

# UNPUBLISHED SEAL OF NIKEPHOROS BOTANEIATES AS A PROEDROS AND DOUX OF ANTIOCH

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**Keywords:** *lead seal, Nikephoros Botaneiates, XI<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantine administration, theme Paristrion.*

**Abstract:** *The object of this article is the discovery of a leaden seal belonging to Nikephoros Botaneiates proedros and doux of Antioch. According to the one who found it and presented it to Dobrich Museum of History, it was discovered somewhere in the Karakuz land, South from Silistra. In analyzing this seal we also used data regarding four other similar bullae of Nikephoros Botaneiates. The discovery of this bulla is very important for clarifying what kind of relation there was between Nikephoros Botaneiates and the Byzantine administration in theme Paristrion.*

Some time ago in the Dobrich Museum of History a leaden seal was offered to be bought off. It is not well-preserved, chipped on the top and on the side. The reading is not problematic. For various reasons it was not bought. At present it is being stored in a private collection. According to the bearer its location is in the region south from Silistra, in the Karakuz land, although this information is impossible to confirm.

Dimensions: outer circle 26.5 mm, inner circle 22 mm, thickness 4.5 mm, weight 18.12 g.

Obv. St. Demetrios standing, holding a spear (r. hand) and a shield (l. hand), both resting on the ground. Vertical inscription (fig. 1): ... – M. | TP. | O. – [Ὁ(ἄγιο)ς Δη]μ[ή]τρ[ι]ο[ς].

Rev. Inscription in seven lines starting with crosslet. Border of dots (fig. 2):

.....	[+Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει)]
.WC....	[τ]ῶ σ[ῶ] [δού(λῳ)]
.IKHΦOP,.	Νικηφόρ[ω]
ΠΡΟΕΔΡΩ	προέδρῳ (καὶ)
ΔΟΥΚΙΑΝΤΙ.	δουκὶ Ἀντι[ο]-
XEIA TWRO	χείλα(ς) τῶ Βο-
TAVEIAT	τανειάτ(η)

+Κύριε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Νικηφόρῳ προέδρῳ καὶ δουκὶ Ἀντιοχείας τῷ Βοτανειάτῃ.

+ *Lord aid your servant Nikephoros Botaneiates, proedros and doux of Antioch.*

And so, the examined seal is of Nikephoros Botaneiates as a proedros and doux of Antioch. I am aware of four other seals analogous to this one. The first one is from G. Zacos' collection<sup>1</sup>, the second bulla is published by N. Lichačev<sup>2</sup>. The other two are mentioned by O. Karagiorgou, as one of them can be bought at an auction, and the other is stored in the museum in Adana, Turkey and is not published<sup>3</sup>.

Here is the data and pictures gathered by O. Karagiorgou on the four currently known bullae<sup>4</sup>:

1. PR: Seal in the Zacos coll (fig. 3).

Ed: Zacos – Veglerly 2688. See also PBW online (2006.2): Boulloterion 3007.

D: 29; f. 20\* mm

2. Russia: Hermitage, M-8089 (fig. 4; fig. 5).

Ed: N.P. Lichačev. *Molivdovuly Grečeskogo Vostoka*, ed. V.S. Šandrovskaja. Moscow 1991, 99-101, pl. LXIII 3.

D: 25; f. 20\* mm

3. PR: Seal of UnPrLoc (fig. 6; fig. 7).

Ed: Giessener Münzhaltung, Sale 62 (20.4.1993), no. 721 (ill.; starting price 1000 DM).

D: 28 mm; f.\* 20 mm

W: 15.55 g

4. TURKEY: Adana museum (fig. 8; Fig. 9).

Ed: Unpublished, but mentioned in SBS 2 (1990) 132.

D: 29 mm; f. 24\* mm

According to the author, the first three seals are from the same boulloterion, they differ from the seal in Adana by their dimensions and also by the inscription on the obverse – the following can be read on the obverse of the first three seals: Q | ΔH | MH – T | PI | OC; and on the bulla from Adana: Q | Δ | H | M | H – [TPIOC]<sup>5</sup>.

