

Βυζαντινή Σφραγιστική

ΠΜΣ

IBY 701, Α.-Κ. Βασιλείου-Seibt

Προσδιορισμός του όρου

- Βυζαντινή Σφραγιστική: Βοηθητική Επιστήμη της Ιστορίας που ασχολείται με την επεξεργασία, ανάλυση και ερμηνεία των σφραγίδων και του περιεχομένου τους και την ενσωμάτωση των πορισμάτων που προκύπτουν στην ιστορική έρευνα με σκοπό την λεπτομερέστερη ανασκευή του κρατικού, κοινωνικού, διοικητικού, οικονομικού, εκκλησιαστικού και πολιτισμικού πλαισίου της αυτοκρατορίας

Τι είναι οι σφραγίδες / Μέθοδος κατασκευής

Βουλωτήριο
βούλλα (από το λατ. *bullā*, -ae)
βουλώνω, βουλωτής



Πρώτη ύλη ο μόλυβδος / μολυβδόβουλλα

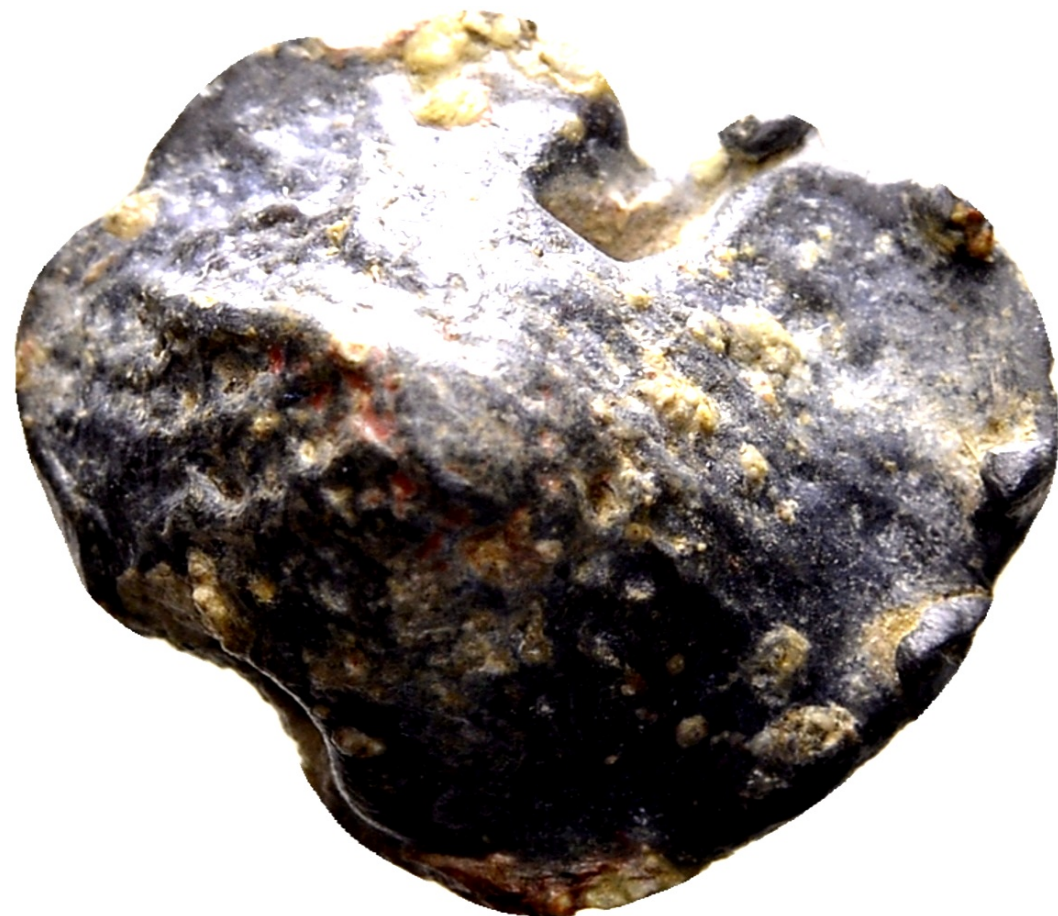
- Πρόκειται για αντικείμενα μικροτεχνίας, σχεδόν αποκλειστικά από μόλυβδο, που χρησιμοποιούνταν κυρίως για την πιστοποίηση της εγκυρότητας διαφόρων εγγράφων (δημοσίων και ιδιωτικών) και του αναλλοίωτου περιεχομένου τους, τα οποία και διασφάλιζαν κλειδώνοντάς τα, εφόσον άπτονταν επί εκείνων
- Σφραγίς, σφράγισμα, κλείς, κλειθρον
- Κλειστά έγγραφα & επιστολές
- Ανοικτά έγγραφα
- Σφράγιση εμπορευμάτων

Η συνήθεια της σφράγισης με μόλυβδο ανάγεται στη ρωμαϊκή εποχή

- Μολύβδινα σφραγίδια (plombs)
- Τήξη μολύβδου, χύση αυτού σε κωνοειδές εργαλείο και σφράγιση του ζεστού μετάλλου (με σφραγίδα ή δακτυλίδι). Η τελευταία μέθοδος απαιτούσε την υγροποίηση του μολύβδου σε αντίθεση με την βυζαντινή.



Aeternalius, IV C.



Σπανιότερη η χρήση χρυσού, αργύρου, κηρού

- Χρυσόβουλλος λόγος
(αυτοκράτορες)
- Αργυρόβουλλος λόγος
(ηγεμόνες της Ηπείρου)



Ποια περίοδο της βυζαντινής Ιστορίας καλύπτουν οι σφραγίδες;

Ποιοι σφράγιζαν;

- Σχεδόν ολόκληρη την Ιστορία του, εφόσον τα αρχαιότερα τεκμήρια προέρχονται από τον 4ο και τα μεταγενέστερα από τον 15^ο αιώνα, εντονότερα δε το χρονικό διάστημα από τον 9ο μέχρι και τον 12ο αιώνα.
- Πέρα από τους αυτοκράτορες και τους πατριάρχες σφράγιζαν σχεδόν κατεξοχήν κρατικοί (πολιτικοί και στρατιωτικοί) και εκκλησιαστικοί αξιωματούχοι (μητροπολίτες, επίσκοποι, ηγούμενοι μοναστηριών, διαχειριστές και κτήτορες μοναστικών ιδρυμάτων).

Που ανάγεται η σπουδαιότητα των σφραγίδων ως ιστορικές πηγές;

- Κυρίως στις επιγραφές που αυτές φέρουν αποτελώντας ως επί το πλείστον ένα είδος αναλυτικής καταγραφής των προσωπικών στοιχείων και της επαγγελματικής δραστηριότητας και αρμοδιότητας των κατόχων τους. Επομένως από το περιεχόμενο της επιγραφής εξηγείται, γιατί οι σφραγίδες αποτελούν κυρίως πρωτογενές υλικό για την Προσωπογραφία, Διοίκηση και Ιστορική Γεωγραφία του Βυζαντίου.

Τυπολογία και εξέλιξη

- Τα αρχαιότερα τεκμήρια βυζ. σφραγίδων (με ελάχιστες εξαιρέσεις) δεν φέρουν εν γένει επιγραφή, αλλά επαρκούνται ακολουθώντας ρωμαϊκά πρότυπα με απεικονίσεις.
- Μόλις τον 6ο αι. εμφανίζονται επιγραφές, εκ των οποίων οι περισσότερες είναι σε μονογραμματική μορφή.
- Μέχρι τα τέλη του 7ου αι. οι επιγραφές επί σφραγίδων ως επί το πλείστον αναφέρουν μόνο το βαπτιστικό του κατόχου τους, σπανιότερα και τον τιμητικό του τίτλο ή το αξίωμα που εκείνος κατείχε και δη σε πτώση γενική, δηλώνοντας έτσι τον κτήτορα.
- Περί τα μέσα του 7ου αι. εισάγεται η επίκληση προς το θείο, τον Κύριο ή τη Θεοτόκο (πιο συχνή), της οποίας έπεται το βαπτιστικό του κατόχου, πάλι σε γενική πτώση. Τοιουτοτρόπως η επιγραφή πήρε τη μορφή μίας σύντομης προσευχής ή δέησης. Αυτή η επίκληση προς το θείο μπορεί επίσης να λάβει τη μορφή μονογράμματος (σε τέτοιες περιπτώσεις μιλάμε για επικλητικά μονογράμματα).
- Την γενική πτώση θα τη διαδεχτεί τον 8ο αι. η δοτική, η οποία και θα παραμείνει σε χρήση από εκεί και πέρα.

Konon patrikios



Παραδείγματα



Συνέχεια τυπολογίας

- Η τυπολογία των επιγραφών επί σφραγίδων εξελίσσεται σταδιακά και ολοκληρώνεται ως προς το περιεχόμενό της μόλις στα τέλη του ενδεκάτου αι. με την παγίωση μίας προκαθορισμένης πεζής φόρμουλας που έχει ως εξής: Επίκληση προς το θείο (επί το πλείστον συνοδευόμενη από την περίφραση τῷ σῷ δούλῳ), βαπτιστικό, τιμητικός τίτλος (ή τίτλοι, αν έχει περισσότερους), αξίωμα/αξιώματα, υπηρεσία εξασκήσης του αξιώματος (αν πρόκειται για αξιωματούχο της κεντρικής διοίκησης) ή γεωγραφικός χώρος εξάσκησης του αξιώματος (αν πρόκειται για αξιωματούχο της περιφερειακής διοίκησης, λ. Χ. δούξ Βουλγαρίας, κριτής Καππαδοκίας), οικογενειακό όνομα

Παραδείγματα

Προτομή του αγίου Θεοδώρου



**Καμίτζης Θεόδωρος πρωτοσπαθάριος
ἐπὶ τοῦ Χρυσοτρικλίνου καὶ στρατηγὸς**



**Νικηφόρος Βοτανειάτης μάγιστρος
βέστης βεστάρχης καὶ δούξ Ἐδεσοῦ καὶ
Νήσου**



**Δαυίδ Τζιπουρέλης πρωτοσπαθάριος ἐπὶ
τοῦ Χρυσοτρικλίνου καὶ τοποτηρητῆς
Ἐδεσοῦ**



Εμμετρες επιγραφές

- Ωστόσο ήδη πριν τα μέσα του ενδεκάτου αιώνα εκδηλώνεται και η συχνότερη χρήση του μέτρου σε επιγραφές επί σφραγίδων, όπου ο εκάστοτε κάτοχος εντάσσει τα στοιχεία του ακολουθώντας τους κανόνες που του υπαγορεύει το μέτρο, χωρίς να ακολουθείται κάποια διαδοχική σειρά όπως στην πεζή φόρμουλα που προαναφέραμε. Με ελάχιστες εξαιρέσεις πρόκειται για επιγραφές σε δωδεκασύλλαβο, ο οποίος αποτελεί απλοποίηση του ιαμβικού τριμέτρου.
- Πρόκειται για τονικό και όχι πλέον για προσωδιακό μέτρο (δηλ. όπου καθόριζαν οι εναλλαγές βραχέων και μακρών συλλαβών τη δομή και συγκρότηση του στίχου).
- Δώδεκα συλλαβές, τομή μετά την πέμπτη ή την έβδομη συλλαβή, παροξυτονία
- Τα αρχαιότερα παραδείγματα έμμετρων επιγραφών σε σφραγίδες ανάγονται στα τέλη του 7ου με αρχές 8ου αι. . Πέρα από την ευρεία γνωστή και μέχρι πρότινος θεωρούμενη αρχαιότερη έμμετρη σφραγίδα του Ανδρέα Κρήτης (με την προτομή του αγίου Τίτου στον εμπροσθότυπο) και τον δωδεκασύλλαβο „Κρήτης, πρόεδρον, Χριστέ, σώζοις Άνδρέαν“ υπάρχουν κι άλλες.

