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NISH XI-II C., ACCORDING BYZANTINE SIGILLOGRAPHY

I have been working on the project Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria for more than thirty years.

The beginning was in 1978, when the foundations of a building used as archives by the local strategos in the period 971-1092 were discovered during archaeological excavations in the second medieval Bulgarian capital Preslav. More than 500 Byzantine Lead Seals, 220 lead blanks and 4 moulds for casting the blanks were found inside and near the building. All these finds were included and commented on in the monographic volume “The seals from the Strategia of Preslav”¹.

Along with the work on the Preslav seals my task has also been the location, documentation and publication of all Byzantine seals from the territory of the whole country.

As a result of my constant effort more than 3,200 Byzantine seals, 800 lead blanks, 20 moulds for casting and 2 boulloteria have been located from the territory of modern Bulgaria and documented so far. A portion of them has been published in two volumes². The third and last volume of the Corpus is in its final stage of completion. It will practically include all sphragistic materials from the territory of modern Bulgaria.

The texts of these seals undoubtedly serve as basic sources for Byzantine history, rank hierarchy, administration and prosopography. In addition to that, these seals can be used as sources for the history of specific settlements and regions.

Three groups of seals can be used for the restoration of the history of a particular settlement.

The seals in the first group have the name of the settlement or region inscribed on them.

The seals in the second group were discovered in the respective settlement. Their find-spots were the places where a letter was once received con-

¹ И. Йорданов, *Печатите от стратегията Преслав (971-1088)*, София 1993.

² I. Jordanov, *Corpus of the Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, volume 1: *The Byzantine Seals with Geographical Names*. Sofia, 2003; I. Jordanov, *Corpus of the Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, volume 2: *The Byzantine Seals with Family Names*. Sofia 2006.

taining an affixed seal bearing the title and position of the person who sent it. As long as we know the sender of the correspondence and provided there is a large number of his seals found in the same find-spot, we can try to determine the possible recipient and institution once located there as well as the occasion on which the correspondence was sent.

The third group contains seals having belonged to individuals of whom we know that they stayed in the particular settlement for a longer or shorter period of time.

The combination of these three groups of seals provides the answers to various questions relating to the history of the particular settlement.

Numerous examples can be given, the most typical of which is Preslav. Actually, we did not know anything of its life in the years of Byzantine rule from 971 to 1185.

Now, on the basis of the seals found there we determine its status in the Byzantine civil and ecclesiastical administration, the period when it was part of the Byzantine empire, the names of 17 strategoi of the city, one metropolitan, the names, titles and positions of more than 400 individuals who sent their correspondence to the city on various occasions and so on.

However, since our symposium is dedicated to Nish I will present those seals from Bulgaria which relate to this territory.

I. Seals of governors of Nish – civil, military and ecclesiastical:

A. Civil and military

Before that, however, I would like to present brief information about Naissus and the representatives of the Byzantine administration located there.

Naissus was a strategic city in antiquity. Its importance increased significantly during the time of emperor Constantine I the Great (306-337) who was born there. At this time the city was turned into a state residence and Christian centre³.

Next to nothing is known about Nisos from the time of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, когато тези земи са част от България, except that it was a bishopric and was captured by the Byzantines in the early XIth century. Nisos focused the attention of the chroniclers when it became a centre of important events in and out of the the empire. In 1071 the city was seized and sacked by the Magyars. The hand of St. Prokopios from his relics preserved there was also stolen⁴.

In the autumn of 1072 a rebellion of the Bulgarians erupted. Constantine Bodin was appointed tzar and the new dynastic name of Peter was given to him.

³ Г. Николов, *Политико-административно и църковно развитие на град Ниш (IV-VI в.)*, ГСУ - ИЦСВП «Иван Дуйчев», 1, 1987, 181-191.

⁴ J. Калић, *Ниш у средњем веку*, Историјски часопис XXXI, (Београд 1984), 5-11.

Right after that his army was divided into two and part of it led by Bodine-Peter set off for Nisos. Soon after the city was captured and turned into a residence of the new ruler⁵.

The importance of Nisos increased greatly at the time of the Crusades when it was one of the most important fortresses on the road of the crusaders. The quite detailed information of the Western chroniclers about the passage through the Bulgarian lands of the members of the First crusade in 1096 proves the importance of the city of Nisos for this countryside⁶. The name of the doux of the city, Nicetas, located there is reported at the same juncture (on him, see below).

