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Book Review: Jean-Claude CHEYNET – Turan GOKYILDIRIM – Vera BULGURLU Les sceaux byzantins du Musée archéologique d’Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute 2012

Olga KARAGIORGOU

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Jean-Claude CHEYNET – Turan GÖKYILDIRIM – Vera BULGURLU, *Les sceaux byzantins du Musée archéologique d’Istanbul*, Istanbul Research Institute 2012, pp. 1074. ISBN 978-6-05-464208-3

The volume under review is the product of a fruitful collaboration among Jean-Claude Cheynet, Professor Emeritus (since 1995) of the Université de Paris IV, an established Byzantine historian and sigillographer with considerable experience in the study of (state and private) sigillographic collections in Turkey¹, Mr. Turan Gökyıldırım, the ex-Director of the Numismatic Department of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum (henceforward IAM) and Dr. Vera Bulgurlu (Marmara University), author of the *İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri’ndeki Bizans Kurşun Mühürleri* (Istanbul 2007), the first scientific work on ca. 350 specimens from the IAM collection. Before Dr. Bulgurlu’s work, the sigillographic collection in the IAM (or, even better, only small parts of it) were known mainly through the short article by A. Müller-Henning in 1991 and the publication of Jean Ebersolt in 1914². Of importance are also the isolated references to certain specimens in the IAM in the

1. J.-C. CHEYNET, *Les sceaux du musée d’Iznik*, *REB* (1991), 219-235; *Sceaux byzantins des musées d’Antioche et de Tarse*, *TM* 12 (1994), 391-478; *Sceaux de plomb du musée d’Hatay (Antioche)*, *REB* 54 (1996), 249-270; *Les sceaux byzantins du musée de Manisa*, *REB* 56 (1998), 261-267; *Les sceaux byzantins du musée de Selçuk (Éphèse)*, *Revue numismatique* 155 (1999), 317-352; *Les sceaux byzantins d’Adıyaman* (together with E. Erdoğan and V. Prigent), *SBS* 12 (2016), 93-140; *Sceaux des musées de la Turquie orientale Karaman, Nevşehir, Malatya, Maraş* (together with V. Prigent and E. Erdogan), *REB* 74 (2016), 287-326. His book on *Les sceaux byzantins de la collection Yavus Tatış*, is expected to appear in Izmir in the beginning of 2019.

2. J. EBERSOLT, *Sceaux byzantins du musée de Constantinople*, *Revue Numismatique* IVe s. 18 (1914), 207-243 and 377-409; A. MÜLLER-HENNIG, *Bizans imparator ailelerine ait kursun mühürler*, *Bülten* 29-30 (1991), 31-38.

publications of V. Laurent and W. Seibt, especially since some of these specimens are irrevocably lost today due to extreme deterioration (see Introduction, p. 8). Thus, a volume finally dedicated to the sigillographic collection of the IAM as an entity, presenting it according to the scientific standards of modern sigillography, is more than welcome.

The volume under review presents a total of 1559 objects, including 1552 molybdoboulla, three lead blanks (no. 11.152), two amulets (nos. 9.33 and 9.34), one square tessera(?) (or lead weight?) (no. 8.228) and one modern copy (no. 6.19); 75 of the molybdoboulla entered the IAM after 1936, as excavation finds, products of confiscation, donations or purchases (see Table on pp. 10-11 and 18-19). All this material is presented in eleven chapters and thereafter follow a bilingual glossary (in French and Turkish) of 190 technical terms, mostly titles and offices of the Byzantine administration (pp. 977-1006), and six indices on names (pp. 1009-1031), offices and titles (pp. 1033-1062), geographical names (pp. 1065-1074), metrical legends (pp. 1077-1082), iconographic motives (pp. 1085-1090) and remarkable expressions (pp. 1093-1095). The eleven chapters of the main catalogue are arranged as follows:

1. *Sceaux impériaux* (pp. 41-80; 62 specimens). The editors state clearly (p. 41, fn. 1) that apart from the “proper” imperial seals, i.e. seals of the sovereign(s), this chapter includes also seals struck by certain state officials who had the privilege to use seals bearing the imperial portrait, such as the *archontes of the blattion* and (during a certain period) the *kommerkiarioi*.

