

Remarks on the Prosopography of the Byzantine Administration in Northeastern Asia Minor

(7th-11th c.)

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Abstract:

This paper presents part of the Project entitled *Mobility of people and families in Byzantium's northeastern frontier. A contribution to the prosopography of the military and political administration in the Armeniakoi area (7th-11th c.)*. The ongoing research on Pontos brings together, for the first time, all the evidence on the administration and especially the prosopography of the region. The collected material provides useful information on the careers and mobility of individuals and families alike. The presented brief case studies contribute to the better understanding of the administrative and social history of the Pontos in Byzantine times.

Key words: Asia Minor, Pontos, Byzantine administration, prosopography, sigillography

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This paper is a brief presentation¹ of a large research Project focusing on Byzantine prosopography in Northeastern Asia Minor. The Post-Doctoral Research under the title *Mobility of people and families in Byzantium's northeastern frontier. A contribution to the prosopography of the military and political administration in the Armeniakoi area (7th-11th c.)* was conducted thanks to an IKY scholarship. This research is co-financed by Greece and the European Union (European Social Fund- ESF) through the Operational Programme «Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning» in the context of the project “Reinforcement of Postdoctoral Researchers” (MIS-5001552), implemented by the State Scholarships Foundation (IKY). The Project was carried out under the supervision of Dr. Olga Karagiörgou (Research Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art, Academy of Athens) from April 2017 to April 2019.



[Figure 1: Map of Byzantine Asia Minor. The Pontic *themes* are underlined.]

The area of the Armeniakoi in Northeastern Asia Minor, also known as Pontos, one of the most important and at the same time the most vulnerable to attacks, included several military-administrative

¹ Parts of this paper have been presented in the following conferences: 18 Jornadas de Bizancio / 18th Congress of Byzantium of the Sociedad Española de Bizantinística (SEB), University of Barcelona, (30/01-02/02 2019); XII International Symposium of Byzantine Sigillography, The Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (28-29/05 2019). Due to the enormous amount of information processed and the limited available space here, the statistical data presented in this paper deliberately refrains from providing references for each mentioned individual; instead, references are kept to minimum, containing only the more comprehensive works on the subject.

Special acknowledgement is due to Dr. O. Karagiorgou – scientific supervisor of the Project –, to all the colleagues who in many ways assisted my research, as well as to the editors and the anonymous reviewers who evaluated this paper.

districts, the so-called *themes*, as well as minor units which played a crucial role in Byzantine history not only from a military point of view, but also within the framework of political, diplomatic and cultural contacts of Byzantium with the neighbouring people and newcomers.

The main objective of this Project is to create prosopographic lists for all the *thematic* and *non-thematic* Byzantine officials who served in the Pontos area from the 7th to the 11th century. So far, it comprises over 300 prosopographic records. These entries include all the necessary information regarding the sigillographic, literary and epigraphic sources and bibliography, as well as complementary information, such as the decoration of seals issued by these officials. Byzantine lead seals form the core of this research, with about 400 specimens registered to date.

The starting point for this research is the experience gained from the ARISTEIA II-4492 Research Project under the supervision of Dr. Olga Karagiörgou, where the prosopography of the *themes* of the Anatolikoi, Hellas, the Kibyrraiōtai and the Opsikion was prepared. All the information has been included in the *TAKTIKON*, a digital database on the prosopography and administrative structure of the Byzantine *themes*.²

The present text is a summary of an ongoing investigation on the Pontic area: the prosopography of the administration of the Armeniakoi, Chaldia, Kolōneia and Sebasteia *themes*. Eventually, this information will be also added in the *TAKTIKON* database. Four main topics will be presented here: An overview on the prosopography and administrative structure of the four large districts in the Pontos area (in order of importance) – the Armeniakoi, Chaldia, Koloneia and Sebasteia (**Figure 1**); specific issues related to the study of officials in the Pontos area; examples of selected individual careers; and some remarks on the artistic aspect of the sources used.

² *TAKTIKON* is being developed at the Academy of Athens by Dr. Olga Karagiorgou (Project's Instigator, Research Centre for Byzantine and Post-byzantine Art of the Academy of Athens), Dr. Pantelis Charalampakis and Dr. Christos Malatras. For more information, see Olga Karagiorgou, Pantelis Charalampakis and Christos Malatras, "State officials in the themes of Opsikion, the Anatolikoi and the Kibyrraiotai: new and recently revisited sigillographic evidence," *Byzantina Symmeikta* 26 (2016): 247-252.

I. Overview of the *themes* of the Armeniakoi, Chaldia, Koloneia and Sebasteia (Figure 2)

Armeniakoi

So far, 123 individuals known through sigillographic and literary evidence have been registered. The number of seals has reached as many as 146 specimens and a few unpublished ones are expected to be added later. The *stratēgoi* amount to 47 individuals, attested from 667 A.D. and the establishment of the *theme* to ca. 1000 A.D., but mostly in the 8th and 9th century. From these, 29 are evidenced through seals only, 14 through literary sources only and 2 from combined evidence of seals and literary sources. Among the *stratēgoi* we find the family names: Agelastos, Bourtzēs, Kamoulianos, Kourkouas, Mousele, as well as some unusual names of various origins: Ashkirash, Baristerotzēs, Lalakōn, Olbianos, Filommatēs, Sabōrios.

The *kritai* amount to 38 individuals, attested from ca. 950 A.D. to ca. 1033 A.D. From these, 32 are evidenced through seals, only 4 through literary sources and 2 from combined evidence. Among the *kritai* we find the family names: Choirosphaktēs, Chrysēlios, Gymnos, Kamatēros, Korinthios, Malesēs, Maurikas, Melias, Mitylēnaios, Monomachos, Promoundēnos, Proteuōn, Spanopoulos, Splēnarios, Tzitas, and the rare first name Pothos.

