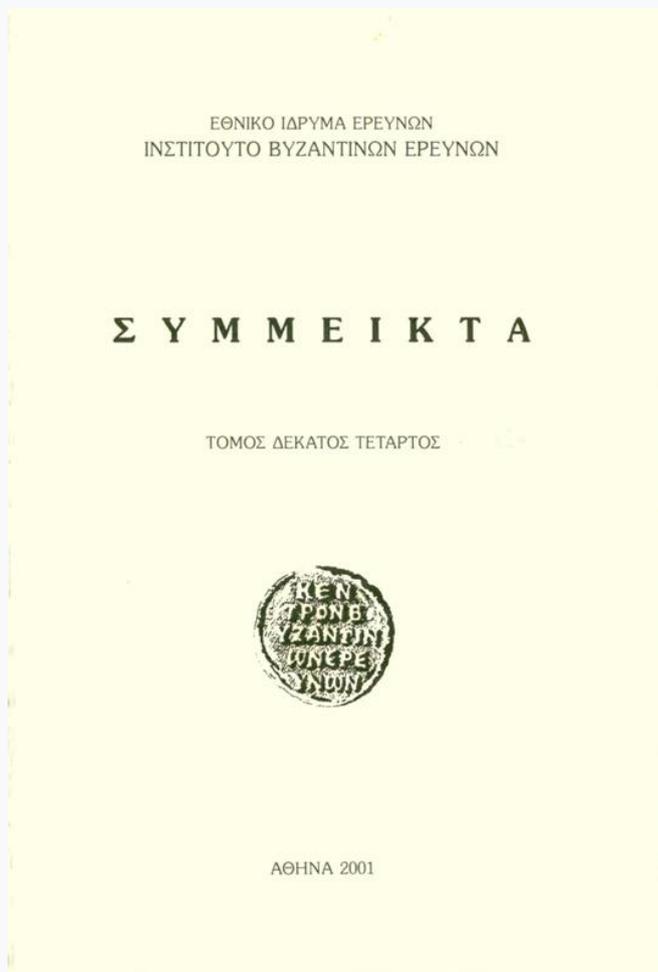


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Some Byzantine State Annuitants: Epi tes (Megales) Hetaireias and Epi ton Barbaron

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NIKOS OIKONOMIDES (†)

SOME BYZANTINE STATE ANNUITANTS:
EPI TES (MEGALES) HETAIREIAS AND EPI TON BARBARON

The purpose of this paper is to comment on a specific group of Byzantine lead seals which, in my opinion, have been misinterpreted, and have been considered as having belonged to heads of the imperial guards or to officials of the foreign service, while in reality they come from a group of wealthy holders of state annuities.

The first group of seals belongs to persons who declare themselves to be ἐπὶ τῆς ἑταιρείας (*e.t.h.*), or, more often, ἐπὶ τῆς μεγάλης ἑταιρείας (*e.t.m.h.*). In the published material one can easily find more than thirty examples.

John *e.t.h.* (X)¹

Meligalanos strator *e.t.h.* (X?)²

Leo imp. spatharios *e.t.h.* (X-XI)³

Nikephoros imp. spatharios *e.t.h.* (IX/X)⁴

Theodore spatharios *t.h.* (X)⁵

Arat... imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.h.* (IX/X)⁶

1. Ioanna KOLTSIDA MAKRE, *Βυζαντινά Μολυβδόβουλλα Συλλογῆς Ορφανίδη-Νικολαΐδη Νομισματικού Μουσείου Αθηνών*, Athens 1996, no. 61.

2. J. EBERSOLT, *Sceaux byzantins du Musée de Constantinople*, Paris 1914 (= *Revue Numismatique* 1914), no. 395 (312). Date proposed by us on the basis of the decoration of the obverse.

3. EBERSOLT, no. 397 (361).

4. G. ZACOS, *Byzantine Lead Seals II*, Berne 1984, no. 255.

5. *BNJ* 17, 1944, 195.

6. W. DE GRAY BIRCH, *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, [London] 1898, no. 17553.

- Nikephoros *e.t.m.h.*(X-XI)⁷
 Demetrios imp. kandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (IX)⁸
 Eustathios imp. strator *e.t.m.h.* (X)⁹
 Basil imp. spatharios *e.t.m.h.* (X/XI)¹⁰
 Constantine imp. spatharios *e.t.m.h.* (X)¹¹
 Staurakios spatharios *e.t.m.h.* (X-XI)¹²
 Theudates imp. spatharios *e.t.m.h.* (IX/X)¹³
 Constantine imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.*(X-XI?)¹⁴
 Constantine imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X/XI)¹⁵
 Christophoros imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.*, hermeneutes of Bulgarian
 (X/XI)¹⁶
 Demetrios imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X/XI)¹⁷
 Elpidios imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (IX/X)¹⁸
 Euphemianos imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X)¹⁹
 Eustathios imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X-XI)²⁰
 Gregorios imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X)²¹
 Gregorios imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X-XI)²²
 John imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (IX)²³
 Kalokyros imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X)²⁴

7. G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Sigillographie de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 1884, 348, no. 1.

