctness of procedure and minuting had finished, the matter was

**14** A helpful narrative overview of the events and conflicts is provided by Fraisse-Coué 1995, 499–550 and 1998, 9–77; as well as Perrone 1993, 11–118. Still useful are the classical accounts by Kidd 1922, III.192–339; Hefele/Leclerq 1908. There are numerous specialist examinations of the theological questions concerned.

**15** For the events, see Schwartz 1929; May 1989.

**16** See, in brief, Papadakis 1991, I.696–697; see further Stephanides 1936; Hajjar 1962.

**17** The records of the imperial inquires are contained in the minutes of the first session of the Council of Chalcedon, where they were read out; see CChalc. sess. I.555–828 (records of 13 April 449), ACO II.1.1, 148–176; and I.829–849 (of 27 April 449), ACO II.1.1, 177–179.

later passed on for adjudication of the *substance* of the case—the question of orthodox faith (not strictly a matter for imperial adjudication)—to an ecumenical (that is empire-wide) council. It assembled on Theodosius II's orders in the August of the same year 449 CE in Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia. In a plenary session this synod once more studied and head read out aloud to them all the documents and records mentioned and, as was expected, produced a protocol of its own proceedings. With this council's verdict the matter seemed closed. But there was widespread criticism, particularly in the west. After the death of Theodosius II a change in imperial religious policy occurred. His successor Marcian called another council to meet in Chalcedon in 451 CE, which reversed almost all the decisions taken in Ephesus two years previously. To do this, the existing records were read out once more and discussed at great length. This process was—again—minuted. What results is a complex layering of protocols from a sequence of meetings over the course of three years—all of which claim to be the verbatim record and authentic minute of events and were read and quoted as such—beginning with the Constantinopolitan 'resident synod', which had taken place in November of 448 CE, and culminating in their re-reading—in some cases for a second or third time—in the Council of Chalcedon in October of 451 CE. We owe it to the special circumstances of the case, that this treasure of interrelated documents and acts has been preserved. Together they form the first part (i.e.: the minutes of the first session) of the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, from where they need to be carefully disentangled. They need to be studied by reversing the process of their creation: by pealing away layer after layer of re-reading and discussion to identify the original shape of the protocol from each event in its turn.[18] It has already become apparent in this brief sketch that the reliability and authority of the various minutes were very much the focus of repeated critical examination at a number of these events. It is for this reason, I want to argue, that we find in the minutes occasional but detailed attention to the physicality of the documents and acts concerned. Physical features were displayed and 'read' by those involved in the meetings as evidence for the provenance of such documents and taken as indicative of their authenticity. Even if that argument is never explicitly made in the records themselves, a comparison to many other similar occasions, where there is hardly ever any mention of the physical shape and form of

**18** The text is edited *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, iussu atque mandato Societatis Scientiarum Argentoratensis* ed. Schwartz 1932–1938; for the texts of the transactions especially II.1.1–3 (Greek texts) and II.3.1–3 (Latin translation); all future references are to this edition [ACO]. See English translation: Price/Gaddis 2005. Price provides a helpful table of the layering of documents from the different occasions at vol. I.113f.

documents and acts, proves that such ostensive attention to texts as material objects is worthy of note. Precisely because council acts do *not* routinely refer to themselves or to the processes by which they come into existence, the very frequent attention given to this question in the acts of the meetings we want to examine must be considered significant. For the purpose of our investigation into manuscripts and archives in particular, both the attention to physical textual objects and the ways in which they were being passed on and kept between different meetings, of both ecclesiastical and imperial bodies, deserves our attention.

I want to focus on one telling example, the reading of documents and acts belonging to the Council of Ephesus (449 CE) that is conducted at the later Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), and will occasionally point out parallel instances from those other occasions mentioned. The Council of Chalcedon was tasked to revoke the decisions taken in Ephesus that were no longer deemed acceptable to the new imperial regime. The bishops scrutinised the entire case file, now with particular attention to the handling of the question in the Council of Ephesus in 449. Pope Leo famously had denounced the Ephesine Council a 'Robbers' Den'; and questions of potential violation of procedural propriety and outright manipulation were at the heart of the investigation. So the acts of Ephesus were being read, which contained all the other pieces already mentioned. The reading of the Ephesine proceedings is, in this way, at the same time a reading of the entire file and the older documents.

## 1 The imperial letters

After the session had been formally opened and initial squabbling over some participants' role on the occasion and differences about the desired sequence of agenda items had been resolved, the Chaldedonian council's investigation started by the reading, first, of several letters written by the Emperor Theodosius II to summon and instruct the council of 449 CE. These letters outlined that council's main task and agenda, instructed various members about who should preside over the council's business; who was allowed, or even ordered, to participate in it; which bishops, by contrast, were to be excluded; and what the roles of certain imperial official were to be on the occasion.