Obv.: Bust of St. Titos offering a blessing and holding book

Rev.: Cruciform monogram: Ἀνδρέαν. Within concentric circles of dots a circular inscription beginning at the top.

Κρήτης πρόεδρον, Χριστὲ, σῶζοις Ἀνδρέαν

DOSeals II 36.8; Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus I 1142 (αρχές 8^{ου} αἰ.)



Στεφάνου (σε μορφή σταυρόσχημου μονογράμματος) λόγων | δούλου της Θεοτόκου (όψιμος 7^{ος}/αρχές 8^{ου} αι.)
Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus II 2275



Theodoros Marhapsabos *strategos* (11th c., second half)
(Cheynet – Theodoridis 135; Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus II 2278)



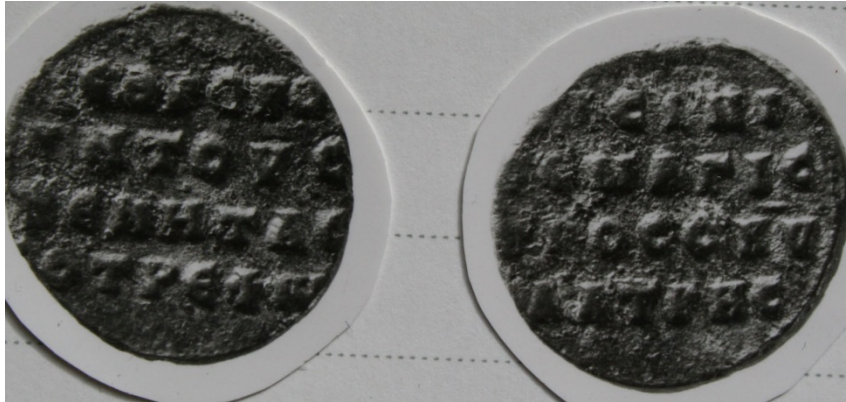
Στρατ(η)γεύσας ἄνωθεν Θεοῦ προνοί(α)/
Μαρχαψάβ(ος) Θεόδ(ω)ρ(ος) τ(ῆς)
Ἄναζάρβ(ου).

(B5, B7 [with *synizeses* in Θεόδωρος])
Nominativus absolutus.

God's providence promoted Theodoros
Marhapsabos to the post of a *strategos* of
Anazarbos in Cilicia.

About Anazarbos s. F. Hild – H. Hellenkemper,
Kilikien und Isaurien (TIB 5). Wien 1990, 178-
185

Sisinnios *magistros* (10th c., last third-early 11th c.; Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus II 1935
Connected with the spending of alms (έλεημοσύνη)



Σισίννιος μάγιστρος, ὁ Χριστοῦ λάτρης/
ἔθρεψε Χριστὸν τοὺς πένητας ὁ τρέφων.
(B7, B5. Paronomasy, ἔθρεψε-τρέφων).

These verses are influenced by *carm.* I 2, 33, 120 of
Gregory Theologos:

Χριστὸν σκέποις, τρέφεις τε, τὸν πτωχὸν τρέφων (PG
37, 936A), based on a motive in the bible: Mt 25.35:
ἐπέινασα γὰρ καὶ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, ἐδίψησα καὶ
ἐποτίσατέ με etc. (The Judgment of the nations).

Συνολικός αριθμός σωζόμενων βυζαντινών σφραγίδων

Μεγαλύτερες δημόσιες συλλογές

Σήμερα σώζονται περίπου 100.000 σφραγίδες σε όλο τον κόσμο, οι περισσότερες σε δημόσιες συλλογές

- Οι μεγαλύτερες συλλογές σφραγίδων είναι κατά σειρά προτεραιότητας οι ακόλουθες:
- 1) Dumbarton Oaks (ca. 13.000, στο αρχείο του ερευνητικού κέντρου)
- <https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals>
- 2) Ermitaz (ca. 11.000, κυρίως Μουσείο, εν μέρει ερευνητικό κέντρο)
- 3) BnF (ca. 6.500)
- Από το σωζόμενο γνωστό υλικό των σφραγίδων έχουν δημοσιευτεί περίπου 60.000, δηλ. πάνω από το ήμισυ. Φυσικά η ποιότητα των δημοσιεύσεων δεν είναι ομοιόμορφη. Γενικά η συστηματική και σοβαρή επιστημονική έρευνα επί βυζαντινών σφραγίδων βρίσκεται στα χέρια ελάχιστων εξειδικευμένων ιστορικών-σφραγιδολόγων.

Γλώσσα των επιγραφών:

- Μέχρι και τον έβδομο αιώνα, λατινικά και ελληνικά. Λατινικά κυρίως στο δυτικό τμήμα του βυζαντινού κράτους. Με την οριστική απώλεια αυτών των εδαφών εξαφανίζεται και η λατινική ως επίσημη γλώσσα του κράτους.
- Σώζονται αρκετά παραδείγματα, τα οποία φέρουν στη μια πλευρά το περιεχόμενο της επιγραφής στα λατινικά και στην άλλη στα ελληνικά. Οι τελευταίοι απόηχοι τέτοιων σφραγίδων ανάγονται στα τέλη του 7ου αι.
- Φυσικά υπάρχουν και επιγραφές μεταγενέστερων περιόδων που συνδυάζουν ελληνική με ξενόγλωσση επιγραφή, ωστόσο πρόκειται για εξαιρετικά σπάνιο φαινόμενο.

Συνδυασμός λατινικών και ελληνικών γραμμάτων
Εχκυβίτου σφράγισμα
Theofylactoutos



Συνδυασμός ελληνικής και αρμενικής επιγραφής
Φίλιππος / Միχαռ



Η Σφραγιστική έρευνα – οι πρωτοπόροι:

- Gustave Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'empire byzantin*. Paris 1884 (ανατύπωση Turin 1963). Με τη δημοσίευση του ογκώδους αυτού έργου τέθηκαν οι βάσεις για μία σοβαρή ενασχόληση με τη βυζαντινή σφραγιστική.
- V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin. II. L'administration centrale*. Paris 1981 (είχε ήδη απεβιώσει, όταν εκδόθηκε ο τόμος). V/1-3. *L'église*. Paris 1963-1972. Ο Vitalien Laurent ήταν ο πρώτος που έφερε στο φως της ημέρας έγκυρες επιστημονικές δημοσιεύσεις.
- Werner Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich. Teil 1. Kaiserhof*. Wien 1978. Διαμόρφωση μεθοδολογικών κριτηρίων για την επιστημονική έρευνα του σφραγιστικού υλικού· τέθηκαν οι βάσεις για την επιστημονική προσέγγισή του στο συστηματικό ερευνητικό κέντρο Βυζαντινής Σφραγιστικής της Αυστριακής Ακαδημίας Επιστημών (Βιέννη).
- Αρχείο „Systematische Photothek zur byzantinischen Siegelkunde“, όπου είναι καταχωρισμένο και επεξεργασμένο περίπου το ήμισυ του διαθέσιμου ανά τον κόσμο σφραγιστικό υλικό

Εκδόσεις (επιλογή)

- J.-CL. CHEYNET, *La société byzantine. L'apport des sceaux.* 2 Bde. Paris 2008
- J.-CL. CHEYNET, C. MORRISSON, W. SEIBT, *Les sceaux byzantins de la collection Henri Seyrig.* Paris 1991
- I. JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria.* I. Seals with Geographical Names. Sofia 2003. II. Seals with Family Names. Sofia 2006. III. Sofia 2009
- Κ. Μ. ΚΟΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Βυζαντιακά μολυβδόβουλλα τοῦ ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἐθνικοῦ Νομισματικοῦ Μουσείου.* Athen 1917
- V. LAURENT, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin.* Tome V. L'église. Paris 1962-1973. Tome II. L'administration centrale. Paris 1981
- I. G. LEONTIADES, *Μολυβδόβουλλα του Μουσείου Βυζαντινού Πολιτισμού Θεσσαλονίκης.* Thessaloniki 2006
- N. P. LIČHAČEV, *Molivdovuly Grečeskogo Vostoka,* ed. V. S. ŠANDROVSKAJA. Moskau 1991

συνέχεια

- E. MCGEER, J. NESBITT, N. OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of the Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art. IV. Washington, D. C. 2001.
V. The East (continued), Constantinople and Environs, Unknown locations, Addenda, Uncertain Readings. Washington, D. C. 2005
- J. NESBITT with the assistance of C. MORRISON, Catalogue of the Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art. VI.
Emperors, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Addenda. Washington, D. C. 2009
- J. NESBITT, N. OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of the Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art. I-III. Washington, D. C. 1991, 1994, 1996
- J. NESBITT, A.-K. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, W. SEIBT, Highlights from the Robert Hecht, Jr., Collection of Byzantine Seals. Thessaloniki 2009
- N. OIKONOMIDES, A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals. Washington, D. C. 1986
- V. S. ŠANDROVSKAJA – W. SEIBT, Byzantinische Bleisiegel der Staatlichen Eremitage mit Familiennamen. 1. Teil. Sammlung Lichačev – Namen von A bis I. Wien 2005
- W. SEIBT, Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich. 1. Teil. Kaiserhof. Wien 1978

ΣΥΝΕΧΕΙΑ

- W. SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft. Die Bleisiegel im Museum August Kestner. Rahden/Westfalen 2011
- W. SEIBT, M. L. ZARNITZ, Das byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk. Wien 1997
- CH. STAVRAKOS, Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel mit Familiennamen aus der Sammlung des Numismatischen Museums Athen. Wiesbaden 2000
- CH. STAVRAKOS, Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel der Sammlung Savvas Kophopoulos. Eine Siegelsammlung auf der Insel Lesbos. Turnhout 2010
- A.-K. WASSILIOU, W. SEIBT, Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil. Zentral- und Provinzialverwaltung. Wien 2004
- A.-K. WASSILIOU, Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden. Teil 1. Einleitung, Legenden beginnend mit Alpha bis inklusive Ny. *W(iener) B(yzantinistische) S(tudien)* 28/1 (2011); Teil 2. Legenden beginnend mit My bis inklusive Sphragis. *WBS* 28/2 (2016).
- A.-K. WASSILIOU-SEIBT und W. SEIBT, Der byzantinische Mensch in seinem Umfeld. Weitere Bleisiegel der Sammlung Zarnitz im Museum August Kestner. Rahden/Westfalen 2015
- G. ZACOS, Byzantine Lead Seals II, ed. J. NESBITT. Bern 1984
- G. ZACOS, A. VEGLERY, Byzantine Lead Seals I. Basel 1972
-
- **Επιστημονική σειρά**
- *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*. Washington, D. C. 1987ff.

