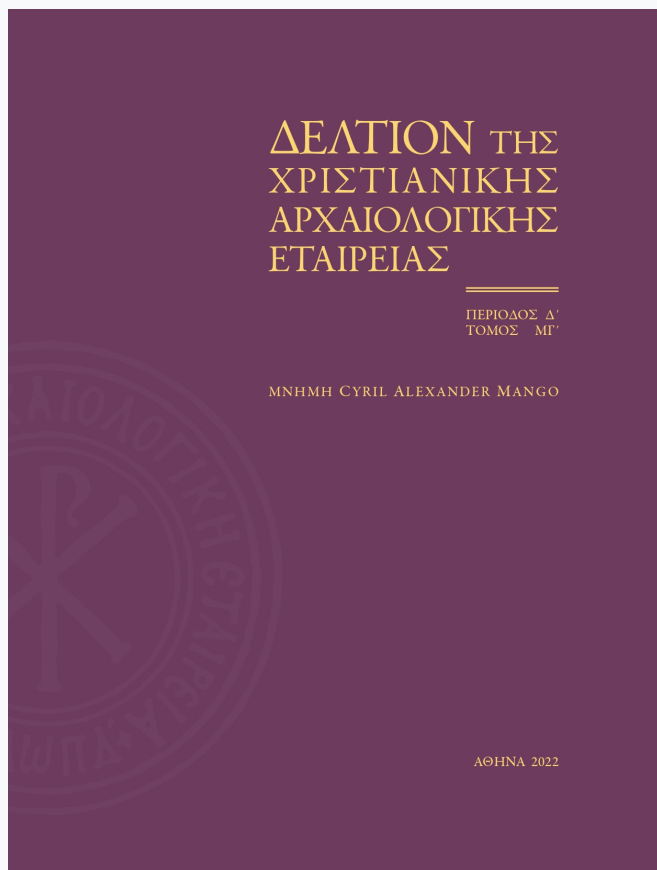


## Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας

Τόμ. 43 (2022)

Δελτίον ΧΑΕ 43 (2022), Περίοδος Δ'



Ο στρατηγός Λέων Χιτζιλάκης της επιγραφής από το θαλάσσιο τείχος της Θεσσαλονίκης. Μια ιδιαίζουσα περίπτωση στρατιωτικής χορηγίας και προσωπογραφίας

*Nektarios ZARRAS (Νεκτάριος ΖΑΡΡΑΣ)*

doi: [10.12681/dchae.34388](https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.34388)

### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

ZARRAS (Νεκτάριος ΖΑΡΡΑΣ) Ν. (2023). Ο στρατηγός Λέων Χιτζιλάκης της επιγραφής από το θαλάσσιο τείχος της Θεσσαλονίκης. Μια ιδιαίζουσα περίπτωση στρατιωτικής χορηγίας και προσωπογραφίας. *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας*, 43, 255–264. <https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.34388>

Nektarios Zarras

## STRATEGOS LEON CHITZILAKES OF THE INSCRIPTION FROM THE SEAWALLS OF THESSALONIKI. AN UNUSUAL CASE OF MILITARY PATRONAGE AND PROSOPOGRAPHY

Η επιγραφή από το θαλάσσιο τείχος της Θεσσαλονίκης, που αναφέρει μεταξύ άλλων ιστορικών προσώπων τον στρατηγό Λέοντα Χιτζιλάκη, τεκμηριώνει αρχαιολογικά την ιστορική διήγηση του Ιωάννη Καμινιάτη για την άλωση της πόλης από τους Σαρακηνούς το 904. Ο Καμινιάτης αναφέρεται στην επιδιόρθωση του τείχους και με ακρίβεια καθορίζει την κτητορική δραστηριότητα του Χιτζιλάκη στα αμυντικά έργα της πόλης. Η σπάνια αυτή ταύτιση ιστορικής πηγής και επιγραφικής μαρτυρίας συμβάλλει στην ερμηνεία του ρόλου των στρατιωτικών αξιωματούχων σε παρόμοια έργα. Η παρούσα μελέτη προσφέρει επίσης νέα στοιχεία για την ακριβέστερη χρονολόγηση της επιγραφής και συμπληρώνει την ελλιπή προσωπογραφία του στρατηγού Χιτζιλάκη.

*The inscription from the seawalls of Thessaloniki which mentions the general Leon Chitzilakes, documents archaeologically the historical sources and especially Ioannes Kaminiates, who gives a revealing testimony for the ktetoric activity of the strategos with respect to the defensive works in the city before the attack by the Saracens in 904. This rare interaction between historical text and epigraphical material contributes to defining the role of military officials in financing the construction of defensive works through their fiscal authority. Additionally, the paper offers new data on Leon's origins, creating an interesting prosopographical image of a military official.*

### Λέξεις κλειδιά

10ος αιώνας, τείχη Θεσσαλονίκης, κτητορικές επιγραφές, στρατιωτική χορηγία, στρατηγός Λέων Χιτζιλάκης, συγγραφέας Ιωάννης Καμινιάτης.

### Keywords

10th century; walls of Thessaloniki; dedicatory inscriptions; military patronage; general Leon Chitzilakes; writer Ioannes Kaminiates.

The utilization of historical sources and archaeological remains associated with them for the interpretation of donor inscriptions is, as Cyril Mango demonstrated with his valuable work, the ideal research method, which, contributes to the deeper understanding of the function of patronage. In the present paper we use the historical testimony of Ioannes Kaminiates relating to the Saracen attack on Thessaloniki in 904, as basic source for interpreting one of the most significant inscriptions for military patronage in that city in the middle Byzantine

period. This is the marble lintel, which is exhibited in the city's Museum of Byzantine Culture, broken in two pieces and measuring 3.15×0.84×0.27m<sup>1</sup>. On the basis of historical data, the inscription is dated to 904 and carries the following two-line inscription (Fig. 1):

\* Dr Nektarios Zarras, University of the Aegean, zarras@aegean.gr

\*\* The paper was presented in the 40th Symposium of the ChAE (Athens, 2021), 69-70. I thank Dr Konstantinos Takirtakoglou for his help with the Armenian bibliography and Alexandra Dumas for editing the English text.

<sup>1</sup> The inscription was found by chance in 1874 and was saved thanks to the tireless efforts of the scholar Petros Papageorgiou, who recorded inscriptions and architectural members in order to save them from destruction. See P. N. Papageorgiou, "Zur Vita der Heilige Theodora von Thessalonike", *BZ* 10 (1901), 151-152. On the seawalls of Thessaloniki see indicatively, M. Vickers, "The Byzantine Sea Walls of Thessaloniki", *Balkan Studies* 11 (1970), 261-280. Ch. Bakirtzis, "Η θαλάσσια όχύρωση της Θεσσαλονίκης", *Byzantina* 7 (1975), 289-341 and 461-495. G. Theocharides, "Review of Ch. Bakirtzis, "Η θαλάσσια όχύρωση της Θεσσαλονίκης",



Fig. 1. Thessaloniki, Museum of Byzantine Culture. Marble lintel from the seawalls of the city (BE 11AB 1), 904.

