

A NEW LEAD SEAL OF GREGORIOS KAMATEROS

Ioto VALERIEV*

Cuvinte cheie: *sfragistică, sfârșitul secolului XI – începutul secolului XII, Dobrogea, Kamateroi, Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118)*

Keywords: *Sphragistics, end of the 11th – beginning of the 12th century, Dobruja, Kamateroi, Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118)*

Rezumat: *Autorul prezintă un sigiliu din plumb intrat în colecțiile Muzeului Regional de Istorie din Dobrici (Bulgaria). Piesa a fost descoperită pe teritoriul regiunii Dobrici. Sigiliul a aparținut lui Gregorios Kamateros, personal. Poate fi datat între sfârșitul secolului al XI-lea și începutul secolului al XII-lea. În articol sunt analizate izvoare scrise, dar și alte sigilii care pot fi puse în legătură cu Gregorios Kamateros.*

Abstract: *The author presents a Byzantine lead seal received in the funds of the Regional Museum of History in Dobrich (Bulgaria) which comes from the territory of Dobrich province. The Seal belongs to Gregorios Kamateros, in his private capacity, and it is generally dated to the end of the 11th – the beginning of the 12th century. The narrative sources and other lead seals possibly connected to Gregorios Kamateros are examined in this article.*

The subject of the current publication is a Byzantine lead seal recently acquired for the collection of the Regional Museum of History in Dobrich (Fig. 1)¹. The location where the seal was found is unknown, but it certainly comes from the territory of Dobrich Region. In the historical and geographical region of Dobroudja, which after 971 was included in the administrative organization of the Byzantine Empire, finding lead seals is rather usual. They are mainly discovered in the fortresses close to the Danube River: Dristra (Silistra), Oltina, Dinogetia (Garvăn), Isaccea and only a few originate from the interior of the area.

Dimensions of the seal: diameter of the core: 23,5/13,1 mm; diameter of the inner circle: 17 mm; weight: 3,43 g. It is a well-centered and readable seal; one-third is missing.

Obv. Bust of Virgin Orans with a medallion on her breast:

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¹ Regional Museum of History – Dobrich, Inv. No. I 5542.

.. || ΘV : [M(ήτη)ρ] Θ(εο)ϛ.

Rev. Inscription in four lines:

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ΘΚΕΒ'Θ'

ΓΡΙΓΟΡΙ .

ΤωΚΑ . .

ΤΗΡ .



Θ(εοτό)κε β(οή)θ(ει) Γριγορί[ω] τῷ Κα[μα]τηρ[ῳ]

The seal belongs to Gregorios Kamateros, in his private capacity. According to the way the legend on the reverse was written out, two variants of this type of seals are known. More seals are known from the first variant², but the one presented here pertains to the second variant³. In general, these seals date back to the end of the 11th – the beginning of the 12th century⁴.

Beside Gregorios Kamateros' seals as a private person, we are aware of two more kinds of seals, the legend of which bespeaks the same name. On the first kind he is presented as protospatharios at the Chrysotriklinos, mystographos, judge at the Hippodrome and notarios of the charity foundations⁵. On the second kind he is mentioned already as protopraitor of Peloponnesos and Hellas⁶.

On the basis of iconographic and paleographic characteristics it can be assumed that the seals of Gregorios Kamateros as a private person and as a protopraitor of Peloponnesos and Hellas belong to one and the same person⁷. We

² MORDTMANN 1873, p. 59, no. 39; SCHLUMBERGER 1884, p. 628; ŠANDROVSKAJA 1959, p. 173-182; LIHAČEV 1991, p. 161-162, Tab. 68.11 (inaccessible). Known are also unpublished seals of this kind from the Dumbarton Oaks collection, from the Zacos collection, from the Institute of Byzantine Studies in France, from the coin cabinet of the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum, from the collections Fogg and Shaw: JORDANOV 2006, p. 173; JEFFREYS *et alii*, *Prosopography of the Byzantine world* (2011), consulted 1.VIII.2013, Boulloterion 1740, <http://db.pbw.kcl.ac.uk/id/boulloterion/1740>.

³ Two seals are treasured up in the Zacos collection, other two in Dumbarton Oaks, another one in the Istanbul Museum: STAVRAKOS 2000, p. 179 (inaccessible); Michael Jeffreys *et alii*, *Prosopography of the Byzantine world* (2011), consulted 1.VIII.2013, Boulloterion 1741, <http://db.pbw.kcl.ac.uk/id/boulloterion/1741>; CHEYNET, GÖKYILDIRIM, BULGURLU 2012, № 7.56.

⁴ JORDANOV 2006, p. 173.

⁵ JORDANOV 2006, p. 173.

