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I. Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

Bulgaria – once a rival empire to Byzantium and an effective ruler of the Balkans, with its borders stretching from the Adriatic to the Black Sea and from Danube to Thessaly, saw its fortunes soon regress. By 1018, it had been reduced to several Byzantine provinces, with its aristocrats absorbed into Byzantine administration, its population displaced and its territory open for the frequent nomadic attacks. Before it could establish itself once again on the historical scene, its affairs remain revealed to the present day audience through foreign writings, archaeology and sigillography. The present study has collected those in an attempt to shed more light on the history of Bulgaria, and with it the Balkans in the eleventh century.

2. Research Parameters and Goals

It is the aim of this study to answer the question of which offices of Byzantine (military) administration were introduced in two of the largest districts into which the former Bulgarian empire had been divided, and with it, how effectively the Byzantine power was exercised there. The answers to those should give a clearer picture of the administrative elite in former Bulgaria and hopefully mirror the effect a well presented administrative history can play for the method of historical reconstruction. Geographically, the themes of Bulgaria and Paradounavon will be analyzed, covering the greater part of the former Bulgarian territory under Samuil (997 – 1014). Although Bulgaria had already lost much of its influence in the north by the end of the tenth century, and much of its southern territory by the beginning of the eleventh century, it was finally subdued in 1018. This year will be taken as the beginning of the time frame presented here. With a new dynasty of Komnenoi sitting on the Byzantine throne in 1081, and the subsequent changes in administration affecting the provinces and the central apparatus of the government, 1081 will be the limit for the analysis of this study.

The particular contribution of this thesis will be reflected precisely in the reconstruction of the administrative elite of the newly conquered territories in focus. A lot of time has passed since last the Empire held a border on the Danube. On the one hand, the arrival of the Bulgars and the consequent establishment of the Bulgarian Empire contributed to an altered societal structure. Therefore, after 1018, Byzantium found their former territories different in terms of people they ruled over. On the other

hand, the historiography of the last century failed to differentiate between administratively stable older themes and the upheavals faced in the new ones. The following chapters will show, how the change in the themes of Bulgaria and Paradounavon was threefold: the Empire encountered the new subjects they now ruled; it then extirpated much of the administrative and social bases the Bulgarians built in the past three hundred years, introducing instead Byzantine administration, together with cultural influences and population displacement policies which transformed the region again; lastly although unplanned, the Empire was forced to settle yet another nomadic group onto those reconquered territories. This thesis will therefore differentiate between Byzantine officials in the two themes, (Hellenized) foreigners in service of the Empire, displaced Bulgarian elite and the newly integrated Pecheneg element. This will also help clarify how much of the territory generally depicted as Byzantine (one only needs to think of the maps, such as the one by OSTROGORSKY¹) never did securely lie in Empire's hands. Rather, it is to be seen as a volatile region, where the lands furthest from the capital were only indirectly subjugated to Constantinople, the middle region was ruled through a few fortresses Byzantium could hold (not infrequently commanded by foreigners), whereas direct control was felt only in the territories closest to the capital.

3. Sources and Research Technique

The importance of the study of the period under scrutiny also lies in the paucity of the sources, especially the Bulgarian ones, for this period of Bulgarian history.² The following chapters will use sigillography, (Byzantine) written records, and to a lesser extent archaeological finds as primary sources in reconstructing the administration of the territories of former Bulgarian empire. Moreover, since the themes of Bulgaria and Paradounavon were provinces on the borders of the Byzantine Empire, with Hungarian and smaller Slavic states looming on the Western border, and vast vacant lands exposed to the raids of Pechenegs, and later Uzes and Cumans in the North, it is the Byzantine military organization, that will be in primary focus of this thesis. There

¹ Georg OSTROGORSKY, *Byzantinische Geschichte (324 - 1453)* (Munich 1996), 258 f.

² As hinted above, the Bulgarian sources for Bulgarian medieval history are reduced to 'six original royal charters, several scores of laconic stone inscriptions, a hundred or so even shorter graffiti, a couple of concise historical accounts, less than a handful of apocryphal works, two dozen saint's lives and eulogies, two notary records and as many adaptations of Byzantine legal codes (!), and a good amount of casual scribal and marginal notes', as quoted from: Kiril PETKOV, *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, Seventh – Fifteenth Century. The Records of a Bygone Culture* (Leiden, Boston 2008), xi.

is no general consensus on whether the theme of Bulgaria included the territories of the entire former Bulgarian imperial lands, with other themes only later being separated from this territory to form new thematic units, or whether these were created shortly after 1018. It is also difficult to define the themes territorially. The themes (the term used here is meant to apply to a wider spectrum of Byzantine administrative units) presented, and the particular cases of smaller units within them are also not meant to review all the territories held within a certain theme, but rather to enable inner-thematic reflections on administration. Similarly, although it could be argued a comparative thematic approach might yield most results, such an examination will not be undertaken in detail here, and might serve as a simple highlight of possible parallels.