Regarding these two large categories, the *stratēgoi* and the *kritai*, two remarks can be made on the names: first, that the family names do not repeat, that is, there are no family names attested in both categories. Considering the amount of evidence which has been lost or the number of seals which are inaccessible, it could be said that it would be rather conjectural to conclude that those families were engaged exclusively either in the military or the civil administration respectively. Second, one can note that the number of Armenian names in the category of the *kritai* is insignificant, with so far only one known instance. There could be two explanations for this: that the Armenian families had been Byzantinised (this is the case of Melias), or that the army needed the Armenians, known for their military skills, much more than the civil administration needed them. Moreover, it is remarkable that all the known *stratēgoi* and the *kritai* of the Armeniakoi are attested up to the late 10th and the mid-11th century respectively. The absence of *stratēgoi* after the 10th c. does not mean that the *theme* disappeared, but rather that its function was altered at about that time. Apart from the *kritai*, officials with fiscal or other duties also continued to operate there up to

the mid-11th century. These are, for example, the *prōtonotarioi*, with 14 individuals, known exclusively through seals that date from ca. 825 to ca. 1050 A.D. Among them we find the family names Artabasdos and Timōnitēs; the *anagrafeis* with six individuals, from ca. 950 to ca. 1025 A.D. and the family name Blemmydēs; and the *chrysoteleis*, with one or two individuals known from seals dated ca. 1025-1050 A.D. (although it is possible that both specimens were issued by the same person).

Chaldia

In Chaldia, so far 119 individuals have been identified through seals and literary sources, and one more person (*stratēgos*) is known from an inscription (dated 884-885 A.D.).³ Among them, one finds 33 *kommerkiarioi* (**Figure 3**), 25 *stratēgoi*, 22 *kritai*, 8 *prōtonotarioi*, 7 *doukai* and 6 *dioikētai*. Some of the family names encountered are: Areobindēnos, Argyros, Boilas, Brachamios, Chaldos, Doukas, Drosos, Hexakionitēs, Kourkouas, Makrembolitēs, Morocharzanēs, Palaiologos, Fōkas, Promoundēnos and, Tetragōnitēs.

OFFICE	ARMENIAKOI	CHALDIA	KOLŌNEIA	SEBASTEIA
<i>anagrafeus</i>	X	X		
<i>archōn</i>			X	
<i>bandoforos</i>	X			
<i>basilikos</i>		X		
<i>chartouarios</i>	X	X		
<i>chartouarios tēs arklas</i>	X			
<i>chartouarios tou dromou</i>	X			
<i>chartouarios tou oxeos dromou</i>	X			
<i>chrysotelēs</i>	X		X	
<i>dioikētēs</i>		X		
<i>domestikos</i>		X		
<i>doux</i>	X	X	X	X

³ *PmbZ* 20239; Gabriel Millet and David Talbot-Rice, *Byzantine painting at Trebizond* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1936), 23, fn. 1; Gabriel Millet, "Les monastères et les églises de Trébizonde," *BCH* 19 (1895): 433-434; Anthony Bryer and David Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), 316; Basilikē Blysidou et al. (eds.), *Ē Mikra Asia tōn thematōn: Ereunes panō stēn geōgrafikē fysiognōmia kai prosōpografia tōn byzantinōn thematōn tēs Mikras Asias (7os-11os ai.)* (Athens: EIE, 1998), 459 (no. 3).

<i>drouggarios</i>			X	
<i>ek prosōpou</i>		X		
<i>episkeptitēs</i>	X			
<i>epoptēs</i>	X			
<i>forologos</i>		X		
<i>katapanō</i>		X		
<i>komēs tēs kortēs</i>	X	X		
<i>kommerkiarios</i>	X	X		
<i>kommerkiarios tēs apothēkēs</i>	X			
<i>kritēs</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>parafylax</i>			X	
<i>prōtokentarchos</i>		X		
<i>prōtonotarios</i>	X	X	X	
<i>prōtostratōr</i>	X			
<i>stratēgos</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>taxiarchēs</i>				X
<i>tourmarchēs</i>		X		

[Figure 2: List of offices attested in the four Pontic *themes*.]

Kolōneia

In Kolōneia we find 29 individuals, of which one is known through an inscription (dated 903-904 A.D.).⁴ The most important among them are: 6 *stratēgoi*, 12 *kritai*, 4 *prōtonotarioi*, and 3 *doukai*. The family names attested in this *theme* are: Eugenianos, Gabras, Kekaumenos, and Fōkas. Although the name of Kallistos Melissēnos appears in scholarly literature among the officials of Kolōneia in his capacity as *doux*, it is very likely that this person never existed.⁵

Sebasteia

Not much is known about the small *theme* of Sebasteia, and so far, only 7 individuals of no special importance – except perhaps Leōn

⁴ Pantelis Charalampakis, “Short notes on the prosopography of the Byzantine *theme* of Koloneia (part I),” *KAREN / The Journal of Institute of Black Sea Studies* 2/2 (2016): 8-11.

⁵ On Kallistos Melissēnos, see Pantelis Charalampakis, Short notes on the prosopography of the Byzantine *theme* of Koloneia (part II) [forthcoming].

Argyros⁶, *stratēgos* – have been attested. Among the remaining officials, one notices Ēlias, *spatharios* and *taxiarchēs* of Sebasteia (first half of the 11th c.),⁷ meaning that he was commanding a group of 1.000 infantrymen.

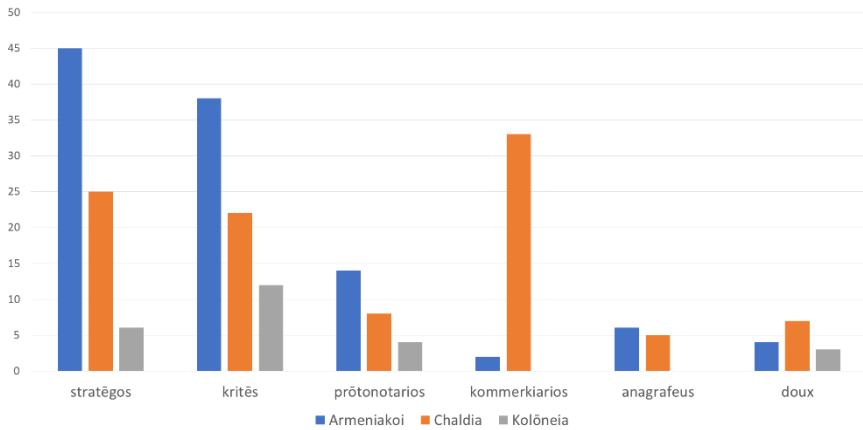
II. Specific issues related to the study of the Byzantine officials in the Pontos area