8. ZACOS, *Seals II*, no. 136.

9. W. SEIBT, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich*, I, Vienna 1978, no. 90.

10. V. LAURENT, *La collection C. Orghidan*, Paris 1952, no. 25.

11. ZACOS, *Seals II*, no. 126.

12. SCHLUMBERGER, 349, no. 4.

13. J.-Cl. CHEYNET, Cécile MORRISSON, W. SEIBT, *Sceaux byzantins de la collection Henri Seyrig*, Paris 1991, no. 128.

14. EBERSOLT, no. 396 (460). Date proposed by us on the basis of the decoration of the obverse.

15. ZACOS, *Seals II*, no. 128.

16. V. LAURENT, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin II*, Paris 1981, no. 469.

17. I. JORDANOV, *Pecatite ot strategijata v Preslav*, Sofia 1993, no. 62.

18. ZACOS, *Seals II*, no. 139.

19. KOLTSIDA-MAKRE, no. 60.

20. SCHLUMBERGER, 349, no. 6.

21. ZACOS, *Seals II*, no. 924.

22. ZACOS, *Seals II*, no. 160.

23. ZACOS, *Seals II*, no. 929.

24. CHEYNET, MORRISSON, SEIBT, no. 129.

- Michael imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X)²⁵
 Michael imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* and anagrapheus of Paphlagonia (X/XI)²⁶
 Michael imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X-XI)²⁷
 Theodore imp. spatharokandidatos *e.t.m.h.* (X?)²⁸
 Aetios²⁹ imperial protospatharios *e.t.m.h.*, epoptes, strateutes and anagrapheus of the Thrakesion (XI)³⁰
 Basil imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* and protokaravos of the emperor (X/XI)³¹
 John imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (?) (X?)³²
 Leo imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (X)³³
 Manasses imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (X/XI)³⁴
 Niketas imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (X)³⁵
 Pankratios imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.*, kleisourarches of Mesembria (X/XI)³⁶
 Romanos imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (XI)³⁷
 Sisinnios imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (IX)³⁸
 Sisinnios imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (X)³⁹
 Sisinnios imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (X)⁴⁰
 Stephanos imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* and epoptes of Paphlagonia (X)⁴¹

25. ZACOS, *Seals* II, no. 841.

26. ZACOS, *Seals* II, no. 854.

27. SCHLUMBERGER, 348-349, no. 3.

28. EBERSOLT, no. 396 (460). Date proposed by us on the basis of the decoration of the obverse.

29. The name could also be Photios.

30. *ÉO* 32, 1933, 36-37.

31. ZACOS, *Seals* II, p. 185.

32. A. F. VISNJAKOVA, Svincovye pečati vizantijskogo Hersona, *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii* 1, 1939, 127, no. 11. The seal could equally have belonged to a grand *hetaireiarches*.

33. W. SEIBT, Marie-Luise ZARNITZ, *Das byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, Vienna 1997, no. 4.3.9.

34. JORDANOV, no. 63.

35. ZACOS, *Seals* II, no. 940.

36. JORDANOV, no. 281.

37. *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 6, 1999, 134.

38. ZACOS, *Seals* II, no. 888.

39. SEIBT, *Bleisiegel*, no. 91.

40. P. SPECK at al. (ed.), *Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Berlin (West)*, Bonn 1986, no. 151.

41. E. MCGEER, J. NESBITT, N. OIKONOMIDES (eds.), *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, IV, Washington 2000, no. 4.11.7.

Theod[o.] imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* and anagrapheus of the Armeniakoi (X/XI)⁴²

Theodore imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* of Romanos (X)⁴³

Theodore imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (?) (X/XI)⁴⁴

Theognostos imp. protospatharios *e.t.m.h.* (IX/X)⁴⁵

N. imp. protospatharios epi tou Chrysotriklinou and *e.t.m.h.* (X/XI)⁴⁶

John primikerios *e.t.m.h.* (X-XI?)⁴⁷

The above seals are obviously related to the *hetaireia*, the bodyguard of the Byzantine emperor⁴⁸ which is first mentioned in the narrative sources in 813⁴⁹ as a contingent surrounding the emperor during dangerous moments at war; in 823, there are more than one *hetaireiai*, in charge of protecting the imperial palace and the emperor.⁵⁰ Under Basil I we find mention of a *mikros hetaireiarches* Stylianos [Zaoutzes], simultaneously with another *hetaireiarches*, Michael Katoudares, who must have been the *megas hetaireiarches*, commander of the *megale hetaireia*⁵¹. In the late IXth and early Xth c. there were three formations of the *hetaireia*, the great (*megale*), the middle (*mese*), and a third one which is usually called by the name of the foreign soldiers of Turkish descent who comprised it, Pharganoi, Chazaroi, etc. This last group of foreign mercenaries may have made up the *hetaireia* which was under the orders of the *mikros hetaireiarches* in the mid-IXth c. Naturally

42. *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, no. 4.22.4.

43. ZACOS, *Seals II*, no. 307. The editor thinks that the name Romanos refers to the Emperor Romanos I Lakapenos and dates the seal to between 920 and 944; I wonder whether this name at the end is not a family name.

44. Gladys R. DAVIDSON, *The Minor Objects* [Corinth XII], Princeton 1952, no. 2722. The seal could equally have belonged to a grand *hetaireiarches*.

45. SEIBT, *Bleisiegel*, no. 89.

46. JORDANOV, no. 64.

47. EBERSOLT, no. 396 (460). Date proposed on the basis of the iconography.

48. On the *hetaireia*, see the basic information and bibliography put together in N. OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris 1972, 327-328 and in L'organisation, 130, and the article by Patricia KARLIN HAYTER, L'Hétériarque. L'évolution de son rôle de De Cerimoniis au Traité des Offices, *JÖB* 23, 1974, 101-143; see also the comments of the editors of seals mentioned in the previous and the subsequent footnotes.

49. SKYLITZES, ed. THURN, 13, l. 39.

50. SKYLITZES, 38, l. 19.

51. GEORGIOS MONACHOS, Bonn, 846,13. In another text he is called *ἐταρειάρχης* and bodyguard (*σωματοφύλαξ*) of the emperor: E. KURTZ, *Zwei griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano, die Gemahlin Kaisers Leo VI*, in: *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale de S. Petersbourg VIII/2*, 1898, 11, l. 19ff.

enough, the *mese hetaireia* must have been created after the great and the small, because it is only in this way that the name *mese* can be understood⁵². When later, before the time of the Taktikon of Escorial, another *hetaireia* of footsoldiers was created (for the Russian guards?), the nomenclature changed again: the *hetaireiai* were *megale*, *mese*, *trite* and *pezon*. The commander of the *hetaireia* was the *hetaireiarches*, and we know a few seals of this official⁵³.

A number of scholars have regarded the *epi tes hetaireias* as the equivalent of the *hetaireiarches*, while others have made a distinction between them, maintaining that the *hetaireiarches* was at the head while the *epi tes hetaireias* were his subordinates, sometimes judging by the importance of the honorific titles which the *epi tes hetaireias* bear on their seal. W. Seibt⁵⁴ alone has mentioned the possibility that this might reflect a financial arrangement, as has been suggested by Lemerle⁵⁵ and myself⁵⁶, but he did not insist on this point, and followed the tradition of assessing the owners of the seals according to their honorific title.

What is the meaning of the expression ἐπὶ τῆς μεγάλης ἑταιρείας?