2. *L'administration centrale* (pp. 81-246; 262 specimens). The specimens presented here are divided into those issued by civil officials (pp. 81-191; nos. 2.1-2.167) and those issued by the military officials (pp. 191-246; nos. 2.168-2.255).

3. *L'administration provinciale* (pp. 247-363; 133 specimens). In this section the molybdoboulla are listed alphabetically, according to the geographical regions where their owners exercised their function. For each one of these geographical regions there is a very informative bilingual (French-Turkish) introduction (apart from Alina, see no. 3.4).

4. *Les fonctions palatines* (pp. 365-385; 34 specimens).

5. *Les dignitaires* (pp. 387-528; 269 specimens).

6. *L'église* (pp. 528-625; 158 specimens – including no. 6.19 which is a modern copy). This chapter presents seals of various ecclesiastical officials from the patriarchates (including five patriarchal seals from Constantinople and one from Jerusalem) and the provincial churches (mostly metropolitans and bishops active in

42 areas), seals of ecclesiastical officials of unknown jurisdiction, seals of charitable institutions, monasteries, monks and nuns.

7. *Sceaux patronymiques* (pp. 627-719; 133 specimens). This chapter includes seals whose legends are dominated by the family name of their owners. The 133 specimens attest to a total of 108 different Byzantine families. Six of the individual owners are represented with two specimens (nos. 7.24, 7.39, 7.68, 7.71, 7.74, 7.115) and one by three (no. 7.117).

8. *Prénoms* (pp. 721-839; 230 specimens – including no. 8.228, which the editors propose to identify as (possibly) a tessera (?); we would prefer to interpret it as a lead weight.

9. *Sceaux anonymes* (pp. 841-858; 34 specimens). Almost all the specimens in this chapter (32) have legends whose content does not betray their owner; the last two entries (nos. 9.33 and 9.34) present amulets with apotropaic legends.

10. *Sceaux iconographiques* (pp. 859-900; 88 specimens).

11. *Sceaux incertains* (pp. 901-974; 154 specimens). This chapter includes specimens whose reading and/or attribution remain uncertain. The uncertain seals are arranged according to the main schema used in the catalogue, i.e. *sceaux impériaux* (nos. 11.1-11.7), *administration centrale* (11.8-11.16), *administration provinciale* (nos. 11.17-11.19), *fonctions palatines* (nos. 11.20-11.22), *dignitaires* (nos. 11.23-11.48), *église* (nos. 11.49-11.56), *sceaux patronymiques* (nos. 11.57-11.73), *prénoms* (nos. 11.74-11.109) and *sceaux iconographiques* (nos. 11.127-11.149), with the addition of three more groups: seals with monograms of uncertain reading (11.110-11.126), *varia* (11.150-11.151) and the entry 11.152 which brings together the three blanks kept in the collection.

In contrast to the traditional categorisation schemes used in older publications, which (apart from the imperial and the *kommerkiarioi* seals) put emphasis on the iconography (seals with eagles, seals with crosses, iconographic seals) and the layout of the legends on the seals (monogrammatic seals, seals with bilateral inscriptions, seals with invocative monograms, seals with cruciform monograms), the categorisation scheme used in the volume under review is clearly orientated towards the administration and the prosopography of the Byzantine Empire, which is certainly a very refreshing point of view. One should bear in mind, however, that this scheme relies on certain pre-conceived priorities and that some misplacements or overlaps are not to be avoided.