The acts note that the secretary Constantine from the imperial offices (the 'divine consistory': σηκρητάριος τοῦ θείου κονσιστωρίου) read the first of these letters 'from a codex' (ἀπὸ κώδικος ἀνέγνω); further letters are subsequently read by him

or a colleague 'from the same codex' ([ἀνέγνω] ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ κώδικος).[19] After that and at a crucial junction a significant change in the reading material is stated: A new document is introduced, and the acts inform us of its origin: Aetius, the Archdeacon of the Church of Constantinople hands this object over for reading to the same imperial secretary.[20]

This new document is called a *schedarion* (σχεδάριον).[21] It is introduced for the first time at the very beginning of readings from the Acts of Ephesus II themselves, and since the text read out aloud starts with the conventional opening elements of a conciliar minute—date and place of the meeting, imperial orders, attendance list[22]—we can be sure that the *schedarion* contains the Ephesine protocol from its very beginning. Whenever the reading of this (Ephesine) text was subsequently interrupted by discussion at Chalcedon, and later resumed, the acts note that the officers read, once more, 'from the same *schedarion*'.[23]

We thus have to consciously register the fact that the imperial letters and the *Ephesine Acta* were being read from two different textual objects, two different manuscripts. The imperial letters read at the beginning of the session were found in a 'codex' separate from the Ephesine acts. Yet the same letters were also contained in the acts of the council and were in fact read again later, at the places where they occurred in the sequence of these acts.[24] The reading from a codex, hence, does not provide information which was not otherwise obtainable and must serve a different purpose.

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**19** CChalc. sess. I.23 (ACO II.1.1, 67.37); after that consistently repeated: CChalc. sess. 46 (ACO II.1.1, 70.38); 47 (71.18); 48 (72.1f.); 49 (731f.); 50 (73.19f.).

**20** The significance of this observation, one can hypothesise, is in the suggestion that this new document is of ecclesiastical provenance, perhaps taken from the archives of the bishop of the capital.

**21** CChalc. sess. I.66 (ACO II.1.1, 77.5–7): Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ καθωσιωμένος μαγιστριανὸς καὶ βοηθὸς τῶν θείων σηκρήτων **ἀπὸ σχεδαρίου** ἐπιδοθέντος παρὰ Ἀετίου ἀρχιδιακόνου τῆς κατὰ τὴν βασιλεύουσαν Κωνσταντινούπολιν ἁγιωτάτης ἐκκλησίας ἀνέγνω.

**22** This is the required formal document head (*protokollon*) in late roman and byzantine documents generally, see Wenger 1953, 747, with reference to the relevant prescriptions in Justinian, *Novella* 47 (of 537 CE) postdating the council; and Dölger/Karayannopulos 1968, 49f., 51f. In later byzantine custom dating is usually transferred to the *eschatokollon* at the end of the document.

**23** See, for instance, CChalc. sess. I.67 (ACO II.1.1, 77.11): Ὁ αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σχεδαρίου ἀνέγνω. After this regularly, and with similar phrasing: CChalc. sess. I.77 (ACO II.1.1, 78.13); 107 (85.6); 140 (88.32f.); 163 (92.4); 184 (94.23); 196 (97.15f.); 237 (103.3f.).

**24** CChalc. sess. I.67 (ACO II.1.1, 77.8–10): Θεῖον γράμμα καταπεμφθὲν πρὸς Διόσκορον τὸν εὐλαβέστατον ἐπίσκοπον περὶ τοῦ παραγενέσθαι ἐν τῇι κατ' Ἔφεσον συνόδωι, ὅπερ ἀνωτέρω ἐντέτακται 'ἀπὸ κώδικος ἀνέγνω'. The acts conventionally simply refer to the documents concerned in this abbreviated manner. They refer back to its previous reading and insertion in the minutes, rather than transcribing the text in full again. Whether this was an original feature of the acts or at what point in the text's transmission this happened is difficult to discern. The other