1) The meaning that comes first to mind is “the person in charge of a service”. For example, *ho epi tou kanikleiou* is the officer also called *ho chartouarios tou kanikleiou* and is responsible of the imperial inkbottle; *ho epi tes sakelles* is also called *ho chartouarios tes sakelles* and is the head of the imperial treasury; *ho epi ton basilikon*, is the commander of the *basilikoi anthropoi*, and is also called *ho katepano ton basilikon*⁵⁷; and so on and so forth. One must stress that there is not one instance in the sources where an *epi tes hetaireias* is shown as having the command of the imperial bodyguard. This is constantly in the hands of the *hetaireiarches*.

2) The same expression may indicate the person participating in a specific group of officials (e.g., *epi tou Chrysotriklinou* =member of the group of the

52. I cannot by any means accept the theory of KARLIN HAYTER, 117-118, to the effect that the term μικρός was used as an insult for Stylianos Zaoutzes. There is no doubt that at a certain moment, probably at the beginnings of the institution, there was a *megale hetaireia* and another one which could be called *mikra* or something else, but whose commander was called the *mikros hetaireiarches*. Then came another one placed in between, and this was called *mese*.

53. For example, SCHLUMBERGER, *Sigillographie*, 348, no. 2; SEIBT, *Bleisiegel*, no. 88; ZACOS, *Seals* II, no. 88; JORDANOV, *Preslav*, no. 65; *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 3, 1993, 108 and 5 (1998) 70.

54. SEIBT, *Bleisiegel*, 213, note 3.

55. P. LEMERLE, *Roga et rente d'état*, *REB* 25, 1967, 80 ff.

56. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 177, note 170, cf. 298, note 69.

57. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 311, 314-5, 328.

Chrysotriklinos; *epi ton oikeiakon* =member of the *oikeiakoi*⁵⁸; etc.). In fact, the expression *epi tes hetaireias* is used with this meaning in order to indicate the actual soldiers of the imperial bodyguard in the text known as *Peri basilikon taxeidion*, which reflects what was done at the time of Michael III and Basil I (c. 842–886). Here are the main passages:

(a) The campaigning emperor takes with him money to distribute to his guards: τοῖς φυλάσσοις σχολαρίοις εἰς τὴν βασιλικὴν φῖναν (perimeter), τοῖς τε βασιλικοῖς ἀγούροις καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλικῆς ἑταιρείας...⁵⁹ The money that the emperor must carry for the *hetaireia* and the gifts made to the ἐπὶ τῆς ἑταιρείας are also mentioned elsewhere⁶⁰.

(b) In the enumeration of how many pack animals are to be prepared to carry the provisions for each palace service participating in the campaign, we read: διὰ τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς ἑταιρείας ἄνδρας σ', σαγμαρία ρ', παρίππια <..>: διὰ τῶν ρ' ἔθνικῶν τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς ἑταιρείας, σαγμαρία ν', παρίππια ρ'⁶¹. This means that each man had the right to one pack horse and half a mule of provisions⁶².

(c) While camping, 100 *scholarioi* guard the outer perimeter of the camp, while οἱ ἐπὶ τῆς ἑταιρείας κρατοῦσι φῖναν ἔσω μετὰ τοῦ ἑταιριάρχου πλησίον ἔξω τῆς κόρτης, ὅπου εἰσὶ δεδεμένα τὰ σχοινία αὐτῆς⁶³. The men of the *hetaireia* together with the *hetaireiarches* guard the inner perimeter, around the imperial tent, as is repeatedly said⁶⁴, while it is specified that after the beginning of the night watch, no one, not even the ἐπὶ τῆς ἑταιρείας, is allowed to go outside the perimeter without special authorisation⁶⁵.

(d) The ἐπὶ τῆς ἑταιρείας follow immediately after the emperor during the marches⁶⁶.

It is clear that the *epi tes hetaireias* mentioned in the above texts are soldiers of the imperial bodyguard, constantly surrounding the emperor and guaranteeing

58. See N. OIKONOMIDÈS, Pour une nouvelle lecture des inscriptions de Skripou en Béotie, *TM* 12, 1994, 486–489.

59. CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS, *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, ed. J. Haldon, Vienna 1990, 110, l. 264.

60. *Ibid.*, 112, l. 288; 128, l. 537.

61. *Ibid.*, 118, l. 377–379.

62. For the meaning of the words *sagmaria* and *parhippia*, see *ibid.*, p. 185.

63. *Ibid.* 120, l. 423–424.

64. *Ibid.*, 122, l. 429, 441.

65. *Ibid.*, 122, l. 431

66. *Ibid.*, 124, l. 475.

his personal security. They are not heads of services and they are not even nobles, if one reflects that the provisions for one campaign for each one of them could be carried on the back on one horse and half a mule⁶⁷, and that they received from the emperor gratuities, not gifts, as was the case with high-ranking dignitaries. They obviously belong to the rank and file of the bodyguards and they are constantly under the orders of the *hetaireiarches* –an officer who does not always appear in the *taktika* for dignitaries, I suppose because, being busy with the protection of the emperor, he was not among the persons invited to banquets⁶⁸.

Almost all the seals of *epi tes (megales) hetaireias* that we have belong to persons who bear imperial titles related to followers of the emperor, *proeleusimaioi* (προελευσιμαῖοι), i.e. titles initially designating men in the personal service of the emperor (e.g. messengers, grooms, bodyguards)⁶⁹. We have 1 *primikerios* (the only eunuch), 16 *protospatharioi*, 16 *spatharokandidatoi*, 7 *spatharioi*, 2 *stratores* and 1 *kandidatos*. The lowest *proeleusimaioi*, the *mandatores*, are not represented here, and one may wonder to what point this minimal title continued to be used in the IX/X c., at least as an honorific one⁷⁰. But there are also two persons who have no title at all: John *epi tes hetaireias* and Nikephoros *epi tes megales hetaireias*.

67. In the same text it is said, for example, that each attendant of the imperial bedchamber (*koitonites*) was entitled to 2 mules and 2 packhorses, while the head of the imperial *vestiarion* (*protovestiaros*) had 4 mules and 4 pack horses, not to speak of the head of the service providing the horses, the *kornes tou stavlou*, who was entitled to 12 mules and 12 pack horses: *ibid.*, 118, l. 376, 379-380.