[A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, C. Stavrakos](#) (eds.), *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 13 (2019). Turnhout

ISBN: 978-2-503-58373-0

Languages: English, French, German

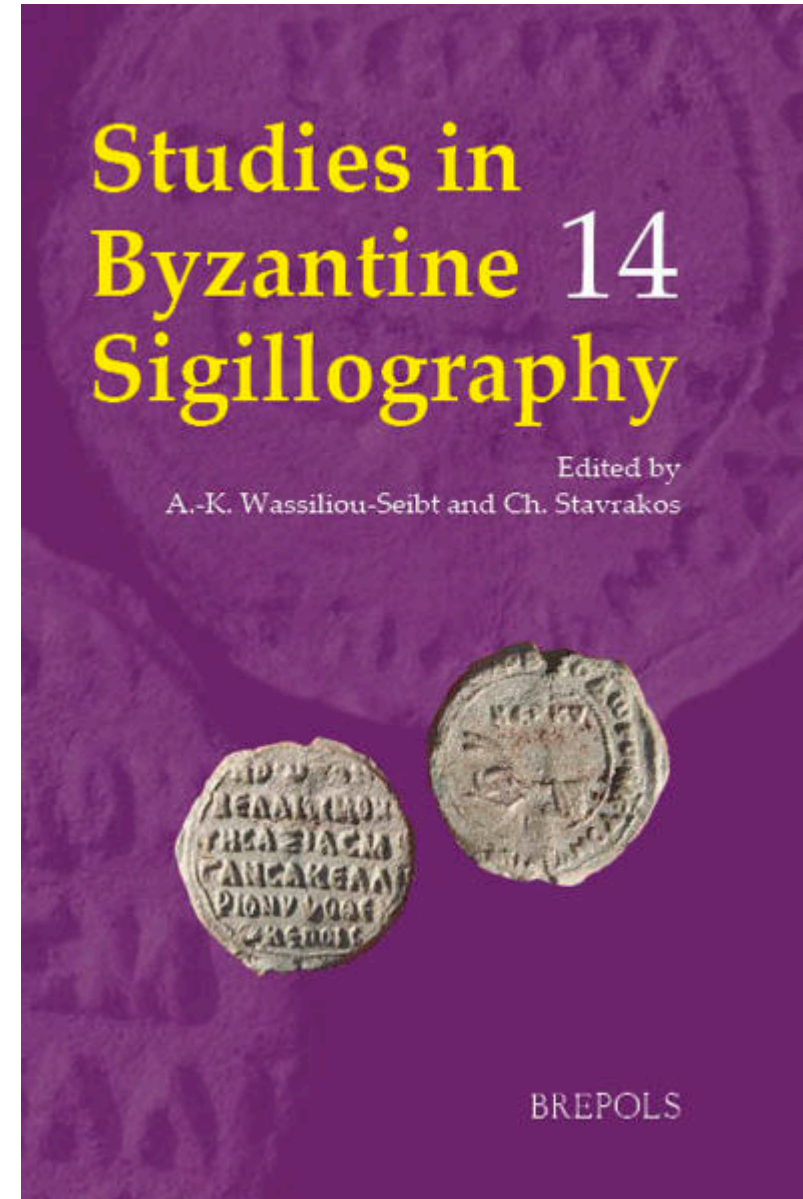
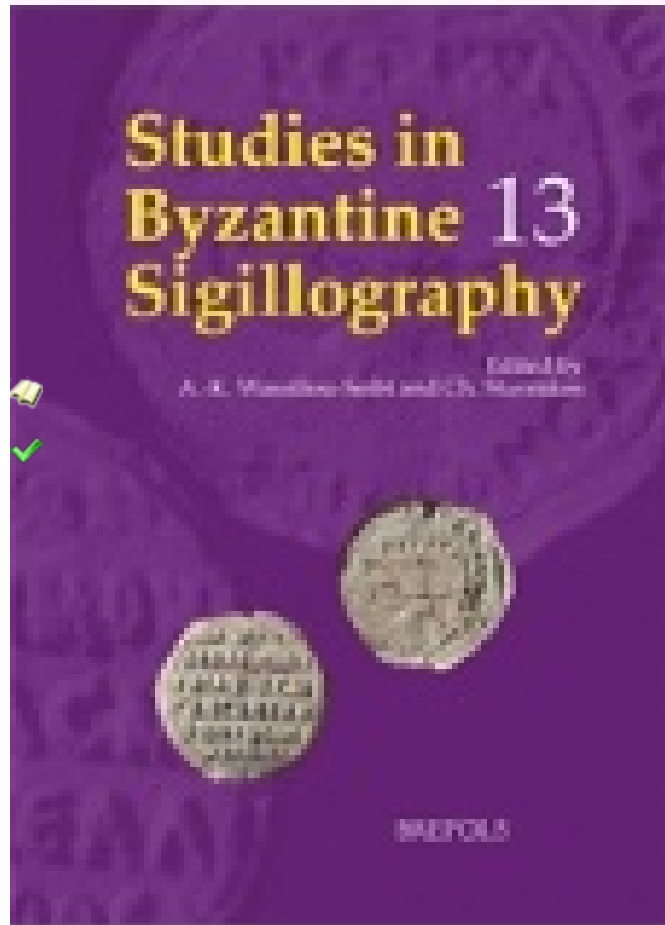
Online content: <https://www.brepolsonline.net/action/showBook?doi=10.1484/M.SBS-EB.5.116702>

[A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, C. Stavrakos](#) (eds.), *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 14 (2022). Turnhout

ISBN: 978-2-503-60127-4

Languages: English, French, German

Online content: <https://www.brepols.net/products/IS-9782503601274-1>



Βραχυγραφίες σε Βυζαντινά μολυβδόβουλλα

- ΚΕ Κ(ύρι)ε
- ΘΚΕ Θ(εοτό)κε
- Ρ,Θ, β(οή)θ(ει)
- Τ, C, ΔΥΛ, τ(ῶ) σ(ῶ) δούλ(ω)
- ΙW Ἴω(άννη), Ἴω(άννου)
- ΚWN Κων(σταντίνω), Κων(σταντίνου)
- ΜΧ Μ(ιχ)αήλ
- ΔΑΔ Δα(υί)δ

συνέχεια

- B, oder R, β(ασιλικός)
- A πρωτο-, προ-, μον-, πρι(μι)-
- z. B. ΑΑΕΔΡ, (πρωτο)(πρό)εδρος
- Α,ΣΠ, (πρωτο)σπ(αθάριος)
- ΑΜΙΚ, (πρι)μικ(ήριος)
- ΑΧ μοναχός
- Α πρώτος
- ΑΜΥΝΔ, Προμουνδηνός
- ΠΡΙ π(ατ)ρί(κιος)
- ΣΠΑΘ,ΚΔΔ σπαθ(αρο)κ(αν)δ(ι)δ(ᾶτος)
- Ο ό ᾶ(γιος)
- ΜΡ μ(ήτη)ρ
- ΜΡΟΠΟΛ μ(ητ)ροπολ(ίτης)
- ΘΥ Θ(εο)ῦ
- ΜΓ μ(έ)γ(ας)
- ΧΡ χρ(υσο)-

INSCRIPTIONS OF CHURCH AND STATE OFFICIALS ON BYZANTINE LEAD SEALS

Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou-Seibt

Byzantine lead seals are among the most important sources for the study of Byzantine history and culture. They are also a kind of mirror of an empire whose crucial ideological component was Christianity, which played a decisive role in the designs of, and legends on, seals since the late sixth century. The earliest examples stem from the fourth and fifth centuries, the latest from the fifteenth.

Lead seals (or *bullae*) are small, more or less round objects, printed by an iron *boulloterion*. A *boulloterion* is a seal pincer with two matrices engraved in negative, which contains an inscription or an inscription and an image. If a lead seal bears imprints on both sides, it is sometimes called *diptychon* in versified inscriptions.¹ Lead seals were primarily used for official and private documents as a guarantee of authenticity and genuineness.

The total number of preserved Byzantine seals is estimated to be more than a hundred thousand. The diameter of these small monuments normally ranges between eleven and thirty-five millimetres. The earliest examples lack (with rare exceptions) an inscription; but they do have primitive images, just as Roman sealings usually do, which are in a way the precursor of the Byzantine lead seal. It is in the sixth century that we encounter the first inscriptions, quite elegant and sometimes partially or totally encoded in the form of a monogram.²

Since the legends on seals offer the personal data of many Byzantines, usually high-ranking dignitaries of the state or the church, they provide important evidence in terms of prosopography, social and administrative history, as well as historical geography. Of course, sigillography has to take into account all the relevant data of narrative sources (historiography, epistolography, documents, etc.) and the archaeological evidence. Since seals are discovered through excavations or surface inspection (with or without the help of metal detectors), they constitute archaeological findings, just as inscriptions on and in churches and monasteries, on secular buildings such as bridges and walls, and on tomb stones, form part of the archaeological record. Regrettably, the exact finding place of lead seals is quite often unknown. Given that a considerable number of Byzantine lead seals carry names of non-Greek origin, they are also a rich source for the study of the ethnic composition of the Byzantine aristocracy and the reconstruction of

administrative and social micro- and macrostructures (in much greater detail than the narrative sources allow for). However, this issue will not be of concern here. Instead I shall focus on the evolution of seal inscriptions with regard to their content and form, which show similarities to what we see in inscriptions on works of minor art.

Until the end of the seventh century, the format of seal legends remained often fairly modest, usually consisting only of the first name, sometimes with title or office, drafted in the genitive, in the sense of ‘the seal of x’, e.g. Ὁβοδιανοῦ / ἀπὸ ἐπάρχων (late 6th–first half of the 7th c.).³ Around the middle of the seventh century, however, an innovation occurred: the introduction of the formula Θεοτόκε or Κύριε βοήθει, followed by the name of the seal’s owner in the genitive; this turned the inscription on the lead seal into a short prayer. Similar invocations can be found in works of minor art, such as crosses, icons donated by a pious donor, rings, signet rings, etc. This short prayer may occasionally take the form of a cross-like invocative monogram. However, sometime in the late seventh century the grammatically more correct dative prevailed over the genitive as the preferred case after βοήθει.