The *kommerkiarioi* in Chaldia

It is worth to begin this overview of specific issues by considering the great amount of *kommerkiarioi* in Chaldia (**Figure 3**). Unlike most of the territories in the Empire where this office seems to disappear from record comparatively early, in Chaldia the *kommerkiarioi* are attested throughout the Middle Byzantine period. This can be explained with the dominant position of Trabzon and the trade routes connecting the East and the West. Despite the existence of other routes, this one, given the evidence provided by the *kommerkiarioi*, was busy and apparently safe, at least compared to the Southeastern Asia Minor border. At the current state of knowledge, it appears that the only other *theme* with a high number of *kommerkiarioi* was that of Chersōn, something which should perhaps be explained with trade routes as well.

⁶ The Argyroi were a powerful family in the 10th-11th c. On this Leōn, see *PmbZ* 24399. Although we know of seals issued by Leōn Argyros as imperial *prōtopatharios* and *stratēgos* (Gustave Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'empire byzantin* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1884), 620-621), it is impossible to identify the place where he served; it could have been Sebasteia or another place in his career, because it was common for high officials to switch posts every now and then. For this reason (and contrary to Rodolphe Guiland, *Recherches sur les institutions byzantines*, vol. 2 (Berlin and Amsterdam: Akademie Verlag - Adolf M. Hakkert, 1967), 179, 442), it is not correct to ascribe the title of imperial *prōtopatharios* to his career stage in Sebasteia. After Sebasteia, Leōn Argyros was promoted to *magistros* and *domestikos of the Scholai* (Kōnstantinos Porphyrogennētos, ed. Gyula Moravcsik and Romilly J. H. Jenkins. *Constantinus Porphyrogenitus. De Administrando Imperio* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1967), ch. 50.149, 150-152). Paul Stephenson, "A Development in Nomenclature on the Seals of the Byzantine Provincial Aristocracy in the Late Tenth Century," *REB* 52 (1994): 191, does not seem convinced that the aforementioned seals were issued by Leon, *stratēgos* of Sebasteia in 911 A.D., and ascribes them to a younger homonymous.

⁷ Eric McGeer, John Nesbitt and Nicolas Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art, vol. 4: The East* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), no. 49.1. See also: *PBW*: Elias 20102; Geōrgios Lebeniōtēs, *Ē politikē katarreusē tou Byzantiou stēn Anatolē* (Thessaloniki: Kentro Byzantinōn Ereunōn, 2007), 653 (no. 472); Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 491 (no. 3).



[Figure 3: Comparative chart of main officials in the three larger *themes*.]

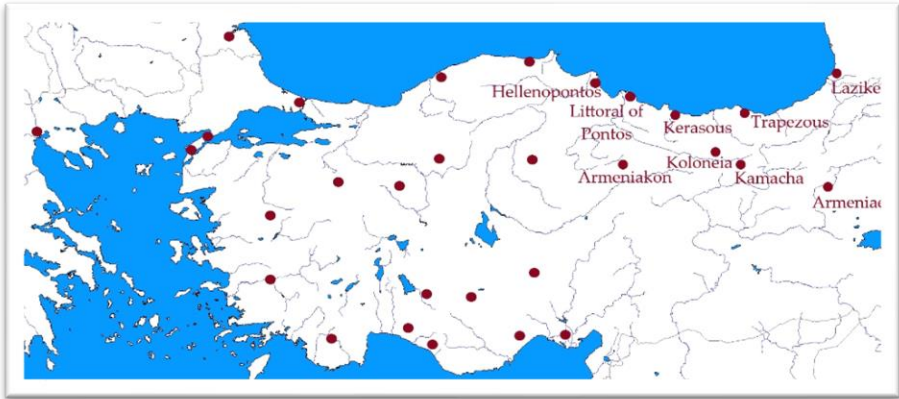
The non-thematic officials before and during the thematic administration

Leaving the *thematic* officials aside for a while, it is interesting to observe some of the non-*thematic* officials included in the research, the *kommerkiarioi* of the *apothēkai* of the Pontic areas, active from 663 to 730 A.D. (Figures 4-5). A total of 14 individuals who were sometimes working in pairs have been registered. They are evidenced through seals only.⁸ Figure 4 indicates the years, the geographical areas, and the officials' names, while figure 5 demonstrates the Pontic area where these *kommerkiarioi* were attested, but also all the other *apothēkai* of the Empire (mostly in Asia Minor) in which they were active.

⁸ Federico Montinaro, "Les premiers commerciaux byzantins," *TM* 17 (2013): 351-538; Efi Ragia, "The geography of the provincial administration of the Byzantine empire (ca. 600-1200). I.2. Apothekai of the Balkans and of the islands of the Aegean Sea (7th-8th c.)," *Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011): 86-113; Efi Ragia, "The geography of the provincial administration of the Byzantine empire (ca. 600-1200). I.1. The apothekai of Asia Minor (7th-8th c.)," *Byzantina Symmeikta* 19 (2009): 195-245; Wolfram Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten. Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.-9. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Löwenklau, 2002).

YEARS	Littoral of Pontus	Kerasus	Hellenopontos	Trapezus	Armeniakos	Kolonia	Kamacha	Armeniae
663-668	Stefanos		Stefanos					Petros
674-675								Petros
675-676								Petros
675-677								Petros
677-678								Petros
678-679								Petros
679-680			Kosmas					Petros
680-681								Petros
687-688								
688-689			Ioulanos					Ioulanos
689-690		Kosmas		Kosmas				
690-691								Kosmas
705-707		Theofylaktos						
707-708		Theofylaktos						
713-714		Theofylaktos						
714-715			Sinetos					
717-717		Anonymus [2]	Sinetos					
717-718								
720-721	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
721-722	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
			Anastasios					
722-723	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
723-724	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
724-725	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
725-726	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
726-727	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
727-728	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
			Theoktistos					
728-729	Anastasios	Iōannēs						
729-730	Anastasios	Iōannēs						

[Figure 4: The *kommerkiarioi* of the *apothēkai*.]