Furthermore, seals are of special interest to this analysis, as they are often the only sources preserved for this thematic organization. Designed to safeguard the secrecy of the information attached to them and provide authority for and authenticity of it³, seals as sources carry a lot of weight. As far as the treatment of the seals goes, when described in detail, this will be done according to the usual categories of a full sigillographic form – mentioning invocation, name, title, (permanent appointments), (temporary) office or command, area of jurisdiction and family name.⁴ Similarly, prosopographic details of the officials, unless relevant to the administration of the two themes, will not be vastly elaborated upon here, and where possible, prosopographic details from the seals will be completed by the primary sources. Moreover, ‘the discovery of Byzantine lead seals can be taken to suggest a degree of official imperial interest in a particular site or area. They may also provide very significant details as to the nature of that interest’.⁵ A vast number of seals retrieved from the Bulgarian territory also witnesses an enormous loss of documents attached to those. Nevertheless, although the documents have been lost, the sheer number of the

³ Werner SEIBT, *Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft. Die Bleisiegel im Museum August Kestner* (Rahden/Westf. 2011), 19; Werner SEIBT, Marie Luise ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk. Katalog zur Ausstellung* (Wien 1997), 17; Nicolas OIKONOMIDÈS, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Washington, D.C. 1985), 8 f.; Paul STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900 – 1204*, (Cambridge 2004), 16.

⁴ SEIBT, *Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft*, 27; SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 20; OIKONOMIDÈS, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 21.

⁵ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 16 f.

Byzantine seals (over three thousand two hundred⁶) found in Bulgaria allows for one to see who was in charge of which portions of land and based on their place of discovery, with whom they interacted. Similarly, despite the loss of territories and instabilities of the late eleventh century, which lead to a decreased area where the seals circulated⁷, since this period represents the highpoint of Byzantine sigillographic activity⁸, this period is well adapted for the analysis conducted here.

However, although the majority of the relevant seals will be mentioned in this paper, and certain examples used as highlights, the seals are not the end-focus, but rather a medium of historical reconstruction. They were, as OIKONOMIDES puts it, ‘modern *cartes de visite*’.⁹ Similarly, (seals of) church institutions will not be in focus here. It is also not the intent of this thesis to provide a catalogue of all Byzantine seals found in the defined time-span and geographical region. Naturally, this would mean a certain part of the administrative relations will have to be left referred to indirectly. Moreover, the majority of the access to these seals will be through the publications they are featured in. In order to focus on the reconstructive part of history, the reading of the seals and their dating will not be done separately by the author of this thesis, but will be cited from the publications.

Out of the primary written sources, John Skylitzes is certainly one of the most valuable Byzantine narrative sources in general. Writing in the time of Alexios I Komnenos (1081 – 1118), his chronicle was envisioned as a continuation of the one by Theophanes the Confessor; another author reflecting on the eleventh century was Michael Psellos, in his *Chronographia* - writing about the events and governmental problems of the empire from an analytical viewpoint; Michael Attaleiates, another historian who recorded in detail the pre-Komnenian era in his *History*, as well as Anna Komnena, the daughter of the first emperor from the new dynasty, and author of *Alexiad*, all record the events of the eleventh century, albeit from their own

⁶ Ivan JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*. Volume 1 – 3. Sofia 2003, 2006, 2009. Addenda et Corrigenda. Numizmatika, sfragistika i epigrafika 7 (2011), 189 – 228, here 189.

⁷ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 21; SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 18.

⁸ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 18; cf. SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 20.

⁹ OIKONOMIDÈS, Byzantine Lead Seals, 21. See also Herbert HUNGER, Der “homo byzantinus” und das Bleisiegel. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), 117 – 128.

perspectives¹⁰, and undoubtedly each with their own subjective goal. Other sources tell of administration – the so-called Taktikon Scorialensis/ Escorial Taktikon or Taktikon Oikonomides – in the late tenth century¹¹ will be used as a comparison to the administration post 1018.

Standard English terminology will be used. Additionally, term “Bulgaria” will denote the former Bulgarian Empire, unless stated otherwise. This will distinguish it from the Byzantine theme of Bulgaria. The primary sources will be quoted in their original (transliterated) form, seals according to their editions, whereas the secondary literature will be quoted in its Standard English form, unless where this would distort the original meaning. The Greek letter β in names and titles will be transliterated as v, except in cases such as Bulgaria or other instances where the reading as /b/ is more common in the contemporary literature.

4. Research on the Topic

Ostrogorsky's interpretation of the eleventh century Byzantium in crisis as a state where feudal and military aristocracy opposed the civilian bureaucrats, has been replaced by Paul Lemerle's assessment, that the actual crisis was brought about by Alexios I Komnenos; Lemerle's view had been modified by the recent historians who argue it was simply the state's rigid structures, that left it unadapted to new circumstances.¹² On the other hand, as seen above, the history of the eleventh century Bulgaria, even more so than its other periods, depends on foreign sources and reconstructions. Byzantine seals have long been an object of scientific inquiry. Gustave Schlumberger, laid 'a certain scientific standard' for the research of seals; Nikolay Petrovich Likhachyov contributed with his analyses in the field of art history; however, it was father Vitalien Laurent, with his *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin* (Paris 1963 – 1981) who established himself as the authority on the methods of sigillography.¹³ Although the finds of Byzantine seals have been steadily published since 1930s, in the mid 1940s Nicolae Bănescu was able to use seals, the information

¹⁰ Michael ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025 – 1204. A Political History* (London 1997), 1 – 6.