A propos, when was the theme of Nisos established?

The *Alexiad* discloses that in 1114-1115 the theme of Nisos already existed (τὸ θέμα τοῦ Νίσου)⁷.

Some sphragistic evidence and indirect information obtained by the chronicles give us reasons to suggest that such an administrative unit existed earlier.

At the time of the above mentioned rebellion of Bulgarians, the first detachment was forwarded to Nisos and the second one to Kastoria. The strategos of Achrida Marianus and the patrikios and antypathos of Devol Theognostos Bourtzes, as well as the strategos of Kastoria, fortified their position there⁸. The enumerating of these strategoi, heads of small military-administrative units as part from theme Bulgaria, consisting of the respective city and its surroundings, shows (even though indirectly) that there was such a strategos in Nisos too.

This logical analysis is also grounded on the evidence obtained by some sphragistic remains: a seal having belonged to Νικηφόρος Λαλάκων πρωτοσπαθάρης καὶ στρατηγὸς τῆς Νίσου dated to the second half of the XIth century is presented below. Therefore, Nisos was a military and administrative centre within the boundaries of the theme Bulgaria.

Clearly, the role of Nisos increased in connection with the Majars invasion and the Crusades; it had already the rank of a douxdom and doux Nikephorus Dekanos resided there.

This was as a result of the dissolution of the thematic organization and the introduction of the new administrative system by Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118).

Nisos preserved its role of a military and administrative centre also in the XIIth c., when Michael Branas, Andronikos Komnenos were mentioned as governors of the city.

⁵ В. Н. Златарски, *История на българската държава през средните векове*, II, София 1972, 143-146.

⁶ Алберт Аквенски, *История на Ерусалимския кръстоносен поход*, ЛИБИ, 3, София 1965, 146-150.

⁷ Anne Comnene, *Alexiade*, III, ed. B. Leib, Paris 1945, p. 178.1.

⁸ I. Skylitzes, *Η Συνέχεια τῆς χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτζη* (Ioannes Skylitzes Continuatus), ed. E. T. Τσολακῆς, Θεσσαλονίκης 1968, p. 164. 12-14.



Fig. 1 Nikephoros Lalakon or Lykaon protospatharios and strategos of Nisos (XI c.)
Сл. 1. Никифор Лалакон, протоспатариј и стратег Ниша (Nisos) (XI в.).

1. *Nikephoros Lalakon or Lykaon protospatharios and strategos of Nisos XI c.). Fig. 1.*

Attested by only one specimen preserved in collection of Dumbarton Oaks (DO. 58. 106. 15.62). Find-spot: Constantinople. D. 23 mm, W. 8.42 g. Obverse struck off-center.

Ed. **Nesbitt-Oikonomides**, *DOSeals*, vol. 1, no. 32.2⁹.

Obv. Bust of the Virgin with both hands open in front of her chest. Sigla: MP || ΘV Μ(ήτη)ρ Θ(εο)ῦ.

Rev. Inscription of five lines:

+ ΝΙΚΗΦ' | Α'ΣΠΑΘ' | ΣΤΡ'ΤΗΓ'Τ' | ΝΗCOVO | -ΛΑ'-

+ Νικηφ(όρος) (πρωτο)σπαθ(άριος) (καί) στρ(α)τηγ(ός) τ(ῆς) Νήσου ὁ Λ(αλ)ά(κων) ἢ Λ(υκ)ά(ων)

Since the family name is inscribed in abbreviation -ΛΑ', the authors offered two variant readings: Λ(αλ)ά(κων) or Λ(υκ)ά(ων). It is necessary to emphasize that in both cases such an individual is unknown in the written sources. It is a new fact both for Byzantine prosopography and the history of Nisos in the XIth c.

Regrettably the seal is not precisely dated. The publishers offered a general dating into the XIth c. The ligature writing of MP: Μ(ήτη)ρ points to a dating after 1050.

2. *Nikephoros Dekanos kouropalates and anagrapheus of Nisos (XI-XII c.). Fig. 2A-B.*

a. Preserved in the collection of National Museum of History, Sofia, no. 27705. Find-spot: Sozopol. D. 17-17.5 mm; field (?) mm; thickness 2.5 mm.

⁹ J. W. Nesbitt and N. Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, vol.1: Italy, North of the Balkans, North of the Black Sea*, Washington, D.C., 1991, no. 32.2.

