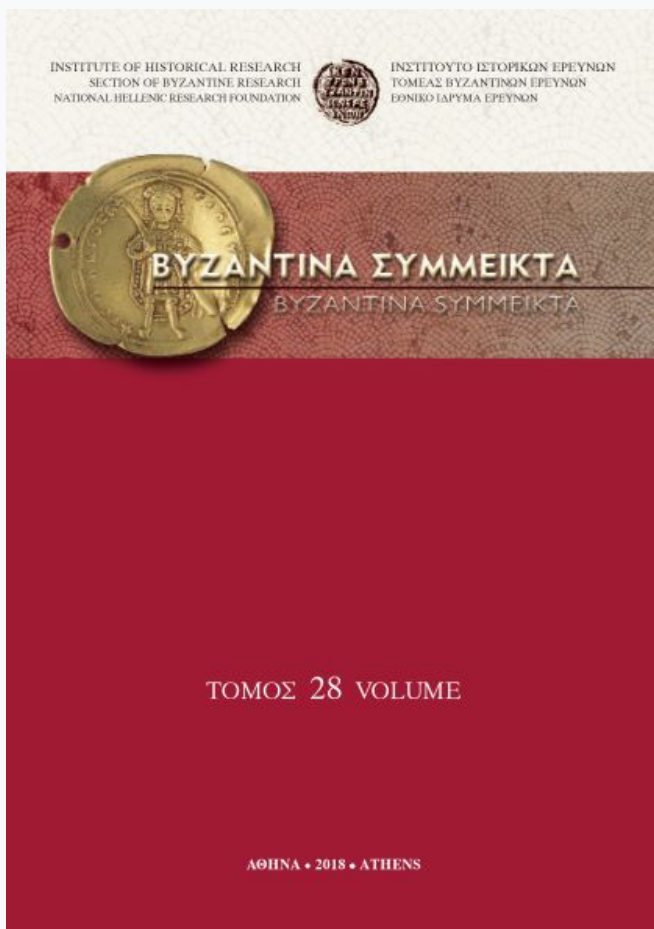


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A Contribution to Byzantine prosopography 2. The Tzirithon family

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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΤΟΜΕΑΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ



BYZANTINA ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ

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ΤΟΜΟΣ 28 VOLUME

PANTELIS CHARALAMPAKIS

A CONTRIBUTION TO BYZANTINE PROSOPOGRAPHY
2. THE TZIRITHON FAMILY

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PANTELIS CHARALAMPAKIS

A CONTRIBUTION TO BYZANTINE PROSOPOGRAPHY
2. THE TZIRITHON FAMILY*

In the 11th century Byzantine society we may distinguish four groups of the elite: the eunuchs, the foreign mercenaries, the military aristocracy and the civil aristocracy¹. Only the latter group is of interest to us, since so far there

* This is the second part of a series of short studies on Byzantine prosopography. The first part, "Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography. 1. Constantine Chage" will appear in *Monitor ISH / Journal for the Humanities and Social Studies* 19.1 (2017), 7-22.

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Apart from the standard abbreviations used in this journal, the following two appear frequently in the next pages:

PBW: Prosopography of the Byzantine World, ed. M. JEFFREYS et al., 2011 (<http://pbw.kcl.ac.uk>).

TAKTIKON (ed. 2015): *TAKTIKON* (ed. 2015). *A digital database on the prosopography and administrative structure of the Byzantine themes*, ed. O. KARAGIORGOU (Project's director), P. CHARALAMPAKIS, CHR. MALATRAS and T. KALAMARAS, 2015 (<http://taktikon.academyofathens.gr>).

1. A. P. KAZHDAN – A. WHARTON EPSTEIN, *Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh*

is no evidence that members of the Tzirithon family were related to any of the other groups. It is important though, to comment on some features of the military aristocracy such as the origins and the names.

It seems that a large number of families belonging to the military aristocracy originated from the frontier areas of the Empire (e.g. Armenia). Members of these families were closely related to their ancestral lands even when they resided in the capital and it is interesting to note that these families, being famous landowners, often drew their names from the sites where their estates were located (e.g. Dalassenoi from Dalassa, Botaneiatai from Botana). Last but not least, they were connected with other aristocratic families and even the imperial house. One should keep in mind, however, that no matter how powerful those families could be, they were always subject to the Emperor and their independence was firmly restricted. Towards the end of the 11th and the early 12th century, the military aristocrats who managed to keep their status were those related to the imperial house, i.e. the Komnenoi, while the rest, with a few exceptions, either disappeared or moved to the group of civil nobility.

Civil aristocracy was much different, including educated individuals, often with a long family tradition “in imperial service [where they served as]: judges, tax collectors, chiefs of the chancelleries, who from generation to generation held similar positions”², while it was not rare to see members of the civil aristocracy exercise military duties. These elite families originated mostly from Constantinople, Greece, the Aegean islands and the coastal cities of Asia Minor and their names reveal their past within the urban context (e.g. Phournatarioi, “bakers”; Saponai, “soapmakers”) or their origin from a quartier (or district or neighbourhood) in the capital (e.g. Akropolitai, Blachernitai, Makrembolitai). Sometimes these bureaucrats incurred the Emperor’s disfavor and were banned from their positions, but in general it seems that thanks to their invisibility (see e.g. the Anzas family) or their connections (or, perhaps, their skills) they were able to keep their offices no matter who the Emperor was. The situation changed slightly towards the end of the 11th century, when the Komnenoi dynasty

and twelfth centuries, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1990, 63-70; J.-Cl. CHEYNET, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)*, Paris 1990, 191-198.

2. KAZHDAN - WHARTON EPSTEIN, *Change*, 65.

discouraged marriages between the imperial clan and members of the civil aristocracy; still, some of those families managed to keep their status and occupy key positions in Byzantine bureaucracy. It is true, for example, that the office of the logothetes of the genikon (treasury) lost its importance in the 11th and 12th centuries, but this does not mean that Ioannes Tzirithon (here, no. 12) was an unimportant or random person.

There is no doubt that the Tzirithones belonged to that group of civil aristocracy that was not related either to the great military families of the 10th and 11th centuries or the palace³. Despite all this, they maintained their links and positions in civil ranks for several decades. Where they came from and how they managed to ascend the hierarchy are still open questions – in fact, the second question may, most likely, remain a mystery. As for the first question, A. Heisenberg was the first one to allude to a possible Armenian descent of the Tzirithon family. Later, V. Laurent pointed to the linguistic evidence in support of this view by referring to the conclusions of St. B. Psaltes on the non-Greek phoneme *tz*. A.P. Kazhdan is also in favour of an Armenian descent since the Tzirithon family features in his monograph on prominent Armenian families in the late Byzantine society⁴.

The Armenian connection seems very plausible, yet we do not know of any similar Armenian name or word and the only possible explanation would be to accept the old Armenian ending *-uni*. In this case the name would have been *Tzirituni and this could have led to the grecised form Tzirithon (Τζιριθων)⁵. The problem with this option is that this supposedly Armenian name would sound Τζιριτουνί in Greek and there is no way to

3. However, according to H. AHRWEILER, *L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081-1317) particulièrement au XIIIe siècle*, *TM* 1 (1965), 177, the Tzirithon family was somehow related to that of Doukas. There is no evidence about this relation.

4. A. HEISENBERG, *Das Kreuzreliquiar der Reichenau*, Munich 1926, 16; V. LAURENT, *Légendes sigillographiques et familles Byzantines*, *EO* 30 (1931), 474; St. B. PSALTES, *Grammatik der byzantinischen Chroniken*, Göttingen 1913, 134-135; A. P. KAZHDAN, *Armjane v sostave gospodstvujushchego klassa vizantijskoj imperii v XI-XII vv.*, Erevan 1975, 83-84, family no. 22.

5. The name has been recorded in the sources with various spellings (*Τζιριθων*, *Τζιριθήων*, *Τζηριθων*, *Τζηριθήων*, *Τζιριθήδων*, *Στηριθήδων* etc.), but it seems that *Τζιριθων* was the correct (or the “official”) one.

transfer the accent from the ending to the antepenult (the name then should be *Τζιριθουνής).

Another possibility is that the name Tzirithon (Τζιριθων) is a combination of a Turkic root word and a Greek ending. We are thinking of the term *cirit* (tzirit), which means either “spear”, “javelin” (usually blunt) or the sport known as “jereed” in English, that is a traditional Turkic game originating from Central Asia that involves two teams of players on horseback throwing javelins to each other. In Greek (Cretan dialect) the Turkish term *cirit* took – in the grecized form *tziriti* (τζιρίτι, το) – another meaning, that of “running”, “run” (noun). Derivatives of this noun are the verb τζιριτώ, “to run”, the noun τζιρίτης, “runner” etc. A Greek family name Tzirites (Τζιρίτης) is also attested. Another derivative, coming directly from the Turkish noun, is the word *ciritçi*, “the javelin thrower”, although in modern Turkish it is more common to say *cirit atıcısı*. It is thus possible that the original meaning of the name Tzirithon would have been something like “the javelin holder” or “the javelin thrower” or “the one who plays/participates in jereed” (and, less probably, “the runner”). About the Greek ending *-θων* one may quote similar cases like Agathon, Phaethon, Pyriphlegethon, Kinaithon, Python, Euelthon etc. Sometimes this Greek ending was used for names of non-Greek origin but with similar sound, like Manethoth, which eventually became Manethon (Μανέθων). What we suggest here is that, before turning into a family name, the name Tzirithon was used as a nickname, describing a characteristic of its first bearer. Whether the Greek ending was added before or after the family established itself in Byzantine society and acquired a certain status remains unclear.