A number of observations allow exploring the character and provenance of the codex further. Important indications come from the way in which the codex versions of the letters are represented. After a version of the letter of invitation addressed personally to Dioscorus of Alexandria, the designated chairman of the Ephesine council, had been read, the secretary was able to point out that other bishops had received letters of the same tenor.[25] This information, we may surmise, was most probably provided from an annotation on the copy from which he read. Similarly, the reading of the emperor's instructions to the senior imperial representative Helpidius concludes with a note that a mandate of the same tenor was also issued to Eulogius, a junior colleague in his task.[26] This time the note is undoubtedly part of the text read, not an explanatory remark by the secretary.[27] And again, a note affirming that a letter of the same tenor was also sent to Juvenal of Jerusalem follows each of two further instructions addressed to Dioscorus of Alexandria, which specifically order the attendance of the monk Barsaumas—unusual in a council—and prohibit that of Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus.[28] The letter to Helpidius lacks the salutation and the closing lines and the two letters mentioned last are also missing the closing lines.[29] From these observations there remains little doubt that the codex resembled a kind of register of imperial letters and mandates. Summary remarks about additional addressees and documents in kind here substituted for the keeping of multiple, in all other elements identical, copies.[30] It is the kind of summary that imperial secretaries would routinely keep

instances of repeated reading out aloud of the imperial letters are noted CChalc. sess. I.81 (ACO II.1.1, 82); 108 (85); 112 (86); 115 (86).

**25** CChalc. sess. I.25 (ACO II.1.1, 69.9–11).

**26** CChalc. sess. I.49 (ACO II.1.1, 72.31).

**27** This may be inferred from the absence of any remark in the minutes indicating that the reading officer provided this information, as had been the case at I.25 (see above note 25).

**28** CChalc. sess. I.47 (ACO II.1.1, 71.16): Τῶι αὐτῶι τύπωι Ἰουβεναλίωι τῶι εὐλαβεστάτωι ἐπισκόπωι ἐκκλησίας Ἱεροσολύμων; and, using the same terminology and phrase (τῶι αὐτῶι τύπωι) again I.52 (ACO II.1.1, 74.29f.).

**29** Imperial letters cited at CChalc. sess. I.49; I.52 and I.47 (see previous notes). The classifications and descriptions of later byzantine documents frequently observe the missing of protocols and eschatocols as a typical feature of registry copies preserved in the sender's archive; see Dölger/Karayannopulos 1968, 133f.

**30** Two letters are retained (at CChalc. sess. I.49 and 50 of the minutes), which give a fascinating insight into the drafting of such letters and the use of stock phrases. The mandate to Helpidius, outlining his responsibilities, and the letter to Proclus the proconsul of Asia, informing him of Helpidius' task and decreeing provision of any assistance necessary to him, share in common a first paragraph, in which the general purpose and reason for the calling of the council are briefly stated: it is word for word identical. Only when the distinct tasks are mandated, does the drafting go separate ways.

for future reference.[31] Such a registry copy would most probably have been produced in the imperial consistory where the originals had been issued, and kept there. This hypothesis seems to be further supported by the observation that a clerk of the imperial consistory handled the copy from which reading pursued.[32] The codex from which reading was conducted, therefore, was an archival copybook of imperial letters.

Our reconstruction thus appears to establish the existence of an imperial archive in which to produce and keep a register of imperial letters. Yet, the difficulties encountered in compiling the Theodosian Code only some two decades before (the assemblage of the Code was ordered in 429 and its publication happened in 438), the fact that the compilers had to travel the provinces and explore obscure libraries and private collections, it is argued by some scholars, militates against the notion of a central archive.[33] The circumstances for the compilation of the Code, however, differ greatly from those here in view. Whereas the compilers sought out legislation spanning a century and from a time when the court was still mainly itinerant, the secretaries here only needed recourse to texts produced two years ago, and relating to events intimately connected to the current case. No

**31** Writing in the reign of Justinian, John Lydus reports of what he describes as ancient practice in cases of law, by which secretaries would keep a synopsis of the main import of a decision to prevent later addition or subtraction; *De magistratibus rei publicae Romanae* 3.11.2 (Dubuisson/Schamp 2006, vol. II.57,15f. See Bandy 1983, at 150,1): σύνοψιν ὁ σηκρητάριος ἐποιεῖτο τῆς τοῦ πεπραγμένου δυνάμεως [...]. The summary remarks in the codex of letters under consideration betray a similar mode of operation in the imperial offices. By adding information about additional addressees of equivalent messages and excising what must be standard opening and closing formulae, the officers generate a kind of 'register' of imperial letters.

**32** CChalc. sess. I.23 (ACO II.1.1, 67.34–36). The 'secretary of the divine consistory' informs the council's chairman that he has these documents 'to hand' and is ready to read them out. Since in other cases it is pointed out in the minutes when documents had been received from a different person or source, we may surmise that these letters were in fact available to him in his office or the respective branch of the imperial administration and were very likely sourced there in preparation of the meeting and on the orders of the meeting's imperial chairmen. The case may therefore be analogous to the provision of documents from the imperial *scrinia* on another occasion the year before (see below 289), even though no repository is explicitly mentioned.