Fig.2A-B. Nikephoros Dekanos kouropalates and anagrapheus of Nisos (XI-XII c.)

Сл.2А-В. Никифор Декан, куроपालат и анаграф и дукс Ниша (XI-XII в.).



Incomplete imprint because the blank was smaller than the diameter of the die or equal to it. A badly preserved specimen. Corroded. All this makes the complete reading of the text difficult.

Ed. Йорданов, Никифор Декан, 75-79¹⁰; *Jordanov, Geographical Names*, no. 55.1a.

b. In a private collection (Vurban Vurbanov from Elhovo). Delivered to the National Museum of History, Sofia, by the police. The principal group of seals from this collection come from the stronghold near the village of Melnitsa, district of Elhovo. D. 18-20 mm. Incomplete imprint but well preserved.

Ed. *Jordanov, Melnitsa*, no. 45¹¹; *Jordanov, Geographical Names*, no. 55.1b.

The two specimens are struck with the same bulloterion.

Parallels: Another specimen struck with the same die is preserved in the collection of Dumbarton Oaks (DO. 58. 106. 2577, see *Nesbitt-Oikonomides, DOS*, no. 32.1).

Obv. Inscription of four lines:

a) +. ΕΡ'Θ' | ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡ' | ΚΥΡΟΠΑ | ΛΑΤΙ

b) . . ΕΡ'Θ' | . . . ΗΦΟΡ' | . ΣΡΟΠΑ | ΛΑΤΙ

Rev. Inscription of four lines:

a) ΔΣΚ . . | ΑΝΑΓΡΑ . | ΝΗΣΤ | ΔΕΚΑΝ

b) ΔΣΚΙΣ | ΑΝΑΓΡΑΦ | ΝΗΣΤ | ΔΕ . .

+ [Κ(ύρι)]ε β(οή)θ(ει) Νικηφόρ(ω) куроπαλάτι, δουκί (καί) ἀναγραφ(εῖ) Νήσου τ[ῶ] Δεκαν(ῶ)

¹⁰ И. Йорданов, *Новооткрит моливдовул на Никифор Декан - куроपालат, дук и анаграф на Ниш от колекцията на НИМ-София*, ГНИМ, 9, 1994, 75-79.

¹¹ I. Jordanov, *Byzantine Lead Seals from the Village of Melnitsa (district of Elkhovo, Bulgaria)*, *SBS*, 7, 2002, 21-57, no. 45

The owner of the seal which had affixed his correspondence to the capital city of Constantinople and Sozopol, as well as the stronghold near the village of Melnitsa, was one Nicephorus Dekanos titled kouropalates, doux and anagrapheus of the Nisos theme.

This seal raises many questions but the following ones should be answered:

- a) Who was Nicephorus Dekanos?
- b) What was the administrative unit of the Nisos theme like?
- c) Who was the intended recipient of his correspondence to Sozopol?

The combination of the title of kouropalates and the office of doux and anagrapheus enables the seal to be dated to the late XIth century or the early XIIth century and thus an attempt to identify the owner of the seal as a person known from the narrative sources is possible.

The Byzantine princess and writer Anna Komnena noted that his father, the emperor Alexius I, left the capital city of Constantinople in November 1107 in order to prepare military operations against Bohemond of Tarentum and before that “after sitting the affairs of palace and capital in good order and after and appointing as governors, the Great Drungarios of the Fleet, the eunuch Eustathius Kymeneianus, and Nicephorus, the son of Dekanos, he left...”¹².

The report of Anna Komnena does not define the title and office of Nicephorus Dekanos. Nevertheless, the coincidence between the names and the period, as well as the discovery in Sozopol of a seal which belonged to another representative of the Dekanos family, George as kouropalates¹³, who is also reported in the *Alexiade*, give us reasons to suggest that the owner of the seal presented here was Nicephorus Dekanos mentioned in the *Alexiade*.

What positions did Nicephorus Dekanos occupy and what was the administrative unit inscribed on the seals?

The positions of doux (developed from military chief to administrative governor) and anagrapheus (fiscal official), combined on the seal of an identical person, illustrate the trends of the Byzantine administrative structure during the second half of the XIth century. At that time every provincial governor enjoyed full power over the military, administrative, fiscal and juridical authorities, i. e. he became in fact the real proxy of the emperor in a particular region.