¹¹ Alexandru MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th – 12th Centuries* (Leiden, Boston 2013), 37; STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 56.

¹² ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 15 f.

¹³ Werner SEIBT, *Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft*, 15 f.; SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 21. Based on the methods of father Laurent, the Viennese school of sigillography refined and further developed those.

on them completed by the available written record and archaeological excavations, in order to write a first monograph relating to the administration of Bulgarian lands by the Byzantines.¹⁴ While the period around the mid-20th century did tend to focus more on archaeology, by the last third of the 20th century, Ion Barnea reconstructed Byzantine military organization as evident from archaeology, the sigillographic evidence, as well as from the Byzantine state hierarchy described by Nicolas Oikonomides in the mid-1960s.¹⁵ With the research attracting Bulgarian, Romanian and foreign scholars, it wasn't however until 1971 at the fourteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, that a greater audience became acquainted with the efforts to reconstruct Byzantium's history in contemporary Romania and Bulgaria.¹⁶ Since then, publications of Byzantine sigillography have seen scholars like Georgi Atanasov, Ion Barnea, Ivan Jordanov, Ljubomir Maksimović and Gheorge Măncu-Adameşteanu not only take interest in publishing the seals, but with it advance the field of sigillography itself.¹⁷ George Zacos, Alexander Veglery, Nicolas Oikonomides, and John Nesbitt¹⁸, as well as Jean-Claude Cheynet, Werner Seibt and Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou-Seibt have also contributed to the field. Historians like Paul Stephenson, Alexandru Madgearu and Bojana Krsmanović gave their contributions too.

Perhaps the most significant recent find for this research, but also for Byzantine sigillography in general, is the discovery of what seems to be an archive of seals during excavations in Preslav, under Ivan Jordanov, not simply because of the sheer number of seals unearthed (over 700¹⁹), but also because their *in situ* location could be recorded.²⁰ Today, the biggest collections of Byzantine seals are found in Dumbarton Oaks (ca. 17 000 specimens) in the United States of America, the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (ca. 13 000 specimens), as well as Paris (ca. 10 000 specimens), Bulgaria (over 3 500 specimens), Germany (ca. 3000 specimens) and Vienna (ca. 1500 specimens), together with a number of publications dedicated to this

¹⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 1.

¹⁵ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 2.

¹⁶ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 2f.

¹⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 3.

¹⁸ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 21.

¹⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 59.

²⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 3f.; Peter FRANKOPAN, The workings of the Byzantine provincial administration in the 10th – 12th centuries: the example of Preslav. Byzantion 71/1 (2001), 73 – 97, here 76.

field analyzing over eighty thousand known specimens of Byzantine seals.²¹ The Austrian Academy of Sciences, Department of Byzantine Studies, also showcases an archive of photographs of seals, with over 40 000 entries.²² Many of the seals do remain unpublished.²³

Authors relevant for the problematic of the theme of Paradounavon in particular include Ion Bica²⁴, Florin Curta, with his focus on numismatics, archaeology and nomads²⁵, as well as experts on nomadic peoples, who contribute to a more complete picture of the Byzantine frontier, such as Victor Spinei and Peter Benjamin Golden. Numismatics had also helped to work out the details of the chronology of the region; archaeologically, since 1990s, sites like Păcuiul lui Soare, Nufăru, Noviodounos, Pliska, Preslav and Hârşova, just to name a few, were excavated by the most prominent Bulgarian and Romanian scholars and archaeologists like Georgi Atanasov, Ivan Jordanov, Valeri Yotov and Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameşteanu.²⁶ It also needs to be said, that much of the modern research on Byzantine Bulgaria has revolved around the question of the establishment of Paradounavon and Byzantine presence in Dobrudja, especially concerning Romanian historiography.²⁷ Such a steady influx of new understandings of Byzantine administration on the Danube has led to a demand for an updated version of the history of the region.²⁸

5. Byzantine Thematic System

Escorial Taktikon, dating to the last third of the tenth century, depicts a military and administrative built of the Empire.²⁹ However, the interpretation of the Taktikon as a primary source reflecting the change in hierarchy of the frontier in the tenth and

²¹ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 28; cf. SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 20 f.

²² SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 21.

²³ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 21.

²⁴ Ion BICA, Thema Paristrion (paradounavon) în istoriografia bizantină și română (Pitești 2003), quoted in MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 4f.

²⁵ Florin CURTA, Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500 – 1250 (Cambridge 2006), quoted in MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 5; see also Florin CURTA, The image and archaeology of the Pechenegs. *Banatica* 23 (2013), 143 – 202.

²⁶ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 4.

²⁷ Alexandru MADGEARU, Alexandru MADGEARU, Rethinking the Byzantine Balkans. A Recent Book on the 10th-12th Centuries, (review of Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*, Cambridge University Press, 2000), in: *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 39/1 – 4 (2001), 203 – 212, here 206.

²⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 5, and footnote 42.

²⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 37; STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 56.

eleventh century, as done by OIKONOMIDES, is susceptible to critique; ‘at the very simplest level such *taktika* are not detailed handbooks explaining the mechanics and principles of Byzantine administration. Instead, they are seating plans drawn up by imperial officials who organised banquets within the great palace in Constantinople’ and are therefore to be taken as ‘approximate outline’ rather than a strictly prescribed rulebook.³⁰ Although a full thematic system included military, civil and financial administration, this chapter will focus on the relevant portions of the military presence in the themes, in order to bring context to the titles later analysed.

Byzantine frontier themes developed from *kleisura* or ‘military structures located on the frontier, especially around mountain passes or other points of access to and from the empire’ with the first ones dating to the seventh and the eighth century and being upgraded into themes in the ninth and tenth century.³¹ As a matter of fact, Theophanes’ use of *themata* to describe the earlier structures is an application of a contemporary term to what was in fact a *strategia* – the seals confirm this, as the term theme first appears on them in the tenth century.³² In the Balkans, the seventh century saw the establishment of the themes of Hellas and Thrace.³³ Thrace was established in 680, when the Empire faced a new adversary – the Bulgars, who by this point crossed the Danube.³⁴ Peloponnes and Macedonia were established by the eighth century, and the ninth century saw a general reorganization of the territory into smaller themes.³⁵ In charge of these were *strategoi*.³⁶ It was Thrace that was split around year 800 into Macedonia, Strymon, Thrace, Thessaly and Mesopotamia.³⁷ It is only after the conquests of John Tzimiskes (969 – 976), that the Taktikon Escorial mentions *doukes*

³⁰ Catherine HOLMES, Byzantium’s Eastern Frontier in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries, in: *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, (ed.) David ABULAFIA, Nora BEREND (Aldershot 2002), 83 – 104, here 89; cf. Hans-Joachim KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert. Studien zur Organisation der Tagmata* (Wien 1991), 34.

³¹ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 16f.

³² cf. KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 47.

³³ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 90.

³⁴ John NESBITT, Nicolas OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art. Volume 1. Italy, North of the Balkans, North of the Black Sea* (Washington D.C. 1991), 155.

³⁵ Ljubomir MAKSIMOVIĆ, *Verwaltungsstrukturen in Byzanz und in den Balkanländern*, in: *Byzanz und seine Nachbarn*, (ed.) Armin HOHLWEG (1996), 47 – 63, here 48.

³⁶ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 90.

³⁷ This administrative unit of Mesopotamia is to be found on the Maritsa river, in the vicinity of Simeonovgrad, as quoted from Alexandra-Kyriaki WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem an der Balkangrenze (Ende 10. – Ende 11. Jh.). Neue Erkenntnisse aus der systematischen Nachlese der narrativen Quellen und dem Siegelbefund*. *Byzantinoslavica* 75/1 – 2 (2017), 164 – 190, here 168.

of Thessaloniki and Adrianople³⁸, and with it presents a transition from *strategiai*. In the Taktikon, there is also mention of *strategoi* in the following: Thrace and Ioannoupolis, Strymon (or Chrysava), Thessaloniki, Dristra, and Mesopotamia (of the West).³⁹ Naturally, *strategoi* were therefore moved down on the hierarchical ladder. The themes were divided, so as to avoid the threat the accumulation of power by their commanders could pose to the emperor; this, however, also made them inefficient in larger military operations; therefore, their original meaning of a “military district” changed to one of a “province”.⁴⁰ On the other hand, these small units also enabled easier control of territories, especially borders, and put less strain on the finances.⁴¹ Additionally, administration of the border could feature smaller, administratively more independent units, without these necessarily being their own separate themes.⁴² Although the seventh century saw a reform in military administration, the borders of the civil province system did not change until the eight century.⁴³ This system was tuned to the contemporary political situation throughout the centuries; nonetheless, in the eleventh century, the bureaucracy exceeded the facilities of the state and the meaning and responsibilities of a title were rather flexible, which makes it understandable why Alexios I Komnenos wished to narrow down the apparatus as much as possible.⁴⁴

Themes were divided into smaller units such as *tourma*, *droungos* and *bandon*.⁴⁵ *Tourma* as a small unit of Byzantine thematic army was divided into the smallest military unit – a *bandon*.⁴⁶ Garrisons in a city would be under a *tourmarch*.⁴⁷ In the eleventh century, *strategoi* were in charge of cities, and carried a military role.⁴⁸ They

³⁸ Nicolas OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles* (Paris 1972), 262.

³⁹ Nicolas OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes de préséance byzantines*, 264 – 268.

⁴⁰ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 90, 119.

⁴¹ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 47.

⁴² Jadran FERLUGA, *Militärisch-administrative Einheiten geringeren Ranges der Themenverfassung. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der älteren Themenordnung (VII. – X. Jahrh.)*, in: *Byzantium on the Balkans. Studies on the Byzantine Administration and the Southern Slavs from the VIIth to the XIIth Centuries* (Amsterdam 1976), 21 – 70, here 27.

⁴³ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 80.

⁴⁴ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 69.