ANEKEN(IC)ΘΗ ΕΠΙ ΛΕΟΝ(ΤΟC) Κ(ΑΙ) ΑΛΕΞΑΝ-  
ΔΡΟΥ ΤΩ(Ν) ΑΥΤΑΔΕΛΦΩ(Ν) Κ(ΑΙ) ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟ-  
Ρ(ΩΝ) Κ(ΑΙ) [ΦΙΛ]ΟΧΡΙCΤΩ(Ν) [Η]Μ[Ω]Ν ΒΑCΙ-  
ΛΕ(ΩΝ) Κ(ΑΙ) Ε[ΠΙ] ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΥ ΤΟΥ Ο[Υ]ΚΟΥΜΕ-  
ΝΙΚΟΥ ΗΜΩΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΟΥ /

[ANEK]ENIC(ΘΗ) ΕΠΙ ΛΕΟΝΤ(ΟC) ΒΑC(Ι)Λ(ΙΚΟΥ)  
Π(ΡΩΤΟ)C ΠΑ(ΘΑΡΙΟΥ) Κ(ΑΙ) CΤΡΑΤΙΓΩ ΘΕCΑ-  
Λ(ΟΝΙΚΗC) ΤΟΥ ΧΙΤΖΙΛΑΚΗ Κ(ΑΙ) ΕΠΙ ΙΩΑΝ-  
[ΝΟΥ][ΑΡΧΙΕΠ]ΙCΚΟΠ(ΟΥ) ΘΕCΑΛΟΝΙΚΗC ΤΟΥ  
ΕΝΤΟΠΙΟΥ<sup>2</sup>.

*It was renovated in the reign of Leon and Alexander,  
brothers and emperors and our Christ-loving kings and  
in the time of Nikolaos the ecumenical patriarch /*

*It was renovated in the time of Leon Chitzilakes the basi-  
likos protospatharios and strategos of Thessaloniki and  
Nikolaos the archbishop of Thessaloniki, the entopios.*

*Byzantina* 7, 289-341, 461-495”, *Makedonika* 15 (1975), 371-395.  
A. Kazhdan, “Some Questions Addressed to the Scholars Who Be-  
lieve in the Authenticity of Kamenites’ ‘Capture of Thessalonica’”,  
*BZ* 71 (1978), 301-314. J.-M. Spieser, “Note sur le rempart mari-  
time de Thessalonique”, *TM* 8 (1981), 477-485. G. Velenis, *Τα τεύ-  
χη της Θεσσαλονίκης από τον Κάσσανδρο έως τον Ηράκλειο*,  
Thessaloniki 1991, 82, 101. M. Tsibidou-Auloniti – H. Lykidou,  
“Θεσσαλονίκης ίχνη. Η περίπτωση της ‘Στοάς Hirsch’”, *AEMΘ*  
22 (2008), 281-288, esp. 284 ff. A. Hadjiioanidis – A. Dalaveras  
– A. Petratos, “Σωστική ανασκαφή σε οικόπεδο στην οδό Καλα-  
ποθάκη 5”, *AEMΘ* 25 (2011), 339-352.

<sup>2</sup> On the inscription, see mainly Papageorgiou, “Heilige Theodora”, op.cit. (n. 1), 151-158. O. Tafrahi, *Topographie de Thessalonique*, Paris 1913, 42-43. J.-M. Spieser, “Inventaires en vue d’un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. I. Les Inscriptions de Thessalonique”, *TM* 5 (1973), 162, no. 12, pl. III.5, 6. E. A. Ivison, “Urban Renewal and Imperial Revival in Byzantium (730-1025)”, *ByzF* 26 (2000), 13. P. Kampanis – A. Tsilipakou (eds), *Ex Thessalonica Lux* (exhibition catalogue: *Museum of Byzantine Culture January 31-May 4, 2014*), Thessaloniki 2014, 64.

The inscription was on the north fortification wall of the Byzantine harbour of the city and was most probably incorporated above the central gate, as indicated first of all by its dimensions, the incision traces and the holes of the lintel<sup>3</sup>. The proposed position of the inscription is reinforced also by its text, which publicized the official state declaration concerning the repair of the fortification wall both to military men and to citizens<sup>4</sup>. This intervention in the seawall is carried out at a critical moment for Thessaloniki, which is related to the attack by Saracens<sup>5</sup>. Historians not only record this crucial episode, which imposed the repair of the fortification wall, but also offer valuable information and details about the anxious efforts of the state official responsible for Thessaloniki, General Leon Chitzilakes<sup>6</sup>. By concentrating on interpreting the data of the inscription, which are related directly to the work and personality of Chitzilakes, as he is presented by Kaminiates, the aims of this paper are: (a) to draw information about the exact role and contribution of military officials to constructing defensive works; (b) to elicit data for the prosopographical study of Leon; and (c) to assess the importance of military patronage in the middle Byzantine period, an issue which, in contrast to the contribution of officials

<sup>3</sup> Papageorgiou, “Heilige Theodora”, op.cit. (n. 1), 152-153.

<sup>4</sup> J. Crow, “Fortifications and the Late Roman East: From Urban Walls to Long Walls”, A. Sarantis – N. Christie (eds), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives* (Late Antique Archaeology 8), 2, Leiden – Boston 2013, 395-432, esp. 423.

<sup>5</sup> Basic historical source for the Saracen attack on Thessaloniki is the work by Ioannis Kaminiatae, *De expugnatione Thessalonicae*, ed. G. Böhlig (CFHB 4), Berlin – New York 1973.

<sup>6</sup> In the historical sources the surname is encountered also as Chatzilakios or Chatzilikios, while in *Theophanes Continuatus* he is mentioned as *Katzilakios*. These variations of Leon’s surname are possibly justified by the fact that it is a Hellenized version of it. On *Strategos* Leon Chitzilakes, see *PmbZ*, 4, no. 24398.



Fig. 2. Thessaloniki, Museum of Byzantine Culture. Marble lintel from the seawalls of the city (BE 11AB 1), part of the inscription with the names of the emperors (detail of the Fig. 1).



Fig. 3. Thessaloniki, Museum of Byzantine Culture. Marble lintel from the seawalls of the city (BE 11AB 1), part of the inscription with the name of strategos Leon Chitzilakes (detail of the Fig. 1).

to religious patronage, is a desideratum of research, as pointed out by James Crow<sup>7</sup>.