**33** For the vexed questions of the origin of texts included in the Theodosian Code, see the discussion in Honoré 1998, 136–142; Matthews 2000. Sirks 2007, esp. 109–127, considers a central source in the capital Constantinople the most plausible origin of (most) texts (141). This seems to be the case, by and large, for pronouncements emanating from the eastern court and starting approximately in the year 398 (Honoré 1998, 139f.), whereas earlier laws, it seems, might well have been retrieved from provincial archives and even private libraries. On the limitations and partial absence of a sophisticated systems of document retrieval in general, see also Kelly 2004, esp. 117–120.

big central archive is necessary for our hypothesis. A much smaller collection or depository with only a narrow thematic focus—we could *exempli gratia* call them ecclesiastical affairs—and chronological span would suffice to assure the existence of a register of imperial pronouncements and constitutions pertinent to this context. There is no strong case against some archival depository that kept a register of the letters written by Theodosius II for the organisation of the council. It is even conceivable that the difficulties encountered earlier in his reign by the compilers of the Law Code motivated an improvement in imperial record keeping.

In the event, all letters concerned made another appearance in the Ephesine Acts and were during the same session at Chalcedon subsequently read again from the *schedarion* that also contained them. The procedural logic and purpose of the initial reading in Chalcedon 'from a codex' is by now already apparent. The procedure assured, and demonstrated to all concerned, that for its cognizance of the original invitations and instructions issued to the council and to various individuals by the Emperor Theodosius II, the Council of Chalcedon did not simply rely on the Ephesine Acts, which contained them. It employed, rather, a text independent of these acts—a text whose character and provenance, moreover, were identifiable by its appearance in the codex-form as a government copy; its authority was thus underlined. Theodosius' instructions, in other words, were read from the source of origin—that is: Theodosius' government offices—rather than from a version attested by the recipient—in theory, and depending on the individual letters: specific council members, or individual bishops, or the government officials addressed by Theodosius in each case, but in reality by the acts of Ephesus II which assembled all of them. They were read *before* the acts of the council (where the same letters and mandates appear again), so that the adherence to the original instructions could be tested.

The procedure, in this part of the proceedings, thus rests on the record-keeping of the imperial offices, not an ecclesiastical repository. Because the documents were originally produced just a couple of years earlier, we may question whether they should be considered archival in the strict sense. For the Emperor Theodosius II, the case was closed with the judgement passed by the Ephesine Council of 449 CE, and so it is not unreasonable to presume that the pertaining instructions for that event were no longer handled as a 'live' case file, but archived. When after his death the new Emperor Marcian called a new council, the matter again turned into a present concern, and the documents were retrieved for the occasion. On this evidence, the imperial archival practices functioned smoothly on the occasion.

## 2 The conciliar files

The understanding of the second object from which reading progresses, the *schedarion* of the ephesine acts, presents a greater difficulty. First of all, the contrast between this manuscript and the codex used before implies that the *schedarion* is not a codex. Had it been a codex as well, the acts would have needed to mark the contrast by a note amounting to something like 'he read from a *different* codex'. The note that the reading took place from a codex would not otherwise sufficiently distinguish the two objects.

What kind of a document are we faced with, and what can we ascertain about its storage? At least three further texts handled in the wider context of the Eutychian affair and the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon are also identified in each case as a *schedarion*. One is the transcript of the first inquiry into Eutyches' trial held on 8 April 449. This *schedarion*, we are able to place in an archive: it was fetched for reading, just five days later on 13 April from the 'divine office of plaints and divine investigations' (τοῦ θείου σκρινίου τῶν λιβέλλων καὶ τῶν θείων κογνιτιόνων).[34] The other two are the records respectively of the first session (8 October) of the Chalcedonian Council that was read in the fourth session of the same council on 17 October, 9 days later;[35] and a separate one of the second session held on 10 October and read out on the same occasion, seven days later. *Schedaria*, thus are records of proceedings, the precise status and format of which needs yet to be determined. In each case the intervals between meetings and the drawing up and re-reading of records are very short; we should not speak of 'archival' retrieval of records in these cases.[36] Another example, however, employed in a later session, shows that such a *schedarion* could be kept for a longer duration. In the fourteenth session (31 October) that deals with contested episcopal claims to the bishopric in Perrha (in the Province Syria Euphratensis),[37] a *sche-*

**34** CChalc. sess. I.557 (ACO II.1.1, 149.29f.); for the date see I.556 (149.21f.).

**35** CChalc. sess. IV.2 (ACO II.1.2, 92.12–15): [ὁ] σηκρητάριος ἀπὸ σχεδαρίου πραχθέντος ἐν ὑπατείαι τοῦ δεσπότου ἡμῶν Μαρκιανοῦ τοῦ αἰωνίου αὐγούστου καὶ τοῦ δηλωθησομένου τῆι πρὸ ὀκτὼ Εἰδῶν Ὀκτωβρίων ἐν Χαλκηδόνι μεταξὺ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀνέγνω. Lampe [7]1984, 1357, *s.v.*, is surely missing the point when he subsumes this passage to the meaning of '(any) short document' (see below).