⁴⁵ cf. MAKSIMOVIĆ, *Verwaltungsstrukturen*, 48; FERLUGA, *Militärisch-administrative Einheiten*, 29.

⁴⁶ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 88; KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 43, Footnote 29; cf. Helene AHRWEILER-GLYKATZI, *Recherches sur l’administration de l’Empire Byzantin aux IX^e – XI^e siècles*. *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 84 (1960), 1 – 111, here 81.

⁴⁷ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 88.

⁴⁸ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 140.

could therefore be in charge of city-themes.⁴⁹ STEPHENSON thinks the position of a *strategos* enabled him to command a garrison at the time, but not the entire theme.⁵⁰ In Escorial Taktikon, (historically closest to the here presented time frame), a *doux* or a *katepano* seems to be primarily linked with the Empire's provinces.⁵¹ The two titles were synonymous inasmuch that their presence meant they had under them a professional army, instead of local troops.⁵² Since being used interchangeably from tenth century onwards, they denoted simply commanders of military forces superior to the ones of a theme, with provinces being called *doukata* and *katepanatai*.⁵³ At first, these functioned parallel to the *strategiai*, until they eventually replaced them; by the end of the eleventh century, *doux* also began to squeeze out the *katepano*.⁵⁴ Alongside the official titles listed here, there were also unofficial titles, given in dire political situations, such as *strategos autokrator*⁵⁵; it depended on the emperor to grant the full extent of this power.⁵⁶ It is also important to point out that a *strategos autokrator* was not a provincial commander – he was simply appointed as a direct representative of the Emperor, answerable only to him.⁵⁷

Mercenaries made up a significant part of *tagmata*⁵⁸. Therefore, the army reforms of Nikephoros II Phokas introduced a stratified commando-chain (with two top positions, the one for the Eastern and one for the Western part), *doux* or *katepano* was at the head of *tagmata*, imperial regiments, in larger administrative units encompassing more themes, the number of soldiers in themes was increased and replaced by *tagmata*, heavy cavalry forces were introduced, and troops were stationed in a theme for longer periods of time.⁵⁹ The frontier regions used light or medium

⁴⁹ Ivan JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija (1018 – 1092) [Seals of the Theme of Bulgaria (1018 – 1092)]. Numizmatika, sfragistika i epigrafika 7 (2011), 157 – 187, here 179.

⁵⁰ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 56.

⁵¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 39; see also Bojana KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change (on the Threshold between the 10th and the 11th Century) (Belgrade, Athens 2008), 178.

⁵² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 121.

⁵³ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 163; MAKSIMOVIĆ, Verwaltungsstrukturen, 54.

⁵⁴ KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 77, 97; JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 177.

⁵⁵ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 58, footnote 71: 'A commander-in-chief for a particular war or campaign, with quasi-imperial authority'.

⁵⁶ KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 9 f.

⁵⁷ cf. KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 55 f.

⁵⁸ Nicolas OIKONOMIDES, L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantine au XI^e siècle (1025 – 1118). Travaux et Mémoires 6 (1976), 125 – 152, here 148.

⁵⁹ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 123 f.

cavalry in most cases.⁶⁰ As far as the commando goes, ‘it is utterly difficult to see through the usage of expressions, that may come in several combinations and meanings, for example ἄρχων, δομέστικός, δούξ or δρουνγγάριος’; the terms such as *strategos* could simply imply a commander in a theme in general, referring more specifically to a *domestikoi*, *doux* or a *katepano*, or it could mean the highest dignitary of a theme, making the interpretation of the sources difficult.⁶¹ As an office, *katepano* did not survive Komenian reform.⁶² Also, the alteration of the commands *katepano* and *archon* is present in written sources, while the same people appear on seals only in their capacity as *katepanoi*; as such, “*archon*” in chronicles was a *licentia poetica* of the writers.⁶³ *Archon* was, however, used often, and for different Byzantine and foreign dignitaries, because it was rather vague, and could denote people of different hierarchical rank, depending on the importance of the area the man held; the office was divided into different classes, so for example the *archontes* of Crete, *patrikioi* and *protospatharioi* were regarded as a 1st class, while their colleagues in Dalmatia or Cyprus, *spatharioi*, were 3rd class; the former *archontes* were called *eparchontes*.⁶⁴ The titles with prefixes, such as *protoproedros*, were meant to distinguish stages of a rank within a group.⁶⁵ One can witness a general inflation in the titles between 1025 and Komnenian reform.⁶⁶ As the state apparatus increased in number, so the power of each office was curbed⁶⁷, since more people had to share the same amount of power.

This would actually fit into the picture of another way themes could be organized – in the eastern part of the Empire one sees *armenika themata* or small border themes⁶⁸; *strategides* on the territory of the former Bulgarian Empire were, according to

⁶⁰ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 130.

⁶¹ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 35.

⁶² MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 85.

⁶³ Vasile MĂRCULEȚ, “The archontate of the Paristrion cities” or “of the cities from the Istros” – a *thema* with a single name in the Byzantine literary sources. *Istros* 17 (2011), 55 – 68, here 57.

⁶⁴ FERLUGA, *Militärisch-administrative Einheiten*, 62, 65 f. However, FERLUGA based here presented observations on *Taktikon Uspenskij*’s, describing the situation of in the ninth century; see also KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 35.