The format of seal legends developed little by little throughout the centuries reaching its final shape in the eleventh century. The usual form was: invocation, first name, title (or titles), office (or offices), administrative district (province), and family name (or family names). Let me illustrate this with an example (dating to 1073–4): Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) τῷ σῷ δούλ(ῳ) Ἰσαακίῳ (πρωτο)προέδρῳ (καὶ) μ(ε)γ(ά)λῳ δομ(ε)στικῳ τῶν σχολῶν τῆς Ἀνατολ(ῆς) τῷ Κομνην(ῳ), ‘Lord help Your servant Isaakios Komnenos *protoproedros* [title] and grand *domestikos* of the schools of the East [commander of the military forces of the eastern part of the empire]’.⁴

Already before the mid-eleventh century we find – along with this formulaic legend – a rapidly increasing number of more ‘original’ inscriptions which offer the personal data of the seal owners in verse,⁵ without strict rules in terms of arrangement. Apart from some rare exceptions, these metrical seals are normally written in the Byzantine dodecasyllable, either unprosodic⁶ or with a few minor prosodic ‘errors’.⁷ The fundamental principles of the dodecasyllable, the metre *par excellence* for the composition of Byzantine inscriptions, are isosyllaby, with each verse consisting of twelve syllables; a strong caesura after the fifth or seventh syllable (henceforth C5 and C7), called ‘Binnenschluss’ by Paul Maas;⁸ and an obligatory paroxytone stress at line end. Some early examples of metrical seals are already documented in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. A well-known example is the seal of the hymnographer and homilist Andrew of Crete: Κρήτης πρόεδρον, Χριστέ, σῶζοις Ἀνδρέαν, ‘Jesus, save Andrew, the metropolitan of Crete’, with a bust of St Titos, the first bishop of Crete and patron of its metropolitan see, on the obverse. ‘Proedros’ is used in this verse (C7) as a metonym for the metropolitan.⁹ Slightly earlier is the legend Στεφάνου λόγων ἢ δούλου τῆς Θεοτόκου (later 7th–early 8th c.), in which the text is elliptic *metri*



Figure 9.1a and b Seal of Stephanos, DO 58.106.4323 (© Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection)

causa, leaving out a word like σφραγίς (Figures 9.1a-b).¹⁰ The English translation of this verse (C5) is: ‘(Seal) of the words of Stephen, servant of the God-bearer’.

There are also examples of deviating dodecasyllables, termed ‘stepchildren’ (‘Stiefkinder’) by Herbert Hunger; some of these deserve to be called ‘unsuccessful dodecasyllables’ (‘mislungene Zwölfsilber’).¹¹ Take, for instance, Δεινῶν με σῶζε, Παντελεήμων, Θεοφάνην σὸν οἰκέτην ἀσηκρητίς (second half of the 10th c.), ‘Panteleemon, deliver from evil me, your servant, the *asekretis* Theophanes’.¹² The seal carries on the obverse a bust of St Panteleemon surrounded by the first half of the legend. The first verse (C5) has only ten syllables; the second verse (C5) is correct. Another example is: Ἐν διπτύχῳ σε, τρισμάκαρ πάτερ, γράφω / Νικόλαος δοῦλος σὸς Λεοντάρης (13th c.), ‘Thrice-blessed father, I, your servant Nicholas Leontares, portray you on a *diptychon*’.¹³ The first verse (C5) is correct, but the second one (C7) has only eleven syllables; however, it could be a matter of haplography of -ος: Νικόλαος (ὡς) δοῦλος σὸς Λεοντάρης would make a perfect dodecasyllable. *Diptychon* metonymically stands for ‘seal’; the inscription addresses St Nicholas who is depicted on the obverse.

Other verses, which previously had been correct, became corrupt when the title of the seal’s owner changed: for instance, when a person achieved a higher rank, e.g. from πρόεδρος to πρωτοπρόεδρος or from νοβελλίσμιος to πρωτονοβελλίσμιος. Part of the legend may occasionally precede the dodecasyllable, as in Χεῖρ Κυρίου, ἐπὶ κορυφὴν στήθι τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου (late 11th–early 12th c.), ‘Hand of the Lord, lay down on the head of Constantine’, which is a regular dodecasyllable (C7), were it not for χεῖρ Κυρίου at the beginning.¹⁴ On the obverse there is a standing figure of the Theotokos (the iconographic type of the Hagiosoritissa, with her face slightly turned to the right) and the hand of God appearing from heaven above. In other cases, the dodecasyllable is followed by a prosaic insertion at the very end, e.g. Σφραγίς γραμμάτων Δημητρίου βεστάρχου τοῦ Κρατεροῦ (late 11th–early 12th c.), ‘Seal of the letters of the *bestarches* Demetrios Krateros’, where τοῦ Κρατεροῦ falls outside the scope of the dodecasyllable. On the obverse there is a depiction of the homonymous patron saint of the seal’s owner.¹⁵

There is a unique example of a prose text between two regular dodecasyllables (C5 and C7): Πρώτου κωνηγοῦ Βουζήνου τὰ πρακτέα / καὶ πρωτοῖερακαρίου Λέοντος (mere prose, though it does have twelve syllables) / φύλαττε, πανύμνητε τοῦ Λόγου Πύλη (second half of the 13th–first half of the 14th c.), ‘Most praised Gate of the Word, protect the acts of the *protokynegos* Bouzenos and the *protohierakarios* Leon’.¹⁶ The shared use of seals was very common in the late Byzantine period for ἀπογραφεῖς (land registrars), who were responsible for surveying pastures and arable land in order to calculate the taxes. This seems to be the case here as well. The prosaic legend was introduced between the two verses, when Bouzenos became the colleague of Leon. The phrase πανύμνητος τοῦ Λόγου Πύλη is a reference to the Virgin, a common metaphor in Byzantine hymnography, which is inspired by the Bible, e.g. *Ezekiel* 44:2–3 ‘This gate shall be shut ... because God the Lord of Israel shall enter by it’ (ἡ πύλη αὐτὴ κεκλεισμένη ἔσται ... ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ εἰσελεύσεται δι’ αὐτῆς), and *Matt.* 7:13–14 ‘Enter by the narrow gate (εἰσέλθατε διὰ τῆς στενῆς πύλης) ... because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life’. Hymnography and homiletics developed this parable further by connecting the gate in a metaphoric way with the Theotokos, who gave birth to Christ, the Life.¹⁷

The political verse (a combination of two hemistichs, an octosyllable and a heptasyllable),¹⁸ though very common in Byzantine vernacular poetry and in other poetic genres (e.g. didactic and court poetry), is extremely rare on metrical seals. The earliest three examples date from the second quarter and the second half of the tenth century and the first quarter of the eleventh century.¹⁹ The combination of a political verse with a dodecasyllable (C5) is attested only once: it is an inscription in which the seal’s owner, George who bears the titles *patrikios* and *anthypatos*, is asking God for protection and strength: Γεώργιον πατρίκιον σκέπε, Λόγε Θεοῦ· / δίδου σθένος σου τῷ ἀνθυπάτῳ, φύλαξ (middle of the 11th c.), ‘Word of God, protect the *patrikios* George; give your power to the *anthypatos*, guardian’.²⁰ It is worth noting that the epic form of the genitive Θεοῦ is used. The seal’s owner can probably be identified as George Meledones, bearing the title *illoustrios*, who is mentioned on a different seal (third quarter of the 11th c.) with two dodecasyllables as its legend.²¹

The use of the paired octosyllable (8+8) and the paired heptasyllable (7+7) is rare as well.²² Not only are such combinations exceptional; it is also not clear whether the seal’s owner wished to have his inscription in verse or rather in rhythmical prose. See, for instance, Δέσποινα, Μήτηρ τοῦ Λόγου, / δούλω Μιχαὴλ σύμπραττε τῷ Κουρτίκῃ (last third of the 11th c.), ‘Lady, Mother of the Word, assist your servant, Michael Kourtikes’ (a combination of an octosyllable with a dodecasyllable).²³ The members of the well-documented family Kourtikes appear to be of Armenian or Kurdish origin.

Equally rare, but at least securely attested are three instances of the use of the hexameter. The first is: Κούρη, ἄνασσα, σώζε Μακρεμβολίτην Ἰωάννην (first half of the 12th c.). The extremely rare form κούρη instead of κόρη and σώζε, a hybrid form of σῶζε, are used *metri causa*. ‘Virgin, Queen, save John

Makrembolites'.²⁴ The second example is: Σφραγίς Μολιβωτοῦ μεγακυδέος Νικολάου (second half of the 12th c.). In this verse we have to note the epic form of the genitive Μολιβωτοῦ and the rarely attested word μεγακυδέος. 'Seal of the glorious monastery of St Nicholas Moliboton'.²⁵ The third example is: Εἷς Θεὸς ἐκ Γενέταο δι' Υἱέος ἐς μέγα Πνεῦμα / ἱσταμένης θεότητος ἐνὶ τελείοισι τελείης, 'One God, from the Begetter through the Son to the great Spirit, with the perfect divinity subsisting in perfect beings'. These hexameters are not original, but derive from Gregory of Nazianzos' *Precepts for Virgins*.²⁶ They have been re-used on four (unpublished) seals from the twelfth century excavated in the western parts of the Rus' principality and preserved in the Oleksii Sheremetiev collection in Kiev. The anonymous owner of the seal was certainly an educated person, perhaps a cleric.

The stylistic register and the number of verses that one encounters in these metrical seals depend on the personal taste, degree of education, social status and origin of the seal's owners. We come across inscriptions that consist of up to five verses, but it is usually a distich which, from the twelfth century onward, may occasionally separate the two verses by a kind of colon (:), just as we see in the case of inscriptions on works of art, inscriptions carved in stone, and book epigrams in manuscripts. If someone was descended from a noble family (or even more than one), he would indicate it (often with the word γένος), because that emphasized his prestige and status in the social pyramid: Ἰωάννης πρόεδρος Ἀλωπῶν γένους / πάλιν τοῖς φίλοις σφραγίζω ἐκ δευτέρου (second to third third of the 12th c.), 'I, the *proedros* John Alopas, seal again and anew for my friends' (Figures 9.2a-b).²⁷ The text consists of two dodecasyllables (C7 and C5); please note the tautology in πάλιν and ἐκ δευτέρου. The owner stresses that he uses for his private correspondence (τοῖς φίλοις) another seal (σφραγίζω ἐκ δευτέρου) than the official one. The Alopas family is attested since the eleventh century and belongs to the civil aristocracy.²⁸ Another example is: Ἐγὼ κρατύνω τὰς γραφὰς Θεοδώρου / Κασταμονίτου μητρόθεν Ἀντίοχου (second to third third of the 12th c.). The inscription consists of two dodecasyllables (C5 and C5); there is enjambment between the verses. The personified seal is speaking: 'I confirm the letters of



Figure 9.2a and b Seal of Ioannes Alopas, proedros, DO 58.106.5351 (© Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection)

Theodore Kastamonites, who is an Antiochos from his mother's side'.²⁹ Theodore descended from two noble aristocratic families, Kastamonites and Antiochos, and was particularly proud of it. In the late twelfth century, aristocratic lineage was often more important than dignities and titles. An identification of the seal's owner with the brother of Euphrosyne Kastamonitissa, the spouse of Emperor Isaakios Angelos (1185–1195), cannot be excluded.³⁰

The social status in the Byzantine hierarchical pyramid was closely linked to the degree of education, an important aristocratic virtue; as a consequence, members of the high aristocracy aspired to an elevated style for their versified seal legends, listing their titles, offices, dignities, first names, family names, geographical designations, and also employing various rhetorical figures of speech, such as alliteration, assonance, metonyms, metaphors, etc. Additionally, they enriched their vocabulary with ancient and biblical terms and with occasional borrowings from well-known hymns, especially in the case of the colourful invocations used for the Mother of God. Metonymy may lead to ambiguity: e.g. Σφραγίς Σαμουήλ / Οὐννικῆς φυλῆς γόνου (second half of the 12th c.), 'Seal of Samuel, descendent of the Hunnic tribe' (Figures 9.3a-b).³¹ Here it is unclear whether the metonymic use of the ethnonym 'Hunnic' denotes Hungarian or Seljuk descent. The smooth breathing in Οὐννικῆς appears to have been chosen in order to make it clear that we are not dealing with a real 'Hun' (an ethnonym that ordinarily takes a rough breathing), but a person with a different ethnic origin.