68. The absence of the *hetaireiarches* from the *taktikon* Uspenskij (which knows the *protomandatores tes hetaireias*: OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 63, l. 30) and in the Leipzig manuscript of Philotheos and his appearance in the Jerusalem manuscript of the same treatise and in all the later *taktika*, has given rise to some discussion. KARLIN-HAYTER (103 ff) has postulated that his absence from the Leipzig manuscript was due to his being eradicated from the list by Leo VI because one *hetaireiarches*, Pardos, was implicated in a conspiracy. I do not see any reason to change my solution which is based on the idea that the *hetaireiarches* (maybe one *hetaireiarches* for all the *hetaireiai* in the IXth c.) was not invited to the banquet because he was at that time on active service protecting the emperor. When there was a second *hetaireiarches*, the one called *mikros*, who undertook the personal protection of the emperor, the other *hetaireiarches* was invited to the banquets and thus he was added to the *taktika*. But in all this one must keep in mind that these changes are not reflected immediately in the written texts of the lists of precedence and that this delay in updating the lists may explain their resultant inconsistencies.

69. For this distinction, see OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 99, note 57.

70. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 298.

It was long since observed that these seals are very numerous, especially if compared to the few real *hetaireiarchai* that we know from their seals⁷¹. But on the other hand, most of them belong to people of the aristocracy. The *protospatharioi* of the seals were ex officio members of the senate: they bore a title that was often given to thematic *strategoï*. Moreover, some of the owners of the seals had administrative positions which obliged them to be away from the palace, often to serve in far-away provinces: we have three *anagrapheis*, of Thrakesion, of the Armeniakoi, and of Paphlagonia, one *epoptes* in Paphlagonia, one *kleisourarches* in Mesembria and one interpreter of the Bulgarian language and one captain of the emperor's ship. The owners of these seals cannot be the *hetaireiarches*, but they cannot be simple bodyguards of the *hetaireia* either.

What can they be?

It is important to have a look now at a text of the turn of the Xth c., preserved in the Book of Ceremonies under the title "The regulation which existed in the time of Leo the Christ-loving emperor concerning [the amounts] to be paid by those who were going to be honoured with a title or an office"⁷². It describes the system of state annuities combined with honorific titles, studied by P. Lemerle⁷³.

It starts with six holders of honorific titles and with the amounts of money which they were normally to pay in order to obtain a pension corresponding to their rank from the government: they are the imperial *mandator*, 2 litrai [of gold, i.e., 144 nomismata], the imperial *kandidatos*, 3 litrai [of gold, i.e., 216 nomismata], the imperial *strator*, 4 litrai [of gold, i.e., 288 nomismata], the imperial *spatharios*, 5 litrai [of gold, i.e. 360 nomismata], the imperial *spatharokandidatos*, 6 litrai [of gold, i.e., 432 nomismata], and the imperial *protospatharios*, 12 litrai [of gold, i.e., 864 nomismata] and often 18 litrai [i.e., 1296 nomismata]. We have secure information concerning the yearly salaries of the last two, 36 and 72 nomismata, which means that the return which they received from their investment was 4.1% for the *spatharokandidatoi* and 8.33% or 5.55% for the *protospatharioi*.

71. E.g. SEIBT, *Bleisiegel*, 211.

72. CONSTANTINUS PORPHYROGENITUS, *De Cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, Bonn, 692-693.

73. LEMERLE, *Roga et rente d'état*, esp. 80-83. I have also discussed this system in its entirety in: *Title and Income at the Byzantine Court*, in: H. MAGUIRE (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Dumbarton Oaks 1997, 205-206, and again in the *Economic History of Byzantium*, (forthcoming).

A little further on, the text continues:

“Whoever [of the above] wants to become [a member of] the *megale hetaireia* gives 16 litrai [1152 nomismata] if his annuity is up to 40 nomismata (i.e., a return of 3.47% on his investment); but if he wants to have a higher annuity, the price will increase proportionately, i.e., one litra [of payment, i.e., 72 nomismata] for 7 nomismata [of increase in the annuity] (i.e., 9.72% on his investment).

Whoever wants to become [a member of] the middle *hetaireia*, gives 10 litrai [720 nomismata] if his annuity is up to 20 nomismata (i.e., 2.77% on his investment); but if he wants to have more than 20 nomismata of annuity, the price will increase proportionately. Whoever wants to become [a member of] the Chazaroi or the Pharganoi, gives 7 litrai [504 nomismata], in order to have 12 nomismata of annuity (i.e., 2.38% on his investment)”.

The person who acquired an honorific title, especially one of those belonging to the *proleusimaioi* (see *supra*), received a yearly salary representing something like 4-8% of his original investment, an amount which was usually higher than the interest allowed to senators (4%) but lower than the prevailing interest rate for commoners (6 %);⁷⁴ and its regular payment was guaranteed by the state. But this arrangement also involved considerable disadvantages: the salary was for life (a life which, with medieval mortality rates, had a fair chance of not being protracted) and not hereditary, while the initial payment (the capital invested) could never be recuperated. Consequently, from the strictly economic point of view, the enterprise was not attractive; but it was accompanied by social prestige and administrative privileges which were obviously important enough for the citizens to run after the titles (human vanity has always been more important than sheer economics).

The paragraph of the text that we have translated says that a person who was already, say, *protospatharios* or *spatharokandidatos* could also acquire a position in one of the *hetaireiai* by making an initial payment of 16, 10 or 7 litrai of gold in order to receive an annuity representing 3.47, 2.77, or 2.38% of his investment, respectively. This investment was economically even less interesting because of its lower yield; but it opened the way to the acquisition of further salaries at a much higher rate –9.72%, clearly higher than the regular interest. The proposal started to have an economic perspective, but at the same time not only did it presuppose the investment of considerable amounts with a very low return, it also started involving enormous amounts of cash which only very wealthy people could afford. One should remember, for example, that in the Xth century the salary of a

74. *Codex Justinianus* IV, 32, 26; cf. *Basilica* XXIII, 3, 74.

provincial governor, a *strategos*, amounted to something between 40 and 10 pounds of gold yearly, depending upon his province and his anticipated expenses in maintaining his court, while in the XIth c. the salary of the Professor of law in Constantinople was at 4 pounds a year, plus some food and one gift.⁷⁵ Yet the arrangement of the *roga* for the dignitaries was acceptable and even attractive for the Byzantines, to the point where in the XIth c. the relationship between *roga* and investment was brought down to 6 nomismata (of salary) per pound of gold (72 nomismata), reducing thus the return to 8.33% of the initial investment –and yet people still wanted to acquire more dignities⁷⁶.