To start with, the *kommerkiarioi* seals are (rightly) included in Chapter 1, since they very often (although not always) bear the imperial portrait(s). Indeed, among

the seven entries (1.50-1.56) for the *kommerkiarioi* seals, only two bear imperial portraits (nos. 1.50 and 1.55), and one realises immediately that the *kommerkiarioi* seals with no imperial portraits are also treated here due to the justified wish of the editors to keep all the *kommerkiarioi* seals together. The last two seals in Chapter 1, however, belonging to *pragmateutai* (nos. 1.60 and 1.61), are of a completely different character that does not comply with the type of the seals treated in this chapter. Furthermore, another seal that may have belonged also to a *pragmateutes* is presented in Chapter 11 (*Sceaux incertains*, no. 11.7). In this respect, we would favour the separate treatment of these three seals of *pragmateutai*, together with the seal of a *scholastikos* (=lawyer) (no. 2.164), as these are the only seals in the collection of the IAM with an entrepreneurial character³.

Chapter 7 treats seals whose legends reveal the family name of their owner. However – and without taking into account the imperial seals (Chapter 1) and the uncertain seals (Chapter 11) – seals recording the last name of their owner (even if this is totally or partially illegible) are included also in Chapters 2 (51 cases), in Chapter 3 (15 cases), in Chapter 4 (5 cases) and in Chapter 6 (15 cases)⁴. It is clear, therefore, that Chapter 7 brings together seals with last names, whose legends do not mention any imperial titles or administrative functions (of the central or provincial administration and the church); the priority in such cases is to place such seals in the respective chapters. In what concerns the *sceaux patronimiques*, we may also refer here to some dubious cases, where it is not clear whether the recorded name is a first or a last name, e.g. Tornikios (no. 7.116), or whether it is a last name or a name denoting a title/profession, e.g. Monachos (no. 6. 133).

Chapter 10 brings together the iconographic seals; however, as noted by the editors themselves (see no. 10.15), some of the seals presented in this chapter are not «uniquement iconographique» since they bear (illegible) traces of circular inscriptions on both sides (no. 10.15, 10.37, 10.38), on their obverse (nos. 10.27, 10.28) or reverse (no. 10.88). Furthermore, similar seals (whose circular inscriptions are fully visible) may be found in other chapters, e.g. nos. 3.54, 4.10, 5.96, 5.119, 5.205, 5.243, 6.19,

3. The editors comment themselves on the distinctly different character of these seals, which they call “private”, see p. 188. We would certainly prefer the epithet entrepreneurial.

4. Chapter 2 (nos. 2.14, 2.15, 2.17, 2.21, 2.50, 2.52, 2.56, 2.60, 2.70, 2.76, 2.80, 2.83, 2.88, 2.91, 2.92, 2.93, 2.97, 2.99, 2.109, 2.111, 2.120, 2.128, 2.131, 2.143, 2.145, 2.152, 2.158, 2.161, 2.166, 2.167, 2.171, 2.172, 2.173, 2.201, 2.202, 2.203, 2.205, 2.206, 2.208, 2.219, 2.223, 2.230, 2.231, 2.233, 2.234, 2.239, 2.240, 2.242, 2.243, 2.244, 2.246; Chapter 3 (nos. 3.9, 3.11, 3.17, 3.41, 3.61, 3.69, 3.80, 3.81, 3.85, 3.94, 3.97, 3.104, 3.105, 3.110, 3.111); Chapter 4 (nos. 4.5, 4.23, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27); Chapter 6 (nos. 6.2, 6.3, 6.29, 6.123, 6.124, 6.127, 6.128, 6.131, 6.133, 6.141, 6.142, 6.143, 6.147, 6.148, 6.149).

6.95, 6.119, 6.141, 8.27, 8.127, 8.140, 8.141, 8.184, 8.211, 9.1, 11.11. Finally, among the uncertain seals in chapter 11 there are some bearing monograms of uncertain reading (11.110-11.126). Similar seals, however, with monograms of probable deciphering are also included in other chapters, e.g. 2.26, 5.60, 5.61, 5.63, 5.116, 5.118, 8.7, 8.16, 8.17, 8.33. We wonder, therefore, whether it would have been more practical (as it would have facilitated the necessary comparisons), to group all seals with monograms under one chapter with subchapters presenting the seals according to the type of monogram (block, cruciform or other) they bear and in chronological order.