**36** CChalc. sess. IV.3 (ACO II.1.2, 93.3): ἀπὸ ἑτέρου σχεδαρίου. The local provenance of these two *schedaria* is not specified, but we may infer that a conciliar 'bureau' was preparing and handling these records of meetings conducted only a few days previously.

**37** See Schieffer 1984, 248f. *s.v.* Perrha.

*darion* is brought of a synod hearing the case in Antioch in 445 CE. This document, too, provides a transcript of the meeting, but is significantly curtailed in that it misses all relevant documents.[38] Importantly a physical defect of the object at the beginning is observed and noted in the Chalcedonian acts.[39] Over the course of six years since the original hearing, the file had suffered unspecified damage or decay, perhaps of the kind that may be associated with archival storage in unsuited conditions such as damp or that is caused by insect larvae.

The meaning of the word *schedarion* given in conventional late antique-byzantine (and modern) lexica is either that of a draft, or (because of the diminutive) that of any short document.[40] The length of the ephesine acts precludes the latter understanding. It seems equally problematic to understand the *schedarion* read aloud during the session as a draft[41]—at least without further qualification. After all, the intense scrutiny afforded to the acts would seem to make an unfinished and preliminary textual instantiation unsuited for the purpose.

Of the very few occurrences of the term in Greek literature—apart from very late byzantine sources—a highly technical, and somewhat obscure passage in John

**38** The effects of the file's state for the conduct and outcome of the case require separate examination (forthcoming).

**39** CChalc. sess. XIV.14 (in the Greek enumeration of sessions retained by Schwartz, this is the fifteenth session), ACO II.1.3, 69,5–7: Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ καθωσιωμένος σηκρητάριος τοῦ θείου κονσιστορίου ἀπὸ σχιδαρίου ἐπιδοθέντος αὐτῶι παρὰ Σαβινιανοῦ τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου ἐπισκόπου, οὗ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἔφθαρται, τὰ ἐξῆς ἀνέγνω [...]. It is interesting to note that the document is handed over by the present bishop of Perrhe, Sabinianus. Does this suggest that the document was kept in his episcopal library or archive, rather than that of Antioch, where the hearing had been conducted?

**40** See *Suidae Lexicon*, *s.v.*: Σχεδάριον: δέλτος, πινακίδιον, τιτλάριον (Adler 1928–1935 repr. Stuttgart 1971); Σ1769, at IV.489; similiarly Photius, who notes the same synonyms *s.v.* δέλτος (Theodoridis vol. 1 *(A—Δ)* 1982) *Δ* 170, p. 387. See Liddell/Scott/Jones 1996, 1743 *s.v.*; Passow 1970, vol. II.2, col. 1789 *s.v.*; Lampe [7]1984, 1357 *s.v.* See however Stephanus [3]1831– 1865 (repr. 1954), VIII, 1645 where the approximate equivalence with the Latin *scheda* is already appropriately noted.

**41** The acts differ markedly from other examples of ancient usage, where the draft-character of the documents is apparent. A papyrus from Oxyrhynchos, P.Princ. 2 96, dated to either 551–2 or 556–7 shows the word σχιδάρ(ιον) written four times into the corner of an accounts list detailing wages for various people; this is clearly a 'draft' in the full sense of the word; see Harrauer/Sijpesteijn 1986, 115–116; and the database http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.princ;2;96 (last accessed: 01/03/2017). The papyrus P.Oxy 24. 2416, dated to before 566, (see http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;24;2416) that concerns an inheritance, and whose regulations may indeed be of a preliminary character, is the only other instance of the word on papyrus contained in the database. In private law suits a draft resolution could be presented to the judge by the parties, which might then be accepted or modified for his decision.

Lydus[42] (*De magistratibus rei publicae Romanae*) that describes the issuing of court documents in pre-Justinian times may shed light on the usage of the term in the acts. The *schedarion* finds its proper place in the elaborate bureaucratic choreography that ensured the proper handling and safeguarding of the documentary records of law cases and the formal steps and requirements for their authorisation; it is what is in Latin called the *recensum*, that version of text, which is authorised for the subsequent production of an issuable copy to the relevant parties.[43] The passage distinguishes a *recensum* (a 'collacted copy') from earlier textual stages; this is then handed to the magistrate for signing and thus turns into a *katharon* (a genuine, fine, copy)—it is important to note that this still is the same physical object—, which is read carefully once more by the secretaries before it is subsequently issued to the 'litigator' and allowed to leave the offices. We may take from John Lydus' description the emphasis on the need for administrative authentication of documents and the character of the *schedarion* as both original and provisional: original in presenting the record in the form that becomes, through the officer's signature, the right and proper record (*katharon*); provisional in that further steps are still required for its issue and release outside the office.[44] The *schedarion* thus retains the connotation of 'not-the-last' step in the sequence of textual practices set in motion by the recording of discussion. It is still awaiting publication. That the missing formal publication—which only happened if there was cause for it[45]—did not invalidate the original and authentic status of the document may be inferred from the appellation