I believe that the owners of the seals inscribed *epi tes hetaireias* belong to one single and homogeneous group: they were, in my opinion, wealthy Byzantines who acquired a supplementary and economically satisfactory annuity by investing in the state, according to the procedure which we have just described. Their situation also explains why some of them undertook lucrative *anagraphai* in the provinces: this was for them a secure way of becoming even wealthier. There appear to be only two exceptions, John *epi tes hetaireias* and Nikephoros *epi tes megales hetaireias*, who had no honorific title; were they the privileged ones who were for some unknown reason allowed to buy lucrative annuities without investing the initial amount? Or were they simple but fanciful members of the *hetaireia* who, unlike their colleagues, had their own seal made?

In fact, those who obtained a nomination to the *hetaireia* were somehow repeating what had happened from the VIIIth century onwards, when the personal servants and bodyguards of the emperor, i.e. the *proeleusimaioi* (*protospatharioi*, etc.) became in fact holders of honorific titles receiving a salary; with one basic difference though: the titles of the VIIIth/IXth c. had as a main objective to provide social distinction while the inscriptions in the *hetaireia* were economic in character, as there is nothing in the lists of precedence showing that they also guaranteed an improved position in the court hierarchy.

A question arises: why don't we have any seals of the *mese hetaireia*? One must stress first that the abbreviation on the lead is not always clear: the letter *m*, if it is not followed by a *g*, can be interpreted, indiscriminately, as *megales* or *meses*⁷⁷; thus there are some seals where the engraving is not explicit enough. But insufficiently clear inscriptions are not necessarily the explanation. It should be

75. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Title and income*, 203.

76. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Title and income*, 208.

77. Cf. SEIBT, *Bleisiegel*, 211, note 5.

emphasised that the economic advantage that one could draw from the *mese hetaireia* was less interesting, if one thinks that the State, willing to attract as much capital as possible, would be ready to accept the acquisition of unlimited additional *rogai* from the top category of the members of the *hetaireia*, but not necessarily from the lower ones. It is only natural that those who registered at the lowest echelon of the *hetaireia* would not be allowed to acquire unlimited amounts of supplementary *roga*, but would be obliged to pass to the next category if their investment was sufficient to acquire the next title⁷⁸; and it seems to me sure that no one in the lower categories would be allowed to invest more than the 16 pounds required for the *megale hetaireia* without changing category.

To understand this, we take a hypothetical example of a Constantinopolitan dignitary of the Xth century who has 16 pounds of gold to invest in buying a position in the *hetaireia*. Depending upon which *hetaireia* he chooses, he would have the following economic result:

megale: investment 16 p.: revenue 40 nom. per year

mese: investment 10 p.: revenue $20 + (6p.x7n.)42 = 62$ nom. Return 5.38% on total investment.

Pharganoi etc.: investment 7p.: revenue $12 + (9p.x7)63 = 75$ nom. Return 6.51% on total investment, if they were allowed to invest all that money without changing category; otherwise one should count a total investment of less than 10 pounds, i.e., 7p for acquiring the basic salary of $12n + (3x7)21 = 33$ n. Return 4.58% on the total investment.

If the first hypothesis concerning the *Pharganoi*, etc. is valid, it is obvious that investment in them would be the best since it would guarantee a return higher than the interest rate of the commoners (6%); the second hypothesis, which may be more realistic and less economically attractive, had, nevertheless, the advantage that it did not involve enormous amounts of money and still placed the investment above the interest rate of the senators.

In other words, the *megale hetaireia* was interesting for very wealthy people who could increase their *roga* indefinitely; the *mese* was a colourless in-between; the *Pharganoi* etc. needed an initial investment which was relatively smaller, and consequently this group was more accessible to wealthy Constantinopolitans.

78. This is also shown by the fact that the return for the initial investment at every echelon grows with its level: 2.38 for the *Pharganoi* etc., 2.77 for the *mese hetaireia*, and 3.47 for the *megale hetaireia*.

The only problem is that the *Pharganoi*, *Chazaroi*, etc., do not appear on the seals. Or do they? This brings us to the second group of seals which we intend to examine, those bearing the inscription ἐν τῶν βαρβάρων.

The bodyguards we are talking about were mainly of Turkic descent and certainly existed in the IXth century: they are mentioned in the sources in 886 (*Pharganoi*), 894 (*Chazaroi*), 899 (the same plus *Tourkoi* [=Hungarians], Arabs and Franks)⁷⁹. They are also designated as the *ethnikoi* of the *hetaireia*⁸⁰. They seem to be the closest possible bodyguards of the emperor, in that they are constantly mentioned next to him, while the *megale hetaireia* seems to be more in charge of the security of the palace, covering the external perimeter⁸¹. The three *hetaireiai* are mentioned one after the other in ceremonies⁸² and their members sometimes take part in military expeditions⁸³.

There are some texts which have up to now been only partly understood but which become clear if one reads them keeping in mind the financial arrangement described above.

a) In 899 Philotheos describes the banquets which the emperor held during the great festivities of the year. On the Saturday after Easter the emperor invited to the *Chrysotriklinos* 102 guests, of whom 54 were *ethnikoi tes hetaireias*, dressed in their *kabbadion*, their typical dress, a long and large cloak⁸⁴. But during the Christmas festivities, the banquet colourfully named *polytrichon* was held in the room of the nineteen *akkoubitoi*, which could seat 228 people; 216 of them were

79. *Vita Euthymii*, ed. Patricia KARLIN-HAYTER, 8-10; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, Bonn, 358; PHILOTHEOS in OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes*, 177, l. 30 and 209, l. 21.

80. CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS, *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, 118, l. 378; OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes*, 177, l. 29 and 209, l. 20, 24; *De Cerimoniis*, 478.