The presentation of each specimen includes its inventory number, a brief description of its state of preservation, its diameter (total and field), the existence of parallel specimens with their editions, the previous editions (if any) of the specimen in question, a detailed description of its obverse and reverse, a transcription of the legend in the Athena fond and in Greek miniscule, a proposed date and the relevant commentary on its epigraphy and historical significance. Each entry is also accompanied by good quality B/W photos, placed next to the description of each specimen, allowing thus the reader to follow it better. The editors are to be congratulated on their good reading skills and the detailed commentaries, especially in cases where the state of preservation of the specimen in question is very bad. Worth noting are the prosopographical commentaries on certain officials and members of well-known [Machetarios (2.91), Anzas (2.93), Xeros (2.109)] or not so well-known Byzantine families [Toxaras (2.128), Kardames (2.143), Datos (2.145), Chrysepetes (2.158)], which betray an excellent command of the relevant literary and sigillographic sources (published, as well as unpublished).

Our main objection in the treatment of the specimens concerns the absence of a second transcription of their legends in Greek minuscule, free of grammatical errors. As known, many of the legends on the seals show grammatical errors which reflect either the engraver's illiteracy and/or carelessness, or the influence of the spoken language on the written one. In their transcriptions of the legends in minuscule, the editors maintain these grammatical errors, indicating (sometimes) the correct form of the words with the use of fictitious characters which do not exist, and never existed, in the Greek language, such as the ϧ, the ð and the ϣ̄. Thus, for example, ΔΟΥΛΟ (dative singular) is transcribed as δούλο (instead of δούλω), ΤΟΝ (plural genitive) is transcribed as τὸν (instead of τῶν) and ΡΑCΙΛΙΚΟ is transcribed as βασιλικῶ (instead of βασιλικῶ)⁵. The flaws of this system become more apparent

5. For indicative examples with the use of ϧ, see nos. 2.6, 2.9, 2.12, 2.25, 2.33, 2.87, 2.89, 2.113, 6.27, 6.37, 6.61, 6.98, 6.125, 11.34; for the ð, see nos. 2.187, 3.123, 3.126, 3.129, 4.12,

in the transcription of the (erroneously spelled) word ΕΤΕΡΙΑC (i.e. ἑταιρείαC)⁶. The editors transcribe this word as ἑτε(ι)ρεία(ς), wishing (we suppose) to keep the erroneous Ε of the second syllable, but also to indicate the (ι) of the diphthong (Αι), dictated by the correct orthography of the word. The problem here, however, is that the diphthong ε(ι) used by the editors in their transcription has the phonetic value of an ι, not an ε, as dictated by the pronunciation of the correct form of the word (ἑταιρείαC). Consequently, we would strongly favour a second transcription in Greek minuscule, free of errors, as this would help the reader –especially the one who is very little (or not at all) acquainted with the Greek language– to see immediately the correct form of the words (especially in what concerns the technical terms⁷), realise straight away the grammatical deviations met in the legends of the seals and thus, draw further conclusions on the social status and cultural level of the sigillant. If the editors had opted to offer a second, free of errors, transcription of the legends, then they would have avoided some other mistakes, such as putting the stress on the wrong syllable⁸ and listing legends with erroneous orthography in the index for the metrical legends⁹.

11.17; for the ϑ, see nos. 2.48, 2.80, 2.128, 2.170, 2.238, 2.243, 3.61, 3.120, 4.5, 4.15, 4.18, 6.119, 6.123, 11.29, 11.54, 11.58, 11.62.

6. See nos. 2.207-211. Although in nos. 2.212-213 and 2.215-216, they transcribe the erroneous E without the addition of the (ι).