**42** For a very brief introduction see Maas 1992; the best interpretation of the work in a historical perspective, and for our understanding of the bureaucratic procedures, is Kelly 2004, see especially 18–63.

**43** Johannes Lydus, *Mag*. 3.11–12 (II.56–59 Dubuisson/Schamp 2006; see 148–152 Bandy 1983); see esp. 3.11.2 (II.57, l.7–15 Dubuisson/Schamp): [...] ἀναγινώσκοντας πρῶτον τὰς ψήφους καὶ ὑποτάττοντας τῷ λεγομένῳ σχεδαρίῳ τὸ παρ' Ἰταλοῖς καλούμενον ῥέκησον, ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀντιβολήν, διδόναι πρὸς ὑπογραφὴν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῖς εἰς τοῦτο τεταγμένοις [...] εἶτα ἐκεῖθεν πρὸς τῶν σηκρηταρίων ἐμμελῶς ἀναγινωσκομένου τοῦ λεγομένου καθαροῦ οὕτω τε ἀπολυομένου τῷ λιτιγάτωρι [...].
My interpretation follows, at l.9, the conjecture of ῥέκησον *(recensum)* for the meaningless and corrupted ρεκινον in the manuscripts (for which see Bandy 1983, 149.21 with *app. ad locum* and commentary ibid. 307), also accepted by the most recent editors Dubuisson/Schamp 2006, see *app. ad locum* and, with discussion, 'notes complémentaires' 157f.

**44** In an analysis of the Carthaginian protocols, Tengström 1962, had concluded–largely based on internal evidence – that the *scheda* mentioned there must denote the original record of the minutes (p. 40: [das] 'nicht reingeschriebene Originalprotokoll' or 'Grundoriginal'). See Wenger 1953, 746, 750.

**45** See Wenger 1953, 313, 751ff., and index *s.v*. For the slow and very limited circulation of information and documents from the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon in the West, see Wyrwa 1997, 147–189, esp. 148–158.

given to the trial record in the case of Eutyches. In a short narrative description of the process of comparative reading employed there, the document produced by Aetius is emphatically called the *authenticon schedarion*,[46] emphasising in this way the originality of the document over its provisionality. The Council of Chalcedon, then, and the imperial commission before it, both, and on separate occasions, took cognizance specifically and purposefully of an original document. The safekeeping of such documents was therefore of primary importance and archival habits must have been operative in both imperial and ecclesiastical offices to underpin this way of proceeding.[47]

What, if anything, may be inferred for the keeping of the original document of transactions from the Council of Ephesus? If the *schedarion* read at Chalcedon consisted of the original record of the Ephesine Council, where had it been kept in the intervening two years? Is the fact that the Constantinopolitan Archdeacon Aetius hands it over for reading in any way relevant to this question? The same archdeacon had already been tasked to produce the original trial record against Eutyches at the inquiry of 13 April 449.[48] That trial record appears to have been in the archdeacon's possession, because of his very close personal connection to it. He had directly overseen both the minuting and the editorial assemblage of the record. It would not be a surprise, then, if his duties also extended to the safekeeping of the documents in whose making he had been instrumental. Yet in a later statement before the imperial commission, Aetius claimed that all his notes and texts had been

**46** See Inquiry of 13 April 449, in CChalc. sess. I.614, ACO II.1.1, 156,5f.: Καὶ διὰ Ἀστερίου τοῦ καθωσιωμένου ἐκσκέπτορος τὸ αὐθεντικὸν σχεδάριον τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν νοταρίων προενεχθὲν ἄλλου τὰ ἀντίγραφα ἅτινα ἐκ τοῦ μέρους Εὐτυχοῦς τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου ἀρχιμανδρίτου, προενεχθέντα συγκρίνοντος ἀνεγνώσθησαν. It is essential to this process, that the record read by Asterius should be the original and authentic one.