81. After the opening of the palace gate and in other ceremonies, the men of the *megale* and *mese hetaireia* stand guard at two different points (*De Cerimoniis*, 518-519, 553); cf. the positions of the *hetaireiai* in the X/XIth c. camp (G. DENNIS, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, Washington D.C. 1985, 250, 252 and l. 161; I must stress here that I do not believe that there was ever a *logothete* of the *hetaireia*, the mention in DENNIS, 250, referring to one of the *logothetai* is to be separated from the *epi tes hetaireias* by a comma). That the *hetaireiai* controlled the palace personnel is also clear in a legal text of the early XIth. c., the *Peira* of Eustathios Romaïos, JGR (51,29).

82. *De Cerimoniis*, 576

83. *De Cerimoniis*, 660-661: 41 men of the *megale hetaireia*, 46 men of the *mese*, 45 *Pharganoi* and 47 *Chazaroi* took part in the expedition to Italy in 935.

84. OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes*, 209, l. 20-24; for the meaning of *kabbadin*, see *ibid.*, 178, note 171; see also the recent but not very convincing study of T. DAWSOB, *Kremasmata, kabadion, klibanion: some aspects of middle Byzantine military equipment reconsidered*, *BMGS* 22, 1998, 39-42.

on the occasion *ethnikoi*, i.e., Pharganoi, Chazaroi, Agarenoi, Franks “and those who enjoy and are supported by an annuity thanks to them”; they also wore “their own barbarian dress, what they call *kabbadin*”⁸⁵. Here we have many more people, the actual *ethnikoi* and the dignitaries who receive an annuity together with them. It is interesting to note that these dignitaries also imitate the appearance of the *ethnikoi*.

b) In the Book of Ceremonies there is an interesting text enumerating those who “are not bound to στρατεύεσθαι when there is a call-up”⁸⁶. There is a list of personnel of the palace and of St Sophia who are said to benefit by this privilege, not to be obliged to contribute in money or supplies whenever there was a call-up; it is even added that “if one of the above possessed an old *strateia*, as long as he lives his household should be exempted from the obligation of the *strateia*. On his death the *strateia* should be re-established on his household”. Now, among the categories of people benefiting from this exemption are mentioned the members of the *megale hetaireia*, of the *mese hetaireia* and of the Pharganoi. And there is no doubt that in these categories also the holders of annuities are meant: otherwise one can hardly imagine how a mercenary from Ferghana could possibly have a *stratotikon ktema* in Byzantium together with a family who might cultivate it. This exemption from the *strateia* was initially invented for the Byzantines who served in the *hetaireia*, but automatically became a side benefit for those who acquired nominal participation in this corps of bodyguards.

c) The third text seems rather uncertain. During the festivities of the Broumalia in November, the emperors used to distribute to the holders of titles a large sum in gold coins (*apokombion*) and then a number of *miliaresia* to those who attended the banquet: inter alia, 500 *miliaresia* to the *megale hetaireia*, 200 to the *mese* and 200 to the Pharganoi⁸⁷. It is possible, but not certain, that the dignitaries inscribed to receive annuities from these corps might also have received some of these *miliaresia*, at least those who were invited to the banquet. This would have constituted another side advantage for those who bought such a position.

The above texts provide external confirmation of the fact that the *ethnikoi* also received outside “buyers of roge” of those who had an economic interest in

85. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 177, l. 29 ff.

86. *De Cerimoniis*, 697–698. Cf. the commentary by P. LEMERLE, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*, Galway 1979, 136–137.

87. *De Cerimoniis*, 607.

buying state annuities. But still we have no seals bearing this name, seals that would confirm that this practice was widespread.

I think that these seals must be sought under a different appellation, those bearing the title ἐπὶ τῶν βαρβάρων. This hypothesis needs explanation.

There are two late IXth c. texts which mention an official named βάρβαρος. In the *Peri basilikon taxeidion* the *barbaros* is mentioned among the high officials (*strategoï, domestikoï, logothetes* and some of their subordinates), who were obliged to offer one mule for the imperial train of baggage⁸⁸. This gives an idea of the level at which this official should be sought. Then comes Philotheos, who describes the participation of the low-ranking palace personnel (tailors, goldsmiths, etc.) in palace processions and informs us that these were to receive a gratuity from the *barbaros*⁸⁹ –in other words, the *barbaros* of the IXth c. must be sought among the palace personnel.

There are two more texts: a) We hear of a house in Constantinople named the “house of the *barbaros*”, which in the first third of the Xth century was given as a residence to Armenian princes when they visited the Byzantine capital; later this house was inhabited by Basil the *parakoimomenos* –undoubtedly it was a very important house, which might have been identical with the house of Aspar⁹⁰. b) We also hear, in the middle of the Xth century, of a pious man called Constantine and surnamed ὁ Βάρβαρος or ὁ ἀπὸ βαρβάρων who offered hospitality to St Basil the Younger in Constantinople in his house situated in the Arkadianai, close to the church of St Irene⁹¹. They do not advance our knowledge on the topic which interests us.

In his remarkable commentary on the *De Cerimoniis*, I. Reiske pointed out that many military officers were named with an abridged name (e.g., *ho hikanatos* instead of *ho domestikos ton hikanaton, ho exkoubitos*, etc.) and proposed the hypothesis that the *barbaros* should be the *praefectus barbarorum sive hetaireiae*⁹². Later, when faced with the seals of *epi ton barbaron* and their curious decoration,

88. CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS, *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, 100, l. 98.

89. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 133, l. 11.

90. CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. MORAVCSIK and R. J. H. JENKINS, Washington D.C. 1967, ch. 43, l. 67 ff.; cf. *Scriptores originum constantinopolitanarum*, ed. Th. PREGER, II, Leipzig 1907, 188 and R. JANIN, *Constantinople byzantine*, Paris 1964, 318.

91. AASS Martii III, 669F ff., cf. p. 29c, 38. The name Βάρβαρος is also attested on a seal, see *infra*, footnote 99.

92. *De Cerimoniis*, II, 860. I have already expressed my agreement with this hypothesis in OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 328, note 237.