The newly-presented seal from the Silistra region is from a third, different boulloterion because the spelling of the title „προέδρῳ” is grammatically correct, with the letter „Ϝ”, while on the other four already known seals it is spelled with the letter „ο”. The personal name “Nikephoros” is also spelled with an „ο” on the four known seals. On the one from Silistra the last letter of the name „Νικηφόρῳ” is broken off but it can be assumed that it is „Ϝ”.

<sup>1</sup> ZACOS, VEGLERLY 1972, no. 2688.

<sup>2</sup> LICHACHEV 1991, p. 63, № 3, plate LXIII.

<sup>3</sup> KARAGIORGOU 2008<sup>1</sup>, p. 115.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*; KARAGIORGOU 2008<sup>1</sup>, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> KARAGIORGOU 2008<sup>1</sup>, p. 115

D. Stoimenov<sup>6</sup> and O. Karagiorgou<sup>7</sup> last dwell on Nikephoros Botaneiates' career. Here is the chronological order as by D. Stoimenov<sup>8</sup>:

1. patrikios, anthypathos and strategos (the end of fifth decade of the 11<sup>th</sup> century–1053)<sup>9</sup>;
2. anthypathos, patrikios, vestes and strategos (1053–1057)<sup>10</sup>;
3. magistros, vestarches and doux of Opsikion (around 1057–1059)<sup>11</sup>;
4. magistros, vestes, vestarches and doux of Edessa and Antioch (post December 1059–ante December 1061)<sup>12</sup>;
5. proedros and doux (ante December 1061–1068)<sup>13</sup>;
6. proedros and doux of Thessalonica (December 1061–August 1062)<sup>14</sup>;
7. proedros and doux of Antioch (May–December 1067/ the beginning of 1068)<sup>15</sup>;
8. protoproedros and doux (1068–1073)<sup>16</sup>;
9. protoproedros and doux of Strimon and Voleron (1068–1070)<sup>17</sup>;
10. protoproedros and doux of Peloponnesos and Hellas (1071)<sup>18</sup>;
11. kouropalates (around 1073–October 1077)<sup>19</sup>;
12. kouropalates and doux of the Anatolikoi (October 1073–October 1077)<sup>20</sup>;
13. sebastos (?) (October 1077)<sup>21</sup>;
14. sebastos and doux of Hellas (?) (ante 3.04.1078)<sup>22</sup>;
15. emperor (3.04–2.06.1078);

What could be the connection between Nikephoros Botaneiates' seal and the Northeastern Bulgarian lands? His name can be related to the war between Byzantium and the Uz in 1064–1065. The Byzantine sources mention magistros

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<sup>6</sup> STOIMENOV 2008, p. 177–185.

<sup>7</sup> KARAGIORGOU 2008<sup>1</sup>, p. 105–133.

<sup>8</sup> STOIMENOV 2008, p. 178–180.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 177–181.

<sup>10</sup> BARTUSIS 1984, p. 135–141.

<sup>11</sup> SBS 1999, 6, p. 129.

<sup>12</sup> ZACOS, VEGLERY 1972, no. 2686; CHEYNET 2001, p. 59; MCGEER, NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES 2005, no. 9.2.

<sup>13</sup> DÖLGER 1948, no. 120/5; ZACOS, VEGLERY 1972, no. 2687; OIKONOMIDES 1986, no. 91.

<sup>14</sup> ΚΥΡΙΑΚΙΔΗΣ 1937, p. 315, 490; DÖLGER 1948, p. 156–160, no. 57; ATTALEIATES 1853, p. 96.

<sup>15</sup> ZACOS, VEGLERY 1972, no. 2688; LICHÁČEV 1991, p. 63, № 3, plate LXIII; KARAGIORGU 2008; p. 115–116.

<sup>16</sup> ZACOS, VEGLERY 1972, no. 2689.

<sup>17</sup> LAURENT 1952, no. 235.