If one were to give preference to a Seljuk Turkic origin of the name, then the two earliest references to individuals bearing the name Tzirithon (see below, nos. 1-2) must be misdated. This, however, would be rather problematic. Yet, contacts between the Byzantines and the various Turkic tribes (other than the Seljuks) of Central Asia were established already in the 6th c., through the North Pontic steppes, thus making it possible for us to look for a Turkic root of the name even before the Seljuk era.

One could even think of another, although less likely, in our view, possibility, that is the combination of a Turkic word root with an Armenian ending. In that case the name should be formed from the noun *cirit* and the ending *-uni*. The name *Tzirituni would denote the descendant of a “javelin

bearer” or a “jereed player”, the ending *-uni* indicating the lineage. Such a hybrid name could have been formed as a result of the contacts between the Armenians and the Seljuk Turks starting around the 1040’s or even a little earlier. It is not difficult to consider the name Tzirithon as the grecised form of the Armenian (?) name *Tzirituni, but again we face the problem of the intonation mentioned above. Moreover, the name Tzirithon is attested as early as the beginning of the 10th century or even earlier and this alone is enough to deconstruct any hypothesis related to a possible Seljuk influence in Armenian. The absence of an Armenian name similar to the form “Tzirithon” / “Tzirituni” would mean that if one wants to accept the Armenian origin of the family, he has to look either for a word of pure Armenian etymology that was used as the first component of the name (such a word is unknown, so far) or for some Turkic language influence in Armenian before the era of the Seljuks which, again, seems rather unlikely (at that time there were many influences from Persian, but not from Turkic).

It is more safe, then, to accept a Turkic theme with Greek ending. The name was originally a nickname, a sobriquet, developed into a family name through at a time when the family names started appearing in Byzantium⁶.

Despite these questions, it is evident that we deal here with one of the many families which, although of non-Greek origin, were assimilated into Byzantine culture. The members of the Tzirithon family must have been not just bearers of some noble descent, but also holders of some important fortune (either as landowners or, perhaps, tax-collectors). These families of non-Greek or mixed origin were holding key-positions in the military and civil aristocracy and played a crucial role in the development of Byzantine society.

6. There are several studies on the origins of the family names in Byzantium: E. PATLAGEAN, Les débuts d’une aristocratie byzantine et le témoignage de l’historiographie: système des noms et liens de parenté aux IXe-Xe siècles, in: *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. ANGOLD, Oxford 1984, 23-43; J.-CL. CHEYNET, Du prénom au patronyme: les étrangers à Byzance (Xe-XIIe siècles), *SBS* 1 (1987), 57-66; P. STEPHENSON, A development in nomenclature on the seals of the Byzantine provincial aristocracy in the late tenth century, *REB* 52.1 (1994), 187-211; A. P. KAZHDAN, The formation of Byzantine family names in the ninth and tenth centuries, *Bsl* 58.1 (1997), 90-109; W. SEIBT, Beinamen, “Spitznamen”, Herkunftsnamen, Familiennamen bis ins 10. Jahrhundert: Der Beitrag der Sigillographie zu einem prosopographisches Problem, *SBS* 7 (2002), 119-136.

We would like to present here the known to us members of the Tzirithon family, hoping that this short paper, together with the other works on Byzantine families⁷, will contribute to the study of Byzantine prosopography in general and Byzantine sigillography in particular.

Of all the 18 members of the Tzirithon family presented here nine are known through sigillographic (and literary) evidence and nine through non-sigillographic sources only. The known (to us) number of seals issued by these nine persons raises to 38 (see table). Basileios (here, no. 7) alone issued 18 seals, almost half of the total number. Two female persons bearing the names Tzirithia and Tzirichia respectively belong, most probably, to a branch of the family or, even more likely, Tzirithia is the female form of the name Tzirithon and the second name is a corrupted form of the first. These two are presented at the end of the study (based on chronology, but also on the context).

The earliest references to the family name Tzirithon come from the early 10th or, perhaps, even the very late 9th c., while the latest user is dated around the mid-13th c. Most of the known members, though, were active in the 11th c. It is of particular interest that none of the persons presented in this paper holds a military office, which shows that the family was attached for centuries to the civil nobility. As for the decoration on the seals, it suggests that no particular holy person was considered as the protector of the family (see table). From the 16 boulloteria that we were able to recognize, eight were decorated with Theotokos (Episkepsis: three; Hodegetria: two; Blachernitissa: one; enthroned with Christ: two; simple representation: one). The remaining seven boulloteria depict St. Nikolaos on his own (one), St. Nikolaos together with the archangel Michael (three), St. Theodoros (one) and St. Georgios (two). However, Arch. Michael appears once together with Theotokos, as does St. Georgios⁸. The image of St. Georgios on seals from the era of Konstantinos Monomachos can be justified, as argued already by Cheynet and Theodoridis (see below, references to nos. 5-6). As for the

7. Anzas, Argyros, Brachamios, Daimonoioannes, Doukas, Gabras, Kantakouzenos, Maleinos, Palaiologos, Phokas, Radenos, Skleros are some of the families that have already been studied by scholars.

8. See also J. COTSONIS, Onomastics, gender, office and images on Byzantine lead seals: a means of investigating personal piety, *BMGS* 32.1 (2008), 24, table 5 (incomplete list).

remaining portraits, one should not consider two branches of the family, not only because the Theotokos is associated to Archangel Michael and St. Nikolaos, but also because, as we shall see below, one of the Tzirithon family members, for example, was using all three holy figures on his boulloteria.

The persons are presented in chronological order. Seals known from bibliography but not fully published, as yet, or specimens of particular interest are inserted in the text right after each person's career stage, together with the relevant images. In the edition and/or commentary of the individual seals we regard as "parallel seals" the specimens struck from the same boulloterion, while "similar seals" are the specimens mentioning same title(s) and office(s), but coming from different boulloteria. A table enlisting the seals and their present location, the boulloteria and their decoration is placed at the end of the paper.

1. – Hilarion (probably late 9th or early 10th century)⁹

This enigmatic figure was, according to A. Heisenberg, *hegoumenos* (abbot) in a Greek monastery. At some time, Hilarion ordered a cross of gilded silver, inside of which holy relics could be placed, and the cross itself would be able to hang from the monk's neck. The cross is kept for centuries at the German monastery on Reichenau island. On the front side of the cross there is the Crucifixion, on the reverse an inscription in Greek language, stretching in nine lines. Many scholars through the centuries tried to decipher the inscription, with no success. Heisenberg, however, offered a very convincing reading which is the following:

+ K(ύρι)ε β/οήθ<ε>ι I/λαρί(ωνι) σ(ῶ)/ δ(ούλω) καὶ καθ(η)γουμένο/
τῆς/ μο(νῆς) <σ>ου τ(ῶ)/ Τζη/ρή/θ(ωνι)¹⁰.

A Latin text, a sort of a chronicle, whose content is somehow related to other Medieval historical works, narrates the story of a cross which traveled from the Holy Land to Germany and after passing through several hands, ended up at Reichenau, around 923 (or 925, but certainly before 950). This

9. This person is recorded in LAURENT, *Familles Byzantines*, 477; KAZHDAN, *Armiane*, 83.

10. We fully agree with Heisenberg's reading; however, we should note that he is wrong in suggesting that it is impossible to read τ(ῶ) Τζηρήθ(ωνος) because monasteries were named only after saints and not founders or owners. One may simply recall *μονὴ τῶν Παδηνῶν*, to name just one example.

text was actually based on the combination of two true stories later turned into a legend. In fact, it is unknown how exactly the cross reached Germany. Previously, scholars believed that the Reichenau cross should be dated around the 13th-15th c.; consequently, it could not be identified with the one mentioned in the legend. A. Heisenberg admitted that it is difficult to date the item, but on the basis of its epigraphy and iconography (the scene of Crucifixion), he suggested a date between the 9th and the 12th c. (more precisely around the late 9th and early 10th c.). Taking into account that this may or may not be the cross mentioned in the legend, it is impossible to link the specimen to the Holy Land. Heisenberg, however, proposed an alternative: since the cross is clearly of Byzantine origin and its legend refers, apparently, to a monastery dedicated to Christ (Savior?), it could have originated from one of the several monasteries dedicated to Christ in Constantinople or its surroundings¹¹.

Although Heisenberg's suggested dating seems plausible, it is reasonable to have some reservations, because epigraphy alone cannot always give accurate results.

2. – Michael (early 10th century)¹²

He is recorded in literary sources as a person active in the reign of Leon VI, around 908-911, when he revealed to the Emperor a plot by the *parakoimomenos* Samonas against his favorite eunuch Konstantinos. Michael himself had previously conspired with Samonas and the *koitonites* Megistos (κοινολογησάμενος Μεγίστω τῷ Κοιτωνίτη καὶ Μιχαὴλ τῷ Τξιρίθωνι γραμμάτιον ...)¹³. Nothing more is known about this person. The fact that he was close to the Emperor indicates either a high ranking official or an elite family member, bearing a high title. There is no evidence that he was a eunuch.

11. HEISENBERG, *Kreuzreliquiar*, especially 8-9, 12-22.

12. *PmbZ*, no. 25163; LAURENT, *Familles Byzantines*, 477; KAZHDAN, *Armiane*, 83.