Metrical seal inscriptions sometimes contain rare words and *hapax legomena*, but also – though only quite rarely – vernacular elements, which are usually neglected by philologists and lexicographers. Let me list these here (the number in the parenthesis corresponds to each lemma in the first and second volume of my *Corpus*):

- *hapax legomena*: θηριωννούμενος (2845), Κομνηνίδης (1129), κρατυσμός (676), Λασκαρόβλαστος (2508), πατράναξ (2508), πατροπαπτόθεν (1114), πορφυροδισέγγονος (2539), πορφυροκλαδόπαις (2499), σεβαστοκρατέγγονος,³² τελειόψυχος (850);



Figure 9.3a and b Seal of Samuel, DO 58.106.5530 (© Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection)

- *rare words*: ἀδελφιδός (974), ἀνθρωπογόνος (2787), αὐτάδελφος (572), βροτός (202), δάνος (607), ἔρνος (1121), κατασκέπω (1650), λογοθετάτον (2748), ξυνευνέτις (767), ὀλιγόνους (2930), ὀμευνέτις (1345), παιδοτρόφος (2399), σκέμμα (676), τελέθω (2468);
- *vernacular words/forms*: αὐθέντης (842), αὐτην (1115), βλάστημα,³³ δόθι (1099), εἰκόνισμα (541 and 1350), κυρώνετε (291), φύλαξε (143).

As far as the contents of metrical seal legends are concerned, there are two principal categories. The first one includes inscriptions indicating the owner of the seal, either without a finite verb form or – in the expanded form – with a verb indicating what the seal does or should do, such as, e.g., confirming the acts and letters (βουλὰς βεβαῶν καὶ λόγους) or authorizing the letters (κῦρος ταῖς γραφαῖς νέμω etc.).³⁴ A good example of such an inscription without a verb is: Σφραγὶς σεβαστοῦ κρατόρων τριῶν κλάδου / Κοντοστεφάνου Κομνηνανθοῦς Στεφάνου (late 12th c.), ‘Seal of the *sebastos* Stephanos Kontostephanos Komnenos, scion of three sovereigns’.³⁵ As far as its structure is concerned, it belongs to the special group of seals that mention the imperial descent of the owner, indicating that he belongs to the highest echelons of the aristocracy. This became very fashionable in the late twelfth century, as we can see in epigrammatic poetry and monodies. The seal’s owner makes use of a metaphor, κλάδος (literally ‘branch’), to proudly stress his imperial lineage which reaches back to the founder of the Komnenian dynasty. The pedigree of this Stephanos Kontostephanos Komnenos who held the title *sebastos*, includes the following sovereigns: (i) John Doukas καῖσαρ, (ii) the emperor Alexios I, and (iii) the emperor John II, his great-grandfather. Stephanos himself, as the son of John Komnenos Kontostephanos and grandson of Stephanos Kontostephanos (who had married Anna Komnene, a granddaughter of Alexios I), was a distant relative of the imperial family. A charter mentions him in 1193 as πανσέβαστος σεβαστὸς ἀνεψιὸς (here in the meaning of great-nephew) τοῦ κραταιοῦ καὶ ἀγίου ἡμῶν βασιλέως (scil. John III) καὶ δοῦξ Κρήτης.³⁶

An example of the first category of metrical seals, but with a finite verb is: Γραφὰς σφραγίζω καὶ κυρῶ καὶ δεικνύω / κληῖσιν σεβαστοῦ Χαλούφης Νικηφόρου, ‘I am sealing and confirming the letters and indicating the name of the *sebastos* Chalouphes Nikephoros’.³⁷ These two dodecasyllables (C5 and C5) have a strong enjambment (δεικνύω ... κληῖσιν). The seal is personified here: it is speaking and saying that it acts on behalf of the *sebastos* Nikolaos Chalouphes. The family name of the owner has an Arabic-Turkish origin.³⁸ Niketas Choniates mentions a governor of Corinth with this name, who could not avert the capture and plundering of the city by Roger II of Sicily in 1147.³⁹ The same person is attested some twenty years later as a successful diplomat in Byzantine embassies to Hungary (1164) and Venice (1166). He obtained the title *sebastos* on account of his marriage with Theodora Komnene (ca. 1162/1163), the niece and former mistress of Manuel I.⁴⁰ The attribution of the above-mentioned metrical inscription to this person is very probable.

The second principal category, present in extended examples, are metrical inscriptions that resemble a short prayer or supplication, especially to the Theotokos or a saint (rarely to God himself), who are depicted on the obverse of the seal, asking generally for help and protection of the seal's owner and for support for just acts and right decisions. In particular they ask for: a) victories against enemies (νίκας κατ' ἐχθρῶν), b) salvation of the soul (ψυχικὴ σωτηρία), c) grace (χάρις) or Christ's favour (ἀντίληψις), and d) redemption of sins (πλημμελημάτων λύσις). The same requests can be found in dedicatory epigrams, in which they often indicate that the donor adorns a work of art with gold and precious stones and presents it to a monastery or a church in order to obtain the intervention of the Theotokos or one of the saints and thus to be granted remission of sins and a place in heaven.

A fine example of such a supplicatory metrical inscription is the following: Σκέποις Λέοντα Κασταμονίτην, Λόγε, / κὰν ταῖς γραφαῖς ἄνωθεν ἐνθῆς μοι χάριν (1130/1160), 'Word (scil. Jesus Christ), please, protect me, Leo Kastamonites, and add grace from above (scil. from heaven) to my letters'.⁴¹ To the same Kastamonites belongs a contemporary *boulloterion*, with an inscription that addresses Christ and requests the salvation of the soul: Ἐν σοὶ πεποιθὼς Κασταμονίτης Λέων / τύχοιεν, Χ(ριστ)έ, ψυχικ(ῆς) σ(ωτη)ρίας, 'Having put my trust in You, Christ, let me, Leo Kastamonites, have salvation for my soul'.⁴² It should be noted that an epigram on a cross reliquary (11th/12th c.), sponsored by a Pantherios and nowadays kept in the Tesoro del Duomo in Modena, begins in exactly the same manner.⁴³ Already Père Laurent proposed the attribution of the above-mentioned two seals to Leo Kastamonites, collaborator and faithful friend of the *sebastokrator* Isaakios Komnenos (1093–shortly after 1152).⁴⁴

It is worth noting that a small number of inscriptions on works of minor art bear versified prayers that are identical or very similar to those on seals. For instance, a steatite icon in the Vatopedi monastery, dated to the fourteenth century, bears the inscription: Ἡ καλλίνικος ἀκρότης τῶν μαρτύρων / Νικόλαον σκέποις με βλάβης ἀπάσης, 'Victorious pinnacle of the martyrs, may you protect me, Nicholas, from every evil'.⁴⁵ The 'victorious pinnacle' are the two martyrs Sts Demetrios and George, who are depicted on the cover of the reverse (whereas the obverse shows the Theotokos with child).⁴⁶ Metrical seals sometimes have the phrase ἐκ πάσης βλάβης ρύου or similar words. For the use of the word ἀκρότης in a metrical seal, see the following example: Λόγου μαθητῶν ἀκρότης, σκέποιτέ με / τὸν τοῦ Νικαίας Κερκύρας Κωνσταντῖνον (after 1150–before 1166), 'Pinnacle of the disciples of the Word protect me, Constantine metropolitan of Corfu, the (nephew) of the (metropolitan) of Nicaea'.⁴⁷ The 'pinnacle' here are the apostles Peter and Paul. The same pair are mentioned on the seal of George Bardanes, metropolitan of Corfu (1219–1236), as μυστολέκται Κυρίου ('proclaimers of the mystery of the Lord'),⁴⁸ as σοφῶν συνωρίς καὶ δυὰς ἀποστόλων ('couple of wise men and pair of apostles') on the seal inscription of Peter, judge of Thrace (1060–1090),⁴⁹ and as δυὰς μαθητῶν on a seal of a higher clerk (last quarter of the 11th c.),⁵⁰ without additional information concerning the owner's name or the location

where he executed his duties. Finally, it should be emphasized that different couples of military saints (e.g. George and Demetrios, George and Theodore, Demetrios and Theodore, or Theodore Stratelates and Theodore Tiron) are addressed on versified seals inscriptions as *δυὰς καλλινίκων μαρτύρων, δυὰς μαρτύρων καλλινίκων*, and *ξυνωρίς σοφῶν ἀθληφόρων, οἱ ξυνωρίς ἱερῶν ἀθληφόρων*.⁵¹

The plea to God or the Theotokos may exceptionally be expressed through the intercession of a saint. In the following inscription (later 11th c.), St Menas has this function: on the obverse, with the legend running around the enthroned Theotokos Nikopoios, *Λιταῖς Μητῆρ μάρτυρος, τοῦ Θεοῦ Μητέρα*, and on the reverse, with the legend running around the standing figure of St Menas, *φύλαττε τὸν σὸν οἰκέτην Θεοφάνην*, ‘Mother of God, save your servant Theophanes through the intercessions of the martyr Menas’.⁵² Similar pleas can be found in epigrams on works of art.⁵³ Only rarely is more than one intercessor asked to put in a plea for the seal’s owner in front of God. An example of this is the following, which is one of the earliest instances of the use of the dodecasyllable on seals: *Θειτόκου φρούρει με πρεσβείαις, Λόγε, | ἀρχαγγέλων τε σὸν λάτριν Κωνσταντῖνον· ἀμήν* (early 10th c.), ‘Word, protect me, your servant Constantine, through the intercessions of the Theotokos and the archangels. Amen’. The second verse is followed by the word *ἀμήν* written on the circumference of a Latin cross depicted on the obverse. The form *Θειτόκε* instead of *Θεοτόκε* is used *metri causa*; the strong enjambment and the hyperbaton are also remarkable.

In exceptional cases, the supplicatory prayer addresses the cross as symbol of the victory of good over evil (which is why it is sometimes called *ὄπλον*, ‘weapon’)⁵⁴ or ‘the hand of the Lord’ (*Χεὶρ Κυρίου*) depicted on the obverse.⁵⁵ The motif of the vigilant and protecting hand of God is inspired by the Bible (*Num.* 11:23; *Ex.* 9:3; *Luke* 1:66; *Acts* 11:21), and was used by the Church Fathers in many of their texts.