The chronological and historical data of the inscription begin with the usual reference to the emperors<sup>8</sup>, while mention is made also of the Patriarch of Constantinople, figures who define the more general timeframe (Fig. 2). In the second line, the dating of the inscription becomes much more specific, as we shall see, due to the reference to *Strategos* Chitzilakes, but also to the Archbishop of Thessaloniki (Fig. 3). During the reign of Leon VI (886-912) and of his brother Alexander (912-913)<sup>9</sup>, with exception the year after 912, when Leon died, Patriarch of Constantinople was Nikolaos Mystikos<sup>10</sup>. The

dating of the inscription to 904, which has prevailed in research, is due to the historical persons and events which are associated with the General Leon Chitzilakes, who, according to Ioannes Kaminiates, assumed responsibility for the defence of Thessaloniki after the departure of the *protospatharios* Petronas and before the attack by Leon Tripolites<sup>11</sup>. The mention of the name of Archbishop Ioannes the *entopios* also accords with the specific dating of the inscription<sup>12</sup>. The head of the Church of Thessaloniki is named Ioannes in the episcopal lists until 905, when he was succeeded by Plotinos<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> See Crow, "Fortifications", op.cit. (n. 4), 397-432, esp. 423-424.

<sup>8</sup> The relationship of the emperors Leon and Alexander is stressed by the word *ἀνταδελφῶν* (true brothers), which is encountered rarely in inscriptions. See A. Rhoby *Epigramme auf Stein. Nebst Addenda zu den Bänden 1 und 2*, Vienna 2014, 708-710.

<sup>9</sup> The Emperor Alexander together with his brother Leon and their father Basil I, they are mentioned in the well-known inscription from Mesembria. On the inscription, see mainly V. Beševliev, *Spätgriechische und spätleitinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien*, Berlin 1964, no. 157, 105-107. N. Oikonomides, "Mesembria in the Ninth Century: Epigraphical Evidence", *Byzantine Studies* 8, 11-12 (1981, 1984 & 1985), 269-273. Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, op.cit. (n. 8), 116-118.

<sup>10</sup> One of the rare references to Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos is in

the inscription from Galakrenai [I. Ševčenko, "An Early Tenth Century Inscription from Galakrenai with Echoes from Nonnos and the Palatine Anthology", *DOP* 41 (1987), 461-468. See also *PmbZ*, 5, 88-89]. On the Patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos, see *PmbZ*, 5, no. 25885.

<sup>11</sup> General Chitzilakes was dispatched by Emperor Leon VI to undertake the city's defence [Ioannis Kaminiatae, *De expugnatione*, op.cit. (n. 5), 16. 58.17, 17. 94.18]. In addition to Kaminiates, the efforts by Leon Chitzilakes to improve the defense of Thessaloniki are referred to by other historians: Theophanes Continuatus, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1825, 368.3-4. Georgius Cedrenus, *Historiarum Compendium*, II, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB), Bonn 1839, 262.18-19. Georgios Monachos Continuatus, *Vitae Imperatorum Recentiorum*, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB), Bonn 1838, 863.6-7.

<sup>12</sup> On the Archbishop of Thessaloniki Ioannes, see *PmbZ*, 3, no. 22905.

<sup>13</sup> It has been argued that the epithet *entopios* is used in order to distinguish the Ioannes in the inscription from the previous

The inscription on the lintel is a rare testimony for middle Byzantine Thessaloniki because it documents archaeologically historical sources about the attack by the Saracens (904), with its tragic consequences for the city. Of special interest and particularly for the personality of Leon Chitzilakes is the second line of the inscription, where he is recorded as *basilikos protospatharios kai strategos*<sup>14</sup>. Research has shown that the surname Chitzilakes is a Hellenized version of the Armenian word *hitzilak* (հիժւլակ), which means horseman<sup>15</sup>. In all probability, Leon was a member of a family of Armenian cavalrymen who were employed in the Byzantine army, due to their special abilities in horsemanship<sup>16</sup>. It is known that the Armenian military aristocracy included many officials who fought as cavalrymen<sup>17</sup>. On the basis of these data we can interpret Kaminiates' interesting information that Leon's fall from his horse not only caused him serious injury but also blackened his public image<sup>18</sup>.

---

archbishop who had the same name and was on the throne at least until 892-893, according to the testimony of the Synodikon. It is not certain to which of the two a lead seal of this period, with the inscription *Ἰωάννη ἀρχιεπισκόπῳ Θεσσαλονίκης*, should be attributed. See E. Chatziantoniou, *Η Μητρόπολη Θεσσαλονίκης από τα μέσα του 8ου αι. έως το 1430. Ιεραρχική τάξη, εκκλησιαστική περιφέρεια, διοικητική οργάνωση* (Βυζαντινά Κείμενα και Μελέται 42), Thessaloniki 2007, 286-287. V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, V.1, Paris 1963, n. 452. See also, *PmbZ*, 3, no. 22905.

<sup>14</sup> See L. Maksimović – B. Krsmanović, “Das Siegel des Ioannes Protospatharios und Strategos”, Ch. Stavrakos – A.-K. Wassiliou – M. K. Krikorian (eds), *Hypermachos, Festschrift für Werner Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden 2008, 243-247, with numerous examples and bibliography.

<sup>15</sup> R. M. Bebrobian, *New Dictionary Armenian – English*, Venice 1875-79, 399. The entry, which in transliteration is rendered as *hétzéal*, is translated as mounted, horseman, rider, horse-soldier. The word is used in this sense by Matthew of Edessa (A. E. Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades Tenth to Twelfth Centuries. The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, Lanham – New York – London 1993, 44). I thank Dr K. Takirtakoglou for this reference.

<sup>16</sup> Also referred to in research are the special bowmen, a corps of Armenian horse-archers. See G. Dedeyan, “Les cavaliers arméniens: du cataphractaire au chevalier”, *Histoire et Défense* 18.2 (1988), 15-46. K. Takirtakoglou, «The Armenians in the Byzantine and Fatimid Militaries in the Eleventh Century. Similarities and Differences in their Operational Roles», G. Theotokis – M. Meško (eds), *War in Eleventh Century Byzantium*, London – New York 2019, 198-203.

<sup>17</sup> Dedeyan, “Les cavaliers arméniens”, op.cit. (n. 16).