We dwelled above on the administrative unit and the time of its establishment. Considering the dating of the seal and the persons who wrote to Sozopol (and in the first place this was the brother of Nicephorus Dekanos, George), as well as their common recipient, we can generally refer the receiving of the correspondence from Nicephorus Dekanos to 1090s. There is no information about the question in what capacity Nikephorus Dekanos ruled the capital city in November 1107 (perhaps he was an eparchos) but surely he had higher rank in the hierarchy than that inscribed on his seal from Sozopol. Having in mind the high position of his colleague Eustathius Kymeneianus, we can conclude that Nicephorus Dekanos had the rank of nobelissimos or protonobelissimos¹⁴.

¹² *Alexiade*, III, 87.11.

¹³ I. Jordanov, *Family Names*, no. 161.

¹⁴ W. Seibt, *Die Byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Osterreich*, 1 Teil, Wien 1978, no. 100.

The seal of Nicephorus Dekanos kouropalates, doux and anagrapheus of Nisos reflects an earlier stage of his career. His appointment as a governor of Nisos attests to the significance the emperor ascribed to Nisos and its surrounding area.

B. Ecclesiastical:

Naissus was an old Christian centre as early as the IIIrd-IVth centuries. It contained holy relics and a significant number of martyrs for the Christian faith¹⁵.

The local bishopric dated before 325, and until the setting up of Justiniana Prima (novella IX from 14th May 535) it was under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Thessalonika, but after that it was subordinate to the head of Justiniana Prima.

In 613-616 the city was destroyed by the Avars and further information about it is lacking until its inclusion within the borders of the Bulgarian state¹⁶.

There is no direct evidence about the place of the city in the church structure of the First Bulgarian Kingdom after the conversion but it was probably a bishopric again. The bishop of Nisos was mentioned by the first charter of Basil II from 1018 and it is a known fact that it confirmed the existing state of affairs "...the present most holy archbishop is to govern all Bulgarian bishoprics which were ruled by tzar Peter and Samuel and were held by the then archbishops"¹⁷.

After the restoration of the Bulgarian church and state Nisos is once again a bishopric. The name of the Nisos bishop Kyriak is disclosed in a letter of the Bulgarian bishops to Pope Innocent III written in 1203¹⁸.

The cathedral church of the city was named after "the blessed and most famous great martyr Procopius"¹⁹. His relics were kept in the city probably in the eponymous church. When the Magyars attacked Naisos in 1072, they stole the hand of the martyr and brought it to the church of St. Demetrius in Sirmium. Almost 100 years later it was returned to Nisos and placed in the church by emperor Manuel I Komnenos²⁰.

¹⁵ V. Laurent, *Le Corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin. Tome V: L'église*, partie 2, Paris 1972, p. 1510

¹⁶ Г. Николов, *Нису (IV-VI век)*, 181-197.

¹⁷ *ГИБИ*, 6, 43-44:

¹⁸ *ЛИБИ*, 3, с. 337.

¹⁹ *ЛИБИ*, 3, с. 337.

²⁰ J. Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, translated by Charles M. Brand, New York, 1976, p. 251.



Fig. 3. Symeon bishop of Nisos (XI c.)

Сл. 3. Симеон епископ нишки (XI в.).

1. Symeon bishop of Nisos (XIth century). Fig. 3.

Preserved in Regional Historical Museum of Vidin, no. 1526. Find-spot: in the town Vidin. D. 15-16.5 (15) 2.9 mm. Incomplete imprint. All letters are not present on the blank. The molybdenobull is also partly damaged.

Ed. Jordanov, Geographical Names, no.55.2.

No parallels known.

Obv. Bust of St. Prokopios holding a spear (r. hand) and a shield (l. hand).

Vertical inscription: -ΠΡ-Ο || -Π'. : [Ἅγιος] Προ[κ(ό)]π(ι)ος

Rev. Inscription of four lines:

. Κ . Ρ' . | ΣΥΜΕΟΝ | ΕΠΙΣΚΩ | Π' ΝΙΣ

[+] Κ(ύρι)[ε] β(οή)[θ(ει)] Συμεόν ἐπισκώπ(ω) Νί(σ)ου

The name of this bishop of Nisos is unknown from other sources. The molybdenobull is generally dated to the XIth century. The depiction of St. Prokopios on the reverse hints that at that time the cathedral church named after this martyr already existed. I stress this detail because the historians of Nisos ask when the cathedral church was built²¹.