13. See e.g. Skylitzes, ed. I. THURN, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, Berlin – New York 1973, 190-191; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1838, 376; Georgii Monachi Continuatio (cod. Vatic. 153), ed. V. M. ISTRIN', *Khronika Georgija Amartola*, v. 2, Petrograd' 1922, 36; Theodosios Melitenos, ed. T. L. F. TAFEL, *Theodosii Meliteni qui fertur chronographia*, Munich 1859, 198-199; Kedrenos, ed. I. BEKKER, v. 2, Bonn 1839, 271-272, etc.

3. – Ioannes (first half of the 11th c.)¹⁴

Ioannes is attested solely on an 11th-century seal, which portrays him as *spatharokandidatos*, *imperial notarios* of the *eidikos logos* and *protonotarios* of the theme of the Anatolikai¹⁵. The specimen is dated in the mid-11th c. St. Theodoros, who appears on the obverse of his seal, may have been his patron saint. The identification of this Ioannes with the homonymous Tzirithon who served as *logothetes* of the *genikon* in the early 12th c. (see here, no. 12), suggested by Laurent, is unlikely.

4. – Leon (mid-11th c.)¹⁶

Leon is known through sigillographic evidence only. Three seals issued by him have survived, all of them struck with the same *boulloterion*, as evidenced by comparing the structure of the inscription and the epigraphy¹⁷. All these seals portray him as *protospatharios* and *megas chartouarios* of the *genikon logothesion*. Therefore, only one career stage of his is known and not two, as it has been suggested elsewhere¹⁸. The text of the inscription runs: Λέοντ(ι) / (πρωτο)σπαθ(αρίω) (καὶ) / μ(ε)γ(άλω) χαρτου/λ(αρίω) τοῦ γενικ(οῦ) / λογοθ(εσίου) ὁ / Τξιρίθ(ων). On the

14. PBW Ioannes 20448; TAKTIKON: PN_1048.

15. USA: Washington D.C., DO BZS.1955.1.3380 (ex G. Zacos collection) = TAKTIKON: ANAT_49; J. NESBITT – N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, *Catalogue of byzantine seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, v. 3, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C. 1996, no. 86.40. See also V. VLYSSIDOU et al., *Η Μικρά Ασία των θεμάτων: Έρευνες πάνω στην γεωγραφική φυσιογνωμία και προσωπογραφία των βυζαντινών θεμάτων της Μικράς Ασίας (7ος-11ος αι.)*, Athens 1998, 370, no. 11 and G. LEVENIOTES, Το θέμα / δουκάτο των Ανατολικών κατά το δεύτερο ήμισυ του 11ου αιώνα, *Βυζαντικά* 25 (2005-2006), 96, no. 60.

16. PBW Leon 20123; KAZHDAN, *Armiane*, 84, no. 9 (following Laurent, Kazhdan registered him as anonymous).

17. 1) France: Paris, BnF Seyrig 88 (ex H. Seyrig collection 542) = J.-CL. CHEYNET – C. MORRISSON – W. SEIBT, *Sceaux byzantins de la collection Henri Seyrig*, Paris 1991, no. 88; 2) Romania: Bucharest, Romanian Academy Orghidan 171 (0-8008) (ex. C. Orghidan collection) = V. LAURENT, *La collection C. Orghidan*, Paris 1952, no. 171; 3) USA: Washington D.C., DO BZS.1955.1.2381 (ex G. Zacos collection) = V. LAURENT, *Le Corpus des sceaux de l'Empire Byzantin*, v. 2 (*L'administration centrale*), Paris 1981, no. 351 (registered as 3381).

18. See J.-CL. CHEYNET – D. THEODORIDIS, *Sceaux byzantins de la collection D. Theodoridis*, Paris 2010, 223, where he is recorded first as *chartouarios*, later as *megas chartouarios* of the *genikon*.

obverse, Theotokos Hodegetria (half-figure). The seal kept at the Romanian Academy (ex Orghidan, published by V. Laurent) is presented here in good quality images, to show the similarity with the other two specimens.



Romanian Academy Orghidan 171 (© Romanian Academy. Photos by Chr. Malatras)

5. - Basileios (mid-11th c.)

Christodoulos' father (see below, no. 6). Most likely, he is not identified to any other homonymous recorded here. Cheynet and Theodoridis suggested that this Basileios was active and received some honor during the reign of Konstantinos Monomachos¹⁹. Thus, one might say that this Basileios was a famous person, perhaps the no. 7 of this paper, and this is why Christodoulos mentioned him on his seal. This is only a hypothesis though.

6. - Christodoulos (mid-11th c.)

A person known through his seal, where he is self-identified as *protospatharios* and son of a certain Basileios²⁰. Christodoulos chose St. Georgios as his saint protector (just like Gabriel Tzirithon did), together with the image of Theotokos. On the basis of Cheynet and Theodoridis' comments, this Christodoulos must have been active after Konstantinos

19. CHEYNET - THEODORIDIS, *Collection Theodoridis*, 222.

20. Germany: Munich, D. Theodoridis collection 1194 = CHEYNET - THEODORIDIS, *Collection Theodoridis*, no. 211.

Monomachos (1042-1055) or at least during the latest years of his reign. It is impossible to say whether this Basileios mentioned on the seal as Christodoulos' father was one of the homonymi recorded here or an unknown person.

7. – Basileios (mid-11th c.)²¹

This Basileios Tzirithon had a brilliant career in both the central and the provincial administration. The first –known to us– stage of his career shows that he must have been already mature in age and experienced in administration, so perhaps we must expect more seals or documents with his name to appear. Although Laurent, Stavrakos, Jordanov and others tempted to identify this Basileios with his homonymous, who served as *exisotes* of the West and *eparchos* (here, no. 8)²², we believe that such an identification is impossible. This Basileios must have already been at a mature age when he was serving as *imperial notarios* and *crites* of the *hippodrome*, in 1045. Since it is certain that he held at least three more posts known to us after that date, he must have been too old to serve as *exisotes* of the West in 1082 and even older to serve as *eparchos* in 1094. His four - so far - known career stages are as follows:

a) *protospatharios* ἐπὶ τοῦ χρυσοτρικλίνου, αὐτοκρατορικὸς νοτάριος τοῦ εἰδικοῦ λόγου and *crites* of the *hippodrome*²³. – Feb. 1045

This career stage is known through an official document only. Although the document is accurately dated in 1045, it is impossible to know when he was appointed and for how long he served at this post.

21. PBW Basileios 214; TAKTIKON: PN_1507; A.-K. WASSILIOU, Beamte des Themas der Kibyrraioten, in: TIB 8 (2004), 412; A. SAVVIDES, The Secular Prosopography of the Byzantine Maritime Theme of the Carabisians/Cibyrraeots, BSI 59.1 (1998), no. 67; KAZHDAN, *Armiane*, 83, no. 1, 84, nos. 4-5.

22. V. LAURENT, EΠΙΘΟΟ – ΑΚΟΖΗΡ, Deux patronymes supposés, *Ελληνικά* 9 (1936), 23-25; C. STAVRAKOS, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel mit Familiennamen aus der Sammlung des Numismatischen Museums Athen*, Wiesbaden 2000, 381; I. JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine seals from Bulgaria*, v. 1, Sofia 2003, 70. The editors of the PBW have also confused the persons.

23. MM, v. 5, Wien 1887, no. 1; F. DÖLGER – P. WIRTH, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453*, v. 2, Munich 1995, 16-17, no. 865.

b) *patrikios, anthypatos*, κριτῆς τοῦ βήλου and *gerotrophos*²⁴. – after 1045

This career stage is known through just one seal, depicting Theotokos Episkepsis (standing) on the obverse. The office of *gerotrophos* means that Basileios was supervisor (director) of a charitable house for the elderly people. These supervisors were also known by the term of *gerokomos, gerokomikos* and *gerontokomos*. The *gerotrophos* was a highly respected person, whose work was generally supervised by a bishop and annually by the Emperor himself. There were several such houses in the 11th century Constantinople, so it is impossible to identify the one that Basileios Tzirithon was directing (or supervising)²⁵.

c) *patrikios, anthypatos*, κριτῆς τοῦ βήλου and *crites* of Drogoubiteia²⁶ – c. 1050's – c. 1060's

This career stage is known by just one seal, decorated with the standing Theotokos holding Christ on the obverse. Although the theme of the Kibyrraiotai was losing in importance in the 11th century, we believe that the course of Basileios' promotion should be from Drogoubiteia to the Kibyrraiotai and not vice-versa. We agree with Jordanov's later suggestion that the seal mentioning Drogoubiteia must be dated around the 1050's or 1060's (certainly before his seal from the Kibyrraiotai) and not in the 1050's only, as he first assumed. Yet, the office of *crites* (judge) of a theme was at that time a very important and prestigious one so in our opinion Basileios' post as *gerotrophos* preceded his career as *crites*.

d) *patrikios, anthypatos*, κριτῆς τοῦ βήλου and *antiprosopos* of the (members of the) *sekreton* of the *oikeiakoi* – c. 1065 – c. 1080

24. Greece: Athens, Numismatic Museum Stamoules 81 (ex A. Stamoules collection) = K. KONSTANTOPOULOS, *Βυζαντιακά μολυβδόβουλλα. Συλλογή Αναστασίου Κ. Π. Σταμούλη*, Αθήνα 1930, no. 81.