<sup>18</sup> Chitzilakes' injury due to a fall from his horse is referred to by

Kaminiates' comment possibly reflects the latent hostility that had developed in the ranks of the army towards Armenian soldiers, due to the strong influence they exerted on the central authority, through the important offices they held<sup>19</sup>. At certain periods, this cumulated discontent was expressed forcefully, the rebellion in Constantinople against the Armenian soldiers of Nikephoros Phokas being a case in point<sup>20</sup>. Other historical sources, such as Theophanes Continuatus, George Kedrenos and George the Monk (*Hamartolos* – ‘the sinner’), stress not only the great attack on Thessaloniki, but also Leon's wounding and being taken captive, until the year 906, when information about him ceases<sup>21</sup>. However, the revealing snippet for the patronage activity of *Strategos* Leon, which interprets the inscription, is given by Ioannes Kaminiates, who in describing the events of the siege of the city notes:

*Λέων δὲ οὗτος ἐκαλεῖτο, πάσης τῆς περιχώρου προχειρισθεῖς στρατηγὸς καὶ πᾶσαν ἐπιμέλειαν τῶν πρὸς τὴν μάχην εὐτρεπιζομένων πραγμάτων ἀναδεξάμενος. ὃ καὶ ἔδοξε τὴν τοῦ ἔργου τούτου σχολάσαι τέως φροντίδα καὶ τοῦ τείχους τὴν οἰκοδομὴν ἐξανύεσθαι. ἅμα γὰρ ἦκε, καὶ μεθίστησιν εὐθύς τὸν δῆμιον ἅπαντα τὸν εἰς τοῦτο τεταγμένον πρὸς τὰς χροιάδεις ὕλας τοῖς τεχνίταις ἐπικομίζειν, ὡς ἂν τῇ πολυχειρίᾳ τυχὸν καὶ τῇ τῶν δεόντων δαψιλῇ χορηγία τὸ σπουδαζόμενον εἰς ἔργον ἄγοιτο. ἤδη μὲν οὖν πάλιν τὰ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς ἦν ἐνεργῆ<sup>22</sup>.*

---

Ioannis Kaminiatae, *De expugnatione*, op.cit. (n. 5), 19.6-7: *Ἐπαρχθέντες οἱ ἴπποι, καὶ πλεόν οὗτος ἐφ' ὃν ὁ στρατηγὸς (Χιτζιλάκης) κεκαθίκει, τῇ φυσικῇ μανίᾳ πληγείς τὸν τε αὐχένα σιμάσας καὶ τὴν κόμην φορίζας, ὄρθιον ἀρθείς τῆς ἔδρας αὐτὸν ἀπεβάλατο, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πρὸς οὐρὰν κυβιστήσας καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἔδαφος ὀφείς τὸν δεξιὸν τε μηρὸν καὶ τὰ πρὸς τὴν κοτύλην μέλη θλασθεῖς ἐλεεινὸς ἦν καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς ζωῆς ἀπειπών.*

<sup>19</sup> A. Kazhdan, “The Armenians in the Byzantine Ruling Class Predominantly in the Ninth through Twelfth Centuries”, T. J. Samuelian – M. E. Stone (eds), *Medieval Armenian Culture*, California 1984, 439-451. Takirtakoglou, “The Armenians”, op.cit. (n. 16), 196-201.

<sup>20</sup> J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)*, Éditions de la Sorbonne 1996 (open access), 22.

<sup>21</sup> Theophanes Continuatus, op.cit. (n. 11), 368.3-4. Georgius Cedrenus, *Historiarum Compendium*, II, op.cit. (n. 11), 262. 18-19. Georgios Monachos Continuatus, *Vitae Imperatorum Recentiorum*, op.cit. (n. 11), 863.6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Ioannis Kaminiatae, *De expugnatione*, op.cit. (n. 5), 17.95-18.7.

*His name was Leon and he had been appointed General of the whole region and he was responsible for guarding all that needs to be prepared in the case of battle. Therefore, he decided to stop for a while dealing with this task and to finish the construction of the wall. As soon as he arrived, he ordered the people assigned to that task to fetch the necessary material for the builders; so that what was his earnest intention might be eventually accomplished by means of the great number of the people involved and the abundant provision of what was needed. In this way the building activity had once again been fully resumed.*

Kaminiates gives details about the repair of the seawall and the personal input of Chitzilakes in the project, so offering valuable information about the patronage activity of local military officials<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, Kaminiates clarifies categorically the exact date of the inscription –which to this day was based only on epigraphical data– because, according to the text, the inscription was evidently carved when Chitzilakes arrived in Thessaloniki, a few months before the city’s siege in the summer of 904, and immediately set about repairing its walls<sup>24</sup>.

Responding to the critical moment, Leon Chitzilakes gathered together both the materials and the specialized technicians necessary for repairing the walls, in order to complete the project post haste. It should be considered certain that rank-and-file soldiers were involved too, as their participation in such tasks and especially in emergency situations, such as that of Thessaloniki, was among their duties, while the contribution of the local peasantry should not be ruled out<sup>25</sup>. Kaminiates’

testimony is significant for the patronage of defensive works of the Byzantine state, which, as is known, were included more generally in its wider building and defensive programme, which it promoted mainly by the established recording of the imperial names and sometimes with an explicit reference to state patronage<sup>26</sup>. However, from the organized state planning of defensive works and the building of fortifications to the implementation of the programme, especially in emergency situations, there is a significant void, relating to the defining of the responsibilities and obligations of the officials. This gap is covered by Kaminiates’ text in combination with the epigraphic testimony of Chitzilakes. The importance of the historian’s description lies in the fact that, with pretext the tragic events in Thessaloniki, he shows an unseen side of the building history of fortification walls in the Empire, pointing out the principal role of military officials in the patronage of such projects. Through his thorough narration, Kaminiates clarifies the military and economic responsibility of Chitzilakes for the repair of the seawalls<sup>27</sup>. Kaminiates’ meaningful phrase *καὶ τῆ τῶν δεόντων δαψιλεῖ χορηγία* confirms that the military commander met in full the expenses of the project, through his initiative and participation in finding the necessary materials and suitable technicians and covering any other need that arose in that emergency situation. The cost of constructing the fortification wall was included in the fiscal authority that issued from his office and role as military commander<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore,

565-1204, London – New York 1999, 236-237, n. 13 with examples from the 11th and 12th centuries. Idem, “Information and War”, op.cit. (n. 23), 382-383.

<sup>26</sup> Characteristic example is the inscription from Tzouroulon (Çorlu-Su). See C. Asdracha, “Inscriptions byzantines de la Thrace orientale (VIII<sup>e</sup>-XI<sup>e</sup> siècles). Présentation et commentaire historique”, *AD* 44-46 (1989-1991), A. Meletes, Athens 1996, 292-296 [rp. in eadem, *Inscriptions protobyzantines protobyzantines et byzantines de la Thrace orientale et de l’île d’Imbros*, Athens 2003, article II].