[Figure 5: Map of the *apothekei* where the *kommerkiarioi* under consideration were active.]

From the remaining non-thematic officials, it is important to mention the *dioikētēs* of Neokaisareia, the *episkeptitēs* of Tefrikē, the *archōn* of Kerasous, and the officials in Amisos: *dioikētēs*, *ōrreiarios*, *chartoularios*, *parafylax*, and *tourmarchēs*. The *ōrreiarioi* in particular were rather numerous in the last quarter of the 10th and the first quarter of the 11th c.

The *archōn* of Kolōneia

A unique seal of a certain Grēgorios, *archōn* of Kolōneia is kept at the Hermitage. The seal is dated in the 9th century (ca. 825-875 A.D.) and was published by B. A. Panchenko.⁹ On the obverse there is a cruciform invocative monogram of Laurent type V, with inscription in the quarters (“Mother of God, aid your servant”). On the reverse, there is an inscription in five lines, of which only four are visible due to the specimen’s preservation. The inscription reads: + Γρη\γοριφ \ ἄρχο[v]τι \ Κολων\ [ιας] (“Mother of God, aid your servant Grēgorios, *archōn* of Kolōneia”). In a recent study, the inscription was read in a

⁹ Saint-Petersburg, Hermitage, M-0677 (ex RAIK collection): Boris’ Panchenko Amfianovich, “Kolektsii Russkago Arkheologicheskago Instituta v” Konstantinopole, Katalog” molivdovulov” (= Catalogue des plombs de la collection de l’Institut archéologique Russe à Constantinople), *IRAİK* 9 (1904): 367 (no. 211 (215), fig. table II, no. 13) [date: 9th-10th c.]. See also: *PmbZ* 2510; Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 488 (no. 3); Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Byzantinische Rang- und Ämterstruktur im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 114.

different way, by replacing the geographical name of Kolōneia with that of Boleron – an area in the Balkans.¹⁰ A recent high-quality photo of the specimen¹¹ has provided the opportunity to confirm Panchenko's reading, and now it is beyond doubt that Grēgorios was in fact serving in Kolōneia.

The established view in scholarly literature suggests that a Byzantine official ranked as *archōn* was authorized to serve in the islands and the coastal cities exclusively. However, the aforementioned case of Grēgorios points to a different interpretation: that an *archōn* could be serving at any place, regardless of its geographic location. In support of this, one may refer to other examples of officials in a non-maritime place: we encounter an *archōn* of Kastoria, of Lopadion, of Nicaea, of Strymōn, etc.¹² Although the existence of an *archōn* of Lydia has been interpreted within the general idea that this particular area kept its status even after the creation of the *theme* of the Thrakēsioi, it cannot be the same for all the other cases, Kolōneia included, since there was no eparchy of Kolōneia (nor of Lopadion, nor Strymōn). This information comes to support the view expressed by the Dumbarton Oaks Seals editors (see here, footnote 12) and can help scholars take a fresh look on the issue of the *archōn* in the Middle Byzantine period.

The term *thema* on Byzantine seals

A very particular case in Byzantine sigillography and in the field of Byzantine *thematic* administration is the presence of the term *thema* (singular) on Byzantine seals. It is not related to the so-called *Armeni(a)ka themata* (plural) and is attested in combination with various other geographical areas. In our case, it exists in one of the seals' inscriptions related to Chaldia: Κύριε βοήθει τῷ σῶ δούλῳ Θεοφάνη or Θεοφίλω, βασιλικῷ σπαθαροκανδιδάτῳ καὶ δομῆστικῳ θέματος

¹⁰ Werner Seibt and Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou-Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil, Zentral- und Provinzialverwaltung* (Vienna: ÖAW, 2004), 224 [date: first half of the 9th c.].

¹¹ I would like to thank Dr. Elena Stepanova, The State Hermitage, for providing me with photos of the seal.

¹² Lopadion: John Nesbitt and Nicolas Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art, vol. 3: West, Northwest and Central Asia Minor and the Orient* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), no. 55.1 [date: 11th c.]; Nicaea: Jean Darrouzès, *Epistoliers byzantins du X^e siècle* (Paris: IFEB, 1960), 85 [date: 10th c.]; Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 3, no. 59.1 [date: 11th c.], with commentary in favor of the view which is also adopted in this paper; Strymon: John Nesbitt and Nicolas Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine seals at Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art, vol. 1: Italy, North of the Balkans, North of the Black Sea* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1991), no. 37.1 [date: 9th c.].

Χαλδίας (“Lord, aid your servant Theophanēs – or Theophilos –, imperial *spatharokandidatos* and *domestikos* of the *theme* of Chaldia”).¹³ It is extremely rare to find the term *thema* on a seal and in fact all ten known specimens (**Figure 6**) mentioning the word are dated in the second half of the 10th century. So far, there has been no explanation or suggestion about this issue.

NAME	OFFICE	AREA OF ACTIVITY
Theofanēs / Theofilos	imperial <i>spatharokandidatos</i> and <i>domestikos</i>	<i>theme</i> of Chaldia
Stefanos	imperial <i>prōtopatharios epi tōn oikeiakōn</i> and <i>anagrafeus</i>	<i>theme</i> of Opsikion
Christoforos	imperial <i>klērikos</i> and <i>kouboukleisios</i> and <i>exarchos</i>	<i>themes</i> of the Anatolikai and of the Kibyrraiōtai
Bardanios	imperial <i>spatharios</i> and <i>domestikos</i>	<i>theme</i> of the Kibyrraiōtai
Nikētas	imperial <i>spatharokandidatos</i> and <i>chartouarios</i>	<i>theme</i> of the Kibyrraiōtai
Eufēmianos	imperial <i>stratōr</i> and <i>chartouarios</i>	<i>theme</i> of Hellas
Iōsēf	imperial <i>vestitōr</i> and <i>abydikos</i> and <i>kommerkiarios</i>	of Thessalonikē, of the West and of the <i>theme</i> of Hellas
Theofilos	imperial <i>spatharios</i> and <i>prōtonotarios</i>	<i>theme</i> of Hellas
Stefanos ...	imperial <i>prōtopatharios epi tou Chrysotriklinou</i> and <i>epoptē</i>	<i>theme</i> of the Thrakesioi
Michaēl Monokaritēs	<i>prōtopatharios</i> and <i>chartouarios</i>	<i>theme</i> of Paphlagonia

[Figure 6: The term *thema* in seal inscriptions.]