25. D. J. CONSTANTELOS, *Byzantine philanthropy and social welfare*, New Brunswick - New York 1968, 237-239.

26. Bulgaria: private collection = JORDANOV, *Corpus*, v. 3, Sofia 2009, no. 1175; JORDANOV, *Corpus*, v. 1, no. 24.1; I. JORDANOV, Pechati na vizantijski sanovnici ot armenski proizkhod, namereni v Balgarija, *Antichnaja Drevnost' i Srednie Veka* 31 (2000), no. 102. See also J.-CL. CHEYNET et al., *Les sceaux byzantins du Musée archéologique d'Istanbul*, Istanbul 2012, 294 and *SBS* 8 (2003), 179, no. 102.

A seal coming from an auction catalogue is the only evidence about this peculiar career stage of Basileios. He was antiprosopos of the members of the sekreton of the *oikeiakoi* (that is those who belong to the sekreton of the *oikeiakoi*). Alternatively, the translation could be: antiprosopos of the *oikeiakoi* of the sekreton. Undoubtedly, he was a judge, representative of the bureau of the *oikeiakoi*, that is of a department of judges whose jurisdiction, however, remains unclear²⁷. This post is unknown from other sources.

Although the seal seems to be dated in the late 11th c., the title is lower than that of protovestarchis, so this career stage should be placed before Basileios' appointment to the Kibyrraiotai.

Unknown present location (auction)

Ed.: Hirsch auction 229 (17-20 Sept. 2003), no. 2675 (with image). Also mentioned in *SBS* 10 (2010), 168 (dated: ca. 1060-1090)

D. (total): 31 mm. Struck off centre.

Obverse: Theotokos enthroned, holding Christ; sigla; border of dots

Reverse: Inscription in 9 lines, border of dots:

+ΘΚΕΡ,|ΡΑΣΙΛΕΙ. |ΠΡΙΑΝΘ,ΠΑΤ. |ΚΡΙΤΗΤΥΡΗΛΥ|ΣΑΝΤ,ΠΡΟΣΩΠΩ|Τ,Ε
ΝΤΩΣΕΚΡΕΤ|Τ,ΩΝΟΙΚΕΙΑΚ,|ΤΩΤΣΙΡΙ|ΘΩΝΙ-

Θ(εοτό)κε β(οήθει) Βασιλει[ω] π(ατ)ρι(κίω) άνθ(υ)πάτ[ω] κριτῆ τοῦ βήλου (καί) άντ(ι)προσώπω τ(ών) ἐν τῷ σεκρέτ(ω) τ(ῶ)ν οἰκειακ(ῶν) τῷ Τζιρίθωνι.

Mother of God. Theotokos aid Basileios Tzirithon, *patrikos*, *anthypatos*, *krites* of the *velon* and *antiprosopos* of the (members of the) *sekreton* of the *oikeiakoi*.

Date: c. 1065-c. 1080

27. *ODB*, 1515, s.v. Oikeiakos and 1866, s.v. Sekreton. See also: J.-CL. CHEYNET, The London Byzantine Seals, in: *La société byzantine. L'apport des sceaux*, v. 1, Paris 2008, 148. There is no study on the *sekreton* of the *oikeiakoi* or the *antiprosopos* of the *oikeiakoi*, or the *antiprosopos* of the *sekreta*.



Auction Hirsch 229 (17-20 Sept. 2003), no. 2675

e) *protovestarches*, κριτής τοῦ βήλου and *crites* of the Kibyrraiotai – c. 1065 – c. 1080

This is the last known office that this Basileios held. His career stage as *crites* of the Kibyrraiotai is attested through 15 seals coming from two boulloteria. The first boulloterion (*TAKTIKON* (ed. 2015): BL_1507.1) produced a group of 12 known seals with Archangel Michael and St. Nikolaos on the obverse²⁸. The second boulloterion (*TAKTIKON* (ed.

28. 1) Austria: Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum Münzkabinett 244 = *TAKTIKON*: KIB_71; W. SEIBT - A.-K. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil, Zentral- und Provinzialverwaltung*, Vienna 2004, no. 191 [60's-70's of the 11th c.]; 2) France: Paris, BnF Zacos 447 (ex G. Zacos collection) = *TAKTIKON*: KIB_168, unpublished 3) France: Paris, BnF Zacos 455 (ex G. Zacos collection) = *TAKTIKON*: KIB_82; unpublished, see J.-CL. CHEYNET, *The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries: A Review of the Book by A. Kazhdan and S. Ronchey*, in: Id., *The Byzantine Aristocracy and its Military Function*, Aldershot 2006, no. II, 12, fn. 20; 4-9) France: Paris, BnF Zacos 581-586 (ex G. Zacos collection) = *TAKTIKON*: KIB_144-149; unpublished; 10-12) USA: Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum BZS.1951.31.5.133, 1951.31.5.267, 1951.31.5.781 (ex T. Whittemore collection; previously known as Fogg 133, 267, 781) = *TAKTIKON*: KIB_8-10, NESBITT - OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue*, v. 2, *Dumbarton Oaks*, Washington D.C. 1994, nos. 59.7a-c [11th c.] and W. SEIBT, *Review of Dumbarton Oaks Seals*, *BZ* 90 (1997), 464. All BnF Zacos specimens mentioned here will be published by J.-CL. Cheynet in his forthcoming study "Sceaux parisiens inédits des thèmes des Anatoliques, de

2015): BL_1507.2) produced a group of three known seals with Theotokos enthroned, holding Christ on the obverse²⁹. In both groups we see the same inscription on the reverse. The date of this career stage probably extends over a long period. It should not be excluded, of course, that he left his post as crites of the Kibyrraiotai before 1080.

8. – Basileios (second half of the 11th c.)³⁰

As commented above, it is rather unlikely that this Basileios should be identified with the homonymous (here, no. 7) who was active around the middle of the 11th c. Kazhdan also believes that these two persons are different. This one is known from four seals with the help of which we are able to establish three stages of his impressive career.

According to a hypothesis by Cheynet and Theodoridis, this Basileios could have been the son of Christodoulos and grandson of a Basileios active in the years of Konstantinos Monomachos³¹. Would this elder Basileios have been the same with the crites (here, no. 7), this is but a speculation.

a) *proedros, vestes, megas oikonomos* of the *euageis oikoi* of the West – 1060's – 1070's (?)

The first career stage is confirmed by an unpublished seal kept at the IFEB collection. Although one should reserve some hesitation about the

l'Opsikion et des Cibyrrhéotes”, in: *Proceedings of the TAKTIKON International Workshop 2015 (Academy of Athens, June 19, 2015)*, Athens.

29. 1) Greece: Athens, Numismatic Museum K142α (ex K. Makrides collection 112) = TAKTIKON: KIB_61; STAVRAKOS, *Familiennamen*, no. 258 [1050-1090]; K. KONSTANTOPOULOS, *Βυζαντιακά μολυβδόβουλλα τοῦ ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἐθνικοῦ Νομισματικοῦ Μουσείου*, Athens 1917, no. 142α; 2) unknown present location (unknown auction or sales) = TAKTIKON: KIB_104; V. LAURENT, *Mélanges d'épigraphie grecque et de sigillographie byzantine. II. Sceaux byzantins inédits*, *EO* 31 (1932), 439-440, no. 9 [late 11th-early 12th c.] (“Konstantopoulos, qui a déjà édité ce plomb, n'a relevé sur son exemplaire, sans doute encore plus endommagé que celui de notre antiquaire, aucun des éléments du nom de famille” – emphasis added. In other words, Laurent knew of another specimen, better preserved than the one in Athens and which he saw at an “antiquaire”, undoubtedly an antique dealer); *SBS* 5 (1998), 48; 3) unknown present location (ex I. Kallisperis collection) = TAKTIKON: KIB_131; N. BEES, *Ἀνέκδοτα βυζαντινὰ μολυβδόβουλλα*, *Journal International d'Archéologie Numismatique* 9 (1906), 49-51 [11th-12th c.].

30. *PBW* Basileios 214; KAZHDAN, *Armjane*, 84, nos. 3 and 6.

31. CHEYNET – THEODORIDIS, *Collection Theodoridis*, 222.

identification of the owner of this specimen with the Basileios presented here, it seems that Stavrakos' suggestion is correct.

France: Paris, IFEB 269

Ed.: unpublished; mentioned by STAVRAKOS, *Familiennamen*, 381, fn. 898 [1060's-1070's].

D. (total): 30,5 mm.; D. (field): 20 x 22 mm.; Th.: 2,9 mm.; W.: 13,18 gr. Chipped (1/4 missing).

Parallel(s): one ex Zacos collection specimen (unpublished; unknown present location, probably at the BnF). This could be a similar specimen, not necessarily coming from the same boulloterion (Stavrakos, who quoted both, did not specify their relation).

Obverse: Theotokos Blachernitissa; sigla: $\bar{M}\bar{P}$ - ..; circular inscription: +ΘΚΕΡ.....ΡΩΡΕCΤΗCΜΕΓΑΛΩΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΩ; double border of dots. Reading: Μ(ήτη)ρ [Θ(εο)ῦ]. + Θ(εοτό)κε β[οήθει ... προέδ]ρω, βέστη (καὶ) μεγάλη οἰκονόμω.