The composition of metrical seal inscriptions is usually intimately connected with the iconography of the obverse. To begin with, simple invocations of saints (e.g. *ἀθλητά, θύτα, μάρτυς, μάκαρ*) cannot be understood without recourse to the depiction on the obverse. The dependence of the text on the figure becomes even more prominent when the seal’s owner is only identified as ‘having the same name’ (*ὁμώνυμος, συνώνυμος, φερόνυμος* or *κλήσιν φέρων*) as the figure depicted on the other side. Just as happens in the case of epigrams that accompany icons, the connection between figure and text is very close in lead seals since the iconographic motif of the obverse may find its explanation in the inscription of the reverse. It must be said that this does not happen very often; but see for instance the seal of the *sebastos* Ariebes (late 12th–early 13th c.) which shows the Annunciation (*χαίρετισμός*) on the obverse: *Σφραγίς σεβαστοῦ τῶν γραφῶν Ἀριέβη / ὁ χαίρετισμός τῆς ἀγνῆς γεγραμμένος*, ‘The inscribed Annunciation of the pure one (scil. of the Virgin) is the seal of the letters of the *sebastos* Ariebes’.⁵⁶ In choosing this particular iconographic motif (more commonly called *εὐαγγελισμός*, ‘joyful tidings’), the *sebastos* Ariebes who was of Armenian origin (‘*arev*’ means ‘sun’ in Armenian), points to his connection with the imperial

family of the Angeloi who used this very same motif on their seals. Another good example of how text and image may mirror each other is the seal of Nikephoros Komnenos (late 11th–early 12th c.), the obverse of which shows St Demetrios as a soldier wearing a sword belt on his left hip, while the reverse reads: Ἐγὼ Κομνηνοῦ τὸ κράτος Νικηφόρου / φέρων σπάθην σφάττουσαν οὓς ἐχθροὺς ἔχει, ‘I am the power of Nikephoros Komnenos holding a sword that slays all his enemies’ (Figures 9.4a-b).⁵⁷ This Nikephoros Komnenos could very well be the homonymous brother of Alexios I.

A small number of metrical seals allude to the role of the seal as a guarantor for security, originality, and authenticity of the document to which it is attached. In a metaphorical sense it may be called κλείς (‘key’),⁵⁸ κλειθρον (‘lock’),⁵⁹ or once even μολυβδίνη πέδη (‘shackle of lead’).⁶⁰ More specifically, the lead seal (σφραγίς μολυβδίνη) is used for the assurance of the decisions of the sealing person (πρὸς ἀσφάλειαν ἰδίων βουλευμάτων).⁶¹

In a recent study I focused on a small group of metrical seal inscriptions stating that their owners preferred not to have ‘holy images’ (εἰκόν, εἰκόνισμα) on their seals or even objected to their use ‘out of piety’ (εὐλάβεια).⁶² Most of these seals date from the second half of the twelfth century and were issued by members of the high military or civil aristocracy, perhaps in order to demonstrate their membership to a close community. Among them ranged Eumathios Makrembolites, nowadays best known as author of the romance *Hysmine and Hysminias*, but also a functionary of the state. A plausible and logical explanation for the deliberate omission of holy images may be the ephemeral character of seals: as soon as they were detached from their documents or letters, they were thrown away without regard to the saintly figures depicted on the obverse. This obviously goes against the piety commonly owed to holy images.

Inscriptions on seals may also reflect Christian values, such as the giving of alms, singled out as one of the virtues of a true aristocrat by Kekaumenos.⁶³ Already in the Old Testament, the mercy showered upon the poor is described as a gift to God, and pity itself as beneficial: δανίζει θεῷ ὁ ἐλεῶν πτωχόν, ‘he who has pity on the poor lends to God’ (*Prov.* 19:17) and καρπὸς ἀνδρὶ ἐλεημοσύνη,



Figure 9.4a and b Seal of Nikephoros Komnenos, DO 58.106.3272 (© Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection)

‘mercy profits the man’ (*Prov.* 19:22). The first proverb is attested repeatedly on lead seals and copper tokens, most of them dating to the eleventh century.⁶⁴ In the New Testament, Jesus proclaims: ἐπεινάσα γὰρ καὶ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, ἐδίψησα καὶ ἐποτίσατέ με, ‘I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink’ (*Matt.* 25:35). It is with these biblical passages in mind that Gregory of Nazianzos wrote: Χριστὸν σκέπεις τρέφεις τε, τὸν πτωχὸν τρέφων, ‘if you feed the poor, you feed and clothe Christ’.⁶⁵ And this verse, in turn, is the source for the following seal’s inscription (late 10th or early 11th c.): Σισίννιος μάγιστρος, ὁ Χριστοῦ λάτρης / ἔθρεψε Χριστὸν τοὺς πένητας ὁ τρέφων, ‘Sisinnios the *magistros*, Jesus’ servant, fed Christ by feeding the poor’.⁶⁶ The owner of this seal may be identified with Sisinnios *magistros* and prefect of Constantinople during the reign of Nikephoros II.⁶⁷ The inscription on the seal of the *sebaste* Maria Skleraina (d. 1045), the mistress of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, also refers to almsgiving: Τροφή πνήτων τῆς σεβαστῆς Μαρίας, ‘Nourishment for the poor from Maria *sebaste*’.⁶⁸ Finally, there is a remarkable inscription on a lead seal or token of the former Zacos collection (for which I rely on the description by George Zacos kept in Vienna): Δέξαι πενιχρὸν δάνος ἐκ βασιλέων, ‘Receive a modest gift from the emperors’. According to the same Zacos, the obverse showed Jesus Christ washing the feet of the apostles (νυττήρ). If the reading of Zacos is correct, the inscription provides precious information on the charity of emperors towards the poor. According to the *Book of Ceremonies*,⁶⁹ the emperor distributed through his dignitaries tesserae/seals to the poor on special religious feasts, which permitted them to enter the palace where they would take part in the feasts and receive food and care.

Inscriptions on seals may mention God’s providence or other tenets of the Christian faith; but they do so less frequently than one might expect. A good example is the metrical inscription of the military commander Theodore Marchapsabos (of Syrian origin), who was made *strategos* of Anazarbos in Cilicia ‘with the help of God’: Στρατ(η)γεύσας ἄνωθεν Θεοῦ προνοί(α) / Μαρχανάβ(ος) Θεόδ(ω)ρ(ος) τ(ῆς) Ἀναζάρβ(ου) (second half of the 11th c.), ‘I, Theodore Marchapsabos, was promoted to the post of military commander of Anazarbos through God’s providence from above’.⁷⁰ The first verse is a dodecasyllable (C7); the second can become one (C7) if one assumes there to be synizesis in Θεόδωρος. The obverse shows a bust of the Theotokos Hodegetria.

A special category of metrical seals is constituted by anonymous or semi-anonymous legends that provide no, or hardly any, personal information on the owner of the seal.⁷¹ The majority of these verses emphatically invite the addressee of the document to open it immediately in order to get information about the sender. In most cases the personified seal says to the addressee the following: ‘You may explore/understand whose seal I am by looking at the writing’ or ‘The writing will show you whose seal I am’, etc. The same implicit invitation to guess who is speaking may be rendered in a more elaborate manner: Προσχῶν γραφῆ σὺ γνώση πάντα μου βίου, / σὺν ἀξία πράξις τε κλησιν καὶ γένος, ‘If you pay attention to the writing, you will know all about my life, including title, function, name

and family name' (a legend dating to the last third of the 11th c.). *Πρᾶξις* here has the meaning of 'function', or 'office'.⁷² Another more elaborate formula is: *Ζητεῖς μαθεῖν, ἄνθρωπε, σήμαντρον τίνοσ; / Γραφή παριστά, πρόσχεσ αὐτῆ καὶ μάθησ,* 'You wish to learn, man, whose sign is this? It is shown by the writing: pay attention to it and you will find out'. *Ἄνθρωποσ* is the one reading this, and *σήμαντρον* is a rare metonym for the seal.⁷³ Similar rhetorical questions can be found in inscriptions on works of art: for instance, *Ζητεῖσ, θεατά, τίνοσ ἡ χεῖρ τυγγάνει,* 'Viewer, do you wish to know whose hand this is?', written on a reliquary of the right hand of St Marina (kept in the Museo Correr in Venice).⁷⁴ The structural similarity to the above-mentioned seal's inscription is self-evident. Seal inscriptions of this kind are both playful and pretentious, indicating that the seal's owner, even though he does not reveal his name, expects to be recognized. Sometimes this self-proclaimed anonymity is undone by the text on the reverse which discloses the name (in verse or prose). Such semi-anonymous legends, in which the riddle is solved on the other side of the seal, are just for play.⁷⁵ They invite the addressee to turn the seal to the reverse and discover the sender's name: for example, obv. *Οὐτίνόσ εἰμι τὸ γράμμα βλέπων νόει,* 'Find out whose (seal) I am by looking at the writing', and rev. *Σφράγισμα Νικολάου τοῦ Κοστομύρη,* 'Seal of Nikolaos Kostomyres'. The inscription on the obverse is a dodecasyllable (C5), but the text on the reverse is in prose. For another example, see the following: *Ἐπιγραφή δείκνυσι τὸν γεγραφότα,* 'The title shows the writer', and *Γραφᾶσ σφραγίζω Μιχαῖλ Ἀπελάτου,* 'I form the seal of the letters of Michael Apelates'.

There is also a very small group of anonymous metrical seal inscriptions, which serve as brief prayers asking for support in a manner not unlike what we see in other eponymous metrical seals. In the following example, the anonymous owner of the seal states that the cross protects him and seals his letters because it is a superior weapon (*ἄριστον ὄπλον*): *Φρουρόσ βίου μοι καὶ σφραγισ σταυρόσ πέλει· / ἄριστον ὄπλον τῆσ ἐμῆσ τοῦτο σκέπησ* (dating to the second half of the 12th c.); this legend reflects the Byzantine ideology of the cross as an apotropaic sign that helps to avert evil.⁷⁶ Or take the following seal inscription: *Ψυχῆσ ἐμῆσ φρουρόν σε καὶ γραφῶν γράφω· / εἰ καὶ κατ' ἄμφω, πλὴν ἀλλὰ ψυχῆσ πλέον* (ca. second half of the 14th c.), 'I depict you as the guard of my letters and my soul; but though it is for both, it is more so for the soul'; the obverse shows an image of the addressee of these lines, St John the Baptist.⁷⁷ As for the identity of the seal's owner, whose name is not revealed, we can only guess: he could be a layman or the abbot of a monastery of St John the Baptist.⁷⁸

The emphasis given to the protection of the soul undoubtedly corresponds to the Christian faith. Life in this world is short, but the faithful may enter paradise if they repent and observe Christian values: in other words, however transient life may be, the salvation of the soul can be secured through penitence. This belief in the redemptive power of penitence explains the enormous number of texts, partially or wholly 'catanyctic' (penitential), in Byzantium.⁷⁹ The motif of the transience of life is emphatically expressed in the following seal inscription (from the year 1263), in which the 'flowing of time', i.e. 'change' (*ροή*), is brought to

a halt (στάσις) by the Mother of God because she gave birth to Jesus, the eternal life: Βροτῶν ροῆς ἢ στάσις, τὰς πράξεις κύρου | αἰῶσι μακροῖς τῆς ροῆς δίχα, κόρη.⁸⁰ Depending on whether one connects βροτῶν with ροῆς or with πράξεις, the inscription can be translated in two ways: ‘Virgin, you who put an end to mortal change, confirm the deeds without change for ages to end’ or ‘Virgin, you who put an end to change, confirm the deeds of men without change for ages to end’. The obverse shows the Theotokos, holding the child in her left arm (Hodegetria Aristerokratousa). The striking circumlocution for the Virgin, ροῆς ἢ στάσις, derives from the rich repertoire of Byzantine hymnography.⁸¹ It is used with a twist in the inscription, no longer stressing the possibility of salvation for ever and ever, but as a request that the documents of the seal’s owner may be valid for a long time indeed. We know who the seal’s owner is because the seal is attached to a document signed by Leo Eskammatismenos, *apographeus* of Rhodes, its surroundings, and the Cyclades. On another seal (third quarter of the 13th c.), the same Leo Eskammatismenos reveals his family name with a metonym, παρόνυμος σκαμμάτων (‘named after ditches’).⁸²

I shall conclude this discussion of anonymous seal inscriptions with a well-known palindrome (the Greek term is καρκίνος): Νῆψον ἀνομήματα, μὴ μόναν ὄψιν, ‘Wash your sins, not only your face’, found on a seal (turn of the 11th to the 12th c.) from the former Zacos collection.⁸³ The earliest attestation of this palindrome is found in the early tenth-century anthology of Constantine Kephalas; in later times it is frequently used as a protreptic inscription on water basins and fountains in the yards of monasteries and churches, in order to remind the visitors to live according Christian values, especially to clean the soul.⁸⁴ As an example of its diachronic survival until the present day we may mention the modern fountain in the yard of the church of St Nicholas on the Acropolis of Serres, a church that itself dates to Byzantine times. The palindrome reminds us of *Matt.* 6:17 about fasting: σὺ δὲ νηστεύων ἀλειψαί σου τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου νίψαι, ‘but you, when you fast, anoint your head [scil. with the holy chrism] and wash your face’, and 1 *John* 3:4, where lawlessness (ἀνομία) is equated with sin (ἁμαρτία): πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἀνομία, ‘whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness’. The obverse of the Zacos seal shows a bust of St Gregory of Nyssa, but the precise connection of the design with the seal’s owner is unclear because we do not know who he is. He may have been called Gregory himself or he may have been attached to a religious foundation (a church or a monastery) that bore the name of St Gregory of Nyssa. It cannot even be ruled out that the seal did not belong to an individual, but to a religious foundation at large, in which case the palindrome may have been chosen to emphasize the message of Christian charity.