⁶⁵ OIKONOMIDES, *L’évolution de l’organisation*, 126.

⁶⁶ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 44.

⁶⁷ KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 4.

⁶⁸ KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 5, 86; Ljubomir MAKSIMOVIĆ, *Organizacija vizantijske vlasti u novoosvojenim oblastima posle 1018. godine* [The Organization of Byzantine Power in Newly Conquered Regions after 1018]. *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 36 (1997) 31 – 43, here 32.

KRSMANOVIĆ, simply adopted territorially from former Bulgarian provinces.⁶⁹ One should not however take it for granted that the Balkan themes were of the same structure like the older themes; now, a theme could mean a fortress or a city with its surrounding.⁷⁰ The Balkans were originally divided into three *doukates* or *katepanats*: Mesopotamia (of the West), responsible for the lower Danube; Adrianople, in charge of territories in Thrace, and Thessaloniki as defense of Aegean area in the late tenth century.⁷¹ Small *strategiai* made up a larger unit under a *doux* or a *katepano*.⁷² Therefore, a title and the kind of army under one's command were interlinked.⁷³

In the eleventh century, a *praetor*, came to denote a civil office of a *krites* or a judge in a theme, also in charge of some civil dealings; this effectively made them civil governors of themes.⁷⁴ Interestingly, AHRWEILER comments that such a service of a judge was considered an exile, even if the theme was a prestigious one.⁷⁵ Therefore, normally, themes were split into military and civil administration with *doux/katepano* or *strategos*, and *praetor* or *krites* in charge of these two branches of command, respectively.⁷⁶ The civil/fiscal officials, although not in focus of this thesis, also include the *kommerkiarioi*. They sat in the important trading centers and were in charge of the troop supplies and trade taxation, often in kind, commanding over the economy of a theme.⁷⁷ They held their posts usually for a year, and they could be in charge of several provinces, with significant members of the society, such as *patrikioi* amongst their ranks.⁷⁸ A *chartularios* kept registries of a theme.⁷⁹ An *anagrapheus* served as a fiscal administrator, to report on the land utilization and determine the

⁶⁹ Bojana KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten zusammengesetzten Bezirke auf dem Balkan im 11. Jahrhundert – Zwei Fallbeispiele. Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta 46 (2009), 65 – 87, here 67; cf. KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 5.

⁷⁰ MAKSIMOVIĆ, Verwaltungsstrukturen, 53 f.

⁷¹ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 167.

⁷² JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 177.

⁷³ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 131.

⁷⁴ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 65; SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 80 f.; BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 349; cf. OIKONOMIDES, L'évolution de l'organisation, 148; cf. JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 178.

⁷⁵ Helene AHRWEILER, Recherches sur la société byzantine au XI^e siècle: nouvelles hierarchies et nouvelles solidarités. Travaux et Mémoires 6 (1976), 99 – 124, here 102 f.

⁷⁶ KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten Zusammengesetzten Bezirke, 66; KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 79.

⁷⁷ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 22 f.; cf. SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 58.

⁷⁸ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 38.

⁷⁹ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 34, footnote 21; DÖLGER, Beiträge zur Geschichte, 69.

taxes accordingly; his duty would be limited to no more than a few themes, and could be shared with another *anagrapheus*.⁸⁰

6. Historical Background and Contextualization

The First Bulgarian Empire established in 680/681, kept challenging Byzantium for power in the Balkans. Following the Slavs and the Avars, it was the Bulgars that had contributed to the collapse of the Byzantine frontier on the Danube in the beginning of the seventh century.⁸¹ The Middle Byzantine period (843–1025) also saw the fortification of the Byzantine borders.⁸² However, after the death of Basil II (976 – 1025) this order would soon prove fragile and the instability helped by the rulers often deemed ineffective⁸³, as much as by the inner revolts and outside nomadic attacks on the empire. Additionally, eleventh century Byzantium witnessed many of the territories under its political influence gaining independence, and its monopoly on trade challenged by Venice, Pisa and Genoa; the loss of territory in Asia Minor affected the Empire's ability to recruit troops, and Normans in Italy would test the Byzantine authority on the Balkan mainland; proper order, although often criticized as 'only a veneer of prosperity' was established by a new dynasty of Komnenoi.⁸⁴

After the death of Symeon I (893 – 927) of Bulgaria, his son Peter I (927 – 969) is often interpreted as a weak ruler. However, by invading Byzantine Macedonia, and his subsequent marriage to Maria, the granddaughter of Romanos I Lakapenos (920 – 944), Peter de facto compelled the Byzantine Empire to conclude peace with their former adversary.⁸⁵ After Maria's death sometime in the 960s, managing to establish relations with local rulers beyond Bulgaria (and following a series of victories in the East), Nikephoros II Phokas (963 – 969) felt emboldened enough to cease paying the tribute to Peter.⁸⁶ In order to avoid the journey North through Bulgarian mountain passes, Nikephoros decided to deploy the Rus' to travel south and strike at Bulgaria,

⁸⁰ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 176.

⁸¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 7.

