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Several Seals from Asia Minor and Anatolia

Continuing works on the materials in a private collection in Russia have recently succeeded in discovering and introducing into scholarly circulation of several Byzantine seals of the origin related to the finds in modern Turkey, once a large Byzantine area with important administrative, commercial, and eparchial centres. Unfortunately, these seals miss provenance and only keep information about the region where found, however, the data in possession enlarge our notion of sigillography as such and some aspects of Byzantine history, too.

Among them are primarily *molybdoboulloi* of the Komnenoi family: *sebastos* and *mezas domestikos* Alexios Komnenos (1078–1081), showing a stage in his ascension to the imperial throne, and Theodore Komnenos, *nobelissimos* and *doux* of Paphlagonia (ca. 1080), as well as seals of well-known figures in the military elite at the court of Romanos IV Diogenes, *proedros* and *doux* Samuel Alusianos (ca. 1069–1071) and *anthipates*, *patrikios*, and *katepano* of Mesopotamia Leo (first half of the eleventh century). *Bullae* with the legend showing ecclesiastical data are of doubtless significance, too. Among them are a *molybdoboullos* of Michael, bishop of Bariane (eleventh century), an eparchial centre in the metropolis of Euchaitais Elenopontou, which not only mentions a new church official of a high rank in a poorly-known diocese in Anatolia but also shows a very rare sigillographic type with image of St. Sisinius that was almost not presented on Byzantine *bullae*, though a seal of *patrikios* and *strategos* Sisinius (eighth century) demonstrates a unique example of a Biblical citation in the seal legend by its invocation borrowed from the first verse of Psalm 140: “*Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man.*”

Today this group of seals might be enlarged with a few copies more allowing one a better understanding of the history of Byzantine Anatolia and Asia Minor and their connections with other imperial regions. Apart from very informative seals from the tenth and eleventh century uncovering titles and career of their owners, this group includes unpretentious *bullae* from the early Byzantine period indicating only the owner’s name or name and title. For example there are seals of *hypatos* John (1) with an invocative monogram within a wreath border (seventh century), *patrikios* Epiphanius (2) showing an eagle (seventh or eighth century), or *hypatos* Theodore (3) with an invocative monogram and a traditional tetragram □ ▮ □ □ ▮ □ □ □ √ □ 9 □ (early ninth century □).

However, this group also incorporates some unusual monuments, such as a seal with

the name of John (4) in a cross monogram with poorly preserved tetragram in corners featuring the owner's position or title, still not deciphered: 0LI-0S0V | .8I-..

It is well-known that complex monograms containing the owner's name together with his rank or position are the most difficult to attribute. Among them are two more *molybdoboulloi* from the seventh or the eighth century with the monograms decipherable as, in the first case, *John, illustrios* (5) and, in the second, *Sisinios* (6).

More informative are seals from the next period with the legends showing the owner's title, rank, and sometimes place of service or the noble family of origin. Within this category, there are few *molybdoboulloi* from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. An example could be a seal of Basil (7), *protospatharios epi tou Chrysotriklinou, megas chartoularios tou genikou* and *protonotarios* (eleventh century), who selected a rare image of St. Mark for the sigillographic type. Taking this issue into account, it would not be a surprise if this official was a member of the noble family of the Xeroi, which representatives used the same sigillographic type for their *molybdoboulloi*. Another example is a seal of another Basil (8), *anthypates, patrikios* and *strategos*, with poorly identifiable place of service due to the legend preservation, who possibly belonged to a noble Byzantine family, showing an image of St. Theodosius (eleventh century).

Among toponymic *bullae*, it is worth mentioning a seal fragment of Nikephoros (9), *anthypates, patrikios, epi tou Chrysotriklinou, megas chartoularios, krites epi tou Hippodromou*, and of the *Thrakesian theme* with a half-length image of the Mother of God. Another *molybdoboullos* indicates Bardas Charas or Karatinos (10), *hypatos* and, as the seals states, "a man of our powerful and holy emperor" (eleventh or twelfth century).

Perhaps the group of seals with family names includes a private seal of Nikephoros (11) with a high-artistic portrait of St. Nikephoros (eleventh century). Unfortunately, the owner's patronymic juts out the small blank, so one can only hope that another copy of better preservation showing the patronymic would be found.

Among the church seals is a *molybdoboullos* of Peter (12), metropolitan of Sardis (eleventh century), showing a half-length image of the Mother of God Hodegetria.

One might understand that, although the seals presented here lost the provenance, they preserve accounts of the region where found and make a considerable contribution to the notion of some officials in central, provincial, and ecclesiastical administration or representatives of noble families in Byzantine Anatolia and Asia Minor.