To conclude, Byzantine lead seals are closely linked to the social status of their owners (usually high-ranking state or church officials), whose personal details (name, title, office and so on) up to the eleventh century are summarized in a formulaic prayer that usually addresses the Holy Virgin (as intercessor between the faithful and God) or the Lord himself. Shortly before the middle of the eleventh

century it became fashionable to put these personal details into verse, commonly the (unprosodic) dodecasyllable, because this was the metre *par excellence* of Byzantine epigrams. The manner of stylistic expression and the number of verses of these metrical seals are determined by the personal taste, degree of education, social status and origin of their owners. In the Comnenian period, the aristocracy showed a predilection for highlighting their connection with the imperial family on their seals, similarly to what we see in contemporary epigrams on works of arts. Content-wise, there are two kinds of metrical seals: (i) the inscriptions state the identity of the seals' owners or indicate what the seals do or should do for them, and (ii) a short prayer to the Holy Virgin or one or more saints asking for assistance, protection, success, every kind of help, salvation from sins, etc., again similarly to what we find in dedicatory epigrams. The connection between image (obverse) and text (reverse) in this category is quite close: the text may offer an explanation of the image or, vice versa, the text's elusive meaning may be clarified by the image. A small part of the metrical seals offers anonymous or semi-anonymous legends, most of which invite the addressee of the document to open it immediately in order to get information about the sender. Even among these anonymous seal inscriptions we come across highly elaborate verses indicating a higher status of their seals' owners. As Christianity was such a crucial ideological component of the Byzantine Empire, inscriptions on lead seals also reflect the religious values held by aristocrats, such as giving alms to the poor.

Notes

- 1 See e.g. A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden. Teil I. Einleitung, Siegellegenden von Alpha bis inklusive My* (Vienna, 2011), nos 739–741. Cf. also p. 191 in this paper.
- 2 See W. Seibt, 'The Use of Monograms on Byzantine Seals in the Early Middle Ages (sixth to ninth centuries)', *Parekbolai* 6 (2016), 1–14.
- 3 Museum August Kestner, Zarnitz Collection L433.2015.10, A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt and W. Seibt (ed.), *Der byzantinische Mensch in seinem Umfeld. Weitere Bleisiegel der Sammlung Zarnitz im Museum August Kestner* (Hannover, 2015), no. 10.
- 4 J. Nesbitt, A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt and W. Seibt, *Highlights from the Robert Hecht Jr Collection of Byzantine Seals* (Thessaloniki, 2009), no. 10 (obv.: bust of Saint Theodoros in military dress).
- 5 Père V. Laurent, *Les bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine* (Athens, 1932) published more than 700 metrical seal inscriptions. But as the material has increased exponentially to more than 4000 examples and as the field of sigillography has developed new methodologies and new approaches, a new edition was clearly a desideratum, which is why I decided to produce one, resulting in two volumes up till now (Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I* and II), while the third is still work in progress.
- 6 The unprosodic dodecasyllable is already well attested in 7th–10th-c. literature: see M.D. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm: An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metres* (Vienna, 1999), 42, and n. 77, and idem, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts*, vol. II (Vienna, 2019), 284–381, esp. 290.
- 7 For some examples, see DO 58.106.2417, ed. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, no. 737 (late 11th–early 12th c.): Ἐμὸς τύπος σφράγισμα τοῦ συνωνύμου, 'My stamp/figure is the seal of the synonymous': St. George depicted on the obverse of the seal is speaking.

- DO 58.106.4981 [Thierry (Étampes/France)], ed. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, no. 219 (first half of the 12th c.): Βροτοτρόφον σὺ καὶ βρεφοτρόφε βρέφος, | Θεοφάνιον τὸν Προμουντηνὸν σκέπε (two dodecasyllables, both with C5; assonance and hyperbaton in the first verse), ‘You, nursling, provider of the mortals (scil. Jesus Christ), and provider of the nursling (scil. Mother of God), protect Theophanios Promoundenos’. For βρεφοτρόφος as epitheton of the Theotokos in Byzantine hymnography see S. Efstathiadis, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ Ὑμνογραφίᾳ* (Paris, 1930), 13. Cf. also the epiclesis ἄνανδρε μήτερ, παρθένε βρεφοτρόφε on a (today lost) Panagiaron (dated to the 14th c.) of the Panteleemon monastery (Athos) sponsored by Alexios Komnenos Angelos. See A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung* (Vienna, 2009–18), vol. II, 263, no. St2 (henceforth BEIÜ).
- 8 See P. Maas, ‘Der byzantinische Zwölf Silber’, *BZ* 12 (1903), 278–323.
- 9 See Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, 33–5, and especially no. 1142 (with earlier editions).
- 10 DO 58.106.4323, A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt (ed.), *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden. Teil 2. Siegellegenden von Ny bis inklusive Sphragis* (Vienna, 2016), no. 2275.
- 11 H. Hunger, ‘Die metrischen Siegellegenden der Byzantiner. Inhalt und Form’, *Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 125 (1988), 5.
- 12 DO 58.106.5402, ed. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, no. 604 (with mention of earlier editions).
- 13 DO 55.1.3862, ed. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, no. 740 (with mention of earlier editions).
- 14 DO 47.2.1399 (unpublished).
- 15 Musée d’art et d’histoire de Genève, CdN 2004–250 (former Zacos collection), J.-Cl. Cheynet and M. Campagnolo-Pothitou (ed.), *Sceaux de la collection George Zacos au Musée d’art et d’histoire de Genève* (Genève, 2016), no. 232 (dated to the second half of the 11th c.). Cf. also J.-Cl. Cheynet, *La société byzantine: L’apport des sceaux* (Paris, 2010), 592; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus II*, no. 2381.
- 16 Former collection Schlumberger, G. Schlumberger (ed.), *Sigillographie de l’empire byzantin* (Paris, 1884; repr. Turin, 1963), 601 (facsimile); Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus II*, no. 1876, with references to the Slavic origin and the members of the family name Bouzenos (**bjzi*, ‘elder’) in Byzantium. The dignities πρωτοκυνηγός (first hunter) and πρωτοϊερακάριος (first falconer) are attested since the second half of the thirteenth century.
- 17 See for example Ps. John of Damascus, Λόγος εἰς τὸ γενέθλιον τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου Μαρίας, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V (Berlin, 1988), 171–2 and 180; Efstathiadis, *Θεοτόκος*, 67–8. For the use of this metaphor in other Byzantine seals with metrical inscriptions, see A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, ‘Biblische Reminiszenzen in Bild und Text auf byzantinischen Bleisiegeln’, in C. Rapp and A. Külzer (eds), *The Bible in Byzantium: Appropriation, Adaptation, Interpretation* (Göttingen, 2019), 123–44.
- 18 For the use and the earliest appearance of this accentual metre in Byzantine poetry see Lauxtermann, *Spring*, 21–40.
- 19 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, 55.
- 20 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, 55. The same inscription also occurs with a slight variation: Γεώργιον πατρικιον σκέπε, Λόγε Θεοῦ, διδὸς σθένος σου τῷ ἀνθυπάτῳ, φύλαξ, ‘Word of God, protect the patrikios George, giving your power to the anthypatos as his guard’.
- 21 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus II*, no. 2155.
- 22 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, 56. For the use of these metres in Byzantine poetry, see Lauxtermann, *Spring*, 41–54.
- 23 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, 56.

- 24 H. Hunger, 'Die Makremboliten auf byzantinischen Bleisiegeln und in sonstigen Quellen', *SBS* 5 (1998), 15, no. 5a; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 1138 (obv.: the Theotokos enthroned with the child on her lap).
- 25 Fogg 835. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, no. 2640 (with references). For the above-mentioned monastery near the Golden Gate see R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. I. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique. III. Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, ²1969), 372–3.
- 26 *PG* 37. 632A: poem I, 2, 2, lines 688–9.
- 27 DO 58.106.5351. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 1016.
- 28 See W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich. I. Teil. Kaiserhof* (Vienna, 1978), no. 162; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 204 and no. 998.
- 29 DO 58.106.1616; Ermitaž, M-9283. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 1016 (with references).
- 30 B. Katsaros, *Ιωάννης Κασταμονίτης: Συμβολή στη μελέτη τοῦ βίου, τοῦ ἔργου καὶ τῆς ἐποχῆς του* (Thessaloniki, 1983), 141–2; M. Loukaki, 'Contribution à l'étude de la famille Antiochos', *REB* 50 (1992), 199, no. 17.
- 31 DO 58.106.5530. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, no. 2795; J.-Cl. Cheynet and A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, 'Adelige aus dem "Westen" in Staatsapparat und Gesellschaft des byzantinischen Reiches: Das Vermächtnis der Siegel' in F. Daim et al. (eds), *Menschen, Bilder, Sprache, Dinge: Wege der Kommunikation zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen 2: Menschen und Worte* (Mainz, 2018), 210, fig. 6.
- 32 A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, 'Kaukasische Aristokraten auf byzantinischer Karriereleiter. Eine kritische Nachlese des Quellenbefunds zur Familie der Aspietai (1081–1205)', *BZ* 108 (2015), 214.
- 33 A. Gkoutzioukostas and A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, 'The Origin and the Members of the Kamytzes Family: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography', *DOP* 72 (2018), 169–79.
- 34 H. Hunger, 'Der *homo byzantinus* und das Bleisiegel', *DOP* 46 (1992), 120–8; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, 35–8.
- 35 Wassiliou-Seibt 315; DO 58.106.3046, A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt (ed.), 'Stephanos Kontostephanos Komnenos und sein Siegel: Ein Identifizierungsvorschlag', in E. Chrysos and E. Zachariadou (eds), *Captain and Scholar: Papers in memory of Demetrios I. Polemis* (Andros, 2009), 344–7 (figures on p. 345); Regional Historical Museum Shumen, ed. I. Jordanov, 'Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria, volume 1–3. Sofia, 2003, 2006, 2009. Addenda et Corrigenda', *Numizmatika Sfragistika i Epigrafika* 7 (2011), 197–8, no. 664A. The three aforementioned specimens are from different *boulloteria*. See Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, 2833a-c.
- 36 Ed. Fr. Miklosich and I. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi*, vol. VI (Vienna, 1890), 125, lines 20–22.
- 37 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 358 (two specimens from the former Zacos collection).
- 38 G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* II. *Sprachreste der Türkvölker in den byzantinischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1958), 339.
- 39 Niketas Choniates, *Historia* 75.61–76.84 (ed. van Dieten). Cf. R.-J. Lilie, *Byzanz und die Kreuzzüge* (Stuttgart, 2004), 84.
- 40 All the references by K. Barzos, *Ἡ γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν*, vol. II (Thessaloniki, 1984), 432–4.
- 41 Fogg 1147; Orghidan; former Schlumberger collection. For the correct reading and date see Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, no. 2031 (references to the earlier bibliography). Katsaros, *Κασταμονίτης*, 138, no. 17.
- 42 Fogg 1437; former Zacos collection (photos in the systematic archive for Byzantine Sigillography at the Austrian Academy of Sciences/Division of Byzantine Research); IFEB 111. Katsaros, *Κασταμονίτης* 138, no. 17; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 743.