<sup>18</sup> ZACOS, VEGLERY 1972, p. 1465; SEIBT, SEIBT 2003, 199.

<sup>19</sup> ZACOS, VEGLERY 1972, no. 2690; LICHÁČEV 1991, p. 63, № 1, plate LXIII; SODE 1997, Nr. 182; Sale catalogue: Spunk Auction 127 (7.10.1998), no. 75.

<sup>20</sup> SCHLUMBERGER 1900, p. 470–471, no. 153; ZACOS, VEGLERY 1972, no. 2690 bis; NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES 1996, no. 86.18.

<sup>21</sup> SCHLUMBERGER 1884, p. 625; LAURENT 1952, p. 127; ZACOS, VEGLERY 1972, p. 1465. Most probably the seals with title „sebastos” belong to a close relative of Nikephoros Botaneiates. For details see the opinions of D. Stoimenov and O. Karagiorgou.

<sup>22</sup> ŠANDROVSKAJA 1975, №. 2; LICHÁČEV 1991, p. 63, № 2, plate LXIII; SBS 5 1998, p. 117.

Basilios Apokapes and magistros Nikephoros Botaneiates as archonts of the towns by the Danube during this war<sup>23</sup>.

Having the so indicated location of the bulla, and namely the Silistra region, medieval Dristra, as a center of theme Paristrion, it can be accepted without a doubt that Nikephoros Botaneiates now as a proedros and doux of Antioch had been corresponding with some ally in the Byzantine areas around the Lower Danube. Although indirectly, the location of the seal still confirms the data from the sources to some extent, and namely Nikephoros Botaneiates' presence in Paristrion theme at the time of the war with the Uz tribe.

In this order, the old question in the science of history needs to be reminded: what post was Nikephoros Botaneiates holding in the mid sixties of the 11<sup>th</sup> century? Some researchers accept that he was a governor of theme Bulgaria<sup>24</sup>, others believe that the theme of Paristrion was divided in two parts: Eastern, with center Dristra and Western, with center Sirmium<sup>25</sup> or Serdika<sup>26</sup>, where Basilios Apokapes governs Eastern Paristrion and Nikephoros Botaneiates Western Paristrion. V. Zlatarski and V. Tapkova-Zaimova assume that Nikephoros Botaneiates was appointed governor of the so-called Western Paristrion in the years before the war of 1064-1065, or that he was sent with the military to Eastern Paristrion during the time of the war<sup>27</sup>.

It is very hard to show that Nikephoros Botaneiates was a governor of theme Bulgaria during the mid sixties of the 11<sup>th</sup> century since the governors of theme Bulgaria in the period 1064-1067 are known from the historical sources, they are Andronikos Philokaleses and Romanos Diogenes<sup>28</sup>.

The here presented bulla of Nikephoros Botaneiates confirms his contact with the Byzantine administration in theme Paristrion. In the future, the data presented by sigillography can help to clarify the debatable moments of this Byzantine politician and emperor's career.

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<sup>23</sup> ATTALEIATES 1853, p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> BĂNESCU 1946, p. 32-33; BOJILOV, GUZELEV 2006, p. 345.

<sup>25</sup> SKABALANOVICH 1884, p. 228, note № 3.

<sup>26</sup> DIACONU 1970, p. 86.

<sup>27</sup> ZLATARSKI 1994, p. 493-494; TAPKOVA-ZAIMOVA 1976, p. 60-65.

<sup>28</sup> CECAUMENI 1896, p. 72; ZLATARSKI 1994, p. 123-124.

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Fig. 1 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Silistra region) – obverse.



Fig. 2 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Silistra region) – reverse.



Fig. 3 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Zacos) – obverse and reverse.



Fig. 4 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Ermitage) – obverse.



Fig. 5 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Ermitage) – reverse.



Fig. 6 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Giessener) – obverse.





Fig. 7 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Giessener) – reverse.



Fig. 8 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Adana) – obverse



Fig. 9 - Seal of Nikephoros Botaneiates (Adana) – reverse.