Reverse: Archangel Michael, holding sceptre (r. hand) and globus (l. hand); sigla: ? μχ; along the circumference inscription between two concentric borders of dots: ·:ΤΩΝΕΥΑΓΓΩΝΟΙΚΩΝΤΗCΔΥCΕ.....ΘΩΝ; [Ὁ ἀρχάγγελος ?] Μ(ι)χ(αήλ). + Τῶν εὐαγῶν οἴκων τῆς Δύσε[ως τῷ Τζιρι]θων(ι)

Mother of God. Archangel Michael. Theotokos aid ... Tzirithon, *proedros, vestes, megas oikonomos* of the *euageis oikoi* of the West.



IFEB 269 (© IFEB Paris)

What we see at the beginning of the circular inscription on the reverse is rather a cross made of four dots touching each other than a simple decoration mark of four dots. The sigla accompanying Saint Michael on the reverse are rather rare. There is an MX on the right side, which implies that there must have been an abbreviation for the “archangel” on the left. This MX on the right is to be found – to our knowledge – on one more seal, with no letters at all on the left but with a circular inscription where the archangel is mentioned³². Although the family name must be that of Tzirithon, there is absolutely no trace of the first name of the seal’s owner. Stavrakos has identified this person with a Basileios Tzirithon, active from the mid 1040’s to the late 1080’s, but as we suggested above, there are two different individuals bearing the same name in the 11th c. Although one might consider that the post of *megas oikonomos* of the *euageis oikoi* of the West is connected to the post of *gerotrophos* ascribed to the elder Basileios presented above, in our opinion this is a coincidence. It was not uncommon for people bearing the same name and family name to hold similar offices at the same time in this period (see, for example, the case of Basileios Xeros). Besides, the office of *megas oikonomos* shows that he was exercising financial duties, just like with his subsequent office of *exisotes*.

b) *protoproedros, dikaiophylax* and *exisotes* of the West / *protoproedros* and *exisotes* of the West – 1080’s, most probably 1082-1089 (?)³³

Exisotes was called “the official in charge of assessing tribute and ensuring that taxpayers did not hold more land than that corresponded to the taxes that they were paying”³⁴. Although Laurent suggested that in the document of 1089 Basileios is recorded as *doux* of the West³⁵, in our opinion this is not true. Of course, in the document of 1082 he is mentioned as *exisotes* of the West and he could have been promoted to *doux* of the

32. G. ZACOS, *Byzantine lead seals*, v. 2, Berne 1984, no. 860.

33. Year 1082: P. LEMERLE et al. (ed.), *Actes de Lavra*, v. 1, Paris 1970, no. 44 (lines 15-17: *π(αρά) τοῦ ἐξισωτοῦ τοῦ τότε χρηματίζοντο(ς) τῆς δι(σεως) τοῦ Τζιρίθωνο(ς)*); F. DÖLGER, *Aus dem Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges*, Munich 1948, no. 1/2 (lines 15-17, incomplete reading). Year 1089: LEMERLE et al., *Lavra*, no. 49 (ll. 13-15: *ὑστερον ἢ ταύτης προέβη παράδοσις διὰ τοῦ πρωτοπροέδρου Βασιλείου τοῦ Τζιρίθωνος τοῦ τότε τὰ τῆς δύσεως διέποντος*). See also LEMERLE et al., *Lavra*, no. 65; JORDANOV, *Corpus*, v. 1, 70.

34. NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue*, v. 2, 50.

35. LAURENT, ΕΠΙΘΟΣ – ΑΚΟΖΗΡ, 24.

West by 1089, but the sentence *τοῦ τότε τὰ τῆς δύσεως διέποντος* does not necessarily mean that he was *doux*, he could have well been *exisotes*, the verb *διέπω* meaning “to keep an office”, “to govern”. We do not know when exactly Basileios was appointed *exisotes*, certainly this happened before 1082.

This stage is known through seals and literary sources. The fact that the seals include the (old and inferior) title of *dikaiophylax*, as well as the fact that this title is omitted in the literary references may indicate that these seals were issued in the early years of his post as *exisotes* of the West, when he would still wish to advertise all his titles on his seals. Later, after having spent a few years as *protoproedros*, Basileios decided that the inferior title of *dikaiophylax* was no longer useful to him.

1) Russia: Saint-Petersburg, Hermitage M-12083 (ex Osman Nuri-bej collection)

Ed.: E. V. STEPANOVA, Pechati s geograficheskim nazvaniem H ΔΥΣΙΣ v sobranii Ermitazha, in: *Ot onona k temze. Chingisidy i ikh zapadnye sosedi. K 70-letiju Marka Grigor'evicha Kramarovskogo*, Moscow 2013, 435-436, no. 10 (without image); presented by V. S. SHANDROVSKAJA, Eparkhi Konstantinopolja XI-XII vv. (po dannym pechatej Ermitazha), *Antichnaja Drevnost' i Srednie Veka* 26 (1992), 67, fig. no. 3 (with image); presented by V. S. SHANDROVSKAJA, Sfragistika, in: *Iskusstvo Vizantii v sobranijakh SSSR*, v. 2, Moscow 1977, no. 721 (without image)

D. (total): 25 x 26 mm. Blank smaller than die; struck off centre; corroded (reverse)

Parallel(s): Auction Naumann 45 (3 July 2016), no. 1061

Obverse: Saint Nikolaos and Archangel Michael, standing, raising their hands towards the medallion of Christ above them, in the centre; inscription: [.. ..] - Θ|ΝΙ|ΚΟ|Λ|ΑΟ|C - .. Χ|Μ|!; border of dots. Reading: [Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστός)] Ὁ ἄ(γιος) Νικόλαος. [Ὁ ἄ(ρ)χ(άγγελος)] Μιχαήλ.

Reverse: Inscription in 8 lines: +Κ̅Ε̅Ρ,Θ, | Τ̅Ψ̅Ω̅Δ̅Η̅Λ | .Α̅C̅Ι̅Λ̅Ε̅Ι̅Ω̅Π̅Ρ̅Ω̅ | .Ο̅Π̅Ρ̅Ο̅Ε̅Δ̅Ρ̅Ω̅Δ̅Ι | ..Ο̅Φ̅Ν̅Λ̅Α̅Κ̅Ι̅Σ̅Ε̅Ξ̅Ι | .Ω̅Τ̅Η̅Τ̅Η̅C̅Δ̅Ν̅C̅ | .Ω̅Τ̅Σ̅Ι̅Ρ̅Ι̅Θ̅Ω | -Ν̅Ι̅- ; border of dots. Reading: +Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) / τῶ σῶ δούλ(ω) / [Β]ασιλείω πρῶ/[τ]οπροέδρῳ δι/[κε]οφύλακι (καὶ) ἔξι/[σ]ωτῆ τῆς Δύσ(εως) / [τ]ῶ Τζιριθῶ/νι

Jesus Christ. Saint Nikolaos. Archangel Michael. Lord aid your servant Basileios Tzirithon, *protoproedros*, *dikaiophylax* and *exisotes* of the West.



Hermitage M-12083 (© The State Hermitage Museum.
Photos by Darya Bobrova)

2) Unknown present location (auction)

Ed.: Auction Naumann 45 (3 July 2016), no. 1061 (with image)

D. (total): 28 mm.; W.: 16,63 gr. Slightly corroded

Parallel(s): Hermitage M-12083

Same inscription with the parallel. On this specimen one can clearly see the erroneous spelling of *δικεοφύλακι* instead of *δικαιοφύλακι*.



Auction Naumann 45 (2016), no. 1061

c) *protoproedros* and *eparchos* – late 11th c. ?

This latter stage of his career is confirmed by the two seals presented below. Undoubtedly, the office of *eparchos* of Constantinople must have been a great promotion for Basileios. It is not clear whether this Basileios is identical to the homonymous eparch mentioned by Anna Komnene in 1106, although such an identification would be possible³⁶. Kazhdan, in any case, dates the seals in the 12th c.³⁷.

1) Russia: Saint-Petersburg, Hermitage M-6642 (ex N. P. Likhachev collection)

Ed.: LAURENT, *Corpus*, v. 2, no. 1032 (without image); SHANDROVSKAJA, *Eparkhi Konstantinopolja*, 66-68, fig. no. 2 (with image); presented by SHANDROVSKAJA, *Sfragistika*, no. 747 (without image)

D. (total): 31 x 32 mm. Struck off centre (reverse)

Parallel(s): Athens Numismatic Museum K483

Obverse: Saint Nikolaos and Archangel Michael, standing, raising their hands towards the medallion of Christ above them in the centre; sigla: Ι. Χ̄C - .Ι.Ι.Ο|Λ|Ο|. - ÖA | Ā|I; border of dots. Reading: Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς. [Ἵ] ἄ(γ)γ(ε)λ(ος) Μιχ(αή)λ.

Reverse: Inscription in 7 lines: †KER,Θ, | ΤΩCΩΔΗΛ' | .ΑCΙΛΕΙΩΑ | ΠΡΟΕΔΡΩC | ΕΠΑΡΧΩΤΩ | ΤΖΙΡΙΘΩ | -ΝΙ-; border of dots. Reading: + Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) / τῶ σῶ δούλ(ω) / [B]ασιλείω (πρωτο)/προέδρω (καὶ) / ἐπάρχω τῶ / Τζιριθω/νι

Jesus Christ. Saint Nikolaos. Archangel Michael. Lord aid your servant Basileios Tzirithon, *protoproedros* and *eparchos*.

Date: Jordanov: 1080's; Stavrakos: 1080-1100, but certainly after 1089³⁸.