- 43 Ἐν σοὶ πεποιθώς, σταυρέ, τοῦ κόσμου φύλαξ, | πολλῶ πόθῳ τέτευχεν σὸν θεῖον τύπον | ὁ Πανθήςριος εὐτελής σὸς οἰκέτης, re-edited in *BEIÜ*, vol. II, 238–9, no. Me69.
- 44 V. Laurent, *Documents de sigillographie byzantine: La collection C. Orghidan* (Paris, 1952), 222–3, no. 439 (partially erroneous reading). Cf. Katsaros, *Κασταμονίτης* 138, no. 17; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 703; II 2031.
- 45 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, nos 2225, 2711, 2722.
- 46 *BEIÜ*, vol. II, 366, no. St4.
- 47 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 1294 (with earlier editions). On the obverse the apostles Peter and Paul, with the seal's owner in the middle. It must be stressed that owners of seals are rarely ever depicted. As a second example we may note Constantine Mesopotamites, metropolitan of Thessaloniki (1197–1222/1227), see V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin. V/1–3. L'église* (Paris 1963–1972), no. 464. For a detailed commentary see Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 950.
- 48 Laurent, *Corpus* V/1, no. 804; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 146. About Georgios Bardanes see A. Galone, *Γεώργιος Βαρδάνης: Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου, του έργου και της εποχής του* (Βυζαντινά Κείμενα καὶ Μελέται 46) (Thessaloniki, 2008).
- 49 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 2250. Obv.: the two apostles, standing, and in the middle the bust of Jesus Christ in a medaillon.
- 50 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 670. Obv.: the two apostles, standing.
- 51 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 669 and 671–672; II, nos 1921–1922.
- 52 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 1287.
- 53 E.g. Λιταῖς φοιτητῶν, Χριστέ, ἡγοῦ σὺ δούλω, 'Christ, guide your servant through the intercessions of the apostles', on a work of art, perhaps a comb (dating to the reign of Leo VI), kept in the Bode Museum in Berlin and reedited in *BEIÜ*, vol. II, 322–4, no. E117.
- 54 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, nos 2251–2268. For the use of the cross on seals as a victorious symbol especially against Islam, see J.-Cl. Cheynet, *La société byzantine: L'apport des sceaux* (Paris, 2010), 275–84. For the iconography of the cross on seals see B. Caseau, 'L'iconographie des sceaux après la fin d'iconoclasme (IX^e–XI^e s.)', in *Sio godini ot roždeineto na Dr Vasil Charalanov (1907–2007)* (Shumen, 2008), 225–32; I. Koltsida-Makre, 'The Representation of the Cross on Byzantine Lead Seals', *SBS* 4 (1995), 43–51; A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, 'Σύμβολον ζωηφόρον. Παραστάσεις σταυρῶν σε βυζαντινά μολυβδόβουλλα', in Th. Korres et al. (eds), *Φιλοτιμία. Studies in honor of Alkmene Stavridou-Zafraka* (Thessaloniki, 2011), 670–85.
- 55 Jordanov, *Corpus* II, no. 69 and III, no. 1824; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I 38; II, no. 2691. This motif also appears on the seal of Theodoros Styppeiotos *protonobellisimos* and *megas sakellarios* (early 50s of the 12th c.), a specimen of which is archived in my collection: though it sheds new light on Styppeiotos' career, I will not discuss this seal here because I.G. Leontiades, 'The Seal of Theodoros Styppeiotos *Protonobellisimos* and *Megas Sakellarios* (early 50s XII C.)', *SBS* 13 (2019), 71–9, deals with it in detail.
- 56 Fogg 2310; another similar specimen was offered in the Auction Gorny 181, 12.–13.10.2009, no. 2805 (incomplete reading). See Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, no. 2867.
- 57 DO 58.106.3272. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 673.
- 58 See Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, nos 1934, 2079 and 2364.
- 59 See Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 187a, b.
- 60 IFEB 450 (first half of the 13th c.). Ch. Stavrakos, 'Ein unpubliziertes byzantinisches Siegel aus der Sammlung Savvas Kophopoulos: Einige Bemerkungen zur Sicherung mit Blei', in Cl. Ludwig (ed.), *Siegel und Siegler. Akten des 8. Internationalen Symposiums für byzantinische Sigillographie* (Frankfurt, 2005), 163–5; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 1115; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 1300: Λόγους περωτοῦς ἐν μολυβδίναις πέδαις / Δερμοκάτης ἐμπεδεῖ Νικηφόρος, 'Nikephoros Dermokaites

fetters winged words in shackles of lead'. The seal's owner wants to show off his good breeding: λόγοι περρωτοί, which stands for the rapid communication of addresser and addressee, obviously refers to Homer's ἔπεα περρόντα. The metaphor μολυβδίναις πέδασι designates the seal closing the letter. Please note the alliteration in πέδασι and ἐμπεδέϊ.

- 61 Stavrakos, 'Blei'; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, no. 1115.
- 62 A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, 'Der ausgesprochene Verzicht auf Heiligenbilder in verifizierten byzantinischen Siegelinschriften', *Parekbolai* 6 (2016), 57–78. This study revises the erroneous interpretation of Maria Campagnolo-Poithou, '«Comme un relent d'iconoclasme» au début du XII^e siècle: le témoignage sigillographique', in M. Campagnolo et al. (eds), *L'aniconisme dans l'art religieux byzantin. Actes du colloque de Genève (1–3 octobre 2009)* (Geneva, 2014), 176–91, who sees a connection both with the imperial ambitions of Anna Komnene and with the intellectual milieu at the time, including supporters of Eustratios, metropolitan of Nicaea, who was condemned for heresy in 1117.
- 63 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon* § 47.20–24, ed. Litavrin (St Petersburg, 2003), 228.
- 64 E.g. DO 58.106.5194; Zacos II 1069. See also G. Schlumberger, *Mélanges Archéologiques: Monnaies, Médailles, Méreaux, Jetons, Amulettes etc* (Paris, 1895), 282–4 (obv.: bust of the Theotokos, Episkepsis type).
- 65 *PG* 37, 936a: poem I, 2, 33, line 120.
- 66 Former Zacos collection (photo in the archive for Byzantine Sigillography at the Austrian Academy of Sciences). G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol. II (ed. by J.W. Nesbitt, Basel, 1972), no. 701 (without picture); Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus II*, 1935; Cheynet and Campagnolo, *Genève*, no. 398 (dated to the third third of the 10th c.).
- 67 For this person see R.-J. Lilie et al. (eds), *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit. II. Abteilung* (Berlin, 2013), no. 27115.
- 68 Fogg 2966. See J. Nesbitt, 'Byzantine Copper Tokens', *SBS* 1 (1987), 73, fig. 4. For the unique seal of this imperial mistress, see J. Nesbitt, A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt and W. Seibt, *Highlights from the Robert Hecht, Jr., Collection of Byzantine Seals* (Thessaloniki, 2009), 34–5, no. 4. A detailed analysis of the person of Maria Skleraina is given by W. Seibt, *Die Skleroi: Eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie* (Wien, 1976), 71–6, no. 16.
- 69 *De Ceremoniis* 360.21–361.2; 778.15–19, Reiske. Cf. G. Dagron (ed.), 'L'organisation et le déroulement des courses d'après le livre des cérémonies', *TM* 13 (2000), 91 (text) and 90 (translation and notes). See also the *Kletorologion of Philotheos*: N. Oikonomides (ed.), *Les listes de préséance des IX^e et X^e siècles* (Paris, 1972), 181.5–9 (text) and 180.
- 70 Collection Theodoridis, J.-Cl. Cheynet and D. Theodoridis (ed.), *Sceaux byzantins de la collection D. Theodoridis: Les sceaux patronymiques* (Paris, 2010), no. 135 (partially different reading); Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus II*, no. 2278.
- 71 For this special category see Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, 38–45; for examples, see eadem, *Corpus II*, nos 1690–1692, 1695–1712, 1714–1722, 1724–1746. Cf. also Hunger, 'Homo byzantinus', 118–9; N. Oikonomides, 'The Anonymous Seal', *SBS* 4 (1995), 71–80.
- 72 Former Zacos collection (Photo in the Viennese Archive). Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus II*, no. 1853.
- 73 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus I*, no. 836.
- 74 See *BEIÜ*, vol. III, no. Me81; A. Guillou, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques médiévales d'Italie* (Rome, 1996), 79, fig. 79 (partially different reading).
- 75 *Pace* Oikonomides, 'The Anonymous Seal', 74, who incorrectly suggested that such legends mention the name of the 'public scribe' on the obverse.

- 76 A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, 'Πρώιμα βυζαντινά μολυβδόβουλλα με έμμετρες επιγραφές', in Ch. Stavrakos and B. Papadopoulou (eds), *Ἡπειρόνδε. Proceedings of the 10th International Symposium of Byzantine Sigillography (Ioannina, 1–3 October 2009)* (Wiesbaden, 2011), 232, no. 11.
- 77 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preußisches Kulturerbe, Münzkabinett 488/1877, W. Seibt and M.L. Zarnitz (ed.), *Das byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk* (Vienna, 1997), no. 4.1.4.
- 78 Cf. Seibt and Zarnitz, *Bleisiegel*, 152, where the authors argue for a seal of a monastery dedicated to St John the Baptist.
- 79 See Lauxtermann, *Spring*, 31–5.
- 80 N. Oikonomides, *A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals* (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, 1986) 130–1, no. 139; Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* I, no. 220.
- 81 See Efstratiadis, *Θεοτόκος*, 73 (στάσις κινουμένων).
- 82 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, no. 2787; Cheynet and Campagnolo, *Genève*, no. 372 (partially different reading).
- 83 Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus* II, no. 1537.
- 84 See M.D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres*, vol. I (Vienna, 2003), 248.