7. For example, under the nos. 2.6-2.7 and nos. 2.53-2.61 the terms *asecretis* (ἀσηκρητίC) and *dioiketes* (διοικητής) respectively, appear in a variety of (mostly erroneous) spellings and the non-Greek reader is left with no indication as to which is the correct orthography of these words. The term *ek prosopou*; is spelled also erroneously (nos. 2.63, 2.65-2.66). On the other hand, the editors add the letter (γ) in their transcription [πι(γ)κέρνι] of *pigkernes* (see no. 2.147) in order to reconstruct the correct form of this term, although they do not reconstruct its orthography in the dative (i.e. πιγκέρνη, not πιγκέρνι). Similarly, they transcribe Δαλασ(σ)ηνοῦ (i.e. the correct form of this last name with two σ), although the engraver offers ΔΑΛΑΧΗΝΟV (no. 2.70).

8. On the wrong accentuation, see, for example, nos. 1.54 (Δεβελτοῦ, not Δεβέλτου), 2.67 (Π[ρ]ασίνου, not Π[ρ]άσινου), 2.105 (Πλουτίνω, not Πλουτινῶ), 2.113 (μειζωτέρω, not μηζότέρω with two accents), 2.114 (Συμεών, not Συμέων); 2.147 (γεγονότι, not γεγόνοτι); 2.169 (κραταιοῦ, not κρατέου), 2.176 (κόμητι, not κομήτη or κομίτη - see also nos. 2.179, 2.181, 2.183, 2.185); 2.179 [δομεστίκω, instead of δομεστικῶ) - see also nos. 2.181; 2.183; 2.185]; no. 2.202 (δούκα, not δουκά); no. 2.219 (πρωτοσπαθάριος, not πρωτοσπαθαρίος); no. 2.222 (Λέω[v]τως, not Λεώ[v]τως); no. 2.224 and 2.229 (σκριβονος, not σκριβόνος, although the same word is accentuated correctly under 2.225-226 and 228); no. 3.55 (κριτή, not κρίτη); no. 3.56 (διοικιτί, not διοικίτι); no. 3.59 (κόμιτη, not κομίτη); no. 11.17 (δεε[σεω]ν, not δεε[σέω]ν).

9. On p. 1077-1082, see, for example, nos. 6.118, 5.184, 3.94, 8.142, 8.114, 7.90, 8.157, 8.161, 6.13, 8.111, 7.68, 6.50, 5.248, 2.204, 6.47, 8.21, 8.67.

A few more remarks on specific entries may be noted here:

nos. 1.22-1.23: the reconstruction of the legend on the obverse should have been in its Latin form, i.e. [IhS4SXRIST]OS (instead of Ἰησοῦς Χριστός).

no. 1.31: the reference to BULGURLU, *Bizans Mühürleri*, no. 19 is the only one that should be listed in the “Éd.” of this Istanbul specimen. All other references concern the publication of similar specimens and should have been listed under “Éd. des // et très proches”. Furthermore, SOKOLOVA, *Imperial Seals*, no. 115, publishes the specimen M-7913 (not the M-7910).

no. 1.32: the reference to BULGURLU, *Bizans Mühürleri*, no. 20 is the only one that should be listed in the “Éd.” of this Istanbul specimen. All other references concern the publication of similar specimens and should have been listed under “Éd. des // et très proches”. Under “// ou proche” the Hermitage specimen M-11166 (ed. SOKOLOVA, *Imperial Seals*, no. 108) should be also added.

no. 1.34: this piece was published neither by J. Ebersolt, nor by V. Bulgurlu. Thus, all the references should be listed under “Éd. des // et très proches”.

no. 1.45: we believe that this seal may be equally well placed within the period between 1095 (when Anna Dalassene entered the monastery of Pantepoptes) and 1100 (when she died). During this period she certainly used seals for her private correspondence on which she had every right to mention her special relation to the emperor; furthermore, her decision to invoke Christ (instead of the Theotokos) may be linked to the fact that she decided to retire in the monastery of Christ Pantepoptes, which she herself had built.

no. 1.55: the unidentified emperor on the reverse is Leo III, the deceased father of Constantine V and grandfather of Leo IV, both portrayed on the obverse. Furthermore, the emperor holds a cross potent in his right hand (not “un scepter à trois branches”). If one could discern whether Leo IV is bearded or not, one could narrow the date of this specimen in the later or early part of this joint reign, respectively.