Laurent's erroneous description of the obverse (where he saw a Theotokos Hagiosoritissa) was obviously due to the bad state of preservation of the Athens specimen (see below), which must have been the only one available to him at that point. The much better preserved specimen at the Hermitage offers a full reconstruction of the obverse.

36. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, 12.4.2, ed. D. REINSCH - A. KAMBYLIS, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, Berlin - New York 2001, 368; LAURENT, *Corpus*, v. 2, 567, rejects this identification.

37. KAZHDAN, *Armjane*, 84, fn. 12.

38. JORDANOV, *Corpus*, v. 1, 70, no. 7; STAVRAKOS, *Familiennamen*, no. 257.



Hermitage M-6642 (© The State Hermitage Museum. Photos by Darya Bobrova)

2) Greece: Athens, Numismatic Museum K483 (ex AE2646)

Ed.: STAVRAKOS, *Familiennamen*, no. 257 [1080-1100] (with image); LAURENT, *Corpus*, v. 2, no. 1032 (with image); LAURENT, *Familles Byzantines*, 473 (without image); KONSTANTOPOULOS, *Μολυβδόβουλλα*, no. 483 (without image)

D. (total): 20 mm.; Th.: 2,8 mm.; W.: 3,52 gr. Poorly preserved; blank smaller than die.

Parallel(s): Hermitage M-6642

Obverse: Archangel Michael standing on the right. The rest of the obverse is not visible.

Reverse: Inscription in 7 lines (5 surviving):

Lord aid your servant Basileios Tzirithon, *protoproedros* and *eparchos*.

Although Stavrakos pointed to the parallel from the Hermitage, he followed the erroneous description of Laurent by repeating that the obverse of the Athens specimen shows the Theotokos Hagiosoritissa.



Athens Numismatic Museum K483 (© Athens Numismatic Museum)

9. – Gabriel (third quarter of the 11th c.)³⁹

Gabriel Tzirithon served as *crites* of Thrake in the third quarter of the 11th c. His post is known from four seals coming from two boulloteria and bearing metrical inscriptions. All his seals portray St. George on their obverse. Three of these specimens belong to the Dumbarton Oaks collection, while the fourth one is kept (according to the bibliography) at the Numismatic Collection in Berlin⁴⁰. Although the editors of the fourth specimen misread the last line of the reverse, it is obvious from Schlumberger's drawing that the seal was struck with the same boulloterion like the Dumbarton Oaks

39. *PBW* Gabriel 20103; KAZHDAN, *Armiane*, 83, no. 2.

40. Boulloterion 1: USA: Washington D.C., DO BZS.1958.106.3864 = NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue*, v. 1, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C. 1991, no. 71.11(a);

Boulloterion 2: 1) USA: Washington D.C., DO BZS.1958.106.1514 = NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue*, v. 1, no. 71.11(b); 2) USA: Washington D.C., DO BZS.1958.106.4243 = NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue*, v. 1, no. 71.11(c); 3) Germany: Berlin, Münzkabinett (?) = G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Sigillographie de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 1884, 708 [11th-12th c.]; M. FROEHNER, *Bulles métriques*, *Annuaire de la Société française de numismatique et d'archéologie* 8 (1884), no. 150; V. LAURENT, *Les bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine*, *Ελληνικά* 6 (1933), no. 530 [c. 1075].

Although Schlumberger himself and Froehner recorded the specimen as being kept in Berlin, Laurent noted that it was part of Schlumberger's private collection in Paris. Despite my efforts, it was impossible to locate the specimen in any collection.

specimens (b) and (c) and thus, as Nesbitt and Oikonomides already pointed out, the last word of the inscription reads *Θράκης* (not *σφραγίς*)⁴¹.

Gabriel is known through literary sources as well. According to Michael Psellos, there was once a dispute between the *strategos* (general) Leon Mandalos on the one hand and the monks of the monastery of Τοῦ Καλλίου (in Constantinople) on the other over a water mill somewhere in Thrake. The courts were not able to take a final decision in favor of the one or the other side, so Gabriel Tzirithon, *dishypatos* and *crites* (judge) of the theme of Thrake gave his verdict according to which the disputed goods were to be equally divided between the two parties⁴². The rest of the story is not important to our study, but it must be noted here that the information provided by Psellos is dated in 1075, which is the *terminus post quem* for Gabriel Tzirithon's service in Thrake. In the *PBW*, however, one finds the years 1084, with no explanation.

The other important information provided by Psellos is the title of *dishypatos* attributed to Gabriel, a title which was often granted mostly to judges, but is rarely attested in the sources.

10. – Michael (11th-12th c.)

He was *genikos logothetes* around the late 11th – early 12th c., according to his seal, which depicts St. Nikolaos on the obverse⁴³. Michael perhaps served at this post just before Ioannes (see here, no. 12). More than one members of the family seem to be somehow involved all together in the *genikon logothesion* around the same time.

11. – Basileios (early 12th c.)⁴⁴

This person, who is elsewhere unknown so far, signed an official document as *logariastes* of the *secretion* of the *genikon logothesion*. Dölger suggested that the document should be dated in February 1109⁴⁵, and also

41. NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue*, v. 1, 159.

42. Psellos, ed. E. A. FISCHER, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes hagiographicae*, Stuttgart 1994, 207-208 (no. 4, ll. 166 ff., esp. 187-189).

43. Germany: Munich, D. Theodoridis collection 213 = CHEYNET – THEODORIDIS, *Collection Theodoridis*, no. 212.

44. Recorded in LAURENT, *Familles Byzantines*, 477; KAZHDAN, *Armjane*, 84, no. 8.

45. C. E. ZACHARIAE VON LINGENTHAL, *Jus Graecoromanum, pars III, Novellae*

that this Basileios was a grandson of Basileios *crites* (here, no. 7), a relation which, according to Kazhdan – and we are in full agreement with his view – is nothing but a hypothesis⁴⁶. It is of great interest to note here that another member of the family, Ioannes (here, no. 12) held at that time the office of *genikos logothetes*, as did before them Michael (here, no. 10).

12. – Ioannes (early 12th c.)⁴⁷

Ioannes is another member of the family with a seemingly brilliant career in civil administration, evidenced through sigillography and literary sources. According to an official document dated in February (and March) 1109, he served as *logothetes* of the *genikon* under Alexios I Komnenos, and was responsible for tax collection in the areas of Thrake and Macedonia⁴⁸. Perhaps he held this post even earlier. Definitely, he was removed before June 1109, because the post is then occupied by another person⁴⁹.

The identification of this person with Ioannes, *protonotarios* of the Ἀνατολικοὶ (here, no. 3), suggested by Laurent (see above), is unlikely, because of dating criteria.

This career stage of Ioannes is also known through three seals, coming from the same boulloterion. Two of them are kept at the IFEB collection, while the third has appeared in the auction market. The Mother of God (*Theotokos Episkepsis*) was his protector depicted on the seals.

1) France: Paris, IFEB 261

Ed.: LAURENT, *Corpus*, v. 2, no. 329 (with image)

D. (total): 20 x 28 mm.; D. (field): 26 mm.; Th.: 1,8 x 4 mm.; W.: 10,13 gr. Well preserved; oval-shaped disc; blank larger than die.

constitutiones, Leipzig 1857, 398; I. ZEPOS – P. ZEPOS, *Jus Graecoromanum*, v. 1, Athens 1931, 338.

46. KAZHDAN, *Armjane*, 84, see commentary on no. 8.

47. *PBW* Ioannes 20374; LAURENT, *Familles Byzantines*, 477, with fn. 5; KAZHDAN, *Armjane*, 84, no. 7.

48. ZACHARIAE VON LINGENTHAL, *Jus Graecoromanum*, 393; ZEPOS – ZEPOS, *Jus Graecoromanum*, 334; DÖLGER – WIRTH, *Regesten*, 168, no. 1245. See also A.-K. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Der Familienname Serblias und seine Träger in Byzanz. Eine sigillographisch-prosopographische Studie, *SBS* 11 (2012), 52.

49. Georgios Spanopoulos. See e.g. DÖLGER – WIRTH, *Regesten*, 170, no. 1246.

Parallel(s): IFEB 302; Auction Timeline (23-27 May 2017), no. 1776

Obverse: Theotokos Episkepsis; sigla: $\overline{\text{MP}} \overline{\text{ΘV}}$; border of dots. Reading: $\text{M}(\eta\tau\eta)\rho \Theta(\epsilon\omicron)\upsilon$.

Reverse: Inscription in 5 lines: $+\overline{\text{ΘK}}\overline{\text{E}}|\text{ROH}\overline{\text{ΘE}}|\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{W}}\text{FENIK}\overline{\text{W}}|\text{T}\overline{\text{W}}\text{T,IP}||\overline{\text{Θ}}\text{WNI}$; border of dots. Reading: + $\Theta(\epsilon\omicron\tau\acute{o})\kappa\epsilon$ / βοήθει / Ἰω(άννη) γενικῶ / τῶ $\text{T}\zeta\iota\rho\acute{\iota}/\theta\omega\nu\iota$.

Mother of God. Theotokos aid Ioannes Tzirithon, *genikos* (*logothetes* of the *genikon*).