The discovery of the molybdenobull in Vidin is a proof that the correspondence of the Nisos bishop Symeon was received there. It was probably addressed to the local bishop and was perhaps provoked by the common interests of the two neighbouring dioceses.

2. Constantine proedros (bishop) of Nisos (XII c.). Fig. 4.

Preserved at Archaeological Museum in Belgrade, no. 38/5. Find-spot: Srem. D. 26-26 (22) mm, W. 12.85 g.

Ed. Laurent, Corpus, V.2, no. 1510; Maksimovich and Popovich, SBS, 3, 1993, 118-119, no. 522.

²¹ J. Kalic, *op. cit.*, 5-40.

²² L. Maksimovic, V. Popovic, *Les sceaux byzantins de la region danubienne en Serbie, SBS, 3, 1993, 118-119, no. 5*



Fig. 4. Constantine proedros (bishop) of Nisos (XII c.).

Сл. 4. Константин епископ нишки (XII в.).

Obv. Bust of St. Prokopios holding a spear (r. hand) and a shield (l. hand).
Vertical inscription: ⦿-ΠΡΟ-ΚΟ || ΠΙ-ΟС : 'Ο ἄ(γιος) Προκόπιος

Rev. Inscription of five lines:

+ | СΦΡΑΓΙΣ | ΠΡΟΕΔΡΟΝ | ΤΟΝΙΣΟΝ | ΚΩΝΤΑΝ | ΤΙΝΟΝ
+ Σφραγίς προέδρου τοῦ Νίσου Κωνσταντίνου

Constantine proedros of Nisos is unknown from narrative sources !
According to the original publisher of the seal it should be dated between 1150-1180. The representation of St. Prokopios on the obverse relates the seal to Nisos and corroborates the fact that the Cathedral bears the name of this Christ's martyr. There is no certain answer to where exactly this church was located in the town.

II. Seals discovered in Nisos

Unfortunately there are no Byzantine seals found in the Nisos region. This is surprising but it is a fact. We had a similar situation in Bulgaria before 1978, but today there are more than 3,200 available specimens. The same is expected to happen in Nisos where such artifacts will also be recorded.

III. Seals having belonged to individuals of whom we know that they stayed in the particular settlement for a longer or shorter period of time.

1. Niketas Karikes protoproedros and dux of Bulgarias (1080s). Fig. 5.

Preserved at Regional Historical Museum of Haskovo, no. 385. Found in the area of Svilengrad. D. 20. 5-21 mm; field 20 mm; thickness 3.1 mm. A good imprint but on the obverse it is slightly struck off center because of the slipping of the blank. A very well-preserved specimen.



Fig. 5. Niketas Karikes protoproedros and dux of Bulgarias (1080s).

Сл. 5. Никита Карики протопродрос и војвода Бугарске (1080 г.).

Ed. Ђорданов-Аладжов, Хасковско, I, № 132³; Jordanov. G. Names, no. 19.2.

Parallels: Other four or five specimens struck with the same boulloterion are preserved in the collections of Istanbul and Vienna (MK no. 191; Seibt no. 259) (see **Mordtmann**, *Europe*, p. 35²⁴; **Hunger**, *Zehn*, no. 92⁵; **Wassiliou, Seibt**, no. 250²⁶) and unpublished from Zacos, III, no. 1436.

Obv. Metrical inscription of five lines::

+ ΠΡΩ | ΤΩΠΡΟΕ | ΔΡ8ΝΙΚΗ | ΤΑΤ8ΚΑ | ΡΙΚΝ'

Rev. Metrical inscription of five lines:

. ΡΑΦΑΣ | . ΦΡΑΓΙΖ | . 8Δ8ΚΟΣ | .8ΛΓΑΡ' | ΑΣ

+Πρωτωπροέδρου Νικήτα τοῦ Καρικν

[Γ]ραφὰς [σ]φραγίζ(ω) [τ]οῦ δουκὸς [B]ουλγαρ(ί)ας

I seal the writings of the doux of Bulgaria || Niketas Karikes protoproedros

In the O'Hara collection, no. 33 and in DO. 77. 34.43 are preserved two lead seals which could be related to the same person.