no. 2.1: since the editors accept Laurent’s identification of the owner of this specimen with that Anastasios, who participated in the coup against Romanos Lekapenos in 921, the date of this specimen may be narrowed within the first quarter of the 10th c.

no. 2.15: In the commentary ... le sceau de Nicétas Machètarios (no 7.76) [instead of (no. 00)].

no. 2.17: In the references ... dans WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Bleisiegel* II, au no. 43 (instead of 53), note 285.

no. 2.42: In the commentary ... Au moment où Théodore (instead of Serge) était en activité...

no. 2.45: The function is known as χρουσεψητης or χρουσ(ο)εψητης [not χρουσ(ο)ηψητης], see N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΕΣ, *Les Listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris 1972, 61, 155, 233, 317.

no. 2.60: in the transcription in miniscule it should read τῷ (instead of τοῦ) Μούστλη.

no. 2.67: The heading of this entry should have been “N., éparque de la Ville” instead of “Que la Vierge aide l'éparque de la Ville et les Verts” (sic!). According to the editors “it seems that this seal was used in a situation where the eparch wished to show his support towards the Greens (although it is difficult to know which object this seal would have secured)”. We could easily imagine that this seal was issued by the Greens in order to seal a letter/package sent to the eparch by them.

no. 2.68: The editors note that “according to a hypothesis expressed by V. LAURENT, the owner of this specimen may be Konstantinos Kapnogenes”, without offering the necessary reference. Is this hypothesis expressed in the manuscript (fiches) of V. Laurent?

no. 2.115: The references to the “mal définie” function of the mystikos (fn. 96) may be complemented by the work of Andreas ΓΚΟΥΤΖΙΟΥΚΟΣΤΑΣ, *Το αξίωμα του μυστικού. Θεσμικά και προσωπογραφικά προβλήματα*, Thessaloniki 2011.

no. 2.120: A.-K. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden, Teil 1 (Einleitung, Siegellegenden von Alpha bis inklusive My)*, Vienna 2011 [henceforward W.-S., *Corpus* 1], no. 184, offers a more convincing reading of the legend and reconstruction of the family name as Xiphilinos.

no. 2.149-2.153: we would prefer that the specimens concerning one and the same function (here “Le protonotaire”) are presented in chronological order, for example here: 2.153 (8th/9th c.), 2.150 (8th/9th c.), 2.151 (9th/10th c.), 2.149 (10th c., first half), 2.152 (11th c.).

no. 2.164: the parallel specimen in the Athens Numismatic Museum is Athènes, Musée numismatique (coll. Makridou 393) (not “Athènes 1057a”).

no. 2.175: in the heading: Le cleisourarque (not Le clisourarque).

no. 5.178: under “Éd.” the editors include a unique reference to the W.-S., *Corpus* 1, which, however, is not included in the ABRÉVIATIONS (p. 38), where only the unpublished thesis of A.-K. WASSILIOU on metrical legends on seals (Wien 1998) is listed. The latter work is, indeed, referred to in five cases under nos. 2.168, 5.177, 7.67, 7.110, 9.12. Still, in her *Corpus* 1, which was published (Vienna, June

8, 2011) before the appearance of the volume under review (November 2012), A.-K. Wassiliou discusses 49 metrical legends on seals kept in the IAM, known to her through previous publications, photos kept in the Vienna Photothek or the manuscript of V. Laurent, for which, however, she offers no inventory number¹⁰.

nos. 6.94, 6.99, 6.124: the reference to the edition of the IAM specimen is included among the references to the edition(s) of the parallel specimens. This would not have happened if one were to list first the edition(s) of the specimen in question, and then deal with the parallel specimens and their editions.