Date: early 12th c. (before 1109)



IFEB 261 (© IFEB Paris)

2) France: Paris, IFEB 302

Ed.: LAURENT, *Corpus*, v. 2, no. 329 (without image)

D. (total): 15,5 mm.; Th.: 1,8 mm.; W.: 3,8 gr. Chipped; corroded; blank smaller than die.

Parallel(s): IFEB 261; Auction Timeline (23-27 May 2017), no. 1776

Obverse: Theotokos Episkepsis; sigla: $\overline{\text{MP}} \overline{\text{ΘV}}$; border of dots. Reading: $\text{M}(\eta\tau\eta)\rho \Theta(\epsilon\omicron)\upsilon$.

Reverse: Inscription in 5 lines: $+\overline{\text{ΘK}}\overline{\text{E}}|\text{ROH}\overline{\text{ΘE}}.\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{W}}\text{FENIK.}|\text{T}\overline{\text{W}}\text{T.}|\text{IP}||\overline{\text{Θ}}\text{WNI}$. Reading: + $\Theta(\epsilon\omicron\tau\acute{o})\kappa\epsilon$ / βοήθει[ι] / Ἰω(άννη) γενικ[ῶ] / τῶ $\text{T}[\zeta]\iota\rho\acute{\iota}/\theta\omega\nu\iota$.

Mother of God. Theotokos aid Ioannes Tzirithon, *genikos* (*logothetes* of the *genikon*).

Date: early 12th c. (before 1109)



IFEB 302 (© IFEB Paris)

3) Unknown present location (auction)

Ed.: Auction Timeline (23-27 May 2017), no. 1776 (with image)⁵⁰

D. (total): 35 mm.; W.: 23 gr. Slightly corroded; blank much larger than die.

Parallel(s): IFEB 261; IFEB 302

Obverse: Theotokos Episkepsis; sigla

Reverse: Inscription in 5 lines:

Mother of God. Theotokos aid Ioannes Tzirithon, *genikos* (*logothetes* of the *genikon*).

Date: early 12th c. (before 1109).

50. According to the auction catalogue, the specimen comes from a private collection in London and was formerly presented by Persepolis Gallery, Mayfair, London, in the 1980's.



Auction Timeline (23-27 May 2017), no. 1776

This specimen (which was described in the auction catalogue as “trade seal”), at first does not seem to have been issued with the same boulloterion as the other two. Especially the K in the first line looks highly corroded, while the W in the fourth and fifth lines resembles a different type. However, not only the obverse is identical, but also several details on the reverse point to the same boulloterion: the Γ in the third line; the T at the beginning of the fourth line; the first I in the fourth line; the position of the W between the two T in the fourth line etc. If one compares the field diameter with that of IFEB 261, which is the best preserved of all three, it seems that either the die of this boulloterion (if we should speak of a second one) was smaller than that of the IFEB specimen, or the editors of the auction catalogue did not measure precisely (or write down correctly) the total diameter (which they give as 35mm.). Otherwise it is impossible to match a field diameter of 26 mm. (IFEB 261) in this disc of a total diameter of 35 mm., when the empty space covers almost half of this length. Be that as it may, based on epigraphy and without being able to examine closely and measure this specimen, we would ascribe all three seals to the same boulloterion.

13. – Konstantinos (first third of the 13th century)

Megalodoxotatos kyr (τῷ μεγαλοδοξωτάτῳ κυρῷ Κωνσταντίνῳ τῷ Τζιρίνθῳ), in a document written by Ioannes Apokaukos, bishop of

Naupaktos and dated between 1215 and 1233 (Laurent dated the same document “around 1235”)⁵¹. There is no doubt that the family name Tzirinthos is nothing but a misspelling of Tzirithon. This Konstantinos must have been a magnate, a landlord somewhere in Epirus, although the place-name has not survived in the document. We would hesitate to identify him with the anonymous *megas chartouliarios*, active in Thessaloniki in the 1240’s⁵², and Laurent’s suggestion that his family has found refuge in the Despotate of Epirus after the capture of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204 relies on no evidence. A branch of the family or an individual may have well been there before the capture or independently. A similar suggestion (again with no supporting evidence) was expressed by Ahrweiler about the Empire of Nikaia⁵³.

14. – Anonymous (first half of the 13th century)⁵⁴

This person is mentioned in a document related to a dispute between some persons belonging to his circle (τὸ μέρος τοῦ Τζιρίθωνος) and the monastery of Lembos, in the area of Smyrna. It seems that he was a land proprietor in the area of Mela, perhaps a “pronoia” holder, according to Ahrweiler, who suggested an identification of this individual with the anonymous Tzirithon active in Thessaloniki around the same time. We tend to agree with Macrides’ hesitations regarding the identification of these persons⁵⁵. Although the document bears no date, Ahrweiler and Macrides accepted a dating in 1250, the year when they put Tzirithon’s death (this, however, on the basis of unknown criteria, since there is no evidence in the text that Tzirithon died in that year precisely; the word *ἐκείνου* is a clue that this person was already deceased at the time when the document was issued, but this does not mean that he necessarily passed away that same year).

51. S. PETRIDÈS, Jean Apokaukos, lettres et autres documents inédits, *IRAIK* 14 (1909), 87-88, no. XV; LAURENT, *Familles Byzantines*, 477, with fn. 1; N. TOMADAKES, *Οἱ λόγιοι τοῦ Δεσποτάτου τῆς Ἠπείρου καὶ τοῦ Βασιλείου τῆς Νικαίας*, Athens 1955 [repr. Thessaloniki 1993], 35, 55, no. 14.

52. The same hesitation was expressed by R. MACRIDES, *George Akropolites. The History*, Oxford 2007, 240, fn. 11.

53. AHRWEILER, *Smyrne*, 24-25.

54. The person is recorded in LAURENT, *Familles Byzantines*, 476.

55. MM, v. 4, Wien 1871, no. 129; AHRWEILER, *Smyrne*, 145, 177; MACRIDES, *Akropolites*, 240, fn. 11.

15. – Anonymous (mid-13th century)⁵⁶

According to Georgios Akropolites and Theodoros Skoutariotes (who actually copied Akropolites), as well as the verses written by Ephraim, a person named Tzirithon participated the plot against Demetrios Doukas Komnenos Angelos, despot of Thessaloniki (since 1244) in autumn 1246, when Ioannes III Vatatzes of Nikaia was on his way back after a victorious campaign in Bulgaria⁵⁷. Apparently the conspirators were working in favor of Ioannes. Towards the end of November 1246, the city was surrendered to Ioannes III Vatatzes and Demetrios was exiled. It is of great interest that this anonymous Tzirithon is recorded as one of the “noble” citizens of Thessaloniki, who had been (prior or after the fall of the city to Vatatzes?)⁵⁸ appointed *megas chartoularios* “by the Emperor” (*Οἱ γὰρ Θεσσαλονικεῖς... ὀνομαστοὶ καὶ γνώριμοι... οἱ δὲ τῶν ἐπισήμων / ἐκ δ’ εὐγενῶν... Τζιρίθων, ὄν καὶ [μέγαν χαρτουλάριον] ὁ βασιλεὺς τετίμηκεν*). It is certain that the emperor mentioned in the text is Ioannes III Vatatzes of Nikaia, since at that time Thessaloniki was under the suzerainty of Nikaia, and not Theodoros Doukas of Thessaloniki (father of Demetrios). We do not agree, however, with Ahrweiler that the Tzirithon family, like the others mentioned in the texts (especially in Ephraim’s work) was one of the noble families of the Empire of Nikaia⁵⁹. What we understand is that this anonymous Tzirithon was a local of Thessaloniki, not necessarily a prominent member of the Nikaian society and also this does not mean that the Tzirithon family was exclusively part of the Nikaian society.

On the basis of the available evidence, we may date Tzirithon’s service as *megas chartoularios* either in the years 1244-1246 or, more likely, after November 1246. Despite Ahrweiler’s comments, Macrides, just like Laurent did before, hesitates to identify this anonymous Tzirithon with either

56. The person is recorded in LAURENT, *Familles Byzantines*, 476.

57. Akropolites, 45, ed. A. HEISENBERG – P. WIRTH, *Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, v. 1, Stuttgart 1977, 79; Theodoros Skoutariotes, ed. K. SATHAS, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, v. 7 (*Ἀνωνύμου Σύνοψις Χρονική*), Venice – Paris 1894, 495; Ephraim, v. 8556, ed. O. LAMPSIDES, *Ephraem Aenii Historia Chronica*, Athens 1990, 303.

58. According to CHEYNET – THEODORIDIS, *Collection Theodoridis*, 223, Vatatzes honored Tzirithon for his services and assistance after the surrender of Thessaloniki in November 1246.

59. AHRWEILER, *Smyrne*, 177.

Konstantinos (see here, no. 13) or the anonymous proprietor from the area of Smyrna (see here, no. 14)⁶⁰. In our opinion, this hesitation is absolutely correct and we are dealing with three different individuals.

16. - Georgios (c. mid-11th c. ?)

A person known through a seal first mentioned by Cheynet and Theodoridis. The specimen is heavily corroded, especially on the reverse, where part of the surface is missing. It seems, though, that the family name is indeed Tzirithon. About the date, it is hard to reach to a safe conclusion and, therefore, this entry comes after those which have more secure dates. The letters point to a period after the first quarter of the 11th c., but certainly not very late, probably before the 12th c. Perhaps a dating between 1030-1060 would fit, until a parallel or similar object is discovered.

Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, BZS.1951.31.5.3307 (ex T. Whittemore collection; previously known as Fogg 3307)

Ed.: unpublished; mentioned by CHEYNET - THEODORIDIS, *Collection Theodoridis*, 223.