Combinations of *themes* in Byzantine administration

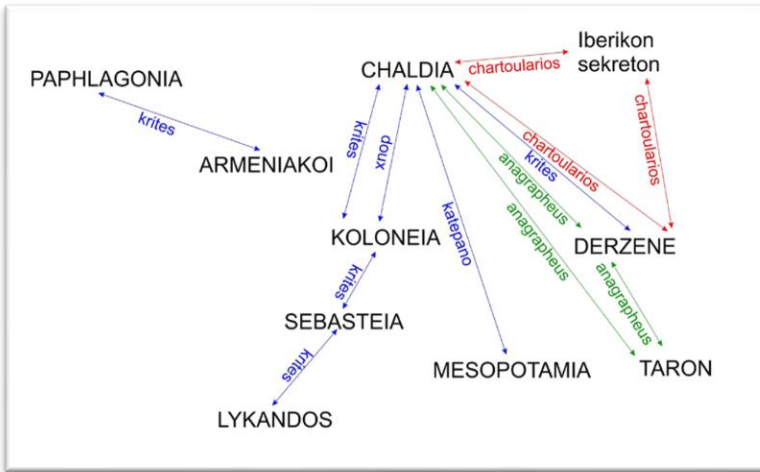
The combination of *themes* is yet another very complicated issue, not always explained through historical evidence. A rather interesting case is that of Iōannēs Chaldos, *patrikios* and *doux* of the Armeniakoi, of the Boukellarioi and of Thessalonikē, in 995-996 A.D.¹⁴ It is not quite clear whether he held office in all three areas at the same time (i.e. if he

¹³ McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 4, no. 32.5 [date: 10th c.]. See also *PmbZ* 28098.

¹⁴ Jacques Lefort et al. (eds.), *Actes d'Iviron. I. Des origines au milieu du XI^e siècle* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1985), no. 8; Skylitzēs, ed. Ioannes Thurn. *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1973), 357. See also: Nicolas Oikonomides, “A propos de la première occupation byzantine de la Bulgarie (971-ca 986),” in Nicolas Oikonomides, *Social and Economic Life in Byzantium*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 581-589 (no. XXV): 584; Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 380 (no. 2); Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1990): 221.

was commanding a large army, consisting of units from various *themes*, perhaps in the absence of other high military commanders, during the Byzantine-Bulgarian wars), or if he served in the Armeniakoi before moving to the Boukellarioi and, finally, to Thessalonikē (i.e. he kept mentioning his previous posts for prestige).

Other cases of officials exercising jurisdiction over a combination of *themes* are known through sigillographic evidence. In this respect, **figure 7** demonstrates a scheme with the possible combinations. Blue colour indicates two combined themes and green indicates three. Red also marks three, but with the inclusion of an area (Ibērikon sekreton) which is not part of the Pontos region studied in the research Project.



[Figure 7: Combinations of *themes* in the Pontos area.]

The term *forologos*

The term *forologos* is arguably unique in the *thematic* administration of the Middle Byzantine period and designates a tax collector. According to the Miracles of Saint Eugenios,¹⁵ this was a person – whose name remains unknown – active in the Trabzon area around 1050-1075 A.D., who might have been either a *dioikētēs* or, less probably, a *kommerkiarios*, and it is impossible to clarify which of the

¹⁵ Jan Olof Rosenqvist, *The Hagiographic Dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1996), 350 (Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 29.1871-1872, 1876; 30.1890-1891).

two before more evidence is available. The date is not clear either. Rosenqvist, who published the source, dated the 29th miracle to the 11th-12th c. Yet, based on the information about the *forologos'* father, Methodios, active in the era of Kōnstantinos Monomachos (1042-1055 A.D.), perhaps we may date this *forologos* approximately to the third quarter of the 11th c. To the contrary, there is no clue about the date of the 30th miracle mentioning yet another *forologos*, named Theodoulos and also active in Trabzon (Chaldia).¹⁶ It is possible that the anonymous *forologos* in Trabzon (i.e. Methodios' son) can be identified with the *forologos* whom Psellos recommended to the *kritēs* of Macedonia. This anonymous *forologos* originated from a rich family in the Black Sea area (without further information) and desired to be appointed in his home place, so Psellos wrote to his contact in order to help him move there.¹⁷

The term *apografeus*

The aforementioned Methodios, father of the anonymous *forologos*, also held an obscure office called *apografeus* in the source. His duty was to register the domains in the entire Asia Minor, Chaldia included and specifically mentioned.¹⁸ It is not clear what the nature of his office was, but probably he served as *anagrafeus*, although the text does not specify if he was appointed in Chaldia only. Perhaps he was moving from one *theme* to another. Since there is no *apografeus* in the *Taktika*, it seems more reasonable to favour the *anagrafeus* identification. Less probably, the person was an *epoptēs*. The term *apografeus* is attested much later, from the second half of the 12th century onwards and the unique seal mentioning this word, discovered in Bulgaria, is dated in that same period.¹⁹

The term *bandoforos*

The *bandoforos* of the Armeniakoi, i.e. the standard-bearer of a *bandon*, a small military unit as a division of a *tourma*, is another very rare term, again unique for the *themes*. So far, through the Byzantine *Taktika* and in particular that by Filotheos composed in the late 9th

¹⁶ Rosenquist, *Dossier of St. Eugenios*, 350 (Lazaropoulos, *Synopsis*, 30.1890-1891).