<sup>27</sup> The emphasis on the seawalls should be correlated with Kaminiates’ more general interest in the harbour of Thessaloniki, which he describes in the *ekphrasis* of the city, as a proem to his historical work. See E. Kaltsogianni – S. Kotzabassi – I. Paraskevopoulou, *Thessaloniki in the Byzantine Literature. Rhetorical and Hagiographical Texts*, Thessaloniki 2002, 11-12.

<sup>28</sup> Included in the fiscal policy of the military commanders was the tax of *kastroktisia*. See N. Oikonomides, “The Donations of Castles in the last Quarter of the 11th Century (Dölger, Regesten

<sup>23</sup> J. F. Haldon, “Information and War. Some Comments of Defensive Strategy and Information in the Middle Byzantine Period (ca. A.D. 660-1025)”, Sarantis – Christie (eds), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity*, op.cit. (n. 4), 371-393, esp. 383.

<sup>24</sup> During the siege of Thessaloniki by the Saracens, Chitzilakes is arrested, taken captive and incarcerated, and is replaced by the general Niketas. See Ioannis Kaminiatae, *De expugnatione*, op.cit. (n. 5), 19.2-4. See also D. Frendo – A. Fotiou, *John Kaminiates, The Capture of Thessaloniki. Translation, Introduction and Notes*, Perth 2000, 158-159, 164. I. Karayannopoulos, “From the Ninth Century to 1204: Political History in Macedonia”, M. B. Sakellariou (ed.), *Μακεδονία. 4000 Χρόνια Ελληνικής Ιστορίας και Πολιτισμού*, Athens 1982, 280-282. Consequently, under these conditions it is impossible to argue for a dating of the inscription to after the siege.

<sup>25</sup> J. F. Haldon, *Warfare State and Society in the Byzantine World*

from an archaeological standpoint Kaminiates' testimony clarifies the issue of the financial role of military officials named in a large number of dedicatory inscriptions on walls throughout the Empire<sup>29</sup>, as will be seen through some indicative examples. One of the earliest and most characteristic is the 8th century inscription<sup>30</sup>, which is rarely cited in the bibliography and which comments on the restoration of the fortress of Rhodanthos (Faraša region) in Cappadocia by *basilikos spatharios* Symeon. The text of the Cappadocian inscription runs as follows<sup>31</sup>:

no. 1012)", P. Wirth (ed.), *Polychronion: Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1966, 413-417, esp. 415-416 (rp. in idem, *Documents et études sur les institutions de Byzance (VII<sup>e</sup>-XI<sup>e</sup> s.*, London 1976, XIV). See also S. Troianos, "Kastroktisia", *Byzantina* 1 (1969), 39-57, esp. 48-51. For the responsibility of undertaking public works, under the remit of the fiscal policy of the provincial commanders see Haldon, *Warfare*, op.cit. (n. 25), 51-66, 234-239. The repair of defensive works in the framework of the fiscal policy and specifically the levying of tax is attested by Theophanes the Confessor. See C. Mango – R. Scott (eds), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History A.D. 284-813*, Oxford 1997, 572.412. Cf. Ivison, "Urban Renewal", op.cit. (n. 2), 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> Theophanes the Confessor in his *Chronicle* mentions the construction, in the 8th century, of defensive works in Anchiolos, Beroia and Thrace, during military campaigns. See Mango – Scott, *Chronicle*, op.cit. (n. 28), 631, 643, 457, 467. C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History* (CFHB XIII), Washington, D. C. 1990, 219. For the inscriptions, see *CIG*, IV, 325-6, no. 8699 (for the year 1006); and the inscription no. 8797, 366 (possibly from the reign of Michael III). Later, Leon the Deacon offers historical information about the building of fortifications in Crete and Antioch by imperial troops during the campaigns of Nikephoros II Phokas [Greek text in: Leon the Deacon, *Leonis Diakoni Caloënsis Histōriæ libri decem*, ed. C. B. Hase, Bonn 1828, 72-74, IV.11. English text in: A.-M. Talbot – D. F. Sullivan (eds) with the assistance of G. T. Dennis and S. McGrath, *The History of Leo the Deacon. Byzantine Military Expansion* (DOS XLI). Washington, D. C. 2005, 123-125]. See also Ivison, "Urban Renewal", op.cit. (n. 2), esp. 9-11.

<sup>30</sup> The issue of the dating remains open, because the pair of Emperors Leon and Constantine is encountered also in the 9th and the 10th century. Furthermore, the apograph of the inscription, which is published by H. Grégoire («Rapport sur un voyage d'exploration dans le Pont et en Cappadoce», *BCH* 33 (1909), 125), does not provide secure palaeographical evidence.

<sup>31</sup> On the Rhodanthos inscription, see H. Grégoire, "Note sur une inscription gréco-araméenne trouvée à Faraša", *Comptes-rendus des*

Κ(ύρι)ε βωήθ[ε]ι βασι[λ]εῦ[σι] / [Ἐπὶ Λέο]ντος καὶ Κοσταντήνου / [μεγ]άλων Βασιλέων / ἀπελύθη Συμεών βασιλικός σπαθάριος / η(ς) σύστασιν κάστρου Ροδανθοῦ. Ἐκ[αθ]άρισεν / τὴν πέτραν.

*Lord, save the kings, in the reign of the great kings Leon and Constantine, Symeon the basilikos spatharios was dispatched to construct the castle of Rhodanthos. He cleaned the stone.*

Grégoire's restoration of the verb ἔκαθάρισεν is problematical. However, even if the verb in the inscription is a different one, in combination with the word stone (τὴν πέτραν), about which there is no doubt, it does not alter the more general meaning of the phrase and its semantic affinity to the details Kaminiates gives about Chitzilakes' actions to repair and reinforce the fortification wall of Thessaloniki. It is interesting that the verb ἀπελύθη derives from military terminology and means that the *basilikos spatharios* Symeon undertook the construction of the fortification wall and was obliged to supervise the building works, contributing to the management of the materials and the labour, as Chitzilakes did in the case of Thessaloniki. It is particularly important to note that the successful completion of similar projects and the coverage of the cost of such works by the officials through their fiscal policy contributed to their promotion and career development in the military hierarchy<sup>32</sup>. From this perspective, we can justify the

*Séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, Paris 1908, esp. 436-437. Idem, "Rapport", op.cit. (n. 30), 120-125. One other epigraphic testimony, which records the responsibility of the *strategos* for military projects and is dated in the 9th century, comes from Thessaloniki, specifically in the so-called Tower *tou Anaglyphou*, at the southeast corner of the Vardar Fortress [Eu. Marki, "Συμπληρωματικά αρχαιολογικά στοιχεία για το φρούριο Βαρδαρίου Θεσσαλονίκης", *Makedonika* 22 (1982), 133-153. G. Kiourtzian, "Note prosopographique sur une inscription du rempart de Thessalonique (861/862)", *REB* 49 (1991), 247-253]. For remarks on the historical information offered by inscriptions regarding the construction and restoration of the fortifications, see also Haldon, *Warfare*, op.cit. (n. 25), 237. Idem, "Information and War", op.cit. (n. 23), 383.