no. 6.101: the specimen edited by LAURENT (*Corpus* V/2, no. 1179) is listed as Ist. 149 (not Ist. 152). If, however, the specimen edited by Laurent is identical to the one edited in this volume, then one should complete the word *basilikes* (imperial) in the last line of the legend on the reverse. The term *basilikes* is also found on the specimens under nos. 6.98, 6.103 and 6.110.

no. 7.29: for another seal of David Komnenos kept at the Benaki Museum (Athens), whose legend (similarly to the IAM specimen) includes also the word ΡΑCΙΛΕΓΓΟΝΟV, see *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 9 (2006), 43-45.

no. 8.2: the legend on the reverse is securely reconstructed as Πλάτωνος τοῦ Τερεντίνου thanks to the better preserved specimen Fogg 1967, see W.-S., *Corpus* 1, no. 362.

no. 10.74: according to the title of this entry the associated saints on this seal are “St. Ioannes Prodromos and an unidentified saint”; in the commentary, however, the unknown saint is identified beyond doubt with St. Ioannes the Theologian.

10. For these metrical legends, see W.-S., *Corpus* 1, nos. (in brackets the relevant entry in the volume under review): 13 (7.67), 37 (8.69), 116 (7.37), 123 (6.108), 189 (8.23), 201 (8.124), 211 (7.18), 212 (7.17), 236 (7.39), 288 (2.190), 307 (8.97), 333 (2.168), 385a (8.98, 8.101), 385q (8.99), 390 (8.41, 8.42), 398 (8.155, 8.156), 483 (5.183), 506 (7.27), 523 (9.8), 578 (6.29), 559 (7.89), 597 (7.45), 598 (7.29), 653 (5.178), 656 (5.177), 683 (8.113), 725 (9.10, 9.11), 731 (3.94), 748 (7.49), 762 (9.12), 766 (6.51), 784 (7.122), 792 (7.54), 815 (9.13), 884 (7.22), 963 (7.86), 966 (7.50), 970 (5.79), 985 (8.105), 1001 (8.114), 1006 (6.76), 1059 (7.53), 1076 (7.110), 1124 (5.93), 1174 (7.70), 1315 (8.15), 1374 (7.65, 7.66), 1440 (8.18) and 1443 (5.249). It should be mentioned that the W.-S., *Corpus* 1 includes 25 more metrical legends also found on specimens kept at the IAM, known to the author of the *Corpus* 1 through parallel pieces (and thus, with no mention to the IAM specimens). For these metrical legends see A.K.-*Corpus* 1, nos. 45, 54, 58, 126, 253, 362, 369, 381q, 439, 522, 524, 587, 682, 695, 789, 845, 962, 1054, 1066, 1094, 1096, 1217, 1265, 1327 and 1363.

no. 10.81: this specimen is not illustrated; the photo reproduced here repeats actually the illustration of the specimen edited under the entry no. 9.32. Furthermore, the inventory number of the specimens edited under the entries nos. 9.32 and 10.81 is the same (Ist. 447).