⁶ SCHLUMBERGER 1884, p. 191, no. 6; SCHLUMBERGER 1895, p. 199-200, 224-225, no. 1, 45; NESBITT & OIKONOMIDES 1991, no. 8.39; STAVRAKOS 2000, no. 110 (inaccessible); JORDANOV 2006, p. 173.

⁷ JORDANOV 2006, p. 173.

do not have such supporting data for the seals as *mystographos*, judge at the Hippodrome and *notarios* of the charitable foundations.

In one of the letters of the Archbishop of Ohrid, Theophylactos, addressed to Gregorios Kamateros, the last one is mentioned as *protasekretis* and *nobelissimos*, but the date of this letter is unsure⁸. Another written source from 1088 informs us about Gregorios Kamateros, son of Basileios Kamateros, a Byzantine dignitary from the second half of the 11th century⁹. Gregorios Kamateros, a secretary of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118), is known from Anna Komnene's "Alexiad"¹⁰.

According to Niketas Choniates' information, the same person was *logothetes* of the *sekreton* under Emperor John II Komnenos (1118–1143)¹¹. A poetic work by the Byzantine writer from the 12th century, Nikolaos Kallikles and a monody by Theodoros Prodromos are devoted to Gregorios Kamateros; he is presented there as *sebastos* and *logothetes*¹². It is supposed that the unknown addressee with *logothetes* title in one of Michael Italikos' letters is namely Gregorios Kamateros¹³. In the written sources mentioned above, Gregorios Kamateros is described as an influential figure at the imperial court, with sophisticated culture and multilateral knowledge¹⁴.

The Byzantine Kamateros family has been subject to several scientific studies¹⁵. The first attested person with this family name is the *spatharokandidatos* Petronas Kamateros, who was sent at the request of the Khagan of the Khazars by Emperor Theophilos (829–842) to supervise the construction of the Sarkel fortress; later the same was appointed as *strategos* of Cherson and was given the title *protospatharios*. Then, for a long period of time, the family name Kamateros is absent from the written sources¹⁶.

According to the information in the written sources and the sphragistic data, members of the family are known for the time span 10th–13th centuries, their influence being strongest under the rule of the Komnenoi dynasty (1081–1185)¹⁷.

During all the time of his rule Alexios I Komnenos relied on the representatives of kinship families. In the age of the Komnenoi the influence of the old families like Skleroi, Argyroi, Dalassenoi and others was gradually replaced by new ones: such as Kantakouzenoi, Palaiologoi, Vranes, etc. In the military campaigns they were part of the immediate environment of the ruler. Moreover, they form (along with other senior commanders) the Permanent Council to the Emperor. Other Byzantine families, such as Kamateroi and

⁸ Theophylactus Achridensis 1994, p. 221; ŠANDROVSKAJA 1959, p. 180–181.

⁹ ŠANDROVSKAJA 1959, p. 175; JORDANOV 2006, p. 169.

¹⁰ Comnena 1996, p. 259.

¹¹ Choniates 1975, p. 9; ŠANDROVSKAJA 1959, p. 175, 180; SKOULATOS 1980, p. 110.

¹² ŠANDROVSKAJA 1959, p. 176–180; SKOULATOS 1980, p. 110.

¹³ Italikos 1972, p. 39–41; Theophylactus Achridensis 1994, p. 107, no. 1.

¹⁴ SKOULATOS 1980, p. 111.

¹⁵ LAURENT 1931, p. 253–272 (inaccessible); STADTMÜLLER 1934, p. 352–358; JORDANOV 2006, p. 167–174.

¹⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenitus 1967, p. 182–185; CHEYNET, GÖKYILDIRIM, BULGURLU 2012, p. 668.

¹⁷ ŠANDROVSKAJA 1959, c. 174; JORDANOV 2006, p. 174.

Aiophedoritoi, took care of the civil government of the Empire¹⁸.

The Gregorios Kamateros seal from the Dobrich Region gave important information about the correspondence of this Byzantine dignitary person. Although the sphragistic evidences from Dobroudja for the period from the end of the 11th–12th centuries are extremely rare¹⁹, this seal still provides details about the Byzantine administrative presence in is area. Based on the available sources I can offer a closer date for the seal of Gregory Kamateros. I believe that it can be fit in the time when Leon Nikerites ruled the Paristrion Theme (about 1091–1095/96) and that means after the Pechenegs' rout in the Battle of Levounion in 1091. Leon Nikerites is also the last known ruler of Paristrion Theme. Therefore, 1095/96 could be the latest date, when Gregorios Kamateros' seal could have been sent.

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¹⁸ Comnena 1996, p. 10-11; KAZHDAN 1966, p. 85.

¹⁹ From Silistra, for instance, only three seals from the 12th century are known: JORDANOV 2011, p. 111.

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