**47** This use of original documents is significant. In the case of Eutyches, officially issued copies were available. After all his attorneys brought their complaint on the basis of such a copy issued to him. In the case of Ephesus II, the availability of an authorized version is at least likely. Pope Leo, it seems, had the opportunity to have a Latin translation prepared before the Council of Chalcedon, contained in the *Collectio Novarensis de re Eutychis*, ed. Schwartz 1932. And even Nestorius, in exile in the Egyptian oasis, relates events from the meetings that seem to presuppose knowledge of the acts; see Nau et al. 1910), in particular at *Hercl.* II 2 (473ff. Bedjan; see 302ff. Nau). The conflation of seemingly precise references to events mentioned in the acts and other narrative features of his writing about the council that bear no resemblance with these acts requires further examination.

**48** Inquiry into the minutes of the Resident Synod, held on 13 April 449, cited CChalc. sess. I.580–596, ACO II.1.1, 153f.

taken away two or three month prior to the inquiry.[49] So the record moved from being held by an ecclesiastical officer—whether in a personal capacity and 'private' storage facility or in an official archive attached to and hosted by the episcopal offices is impossible to say—to become part of a case-file of the government inquiry. When the investigation took place, other records were brought from the imperial *scrinium*.[50] Where the actual *schedarion* of the trial against Eutyches was obtained is not specified in the minutes of the inquiry. That Aetius was requested to make it 'public', then, need not be an indication of the distinct place of archival safekeeping, be it in the episcopal archive for which he worked or be it in his private storage—after all he had claimed that papers had been taken away from him. Rather it more probably served as a symbolic act to demonstrate the ecclesiastical character and provenance of the document concerned as well as asserting his personal responsibility in drawing it up. In the particular instance, all documents 'travelled' only between different people and places within the city of Constantinople. In the case of the acts from the Council of Ephesus the matter is more complex. Here, too, Aetius hands over the *schedarion* for reading in the Chalcedonian Council. If we wanted to read the Constantinopolitan archdeacon's ability to hand over the text as an indication of its physical location prior to being brought to Chalcedon—just across the straights of the Bosporus—we needed to explain how it could have got to Constantinople and the episcopal offices in the first place. The Carthaginian Conference had its protocol stored in the provincial archive. On that model, the Ephesine acts ought to have been stored in Ephesus. But at Chalcedon Bishop Stephen of Ephesus insisted that he had not received a copy of the minutes.[51] Taken strictly this statement relates only to the period between the close of the session and the signing of the decision, and does not rule out the later storage in a public provincial archive there. To understand his firm denial we have to take into account, additionally, his intention to exculpate himself from any involvement in Dioscorus' alleged

**49** I.827, ACO II.1.1, 176. The person who took Aetius' papers was one Asterius, called in this context a fellow presbyter and notary. Interestingly the person reading at the inquiry is also called Asterius, holding the office of *exceptor*, evidently in the imperial administration and most probably associated with the head of the inquiry, the patrician Florentius. The same name could be pure coincidence, or might Asterius have served, on different occasions or moving from one position to another over time, both the ecclesiastical and the imperial administration?

**50** Inquiry of 13 April 449 (see n. 48 above), in CChalc. sess. I.557, ACO II.1.1, 149.29: [...] προηνέχθη τὸ σχεδάριον ἀπὸ τοῦ θείου σκρινίου τῶν λιβέλλων καὶ τῶν θείων κογνιτιόνων [...]

**51** CChalc. sess. I.130, ACO II.1.1, p. 88, 2–6: [...]. I did not get copies of the minutes (οὔτε ἀντίγραφα ἔλαβον τῶν ὑπομνημάτων), and I do not know what happened next, but on the very day the investigation took place we signed on the sheet (ὑπεγράψαμεν εἰς χάρτην), and the bishops who had not signed it did so under my guarantee on the following day.

machinations at Ephesus. Even so his protestations make the hypothesis of Ephesus as the location of the storage of original acts less likely. Alternatively, and because all the record-keeping in Ephesus had been carried out by Alexandrian clergy from the staff of the council's chairman, Bishop Dioscorus of Alexandria, we might assume that responsibility for the raw-original remained with them, and the document travelled to Alexandria with them to be stored there. Yet it is decisively not by an Alexandrian clergyman but by one from Constantinople that the document is being produced at Chalcedon. Any hypothesis that immediately after the Ephesine Council the acts might have gone directly to the episcopal offices in Constantinople has little plausibility because of the deposition of its bishop on the occasion; the relationship was hostile. However, if the indirect evidence of a Latin translation and the knowledge of events gleaned from Nestorius' narrative point to an official, imperially endorsed and arranged 'publication', the raw-original would likely have been used to this end in a branch of the imperial administration and subsequently kept in an archive associated with it. This seems, to me, to be the most plausible explanation for a Constantinopolitan provenance of the documents put before the Chalcedonian council. Yet even if (in what is perhaps a less probable hypothesis) original acts were initially kept in an ecclesiastical and not an imperial archive—whether in Ephesus or, more likely, in Alexandria—, in order to be available in Chalcedon in 451 they needed to be seized by imperial officials prior to and in preparation for the council. In either hypothetical scenario the original *schedarion* ends up in imperial safekeeping, and therefore most probably in an imperial archive, from which it was subsequently taken to Chalcedon for transaction.