⁸² Joan M. HUSSEY, The Byzantine Empire in the Eleventh Century: Some Different Interpretations. Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 32 (1950), 71 – 85, here 71.

⁸³ HUSSEY, The Byzantine Empire in the Eleventh Century, 71.

⁸⁴ HUSSEY, The Byzantine Empire in the Eleventh Century, 72 - 74.

⁸⁵ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 23f.

⁸⁶ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 47 f.; cf. MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 28.

in order to subdue it into a buffer zone against the Rus.⁸⁷ However, Svyatoslav I of Kiev (942 – 972) would prove to be a problem, rather than a solution to the Byzantine quarrel with Bulgaria. Namely, the Rus' were showing little intention of leaving Preslav, Dorostolon (later Dristra, now Silistra) or the territories they took.⁸⁸ Nikephoros' policy therefore backfired, as Bulgaria fell under Rus' sphere of influence.⁸⁹

It was John Tzimiskes, who was eventually able to push the Rus' northwards across the Balkan Mountains, and moved into Eastern Bulgaria – by spring 971 he recaptured Preslav, which now bore a new name of Ioannoupolis.⁹⁰ Seals witness its commander was Katakalon, a *protospatharios* and *strategos*.⁹¹ An (imperial) *protospatharios* or the first sword-bearer was a function originally referring to the commander of the *spatharioi* (imperial bodyguards).⁹² Peter's son, the captured Boris II (969 – 971), was taken to Constantinople and ceremoniously stripped off of his power and invested with a rank of *magistros*.⁹³ As MADGEARU puts it, 'this was the final act of the long battle for restoring the Byzantine power over what Leo the Deacon called Mysia, the formerly Roman province which had fallen under the barbarian Bulgars after emperor Constantine IV's failed expedition against them. The immediate consequence of the 971 war was the disappearance of the Bulgarian state'.⁹⁴ Therefore, Byzantium was able to secure for itself the region south of Danube, as far as Stara Planina, together with a portion of the territory of Thrace; the newly conquered Byzantine territory stretched as far west as Iskar river.⁹⁵ However, already then 'Byzantium did not control a geographically compact territory in the north-eastern region of the dissolved Bulgarian state and concentrated its authority in several fortresses and cities that to some extent secured communications between the newly established command centres'; moreover 'the consolidation of Byzantine

⁸⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 29, 167; cf. STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 48.

⁸⁸ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 49; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 29, 38.

⁸⁹ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 51.

⁹⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 30f.; STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 51 f.

⁹¹ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 53.

⁹² SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 45, footnote 41; SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 70, 73.

⁹³ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 54; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 37.

⁹⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 37.

⁹⁵ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 37.

power in the region of the former Bulgarian state undoubtedly relied on the relations, which the Byzantine army managed to establish with the local inhabitants'.⁹⁶ This scenario will be repeated in its entirety even after the 1018 conquest of Bulgaria.

With Basil II's coming to power, allegiances and power relations shifted once again. The civil war after the death of John Tzimiskes left little time to be dedicated to Bulgarian lands.⁹⁷ The 976 revolt of the Kometopuloi, four sons of a Bulgarian *komes*, signaled Basil could not rest or think his borders secure.⁹⁸ One of the brothers, Samuil (997 – 1014), established himself in contemporary Macedonia, with a seat in Ochrid, and the revived Bulgarian Empire achieved a string of victories.⁹⁹ His rule, based around Prespa, Ochrid, Bitola, Hagios Germanos and Setina had expanded to Larisa, the main city of the province of Thessaly by 985/986, and Serdica (Triaditza, today Sofia) by 986.¹⁰⁰ It is also important to point out Basil II could use Philippoupolis (today Plovdiv) as a base for his battles against the Bulgarians, seeing that Samuil never managed to recapture it.¹⁰¹ However, in 986 Samuil obliterated Basil II on his campaign into Bulgaria at Trajan's Gates.¹⁰²

In 988, in an attempt to end the rebellion of Bardas Phokas, a general in the Byzantine army, Basil II turned to Vladimir the Great (980 – 1015) for help.¹⁰³ Vladimir's Varangian warriors helped the young Emperor in the power-struggle in exchange for a hand in marriage of Basil's sister Anna, and Christianization of the Rus', resulting

⁹⁶ KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 144; as comparison, 'the frontier in the east resembles a zone where the imposition of Byzantine military authority was inconsistent and intermittent, and where diplomatic relationships were of greater importance'; Basil II also granted forts to local rulers in the East; because the Emperor saw no immediate danger they could be in, he also so no need for a protective border, as quoted from HOLMES, *Byzantium's Eastern Frontier*, 95 f.

⁹⁷ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 58.

⁹⁸ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 46f. See also Werner SEIBT, *Untersuchungen zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte der "bulgarischen" Kometopulen*. *Handes Amsorya* 89 (1975), 65 – 100.

⁹⁹ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 46.

¹⁰⁰ Mihailo POPOVIĆ, *Der Balkan vom Ende des Ersten bulgarischen Reiches bis zum Beginn des Zweiten bulgarischen Reiches*. Version 1.0, in: *Online-Handbuch zur Geschichte Südosteuropas*. Volume 1: Herrschaft und Politik in Südosteuropa bis 1800, ed. by Institut für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung, 24.6.2016, URL: <http://www.hgsoe.ios-regensburg.de/themen/herrschaft-politik-und-staatlichkeit.html>, 3 – 5.