¹⁷ Psellos, ed. Kōnstantinos Sathas. *Mesaionikē Bibliothēkē*, vol. 5 (Venice: Phoenix and Paris: Maisonneuve, 1876), 439-440 (no. 172). For another *forologos*, active in the *doukaton* of Antioch, see: *PBW*: Anonymus 156 (Skylitzēs, 395-996; Zōnaras, ed. Mauricius Pinder and Theodorus Büttner-Wobst. *Epitome historiarum*, vol. 3 (Bonn: Weber, 1897), 588).

¹⁸ Rosenquist, *Dossier of St. Eugenios*, 238 (Lazaropoulos, *Logos*, 5.606-611). On the date see: 238-239.

¹⁹ Ivan Jordanov, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, vol. 3 (Sofia: NAIM-BAN, 2009), no. 835

century, we have only known *bandoforoī* attached to the palace guard. Of course, the office is mentioned in Maurikios' *Stratēgikon* and Leon's *Taktika*, though in a different context, unrelated to the *thematic* administration. In our case, the officer is an anonymous person, native of Boōn, in Polemōnion (on the Black Sea coast), and grandfather of Saint Iōannēs, bishop of Gothia. He must have been active around the last quarter of the 7th c.²⁰

III. Notable officials and family relations

A selected number of individuals – officials related to the area under investigation – shall be presented below, in order to illustrate the valuable types of information which can be inferred from our prosopographic study. These examples are indicative about several significant aspects of Byzantine social history among which mobility, development of individual careers and the role of family connections.

Kōnstantinos Promoundēnos ca. 1040-1070 A.D.	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>hypatos</i> and <i>kritēs</i> of <i>Charsianon</i>
2	<i>patrikios</i> , <i>vestēs</i> , <i>kritēs</i> of the <i>Vēlon</i> and of the <i>Anatolikoi</i>
3	<i>vestarchēs</i> , <i>kritēs</i> of the <i>Vēlon</i> and of the <i>Anatolikoi</i>
4	<i>vestarchēs</i> , <i>kritēs</i> of the <i>Vēlon</i> and of the <i>Armeniakiōi</i>
5	<i>vestarchēs</i> , <i>kritēs</i> of the <i>Vēlon</i> and <i>praitōr</i> of the <i>Boukellarioi</i>
6	<i>magistros</i> , <i>kritēs</i> of the <i>Vēlon</i> and of the <i>Anatolikoi</i>
7	<i>magistros</i> , <i>vestēs</i> , <i>kritēs</i> of the <i>Vēlon</i> and of the <i>Thrakēsioi</i>
Leōn Promoundēnos ca. 1040-1060 A.D.	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>protospatharios</i> <i>epi tou Chrysotrikinou</i> , <i>prōtonotarios</i> , <i>kritēs</i> of the <i>hippodrome</i> , of <i>Chaldia</i> and of <i>Derzēnē</i>

[Figure 8: Kōnstantinos Promoundēnos' career.]

²⁰ Marie-France Auzépy, "La Vie de Saint Jean de Gothie (BHG 891)," in *La Crimée entre Byzance et le Khaganat Khazar*. ed. Constantin Zuckerman (Paris: CNRS, 2006), 69-85. See also *PmbZ* 4280A; George Huxley, "On the *Vita* of St John of Gotthia," *GRBS* 19 (1978): 162.

Kōnstantinos Promoundēnos (**Figure 8**) had a remarkable career in the Asia Minor *themes* in the period ca. 1040-1070 A.D., with the Armeniakoi somewhere in the middle of his *cursus honorum*.²¹ He had previously served in Charsianon and the Anatolikoi, and later in Boukellarioi, the Anatolikoi and the Thrakēsioi. Another family member, Leōn Promoundēnos, was serving at the same time (ca. 1040-1060 A.D.) in the neighbouring *themes*: *prōtopatharios epi tou Chrysotriklinou*, *prōtonotarios*, *kritēs of the hippodrome*, of Chaldia and of Derzēnē.²² It is interesting to note that officials who most probably (although their birthplace has not been identified) did not originate from the East were taking positions only there.

Leōn Areobindēnos	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>spatharokandidatos, asēkrētis and kritēs of Chaldia and of Derzēnē</i>
Matthaios Areobindēnos	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>megas asēkrētis and kritēs of Chaldia and of Derzēnē</i>
Nikolaos Areobindēnos	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>spatharokandidatos and prōtonotarios of Chaldia</i>
Nikolaos Areobindēnos	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>spatharokandidatos, asēkrētis and kritēs of Chaldia and of Derzēnē</i>

[Figure 9: The Areobindēnos family.]

The family of Areobindēnos (**Figure 9**), originating from the area of the capital (Constantinople), was very much attracted to the East or perhaps had migrated there. This is the only way to explain how four members of the family were serving in Chaldia (and Derzēnē) at about

²¹ Valentina S. Shandrovskaia, “Sfragistika,” in *Iskusstvo Vizantii v Sobraniyah SSSR. Katalog vystavki* (Moscow: Sovetskiy Hudozhnik, 1977, vol. 2), no. 713; SBS 5 (1998): 143.

²² Maria Campagnolo-Pothitou and Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Sceaux de la collection Georges Zacos au Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2016), no. 124. See also: Seibt and Wassiliou-Seibt, *Bleisiegel*, 179; PBW: Leon 20289.

the same time (first half of the 11th c.): three *kritai* (Leōn²³, Matthaios²⁴, Nikolaos²⁵) and one *prōtonotarios* (Nikolaos²⁶).

Similar is the case of Christoforos Mitylēnaios (**Figure 10**), the famous poet, who also served in the East exclusively and ended his career as *kritēs* in the Armeniakoi and Paphlagonia (ca. 1040-1050 A.D.).²⁷ Theodōros Proteuōn (**Figure 11**) also served as *kritēs* of the Armeniakoi (ca. 1025-1050 A.D.).²⁸ He did not have a brilliant career like the aforementioned officials, but it is interesting to note that another member of his family was serving at the same time in the Balkans.

²³ McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 4, no. 61.3; Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Sceaux de la collection Zacos (Bibliothèque nationale de France) se rapportant aux provinces orientales de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris: BnF, 2001), no. 27. See also: Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 317; PBW: Leon 20101; Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 463 (no. 7).