<sup>32</sup> As in the cases of the young Theophanes the Confessor and Petronas Kamateros. See Mango – Scott, *Chronicle*, op.cit. (n. 28), xlviii, n. 21. G. Moravcsik (ed.), *De Administrando Imperio*, transl. R. J. H. Jenkins, Washington, D. C. 1967, 182-185. See also, Ivison, "Urban Renewal", op.cit. (n. 2), 11-12.

significant increase in the recording of names not only of generals, but also of low-ranking soldiers in dedicatory inscriptions of *kastra*. The similarity of the military officials' motive for patronage of religious buildings and of defensive works is truly remarkable: in the first case their aim is to secure the salvation of their soul, whereas in the second it is to secure a better career and a position either in Constantinople or in some other major urban centre.

Testimonies pertaining to the construction of fortifications by the army and under the full responsibility of the military commander proliferate from the 9th century onward, as borne out by several surviving inscriptions<sup>33</sup>. Dated to the end of the 9th or to the early 10th century<sup>34</sup> is the significant inscription from Selymbria, parts of which are located in the narthex of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The inscription, which must have been placed on one of the polygonal towers of the city's fortification walls, refers to the *spatharokandidatos* Theophanes and the *patrikios* Theophylaktos, who assumed responsibility for building the walls<sup>35</sup>. Both Theophanes and Theophylaktos are characterized as *εὐκλεῆς*, which means brave and illustrious<sup>36</sup>. It is interesting



Fig. 4a and b. Constantinople, Hagia Sophia, narthex. Parts of the inscription from Selymbria, early 10th century.

that in the Selymbria epigram emphasis is placed on the personality of Theophanes, due mainly to his contribution to the restoration of the city according to the verse *λαμπρῶς ἀνιστᾶ καὶ νεουργεῖ τὴν πόλιν* (Figs 4a and b). The phrase indicates most eloquently that the authors of inscriptions, through a standardized phraseology from the imperial vocabulary of patronage, transferred to the provinces the ideology of the capital and the idea that renovating a fortified city was the task of the local military officials themselves. In inscriptions from Constantinople, the restoration of the fortification walls and of the famous fortified cities is presented as a personal work of the emperors, which is promoted by specific words or expressions, such as *χειρὶ κραταιᾶ, ἤγειρε/ἀνήγειρε, νεουργεῖ*. On the contrary, references to lower-ranking officials are very few, such as the inscription mentioning Bardas from the Sea Walls, now in the Constantinople Archaeological Museum<sup>37</sup>.

The linking of the heroic ideal of the soldier-saints with the military officials of the inscriptions aims at assimilating their protection of the populace of walled

<sup>33</sup> I cite indicatively the inscriptions from Philippi, Tzouroulon and of the *kastra* of Prophitis Ilias, today in Mylovos, Pieria. See S. Provost, "Une réfection des remparts de Philippe sous Michel VII Doukas", *REB* 61 (2003), 169. Idem, "Esquisse du paysage urbain entre le IXe s. et le XIIIe s. d'après les sources archéologiques", J. Fournier (ed.), *Philippe. De la Préhistoire à Byzance. Études d'archéologie et d'histoire* (BCH Supplément 55), Athens 2016, 241-243, fig. 19. Asdracha, "Inscriptions byzantines", op.cit. (n. 26), 292-296. Eu. Marki, "Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος της Μεγάλης Γέφυρας και άγνωστη επιγραφή του Βασιλείου Β' Βουλγαροκτόνου από το Μυλοβό", *Πρακτικά ΙΓ' Ιστορικού Συνεδρίου της Ελληνικής Ιστορικής Εταιρείας*, Thessaloniki 1993, 146-152. J.-C. Cheynet, "Grandeur et décadence des Diogéni", idem, *La société byzantine: l'apport des sceaux*, 2, Paris 2008, 569-570.

<sup>34</sup> Asdracha dated the inscription between the 9th and the 11th century, and Rhoby in the 9th century [Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, op.cit. (n. 8), 633].

<sup>35</sup> Asdracha, "Inscriptions byzantines", op.cit. (n. 26), 280-283. Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, op.cit. (n. 8), 633-636, pls LXXXV-LXXXVII. Idem, "Tower, established by God is protecting you: Inscriptions on Byzantine Fortifications. Their Function and their Display", Ch. Stavrakos (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium: Inscriptions in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine History and History of Art*, Wiesbaden 2016, 359-360.

<sup>36</sup> *LBG*, IV/3, 619 (verb *εὐκλεέω*). At the same period, the epithet *εὐκλεῆς* for military officials is encountered also in other inscrip-

tions. See A. Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, Vienna 2009, 403-406. Idem, *Epigramme auf Stein*, op.cit. (n. 8), 556-559. Of analogous meaning and a rare epithet for military officials is *πολύαινος*, which is attributed to *protospatharios* Leon in the inscription in the Panagia Skripou (873/74) at Orchomenos. See A. Papalexandrou, "Text in Context: Eloquent monuments and the Byzantine Beholder", *Word and Image* 17 (2001), 259-283. Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, op.cit. (n. 8), 319-324 with bibliography.

<sup>37</sup> Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, op.cit. (n. 8), 626-628 with bibliography.



cities to that provided by soldier-saints, the cult and the prestige of which was cultivated by Emperors in the 10th century<sup>38</sup>. The metrical inscription from the fortress of the Byzantine city of Christoupolis (Kavala), which is dated to the year 925/26, belongs in an analogous ideological environment<sup>39</sup>. Reflected in the Christoupolis epigram is the concept of bravery (*ἀνδρεία*), which was strong in Byzantine society, one of the virtues often presented as a rhetorical *topos* in encomiastic texts for the Emperor and members of the royal family, and more specifically of the Macedonian dynasty, the heroic ideal of which the inscription echoes<sup>40</sup>.

Observed in the aforesaid inscriptions is an attempt to publicize the project of building the fortification walls, through the person of the responsible military commander, who, as the epigraphical material demonstrates, is praised for his virtues and his personality. The same ideological basis evident in the inscriptions is enhanced also by Kaminiates' detailed description, emphasizing the fervent efforts to boost the defensive capability of the Byzantine army. In the measures taken to protect the city, the personage, the heroic mettle and the virtues of

the capable general guarantee the strong and safe construction of the fortification wall. This rare meticulous account, in the contemporary sources, of the dramatic moments and the anguished efforts by the General Chitzilakes to repair the walls of Thessaloniki is probably a direct confirmation of the reputation enjoyed by Armenian officials and aristocrats, namely that they had the experience of living in fortified cities<sup>41</sup>.