Obverse: Theotokos Episkepsis; sigla: $\bar{M}P$ - $\bar{\Theta}V$; border of dots. Reading: $M(\acute{\eta}\tau\eta)\rho \Theta(\epsilon\omicron)\tilde{\upsilon}$.

Reverse: Inscription in 5 lines: $+K\bar{R}\bar{\Psi}\bar{H}\bar{\Theta}, |T\P.. \Delta\Theta, |ΓΕΨ...Ω|A.....H|PI \Theta\PNI|$ -; border of dots. Reading: $K(\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\epsilon) \beta\omega\eta\theta(\epsilon\iota) / \tau\tilde{\omega} [\sigma\tilde{\omega}] \delta\omicron\upsilon(\lambda\omega) / \Gamma\epsilon\omega[\rho\gamma\acute{\iota}]\omega / \alpha[... \tau(\tilde{\omega}) T\zeta] \eta/\rho\acute{\iota}\theta\omega\nu\iota - K\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\epsilon \beta\omicron\eta\theta\epsilon\iota \tau\tilde{\omega} \sigma\tilde{\omega} \delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omega \Gamma\epsilon\omega\rho\gamma\acute{\iota}\omega \alpha[...] \tau\tilde{\omega} T\zeta\iota\rho\acute{\iota}\theta\omega\nu\iota$

Mother of God. Lord aid your servant Georgios Tzirithon [...].

Reading of the first line is not certain. Although the obverse shows Theotokos, the inscription on the reverse starts with a K, which suggests invocation to the Lord. This combination, though, is not unique.⁶¹

At the beginning of the fourth line the surviving letter looks like an A. If we consider that the article preceding the family name is abbreviated with T and the diphthong of the name consists of one character only (T^3), then there is enough space for three more letters, which could be read as A[CHK], that is askretis. Nothing else is known about this person.

60. AHRWEILER, Smyrne, 177; LAURENT, Familles Byzantines, 476; MACRIDES, *Akropolis*, 240, fn. 11.

61. See, for example, DO BZS.1958.106.199 (11th c.), in: E. McGEER - J. NESBITT - N. OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue of Byzantine seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, v. 5, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C. 2005, no. 42.4.



© Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, BZS.1951.31.5.3307 (photos provided by © Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.)

17. – Tzirithia (1409)⁶²

This person (Τζιριθία) is included here because of her very particular name which is similar to that of Tzirithon and could, therefore, be associated to the Tzirithon family. The same applies to the next entry.

Tzirithia was a widow, *πάρουικος* of the monastery of Lavra in the village Gomatou near Hierissos. She is recorded in a document (*πρακτικὸν*) of 1409 from the archives of Lavra⁶³. It is not uncommon to see old noble Byzantine families to decline after the 11th-12th c. and some of their branches to appear as part of the low classes in rural society. It seems that this is the case for the Tzirithon family as well.

18. – Kale Tzirichia (1320)⁶⁴

This is a case similar to the previous one, with the name Tzirichia (Τζιριχία) to be, most probably, a corrupted form of Tzirichia (Τζιριθία). It is obvious, in the text, that Tzirichia is a family name. Καλή Τζιριχία was a widow, *πάρουικος* at Gomatou (Hierissos), according to a document from the archives of Iviron⁶⁵.

62. *PLP*, no. 27985.

63. LEMERLE et al., *Lavra*, v. 3, Paris 1979, 159 (no. 161, l. 64).

64. *PLP*, no. 93951.

65. J. LEFORT et al. (ed.), *Actes d' Iviron*, v. 3, Paris 1994, 266 (no 79, II. 136-137).

TABLE 1: Seals issued by Tzirithon family members

BL column shows the boulloteria used by each person. The small letter before the number corresponds to the official's career stage as indicated in the present study.

b. = bust; h.-f. = half-figure; st. = standing; thr. = enthroned.

Owner	BL	Present Location	Date	Depicted Saint(s)
Ioannes (3)	1	DO BZS.1955.1.3380	11th c. first half	St. Theodoros (b.)
Leon (4)	1	BnF Seyrig 88	11th c. middle	Th. Hodegetria (h.-f.)
Leon (4)	1	Orghidan 171	11th c. middle	Th. Hodegetria (h.-f.)
Leon (4)	1	DO BZS.1955.1.2381	11th c. middle	Th. Hodegetria (h.-f.)
Christodoulos (6)	1	Theodoridis 1194	11th c. middle	St. Georgios (b.) + Th. Blachernitissa (b.)
Basileios (7)	b1	Athens NM Stamoules 81	after 1045	Th. Episkepsis (st.)
Basileios (7)	c1	private coll. (Bulgaria)	c. 1050s-c. 1060s	Th. Hodegetria (st.)
Basileios (7)	d1	Hirsch (Sept. 2003), 2675	c. 1065-c.1080	Th. holding Christ (thr.)
Basileios (7)	e1	Vienna MK 244	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	BnF Zacos 447	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	BnF Zacos 455	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	BnF Zacos 581	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	BnF Zacos 582	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	BnF Zacos 583	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	BnF Zacos 584	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	BnF Zacos 585	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	BnF Zacos 586	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	Harvard BZS.1951.31.5.133	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos

Basileios (7)	e1	Harvard BZS.1951.31.5.267	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e1	Harvard BZS.1951.31.5.781	c. 1065-c.1080	Arch. Michael + St. Nikolaos
Basileios (7)	e2	Athens NM K142α	c. 1065-c.1080	Th. holding Christ (thr.)
Basileios (7)	e2	unknown pr. loc.	c. 1065-c.1080	Th. holding Christ (thr.)
Basileios (7)	e2	unknown pr. loc. (ex I. Kallisperis coll.)	c. 1065-c.1080	Th. holding Christ (thr.)
Basileios (8)	a1	IFEB 269	1060's-1070's ?	Th. Blachernitissa (st.)
Basileios (8)	a1?	unknown pr. loc. (BnF ?)	1060's-1070's ?	?
Basileios (8)	b1	Hermitage M-12083	1080's ?	St. Nikolaos + Arch. Michael
Basileios (8)	b1	Naumann 45, 1061	1080's ?	St. Nikolaos + Arch. Michael
Basileios (8)	c1	Hermitage M-6642	11th c. late ?	St. Nikolaos + Arch. Michael
Basileios (8)	c1	Athens NM K483	11th c. late ?	St. Nikolaos + Arch. Michael
Gabriel (9)	1	DO BZS.1958.106.3864	11th c. third quarter	St. Georgios (st.)
Gabriel (9)	2	DO BZS.1958.106.1514	11th c. third quarter	St. Georgios (st.)
Gabriel (9)	2	DO BZS.1958.106.4243	11th c. third quarter	St. Georgios (st.)
Gabriel (9)	2	Berlin MK ?	11th c. third quarter	St. Georgios (st.) ?
Michael (10)	1	Theodoridis 213	11th c. late-12th c. early	St. Nikolaos (b.)
Ioannes (12)	1	IFEB 261	12th c. early	Th. Episkepsis (h.-f.)
Ioannes (12)	1	IFEB 302	12th c. early	Th. Episkepsis (h.-f.)
Ioannes (12)	1	Timeline (May 2017), 1776	12th c. early	Th. Episkepsis (h.-f.)
Georgios (16)	1	Harvard BZS.1951.31.5.3307	c. mid-11th c. ?	Th. Episkepsis (h.-f.)

ΣΥΜΒΟΛΗ ΣΤΗ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ
2. Η ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΤΖΙΡΙΘΩΝΩΝ

Παρουσίαση της βυζαντινής οικογένειας των Τζιριθώνων, μέσα από φιλολογικές πηγές, κρατικά και νομικά έγγραφα, καθώς και μολυβδόβουλλα. Συνολικά περιλαμβάνονται 16 πρόσωπα φέροντα το οικογενειακό όνομα Τζιρίθων, καθώς και δύο ακόμα με το βαπτιστικό Τζιριθία, που, πιθανότατα, συνδέεται με το υπό εξέταση οικογενειακό. Από τα 38 μολυβδόβουλλα που συγκεντρώθηκαν, τα 18 προέρχονται από βουλλωτήρια ενός προσώπου.

Το όνομα Τζιρίθων, πιθανότατα, ετυμολογείται από κάποια τουρκική γλώσσα, αν και σύμφωνα με τη βιβλιογραφία, η οικογένεια είναι αρμενικής προέλευσης. Η παλαιότερη μαρτυρία για άτομο φέρον το όνομα Τζιρίθων χρονολογείται στα τέλη του 9ου ή τις αρχές του 10ου, ενώ η τελευταία γύρω στα μέσα του 13ου αιώνα. Το όνομα Τζιριθία, ωστόσο, χρονολογείται στις αρχές του 15ου αι. Προς το παρόν, όλα τα στοιχεία δείχνουν πως η οικογένεια Τζιρίθων δεν στράφηκε καθόλου προς τον στρατιωτικό τομέα και όλα τα μέλη της σχετίζονταν με την πολιτική διοίκηση. Επιπλέον, κατόρθωσαν να διατηρηθούν στο προσκήνιο για περίπου δυο αιώνες.

Αναμφίβολα, η οικογένεια των Τζιριθώνων, αν και ελάχιστα γνωστή, ανήκε στην αφρόκρεμα της βυζαντινής αριστοκρατίας, και είχε πρόσβαση σε υψηλά αξιώματα της πολιτικής διοίκησης.