²⁴ Nikolaj P. Likhachev, *Istoricheskoe znachenie italo-grecheskoi ikonopisi izobrazhenija Bogomateri* (Saint Petersburg: Izdanie Imperatorskogo Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obshchestva, 1911), 30 (table VII, no. 22). See also: Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 464 (no. 9).

²⁵ Cheynet, *Sceaux Zacos*, 55.

²⁶ McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 4, no. 32.35a-c; Valentina S. Šandrovskaja and Werner Seibt, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel der Staatlichen Eremitage mit Familiennamen. 1. Teil. Sammlung Lichačev – Namen von A bis I* (Vienna: ÖAW, 2005), 46; Cheynet, *Sceaux Zacos*, 55, fn. 111; Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*, 290 (no. 3), 620 (no. 8). See also: Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 317; *PmbZ* 26086; PBW: Nikolaos 20205; Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 466 (no. 8).

²⁷ Vatic. gr. 1357, f. 82 r. (see: Eduard Kurtz, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios* (Leipzig: August Neumanns Verlag, 1903), XI). See also: PBW: Christophoros 13102; Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 362 (no. 8), 383 (no. 18) [date: 1034-1055]; Geōrgios Lebeniōtēs, “To thema/doukato tōn Anatolikōn kata to deuteron ēmisy tou 11ou aiōna,” *Byzantiaka* 25 (2005-2006): 90 (no. 28); Seibt and Wassiliou-Seibt, *Bleisiegel*, 200; Nicolas Oikonomides, “Life and society in eleventh century Constantinople,” in Nicolas Oikonomides, *Social and Economic Life in Byzantium*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 1-14 (no. XXI): 1-2; Jean-Claude Cheynet, Cécile Morrisson and Werner Seibt, *Les sceaux byzantins de la collection Henri Seyrig* (Paris: BnF, 1991), no. 193.

²⁸ Valentina S. Shandrovskaya, “Chto izvestno o Protevonah,” in *Vizantijskie Ocherki. Trudy rossijskikh uchenykh k XIX mezhdunarodnomu kongressu vizantinistov* (Moscow: Indrik, 1996), 221-222, fn. 24; *SBS* 6 (1999): 110 [date: ca. 1060]; McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 4, no. 22.23c; Vitalien Laurent, “Mélanges d'épigraphie grecque et de sigillographie byzantine. II. Sceaux byzantins inédits,” *Echos d'Orient* 31 (1932): 442-443 (no. 13); unpublished seal - France: Paris, IFEB 1166. See also: Vitalien Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin, vol. II: L'administration centrale* (Paris: IFEB - CNRS, 1981), 443; Seibt and Wassiliou-Seibt, *Bleisiegel*, 193; Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 382 (no. 16).

Christoforos Mitylēnaios ca. 1020-1060 A.D.	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>prōtopatharios and kritēs of Charsianon</i>
2	<i>imperial prōtopatharios and kritēs of Mesopotamia</i>
3	<i>imperial prōtopatharios and kritēs of the Anatolikoi</i>
4	<i>prōtopatharios epi tou Chrysotriklinou, kritēs of the Vēlon and of Paphlagonia</i>
5	<i>patrikios and kritēs of Paphlagonia</i>
6	<i>patrikios anthypatos and kritēs of Paphlagonia and of the Armeniakoi</i>
7	<i>magistros and anthypatos</i>

[Figure 10: Christoforos Mitylēnaios' career.]

Theodōros Prōteuōn ca. 1020-1060 A.D.	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>prōtopatharios and kritēs of the Kibyrraiōtai</i>
2	<i>prōtopatharios and kritēs of the Armeniakoi</i>
3	<i>prōtopatharios, kritēs of the Vēlon and koiaistōr</i>
4	<i>patrikios and kritēs of the Vēlon</i>
Nikēphoros Prōteuōn ca. 1050-1055 A.D.	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>ek prosōpou of Morra and Philippopolis</i>
2	<i>archōn (doux) of Bulgaria</i>

[Figure 11: Theodōros Prōteuōn's career.]

The case of Alexios Mousele (**Figure 12**) is different. Mousele, also attested as Mousoulakios, which seems to be a diminutive form, was a family of Armenian origin active in Byzantium from the 7th until the 12th century. Alexios Mousele, *drouggarios tēs viglas*, was sent by Empress Eirene to the *theme* of the Armeniakoi in order to settle the issue of revolt against her. There Alexios was unofficially proclaimed *stratēgos* by the local army in September 790 A.D. He was clearly on the side of Eirene's son, Kōnstantinos. Shortly after, under Kōnstantinos VI, in October 790 or a little later, he was officially appointed *stratēgos* of the Armeniakoi. Later, probably in December 791 A.D. and while still serving in the same *theme*, he was promoted to *patrikios*. At about the same time, however and for reasons unknown to us but probably

related to his refusal to recognize Eirene, whom Konstantinos had just released and restored to the palace, Alexios was removed from his post and was confined in Constantinople. The local army protested, asking for Alexios to be sent back in charge. At some time between late December 791 A.D. and late January 792 A.D., Alexios returned and stayed in the Armeniakoi until July of that same year the latest, when he was arrested and blinded under the suspicion of plotting against the emperor.²⁹ There is a point worth of attention: that Alexios' popularity among the Armeniakoi and his promotions may not have been due only to his skills. Grēgorios Mousoulakios, most probably a relative, was very powerful at that time, serving as *komēs* of Opsikion for several years. One may suspect thus that Grēgorios' influence both in the palace and the Armeniakoi – himself being of Armenian descent – assisted the promotion of Alexios in the *theme* of the Armeniakoi.

Alexios Mousele October 790 – December 791 A.D.	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>spatharios</i> and <i>droungarios tēs Viglas</i>
2	<i>prōtopatharios</i> and <i>stratēgos of the Armeniakoi</i>
3	<i>patrikios</i> and <i>stratēgos of the Armeniakoi</i>
Gregorios Mousoulakios 766-786 A.D.	
Career stage	Title(s) / Office(s) / Area
1	<i>imperial spatharios</i> and <i>komēs of Opsikion</i>
2	<i>patrikios</i> and <i>komēs of Opsikion</i>
3	<i>anthypatos patrikios</i> and <i>komēs of Opsikion</i>

[Figure 12: Alexios Mousele and Grēgorios Mousoulakios.]