Mordmann and Schlumberger thought first of military leaders of the foreign mercenaries, while Sorlin-Dorigny insisted on the “civilian” character of the seals and proposed a first rapprochement with the *scrinium barbarorum*⁹³. Reiske’s hypothesis was rejected by Bury, who preferred to see here the survival of the *scrinium barbarorum*, which, according to Bury, would have “exercised supervision over all foreigners visiting Constantinople”⁹⁴. Bury’s hypothesis has been slavishly followed by Guiland⁹⁵ and Haldon⁹⁶, in spite of the fact that other scholars, such as Pančenko, returned to the hypothesis of Mordtmann because of the decoration of the seals⁹⁷. But a much more important difficulty for Bury’s theory is that an office like the *scrinium barbarorum* is not mentioned in Philotheos; bringing into this discussion as an argument the seals of *epi ton barbaron* is very inadequate, because the mere existence of the seals does not by any means support the idea that the VIth century *scrinium barbarorum* (the exact function of which is not known anyway) had survived in the office of the *logothesion of the genikon*. After all, Philotheos enumerates in detail all the personnel of the *genikon* without mentioning the *scrinium barbarorum* or any other similar office⁹⁸.

Most of the seals of *epi ton barbaron* are now republished in Laurent, *Corpus II*, who repeats the theory of Bury-Guiland⁹⁹. His list can be supplemented now thanks to some recent publications. In the list that follows, the seals are arranged respecting the order which Laurent has adopted; reference, inscription (*e.t.b.* = *epi ton barbaron*), date and decoration of the obverse:

93. *Sigillographie*, 447-456.

94. J. B. BURY, *The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century*, London 1911, 93.

95. R. GUILLAND, *Les logothètes*, *REB* 29, 1971, 37, cf. 40-41 (confusion with the *chartoularioi tou dromou*); R. GUILLAND, *Le chartulaire et le grand chartulaire*, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 9, 1971, 418.

96. CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS, *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, 192-193

97. B. A. PANČENKO, *Katalog molivdovulov* (offprint from the *Izvestija Russ. Arheol. Instituta v Konstantinopole* 1903, 1904, 1908), nos. 173, 469. N. LIHAČEV discussed the whole problem and reserved his judgement: he only stated clearly that in his opinion all these seals with the curious decoration are “in one way or the other related to foreigners” (N. LIHAČEV, *Molivdovuly grečeskogo vostoka*, Moscow 1991, 285).

98. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 117, l. 10-18.

99. Cf. the seals published by Laurent; we shall omit here the XIth (and not Xth) c. specimen (DO 58.106.4124) of Nikephoros *protospatharios epi tou Chrysotriklinou* and *epi ton agelon ho Barbaros*, which Laurent included as no. 528 because of misreadings.

- Corp. 493¹⁰⁰: Leo chartouarios + *e.t.b.* (early IX) -Cr. mon.
 Corp. 495¹⁰¹: Leo chartouarios + *e.t.b.* (early IX) -Cr. mon.
 Corp. 494¹⁰²: Leo gerokomos + *e.t.b.* (early IX) -Cr. mon.
 Corp. 492: Eustratios imp. silentarios + *e.t.b.* (early IX) -Cr. mon.
 Corp. 496: Christophoros imp. spatharokandidatos + *e.t.b.* (late IX) -Bird
 Corp. 497: Christophoros imp. spatharokandidatos + *e.t.b.* (late IX) -Cross
 Corp. 498: Christophoros imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (late IX) -Christ bust
 Corp. 499: Nikephoros spatharokandidatos + *e.t.b.* (IX/X) -Profile bust
 Elias imp. kandidatos [+*e.t.b.*] -assumption of Elijah and Griffin¹⁰³
 Corp. 500: Michael imp. spatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Lion
 Corp. 501: Michael imp. spatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Patriarchal cross
 Corp. 502: Michael imp. spatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Bust of Virgin w. Child
 Corp. 503: Michael imp. spatharokandidatos + *e.t.b.* (X) -Eagle
 Corp. 504: Michael imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Dragon
 Corp. 505: Michael imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Profile bust
 Corp. 506: Michael imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Greek cross
 Corp. 507: Apelates? imp. protospatharios Chrysotriklinou + *e.t.b.* (X) -St.

standing

- Corp. 509: Nicholas imp. spatharokandidatos + *e.t.b.* (X) -Lion
 Corp. 508: Nicholas imp. protospatharios Chrysotriklinou + *e.t.b.* (X) -Lion
 Corp. 510: Demetrios imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Cross
 Corp. 511: Constantine imp. spatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Rosace
 Corp. 512¹⁰⁴: Constantine imp. spatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Bust brandishing club
 Corp. 513: Constantine imp. spatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Eagle
 Corp. 514: Constantine imp. spatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Griffin
 Corp. 515: Constantine imp. spatharokandidatos + *e.t.b.* (X) -Bust of a

barbarian

- Corp. 516: Constantine imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Eagle
 Corp. 517: Constantine imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Cross on steps

100. Cf. also G. ZACOS and A. VEGLERY, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, Basel 1972, no. 2098.

101. Cf. also ZACOS-VEGLERY, no. 2107.

102. Cf. also ZACOS-VEGLERY, no. 2107.

103. G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Mélanges d'archéologie byzantine*, Paris 1895, 259-260. The words *epi ton barbaron* are not legible on the seal but have been postulated by Schlumberger, rightly I think, because of the particular decoration of this piece.

104. See also LIHAČEV, *Molivdovuly*, 280 (LXXX, 8)

- ZV 3003/a: Peter hypatos and *e.t.b.* (IX/X) -bust+bust
 ZV 3003b: Peter hypatos and *e.t.b.* (IX/X) -monogram.+ bust
 ZV 1364: Peter imp. spatharios, gerokomos + *e.t.b.* (IX/X) -Cross on steps
 Corp. 518: Peter imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Bust in profile
 Corp. 519¹⁰⁵: Peter imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Three busts; central w.
 club
 Corp. 520¹⁰⁶: Peter imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -monogram
 Corp. 521: Peter imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -4 busts
 Corp. 522: Stavrakios imp. protospatharios + *e.t.b.* (X) -Wolf with bird
 Corp. 523: Stavrakios imp. protospatharios oikeiakos + *e.t.b.* (X) -Christ +
 Apostle?
 Corp. 524: Stavrakios imp. protospatharios oikeiakos + *e.t.b.* (X) -Christ +
 Apostle?
 Corp. 525: Stavrakios imp. protospatharios oikeiakos + *e.t.b.* (X) -Eagle
 Corp. 526: Stavrakios imp. protospatharios oikeiakos + *e.t.b.* (X) -Griffin
 Corp. 527¹⁰⁷: Stavrakios imp. protospatharios oikeiakos + *e.t.b.* (X) -Profile
 bust
 Lih.¹⁰⁸: Theodore Lautokomites imp. protosp. Chrysotrikl. + *e.t.b.* (X) -St
 Theodore