Both the expert and non-expert reader of this volume will certainly feel very grateful for the appearance, at last, of a complete and authoritative guide to one of the most significant sigillographic collections of the world, containing a good number of very rare (if not unique, in certain cases) specimens. Letting aside the important *per se* imperial seals (Chapter 1), the collection includes seals of some well-known historical personalities, such as Konstantinos Diogenes, the father of Romanos IV (no. 2.233), Isaakios Komianos (=Komnenos), strategos, who is in fact the future emperor (no. 2.239) and Konstantinos, doux of Antioch and brother of Michael IV (3.20). Other specimens bring forward unique or very rarely attested terms and functions, such as a *koursor* (2.100), a *protonotarios* of the Great Antioch (no. 3.21 – provided, as noted by the editors, that the proposed reading is correct), a *kourator* of Italy (no. 3.61), a *protokourator* (no. 3.70), the first known *dioketes* of the West (no. 3.79), a *nipsistarios* (no. 4.14), a certain Konstantinos, *exousiastes* (no. 3.54), attesting to the first use by a western prince of this term, which signifies a certain subordination to the emperor, the bishobrics of Orymna (no. 6.49) and Phthia (no. 6.54), attested on seals for the first time, and of three ecclesiastical officials, Theodoros, archbishop of Corinth (no. 6.25), Theophylaktos, synkellos and metropolitan of Ephesos (6.31) and Basileios, bishop of Melos (6.44), who are unknown in other sources. Some seals mention rare first names, such as Alypios (2.232) and Chrysaphios (6.69). Of special interest are some iconographic seals. We may note the half-figure of St. Ioannes Prodromos holding a stab topped by the circular icon of Christ (no. 4.33), the rare portraits of St. Pionos (3.99), St. Auxentios (6.95) and St. Matthew (6.141), the depiction of a man (possibly Sampson) fighting with a lion (no. 6.136), the very rare motif of a horse galloping to the left without a rider (no. 11.140) or of a saint on horseback¹¹ (no. 11.142), the highly unusual combination of St. Nikolaos either with St. Eleutherios (no. 10.59), St. Prokopios (no. 10.81) or St. Panteleimon (no. 10.82) and finally, the exceptional iconography on the seal no. 11.109, which associates two saints (St. Georgios and St.

11. On this motif, see M. CAMPAGNOLO-POTHITOU – J.-C. CHEYNET, *Sceaux de la collection George Zacos au Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève*, Geneva: Musée d'art et d'histoire, 2016, no. 380 with relevant bibliography.

Theodoros) depicted on one side of the seal, with the Archangel Michael (depicted on the other side)¹². Quite original as a type is the seal under no. 11.11, whose legend unfolds on the background, on either side of the standing holy figures decorating its obverse (Archangel Michael) and reverse (St. Nikolaos). Finally, a number of legends include remarkable words/phrases, such as the epithet *εὐκλεέστατος* (no. 4.9), which is very rarely attested on seals, especially in the superlative, the formula *ἐλέω Θεοῦ* (usually reserved for patriarchs) on the seal of bishop Ioannes (no. 6.75), the expression *μάντρα ἀδελφῶν* in order to denote a monastic community (6.114), or the epithet *ἄγριος*, to signify the humility of a monk, which is an *hapax* (6.123). The reviewer's favourite, however, by far, is the 7th-century seal bearing a lively invocation to the Theotokos in support of the eparch of the City and the Greens (no. 2.67): *Θεοτόκε βοήθει ἐπάρχῳ τῆς πόλεως καὶ Πρασίνοις!*

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the present volume constitutes an extremely important work of reference, not only because of the sheer number (1552) of the seals that it presents, their vast chronological coverage (4th-15th c.), the diversity and rarity of the types, but also – and above all – because of the scientific treatment that all these specimens have received from the editors. In their effort to decipher the legends of these seals, the editors resort quite often to the readings by scholars such as G. Schlumberger, J. Ebersolt or V. Laurent, who were fortunate to study this material in a far better state of preservation¹³. In this respect, the volume under review is a clear appeal to the authorities of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum to invest quickly on the conservation of these tiny but valuable treasures, in order to safeguard for future generations the rich information they convey to the study of the Byzantine civilisation.

OLGA KARAGIORGOU
Academy of Athens
Research Centre for Byzantine
and PostByzantine Art

12. The editors designate as obverse of this seal the side with the portraits of Sts. Georgios and Theodoros, but we would prefer as obverse the side with the Archangel Michael.

13. See some indicative cases under nos. 2.218 (based on what J. Ebersolt read without difficulty 100 years ago); 2.235 (the word “strategos” –today almost effaced– was clearly read by V. Laurent); 3.7 (V. Laurent was able to read the first three lines, today completely effaced); 3.60 (V. Laurent was able to read the inscription on the obverse); 3.67 (based on V. Laurent's reading before World War II); 3.83 (J. Ebersolt and V. Laurent could read the word “Opsikion”); 5.243 (G. Schlumberger had identified the saint on the reverse with St. Nikolaos); 6.52 (the reading relies on what V. Laurent was able to read).