Obv. – ο - | +ΚΕΡΟΗ | ΘΗΤΩΣΩΔ | ΛΩΝΙΚΗ|ΤΑΠΡΙ

Rev. ΚΑΙΔΟ | ΜΕΣΤΙΚΩ | ΤΟΝΑ . ΑΝ | ΤΟΝΤΩΚ. | ΡΗΚΗ |-

This seal generally dates to the time after the 1050s-1060s. Is the person in question the same Niketas Karykes during an earlier period of his career? According to this seal, he was *δομέστικος τῶν ἀθανάτων*, i.e. commander

²³ И. Ђорданов, Д. Аладжов. *Непубликувани оловни византијски печати от Хасковско (I)*, Археология, 1, 1991, 44-56, № 13.

²⁴ A. D. Mordtmann, *Μολυβδόβουλλα βυζαντινὰ τῶν ἐπαρχιῶν τῆς Εὐρώπης*, ΕΦΣ, 17, 1882-1883, p. 35

²⁵ H. Hunger, *Zehn Unedierte Byzantinische Beamten-Siegel*, JÖBG, 17, 1968, 179-188, no. 9

²⁶ K. Wasisiliou, W. Seibt, *Die Byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Osterreich*. 2 Teil, Wien, 2004, no. 250

of the elite units of the personal imperial guards, called immortals. These corps were formed by John I Tzimiskes (969-976) and later on they were restored by Michael VII (1071-1078)²⁷.

If the person in question was Niketas Karykes, this means he was commander of the personal guards of the emperor (Michael VII?) and during a later period (when he was appointed subsequently or skipping the ranks of anthypatos, vestes, vestarches, magistros and proedros), he was honoured with the title of protoproedros and occupied the position of duke of Bulgaria.

There are two possibilities for identifying the person of Niketas Karykes from the seals, with:

Niketas dux et principem Bulgarorum, well-known from the western chronicles, who met the participants in the First Crusade at Belgrade and Nisos in 1096 and accompanied them to Adrianoupolis²⁸;

the duke of Crete Καρίκης revolted in 1092-1093. He was killed when the dispatched army repressed the rebellion²⁹.

There is insufficient evidence for absolute certainty in both cases.

The person of Niketas Karykes cannot be identified as duke of Bulgaria in 1096 because of the following obstacles:

not a single western chronicle reports the patronym of Niketas;

the title of princeps cannot be equated with the one of protoproedros, may be with kouropalates or sebastos.

As regards the duke of Crete Καρίκης revolted in 1092-1093, his proper name is missing. Other representatives of the Karikes³⁰ family are also known. Besides, he was killed in 1093.

It is an undoubted fact, however, that Niketas prince and doux of Bulgaria sojourned in Nisos during the First Crusade in 1096 ! The presented seal is one possibility to relate him with the history of the town.

2. Michael Branas (XII c.). Fig. 6.

Who was Michael Branas and what is his connection with Nisos?

He was a Byzantine military commander who took active part in the imperial campaigns in connection with the participants in the Second Crusade, the war against the Majars, Serbs and Pechenegs and generally he had an active presence in the lands of modern Serbia. The main source of his activity is the history of John Kinnamos.

In connection with the passing through Byzantium of the participants in the Second Crusade in 1147-1149 John Kinnamos reports the following: When

²⁷ N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de prestance byzantines des IXe et Xe siecles. Introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire*, Paris 1972, 332-333.

²⁸ Златарски, *История*, II, 224-226; N. Banescu, *Les duches byzantins de Paristrion (Paradounavon) et de Bulgarie*, Buciresti 1946, 149-150.

²⁹ B. Skoulatos, *Les personnages byzantins de l'Alexiade. Analyse prosopographique et synthese*, Louvain 1980, no.100.

³⁰ Jordanov, *Family Name*, 191-192.



Fig. 6. Michael Branas (XII c.).

Сл. 6. Михаил Врана (середина XII века).

they came near the city of Naissos [Niš], which is the capital of Dacia, Michael surnamed Branas, who had been entrusted with governance of that region by the emperor, provided necessities for them, as commanded³¹.

Most historians are likely to assume that Michael Branas similarly to Niketas in 1096 was actually doux of Bulgaria and resided in Nisos!

It is possible however that he was doux of Nisos as his predecessor Nicephoros Dekanos!