In this respect, the handover performed by a Constantinopolitan cleric—once again—does not so much provide evidence of the document's specific archival provenance; it is rather full of symbolic resonance. The Alexandrian bishop Dioscorus had been responsible for the deposition of the then bishop of Constantinople—Flavian, the predecessor of the current incumbent—in Ephesus; now he was under a cloud of accusations himself, and so the prominent role of a Constantinopolitan clergyman in presenting and handing-over the decisive document, on which he was going to be judged, neatly illustrated the reversal of fortunes.

All potential scenarios for the keeping of the document have to remain hypothetical; our limited evidence does not support a firm conclusion. What should have become apparent, nevertheless, is that by the middle of the fifth century, a complex bureaucratic operation was underway in regulating church affairs and huge amounts of paperwork were being produced in the process. There was an acute sense of the need to work with authoritative documents, and their status was inferred not least from physical features of the manuscripts in question. The need

for handling original documents in subsequent efforts of adjudication also required arrangements for storage and safekeeping.

Bishops at important major sees such as Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria lead, and were supported by, substantial administrative operations; these included infrastructure and practices of storing and retrieving important documents in a way that must have been similar to imperial administrative habits. The files of the case of Eutyches originally heard in Constantinople, those of the Second Ephesine Council—and also the one, only briefly mentioned,[52] produced by a synod in Antioch in 445 and brought to Chalcedon in an already damaged state—are examples for archival habits presumably more widespread in the church. Incidentally, the damaged Antiochene file also illustrates the ever-present difficulties in protecting stored documents from damage and loss that any archive faces.

We note, first of all, that in the sequence of events documents and entire sets of acts were passed on between different bodies: on the one hand meetings chiefly of churchmen (synods or councils) and on the other hearings held under the auspices of high government officials or administrators authorised to conduct inquiries by the emperor. In each case the file of a previous meeting (or set of meetings) was produced for reading and in this way entered the new proceedings. The revisiting of texts also resulted in the movement of the physical objects between the relevant branches: so the ecclesiastical acts of a Constantinopolitan Resident Synod came to form part of an imperial case-file when a commission undertook to inquire into their propriety. This file was brought forth for reading on a subsequent occasion from the *scrinia* of the law branch of the central imperial administration.[53] Later it re-entered the ecclesiastical sphere when the records were read once more in a meeting of bishops, this time the imperial synod convened at Ephesus. Probability suggests that the file was physically passed on into the safekeeping of the church as would have been the norm in civil law cases, but theoretically a copy could also have been made and included in the acts of the synod, while the previous—original—file was returned to its hypothetical place of storage in the imperial offices. What is important to note is the crossover between imperial and church bodies handling the same physical objects, and with it, we may surmise, the crossover between the employ of storage facilities belonging to either organisation. What the specific archival arrangements, internal to the ecclesiastical or imperial bureaucracies and their physical, even spatial configurations looked like in each case, our sources do not reveal. In particular whether administrative habits and the underly-

**52** See above 285 with n. 39.

**53** See above n. 50.

ing infrastructure showed any distinction between libraries and archives is impossible to garner from the cases in view in this paper. At least this must be said where the church is concerned; the imperial administrative archives—in contrast—must surely be considered discrete, physically and in inspiration, from any literary ambition and artistic context, whatever their architectural reality.[54]

The cases here in view do show, however, that no strict separation of church and state archives and archival habits can always be expected in practice, while at the same time the handling of documents provided ways to express symbolically the primary 'affiliation' of a document. The involvement of churchmen and imperial officers respectively in acts of handling and reading allowed showcasing 'where' the document ultimately belonged and 'whence' it originated and derived its principal authority: from the church or the imperial administration. The distinction was important but so was the close collaboration and indeed intersection between the two spheres and their administrative operations. At least in the contexts of imperial Church councils, not the distinction of separate spheres of authority but the collaboration between them translated readily into bureaucratic and archival practices. Textual production, handling, and storage mirrored closely the ideological and organisational intertwining of the late antique Roman Church and Empire. And so church acts will have been found frequently in 'public' archives associated with the imperial administration at various levels—be it one of the central government branches or be it a provincial or local office—and the fate of church *acta* also illustrates imperial archival practices.

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**54** For the situation of Constantinopolitan archives in the sub-structure of the Hippodrome, see Kelly 1996, 161–176.

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