The prosopography of Leon Chitzilakes is complemented by two lead seals, which have been attributed to him even though they do not mention his surname. The first is the lead seal in the Museum of Byzantine Culture of Thessaloniki (Figs 5a and b)<sup>42</sup> and the second is in the Zacos Collection<sup>43</sup>. Both carry an identical text, which is similar to that of the Thessaloniki inscription and reads as follows:

Κ(ύρι)ε [βοήθει τῷ σῶ δ]οῦλω Λέοντι β(ασιλικῷ) (πρω-  
το)σπαθ(αρίῳ) (καὶ) στρατηγ(ῷ) Θεσσαλονίκ(ης).

Although the first lead seal comes from Thessaloniki and its text presents similarities to the inscription, the absence of the surname Chitzilakes is a serious impediment for attributing it confidently to Leon. A possible relation of the Thessaloniki lead seal to General Chitzilakes cannot be precluded, but I have reservations about this, particularly in the light of Werner Seibt's views on the pitfalls of attributing seals to historical persons without sufficient proof<sup>44</sup>. To the contrary, in the case of the seal in the Zacos Collection, its relation to General Chitzilakes should be ruled out, because, according to

<sup>38</sup> J.-C. Cheynet, "Le cult de saint Théodore chez les officiers de l'armée d'Orient", A. Avramea et al. (eds), *Βυζάντιο. Κράτος και Κοινωνία. Μνήμη Νίκου Οικονομίδη*, Athens 2003, 137-154. I. Drpić, "The Serres Icon of Saints Theodores", *BZ* 105/2 (2012), 647-648.

<sup>39</sup> On the Christoupolis inscription, see S. Reinach, "La reconstruction des murs de Cavala", *BCH* 6 (1882), 267-275. C. Mango, "Byzantine Epigraphy (4th to 10th Centuries)", D. Harlfinger – G. Prato (eds), *Paleographia e codicologia greca. Atti del II colloquio internazionale (Berlino-Wolfenbüttel, 17-21 ottobre 1983)*, Alessandria 1991, I, 243-246, II, 143 (pl. 28). Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Stein*, op.cit. (n. 8), 240-243, with bibliography.

<sup>40</sup> P. Magdalino – R. Nelson, "The emperor in Byzantine art of the 12th century", *ByzF* 8 (1982), 144. See for example the imperial virtue of courage in encomiastic texts of the 9th and 10th centuries for the founder of the dynasty, Basil I (867-886). P. A. Agapitos, "Η εικόνα του αυτοκράτορα Βασιλείου Α΄ στη φιλομακεδονική γραμματεία 867-959", *Hellenika* 40 (1989), 285-322, esp. 322. L. Andriollo, "Aristocracy and Literary Production in the 10th Century", A. Pizzone (ed.), *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature. Modes, Functions, and Identities* (Byzantinisches Archiv Book 28), Berlin 2014, 119-138. A. Markopoulos, "Remarks sur les descriptions des empereurs byzantins dans l'historiographie, de Malalas à Léon le diacre", *Constantinople réelle et imaginaire. Autour de l'oeuvre de Gilbert Dagron [TM 22/1 (2018)]*, Paris 2018, 309-310.

<sup>41</sup> N. G. Garsoïan, "The Early-Medieval Armenian City: An Alien Element", *Ancient Studies in Memory of Elias Bickermann (The Journal of the Near Eastern Society 16-17)*, New York 1984-1985, 67-83, esp. 73-79 (rp. in eadem, *Church and Culture in Early Medieval Armenia*, Ashgate 1999, VII).

<sup>42</sup> The lead seal found in the gallery of the church of the Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki belonged initially in the Rotunda Archaeological Collection [S. Kissas, "Μολυβδόβουλλα από τα υπερώα της Αγίας Σοφίας Θεσσαλονίκης", *SBS* 2 (1990), 189-191].

<sup>43</sup> See G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, ed. J. W. Nesbitt, Bern 1984, 2, 143-144, n. 219, pl. 29.

<sup>44</sup> W. Seibt, "Zwischen Identifizierungsrausch und Verweigerung: zur Problematik synchroner homonymer Siegel", C. Ludwig (ed.), *Siegel und Siegler. Akten des 8. Internationaler Symposions für byzantinische Sigillographie*, Frankfurt 2005, 141-150.



Figs 5a and b. Thessaloniki, Museum of Byzantine Culture. Lead seal (BMO 7 MVP-APLA 4387).

Christos Stavrakos, there are no indications that could support such a hypothesis<sup>45</sup>.

The Chitzilakes inscription from the seawalls of Thessaloniki and the text of Kaminiates constitute one of the most important middle Byzantine models of interaction

<sup>45</sup> Another seal with similar to the inscription text and which belongs to the Mordtmann Collection has no relation to Chitzilakes. On the Mordtmann lead-seal, see *PmbZ*, 4, no. 131. I warmly thank Prof. Christos Stavrakos for our fruitful discussion on this matter.

between historical and archaeological material which contributes to the interpretation of the reference to military officials in dedicatory inscriptions and the definition of their financial role in the construction of defensive works of the Empire. The dating of the inscription on the basis of Kaminiates' references to Chitzilakes places it securely before the siege in the summer of 904 and rules out any hypothesis dating it after this event, as this comes up against both historical evidence and epigraphical practice. The historical testimony of Kaminiates, attuned to the ideological milieu of the period, projects the military personage and moral fibre of *strategos* Chitzilakes through his dramatic efforts and personal concern to strengthen the protection of Thessaloniki and to safeguard the citizens. Consequently, Chitzilakes, who confronts an extremely critical and emergency situation, and meets the expenses of the projects, as the word *χορηγία* specifies in Kaminiates, can be rightly characterized as *ktetor*. However, even in less critical circumstances those officials who successfully completed defensive projects of the Empire, through their prudent financial policy and correct construction or repair of fortification walls, are able to ascend the ranks of the military hierarchy. In the special circumstances that Kaminiates narrates, Chitzilakes' responsibility for and personal supervision of the repair of Thessaloniki's walls can be considered as an early form of *kastroktisia*, which, as Nikos Oikonomides notes<sup>46</sup>, developed after the 10th century and, among other regulations, ordained that the military officials were responsible for the repair and upkeep of the *kastra*.

<sup>46</sup> Oikonomides, "Donations", op.cit. (n. 28), 413-417. Troianos, "Kastroktisia", op.cit. (n. 28), 39-57, esp. 47-52.