In 1147, he along with Michael Palaiologos were authorized to meet the French King Ludwig VII and his army after their crossing of the Danube³²;

In 1150 and 1153, Michael took part in the war against the Majars, Serbs and Pechenegs and was exposed to great danger³³;

In 1155, we encounter him on Cyprus where the united Byzantine armies attempted at opposing the Latins but failed. Michael Branas was taken prisoner by the enemies³⁴;

In 1161, we encounter him in his capacity as governor of Cilicia³⁵.

Only one seal is known bearing the name of Michael Branas:

It is attested by two specimens:

a) preserved in Archaeological Museum of Belgrad, no. 38/12. Find-spot: Sirmium in Serbia. D. 23-23 (18) mm, W. 15.3 g. Incomplete imprint but well preserved.

Ed. Mausimović, Popović, p. 125, no. 12.

b) from Auction Clasical Numismatic Group, Sale 58 (September 2001), no. 11510.

³¹ Kinnamus, p. 60.

³² Kinnamus, p. 68.

³³ Kinnamus, 194-195.

³⁴ Kinnamus, p. 137

³⁵ Kinnamus, p. 214; Nicetas Choniates *Histoire*, ed. J. L. Van Dieten, Berlin-New-York 1975, 286. 6.

Obv. St. George standing, holding a spear (r. hand) and resting his l. hand on a shield set on the ground. Vertical inscription on either side: ☉-ΓЄ-Ω || ΓΙ-OC: Ὁ ἄγιος Γεώργιος)

Rev. Inscription of five lines:

+RPA | NANMIXA | HAT8AOG8 | MAPTVС | . K . . OIC

+Βρανα̃ν Μιχαήλ τοῦ Λόγου μάρτυς [σ]κ[έπ]οις

St. Georgios. / Witness of the Word, may you protect Michael Branas

It is difficult to determine the exact dating of the seal and to which period of Michael Branas's activity it can be associated. The seal is private without a title and position, but this is typical for many other seals of this period. Its finding in Sirmium relates it with Michael Branas's activity in this region.

Dear colleagues, my paper was an attempt to give you an overview of the possibilities of Byzantine Sigillography in regard to specific settlements and regions, their administration and the connection between people who once inhabited the Balkans.

Иван Јорданов

НИШ XI-II ВЕКА, ПРЕМА ПОДАЦИМА ИЗ ВИЗАНТИЈСКЕ СФРАГИСТИКЕ

Већ више од тридесет година, аутор ради на пројекту „Корпус византијских печата у Бугарског“. Ове године излази из штампе и последњи, трећи том књиге о печатима. На територији садашње Бугарске пронађено је више од 3.200 печата.

Текстови који се налазе на овим византијским печатима неоспорно представљају првокласне изворе за византијску историју, хијерархију чиновна, администрацију и прозографију. Поред тога, ови печати могу се користити и као извори када се ради о историји појединих насеља.

Приликом утврђивања историје појединих насеља, могу се користити три врсте печата. Прву групу чине они печати на којима су написана имена одређеног насеља или области. Друга група су печати пронађени у одређеном насељу. Тамо где их данас налазимо, некада се одвијала преписка, затварана печатом одговарајућег лица. Једном када знамо ко је пошиљилац ове преписке, и када је се ради о већој количини исте, можемо потражити и одговор на питање ко је био прималац те преписке, као и која се институција ту налазила и којим се поводом дата преписка одигравала.

Трећа група су печати који су припадали појединцима за које знамо из других извора, да су се налазили у одређеном насељу неки дужи иликраћи временски период.

Комбиновањем ове три групе печата добија се одговор на различита питања која се тичу историје одређених насеља.

У оквиру предложеног, у извештају ће бити представљени печати који су везани за историју града Ниша у периоду од XI-XII века.

I. Печати управитеља Ниша, грађански, војни и црквени.

1. Никифор Лалакон протоспатариј и стратег Ниша – XI в. Обр. 1.

2. Никифор Декан куропалат, анаграф и војвода Ниша, XI-XII в. Обр. 2A-B.

3. Симеон епископ нишки – XI в. Обр. 3.

4. Константин епископ нишки – XII в. Обр. 4.

II. Нису познати византијски печати пронађени у Нишу!

III. Печати појединаца који су живели у Нишу у XI-XII в.

1. Никита Карики протопроедрос и војвода Бугарске (80-те г. у XI в.) Обр.5.

2. Михаил Врана – средина XII в. Обр. 6.