IV. The artistic aspect

In addition to the textual information provided by various sources on prosopography, iconography can reveal further, sometimes

²⁹ Theofanēs, ed. Carolus De Boor. *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883), 466-467; Zōnaras, 292-294; McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DŌSeals* 4, no. 22.41; *SBS* 5 (1998): 183; John Nesbitt, "Review of Laurent, Vitalien. *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin, vol. II: L'administration centrale*. Paris: IFEB - CNRS, 1981," *Speculum* 58.3 (1983): 771-772; Vitalien Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin, vol. II: L'administration centrale* (Paris: IFEB - CNRS, 1981), no. 665. See also: *PmbZ* 193; Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 376 (no. 15) [date: 791-792, as *patrikios*]

fascinating details about the individuals of the time. It is of particular interest to observe a few rare and unusual examples which illustrate the diversity of the iconographical evidence originating from Pontos. Among the scenes of religious character, the most peculiar example is a stylite's pillar on the seal of a *kritēs* of Kolōneia from the Dumbarton Oaks collection (second quarter of the 11th c.).³⁰ A rosace combined with a cross adorns the seal of Basileios, *prōtonotarios* of Chaldia from the same collection (late 10th-early 11th c.).³¹ This floral cross – unique in sigillography – reminds us of the medieval Armenian crosses, yet so far there is no known parallel of this particular motif. Among the less common – although not completely unknown – depictions are those of a peacock. One such example can be observed on the seal of Geōrgios, imperial *spatharios* and *kommerkiarios* of Chaldia (second half of the 10th c.).³² A sphinx – again a unique motif in sigillography – is visible on the seal of Fōtios, imperial *prōtospatharios epi tōn oikeiakōn* and *kommerkiarios* of Chaldia (second half of the 10th c.).³³

In a recent study Alicia Walker³⁴ considered the peacock as a symbol borrowed from Islamic art. This is open to interpretation, because already in Greek Antiquity, and later in Christian art, this bird symbolized the soul's immortality. Furthermore, in the second half of the 10th c. the use of animals, birds and fantastic creatures was popular in Byzantium.³⁵ Nevertheless, Walker's suggestion reveals an interesting perspective on the issue and raises the question of the origin of the Sphinx, as well as another unidentified creature (another peacock?) depicted on a seal mentioning the term *thema* discussed above.

³⁰ McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 4, no. 48.5. See also: *PBW*: Anonymus 20267; *Lebeniōtēs, Politikē katarreusē*, 570 (no. 142); Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, p. 487, fn. 2; Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, 147, fn. 38 (Andreas?).

³¹ McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 4, no. 32.33. See also *PBW*: Basileios 20246; Blysidou et al., *Mikra Asia*, 466 (no. 7).

³² McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 4, no. 32.18a-b.

³³ McGeer, Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *DOSeals* 4, no. 32.25; *SBS* 5 (1998): 81; George Galavaris, "Seals of the Byzantine Empire," *Archaeology* 12 (1959): 267 (no. 5) [date: 11th-12th c.]; Basilikē Penna, "Mē thrēskeutikes parastaseis se byzantines sfragides (10os aiōnas): kataboles kai ermēneutikes proseggiseis." In *Ē proslēpsē tēs Archaiotētās sto Byzantio, kyriōs kata tous Palaiologeious Chronous, Praktika Diethnous Synedriou (Spartē 3-5 Noembriou 2012)*, ed. Georgia Xanthakē-Karamanou (Athens: Papazēsē, 2014), 278-279, fig. 2.

³⁴ Alicia Walker, "Islamicizing Motifs in Byzantine Lead Seals: Exoticizing Style and Expression of Identity," *Medieval History Journal* 15/2 (2012): 397-398.

³⁵ Penna, *Parastaseis*, 275-303.

The iconography of officials is a fascinating side-topic which deserves a study of its own.³⁶ It is worth mentioning the rare – rather unique – instance of a portrait of a *thematic* official from a manuscript.³⁷ The person in question is Theodoros Gabras, depicted together with his wife Eirēnē. He was *topotērētēs* of Kolōneia and was later promoted to *doux* of Chaldia. The miniatures come from a manuscript which he himself commissioned and was finished in May 1067 A.D. The representation is of particular importance because the Byzantines generally avoided depicting themselves in portraits and when they did so, it was only on very special occasions (e.g. as donors of a religious establishment or in invocation to a Holy Person).

Conclusion

The ongoing research Project on Pontos brings together, for the first time, all the evidence on the administration and especially the prosopography of the region from the 7th to the 11th c. The collected material provides useful information on the careers and mobility of individuals and families alike.

These brief case studies and the relevant examples have demonstrated how the research on individuals, especially through sigillography, can help us understand better the Pontos' social history in Byzantine times.

It should be emphasized that prosopographic catalogues like the ones developed within the *TAKTIKON* Project (including the one about Pontos) can serve as powerful research tools that will be useful in any future study related to linguistics and the institutional, social and artistic history of a region. Furthermore, they are indispensable in the research of mobility of individuals and families within the administrative network of the Empire as well as its geographic space. Prosopography can be also applied in the study of devotion and the

³⁶ Regarding sigillography, this fairly understudied topic has been briefly discussed in Olga Karagiorgou, “‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’: Looking anew at the Iconography of the Tondi,” in *The Tondi in Venice and Dumbarton Oaks. Art and Imperial Ideology between Byzantium and Venice*, ed. Niccolò Zorzi, Albrecht Berger and Lorenzo Lazzarini (Rome and Venice: Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani – Viella, 2019), 97-98, with fn. 17.

³⁷ The original is kept in St. Catherine’s Monastery in Sinai (codex Sinaiticus graecus 172), but several pages from it were taken and transported by Porfiriy Uspenskiy, a Russian scholar, in the 19th c. and they are kept today in Saint Petersburg’s State Library (codex graecus 291). A detailed study on Gabras is currently under preparation by the author of this article.

cult of Saints; the administration; the origins, forms and popularity of certain names, and many more.

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