#### Illustration credits

Figs 1-3: G. Fafalis, photographer, 2003, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports – Museum of Byzantine Culture. Fig. 4: Photographs by Nektarios Zarras. Fig. 5: M. Skiadaresis, photographer, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports – Museum of Byzantine Culture.

## Ο ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΟΣ ΛΕΩΝ ΧΙΤΖΙΛΑΚΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΠΙΓΡΑΦΗΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΟ ΘΑΛΑΣΣΙΟ ΤΕΙΧΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ. ΜΙΑ ΙΔΙΑΖΟΥΣΑ ΠΕΡΙΠΤΩΣΗ ΣΤΡΑΤΙΩΤΙΚΗΣ ΧΟΡΗΓΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΓΡΑΦΙΑΣ

**Η** γνωστή στη βιβλιογραφία κτητορική επιγραφή από το θαλάσσιο τείχος της Θεσσαλονίκης, στην οποία μεταξύ άλλων ιστορικών προσώπων αναφέρεται και ο στρατηγός Λέων Χιτζιλάκης (Εικ. 1-3), επανεξετάζεται για πρώτη φορά συστηματικά και υπό το πρίσμα της περιγραφής του ιστορικού Ιωάννη Καμινιάτη για την άλωση της πόλης από τους Σαρακηνούς το 904. Η ιστορική πηγή ερμηνεύει την επιγραφή από το θαλάσσιο τείχος και αμφότερα αποτελούν ένα σπάνιο παράδειγμα σύζευξης και αλληλεξάρτησης ιστορικής και αρχαιολογικής μαρτυρίας.

Τα στοιχεία που προσφέρει ο ιστορικός, συμπληρώνουν την προσωπογραφική μελέτη του στρατηγού Λέοντα, ο οποίος παρουσιάζεται συνολικά μέσα από την αρμενική καταγωγή του, το επίθετό του, τη σχέση του με την ιππασία και την εμπειρία του στην αμυντική οργάνωση του τείχους. Το τελευταίο, ιδιαίτερα, στοιχείο συνδέεται με την απόφαση του αυτοκράτορα Λέοντα ΣΤ΄ να αναθέσει στον Χιτζιλάκη την άμυνα της Θεσσαλονίκης, σε ένα ιδιαίτερα κρίσιμο χρονικό διάστημα για τη σωτηρία της πόλης. Η στρατιωτική δράση του Λέοντα συμπληρώνεται στην παρούσα μελέτη και μέσα από σφραγιστικά δεδομένα (Εικ. 5), τα οποία εξετάζονται με επιστημονικά δεδομένα και συμβάλλουν στην παρουσίαση της προσωπογραφίας του Χιτζιλάκη.

Ο Καμινιάτης παραδίδει μια λεπτομερή περιγραφή για τη συγκέντρωση από τον στρατηγό οικοδομικού υλικού και έμπυχου δυναμικού, καθώς και για την επιδιόρθωση των τειχών που ο ίδιος ο Χιτζιλάκης σχεδιάζει και υλοποιεί μέσα από την προσωπική του συμβολή. Χρησιμοποιεί, μάλιστα, τη φράση «καὶ τῆ τῶν δεόντων δαψιλῆ χορηγία» προβάλλοντας με τρόπο αναμφισβήτητο τον Λέοντα Χιτζιλάκη ως κτήτορα για τη συγκεκριμένη φάση επισκευής του τείχους. Η εξεταζόμενη επιγραφή τεκμηριώνει αρχαιολογικά την παραπάνω πολυσήμαντη ιστορική μαρτυρία για τη συμβολή των στρατιωτικών αξιωματούχων στα αμυντικά έργα. Επιπλέον, μέσα από τη διήγηση του Καμινιάτη αποσαφηνίζεται με τον πιο κατηγορηματικό τρόπο η ακριβής χρονολόγηση της επιγραφής,

που μέχρι σήμερα στηριζόταν μόνο στα επιγραφικά στοιχεία, διότι, σύμφωνα με το κείμενο, είναι φανερό πως η επιγραφή γράφτηκε όταν ο Χιτζιλάκης έφθασε στη Θεσσαλονίκη, λίγους μήνες πριν από την άλωση της πόλης, το καλοκαίρι του 904, και επιδιόρθωσε άμεσα το θαλάσσιο τείχος. Κατά τη διάρκεια της άλωσης της πόλης ο Χιτζιλάκης αιχμαλωτίζεται και φυλακίζεται και αντικαθίσταται άμεσα από τον Νικίτη, ενώ μετά το 905/6 δεν έχουμε καμία πληροφορία για αυτόν.

Παράλληλα, το κείμενο του Καμινιάτη συμβάλλει και στην ερμηνεία πλήθους κτητορικών επιγραφών που προέρχονται από αμυντικά έργα της αυτοκρατορίας, και στις οποίες, ιδιαίτερα μετά τον 9ο αιώνα, προβάλλεται μέσα από συγκεκριμένες φράσεις του επιγραφικού κειμένου η ευθύνη των ανώτερων αλλά και κατώτερων στρατιωτικών αξιωματούχων για την κατασκευή ή επισκευή των τειχών (Εικ. 4). Η φράση, επίσης, του Καμινιάτη «τὸ σπουδαζόμενον εἰς ἔργον ἄγοιτο. ἤδη μὲν οὖν πάλιν τὰ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς ἦν ἐνεργῆ», που αναφέρεται στην ολοκλήρωση της επισκευής του τείχους από τον Χιτζιλάκη, συνεξετάζεται με ανάλογες ιστορικές και επιγραφικές μαρτυρίες, και στην παρούσα μελέτη φαίνεται πως η επιτυχής περάτωση των αμυντικών έργων από αξιωματούχους, μέσα από τη δημοσιονομική τους πολιτική, ήταν προϋπόθεση για την επαγγελματική τους εξέλιξη με προαγωγή σε ανώτερες ή ευνοϊκότερες θέσεις. Οι κτητορικές επιγραφές των αμυντικών έργων προσδίδουν στην κατασκευή των κάστρων και ιδεολογικό χαρακτήρα, με την προβολή του ηρωικού ιδεώδους και του ήθους των στρατηγών, στοιχεία που αποτελούν προϋπόθεση για τη στέρεη και σωστή κατασκευή των τειχών. Η ιδιότυπη περίπτωση χορηγίας του στρατηγού Λέοντα Χιτζιλάκη στο θαλάσσιο τείχος της Θεσσαλονίκης τον 10ο αιώνα προαναγγέλλει τη δημιουργία, έναν αιώνα αργότερα, του συστήματος της καστοροκτισίας, που αναπτύχθηκε ιδιαίτερα από στρατιωτικούς αξιωματούχους.

*Πανεπιστήμιο Αιγαίου  
zarras@aegean.gr*