This material calls for some basic remarks.

a) The date: we have no seals which could be dated with certainty to the second half of the Xth century. It is characteristic that no seals of *epi ton barbaron* are to be found in Preslav (the material of which starts with the year 971), or in Zacos, *Seals II*, or in the Seyrig collection, most of the material of which comes from Syria, from places which Byzantium conquered after the middle of the Xth century. It is also characteristic that only one of the owners mentions his family name.

b) The names. All the names which appear on our seals are common among the grecophone leading class of Byzantium; and there are no names that would indicate a "barbaric" origin. The single family name sounds equally Byzantine.

c) The titles. The earliest seals which we have, those of Leo (493-495), belonged to a state official with financial responsibilities. All the others belong to

105. See also LIHAČEV, *Molivdovuly*, 278-280 (LXXX, 7).

106. See also ZACOS-VEGLERY, no. 2306 (IX/X c.).

107. See also LIHAČEV, *Molivdovuly*, 280-285 (LXXX, 9 and 10).

108. LIHAČEV, *Molivdovuly*, 94-95 (LXII, 9).

dignitaries, mostly to dignitaries *proeleusimaioi*¹⁰⁹, i.e., *spatharioi*, *spatharokandidatoi*, *protospatharioi*, similar to the dignitaries we mentioned above as having bought their annuities from the *megale hetaireia*.

(d) The variety. We have several specimens with the same name and the same titles but with considerable variety in the decoration. This appears to be in contradiction with the basic attitude of the Byzantines, who tended to reproduce as much as possible the same or a very similar seal in order to make sure that their correspondents would recognise it when receiving their letters¹¹⁰. The identity of the monograms of the three specimens of Leo (*Corpus*, 493–495) show that it must have been the same person. The same can be said of the two seals of Nicholas with the lion (*Corpus*, 508, 509) and of the two seals of Constantine with the eagle (513, 516). But there is no reason for saying that the three Christophoroi that we have (496–498) were all one and the same person. This cannot be said either of the seven Constantines (511–517) or of the seven Peters (ZV 3003–C 520)¹¹¹ or for the six Stavrakioi (522–527). But it is possible that we have here persons possessing (at least?) two *boulloteria*, one with secular and one with Christian decoration.

e) The decoration. All scholars have commented on the surprising decoration of this group of seals. While a few specimens have some christian decoration usual for the period (cruciform monograms, crosses, holy images), most of them bear explicitly secular, even pagan, motifs: eagles, lions, griffins, dragons; or then depictions of laymen, often in profile (i.e., copied from ancient gems) or facing and holding rudimentary weapons or sceptres, and obviously pretending to be portraits of barbarians. In one case, the word “barbarian” is also inscribed next to the image (515).

I take these men are Byzantine dignitaries who bought supplementary annuities from the *ethnikoi* of the *hetaireia*, commonly called *barbaroi*, and show it on their seals by adopting, on some of them, decorations that would fit barbarians –in the same humorous way as they used to wear the *kabbadin*, the *ethnikon schema*, in the palace ceremonies¹¹². They are attested during most of the

109. There are two exceptions: the silentarios Eustratios, who held a very low rank in the hierarchy (OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes*, 296) and dates from the first half of the IXth c.; and the hypatos Peter, who most probably would later become spatharios.

110. N. OIKONOMIDES, *The Usual Lead Seal*, *DOP* 37, 1983, 147–157.

111. ZACOS-VEGLERY, no. 2306, tend to identify all the Peters.

112. PHILOTHEOS, in OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes*, 177–178.

IXth and the first half of the Xth c., exactly the period of which the texts concerning the annuities speak and during which the term *barbaros* is attested in the sources. Their disappearance before their colleagues inscribed in the *megale hetaireia* may be explained by the fact that their annuities were less advantageous than those of the *megale hetaireia*. Also, the separate *hetaireia* of the barbarians may have now disappeared and been replaced by the *trite hetaireia*, which appears in the taktikon of Escorial (971-975)¹¹³.

113. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes*, 271, l. 23

Νίκος ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, Βυζαντινοί αξιωματούχοι με κρατικό επίσης εισόδημα: *ἐπὶ τῆς (μεγάλης) ἑταιρείας* και *ἐπὶ τῶν βαρβάρων*

Στη μελέτη εξετάζονται δύο σειρές μολυβδόβουλλων, οι ιδιοκτίτες των οποίων παράλληλα προς τα λοιπά τους αξιώματα φέρονται είτε να ανήκουν στην *(μεγάλη) ἑταιρεία* είτε ως *ἐπὶ τῶν βαρβάρων*. Η ανάλυση των τίτλων και η διασταύρωση με τις πληροφορίες από αφηγηματικές πηγές, όπως το *Περὶ βασιλείου τάξεως* και από το *Περὶ τῶν βασιλικῶν ταξιδίων* αποδεικνύει ότι και στις δύο περιπτώσεις οι τίτλοι *ἐπὶ τῆς (μεγάλης) ἑταιρείας* και *ἐπὶ τῶν βαρβάρων* δεν δηλώνουν λειτούργημα, αλλά ψιλὸ αξίωμα. Επιπλέον, από τη διασταύρωση των μαρτυριῶν συμπεραίνεται ότι οι δύο τίτλοι ανήκουν σε διαφορετικές διαβαθμίσεις της ίδιας κατηγορίας αξιωμάτων. Η απόκτηση αυτῶν των αξιωμάτων, που συνοδευόταν από επίσης ρόγα, προϋπέθετε την αρχική «αγορά» τους, την επένδυση δηλαδή ενός αρχικού κεφαλαίου, κλιμακούμενου ανάλογα με τον τίτλο. Η απόδοση, ωστόσο, των κεφαλαίων ήταν σχετικά χαμηλή, γεγονός που υποδεικνύει ότι η αγορά τίτλων απέβλεπε αφενός σε κοινωνική καταξίωση και αφετέρου στην δυνατότητα συμπληρωματικῶν εισοδημάτων από άλλες πηγές.