¹⁰¹ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem*, here 165.

¹⁰² STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 59.

¹⁰³ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 45; STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 60; Warren THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford 1997), 517.

in a peace between the two countries, which was to last until 1043.¹⁰⁴ The conflict at first eluded the north of the former Bulgarian Empire, but the lack of Byzantine seals in Preslav for the years 986 and 1000 could be interpreted as the recapture of the city by the Bulgarians¹⁰⁵, even if this does remain unmentioned in Byzantine narrative sources.¹⁰⁶ Samuil certainly took Preslav, Pliska, Beroia and Serbia by 989.¹⁰⁷ ‘By 997 he held most of the lands that had pertained to Tsar Symeon at the height of his power, from the lower Danube to Dyrrachion¹⁰⁸, and in that year had himself crowned as tsar of Bulgaria’.¹⁰⁹ Although ‘Basil’s Balkan campaigns were far shorter and his intentions far more limited than has generally been supposed’¹¹⁰, aided by his foreign troops, Basil II will soon turned the tide in the war with Bulgaria. Having signed a peace treaty with the Fatimids in the East, he was now able to focus on the Balkans¹¹¹ – by the year 1000 Byzantium moved into Eastern Bulgaria¹¹² conquering Veliki Preslav (Preslav) and Pliska that year, Thessaly, Serbia and Beroia in 1001¹¹³, Serdica in 1004¹¹⁴, and Dyrrachion by 1005.¹¹⁵

After 1001, Preslav, having been renamed again, was the seat of a *strategos* headed by a *protospatharios* and *epi tou chrysotrikliniou*, Dristra by a *primikerios* (at a time a title for eunuchs, but also an office¹¹⁶) and Preslavitsa was a *strategia*.¹¹⁷ In general, during Basil II’s conquests in the early years of eleventh century, captured fortresses were given to local and byzantine magnates – Beroia to a family member of Samuil, Dobromir, *anthypatos*, Serbia to Nikolitzas to command, and Dyrrachion to the Chryselioi family.¹¹⁸ Samuil suffered his final defeat at Kleidion in 1014, dying soon

¹⁰⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 45f; cf. STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 60.

¹⁰⁵ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 47.

¹⁰⁶ FRANKOPAN, The workings of the byzantine provincial administration, 89.

¹⁰⁷ POPOVIĆ, Der Balkan vom Ende des Ersten bulgarischen Reiches, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Today Durrës.

¹⁰⁹ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 61.

¹¹⁰ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 63.

¹¹¹ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 523.

¹¹² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 51.

¹¹³ POPOVIĆ, Der Balkan vom Ende des Ersten bulgarischen Reiches, 5.

¹¹⁴ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 522: THREADGOLD writes Serdica was conquered in 999.

¹¹⁵ POPOVIĆ, Der Balkan vom Ende des Ersten bulgarischen Reiches, 5.

¹¹⁶ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 75; SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 72.

¹¹⁷ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 64.

¹¹⁸ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 67; WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 166.

afterwards. Gavril Radomir (1014 – 1015), the son of Samuil, managed to defy the conquests of Basil II, but was killed by his successor and cousin, Ivan Vladislav (1015 – 1018), who was in collusion with the Byzantine emperor.¹¹⁹ In 1018, after the death of Ivan Vladislav at Dyrrachion, Basil II had marched against Ochrid and no successful resistance offered allowed him to take the remnant of the Bulgarian Empire.¹²⁰ The Bulgarian nobility capitulated and was integrated into Byzantine administration through titles and offices awarded to them.¹²¹

Since the following chapters focus on the question of how Byzantium managed the former Bulgarian territories, it is worth looking at how Basil II managed these lands. After his subjugation of the Bulgarian Empire, he left some fortresses on Danube to serve as monitoring stations, mostly staffed by *stratiotai* – these, were, naturally, not able to stop the massive crossing of the Pechenegs, Uzes or Cumans once the Danube froze in winter.¹²² On the one hand, although SPINEI refers to the later instances of the nomads, his premise about the disinterest in restoring the fortresses might be valid in case of Basil II as well – namely, SPINEI sees fortresses as ‘bastions of resistance’; therefore leaving them in their ruinous state would prevent potential rebellions.¹²³ Many of the Danubian forts were never repaired also because the Empire did not have enough manpower to hold this frontier effectively.¹²⁴ On the other hand, in the interior, as early as 1000, some forts were restored, observing movements around Preslav, and further to the capital.¹²⁵ These were de facto the pillars of Basil II’s power there, since the rest of it depended on local support and the adopted forms of rule; this followed an already established Byzantine policy.¹²⁶ As seen above, the themes were different in as much that this Byzantine model of governing territories

¹¹⁹ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 74; THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 526 f.

¹²⁰ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 55; POPOVIĆ, *Der Balkan vom Ende des Ersten bulgarischen Reiches*, 6; THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 527 f.

¹²¹ THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 527 f. For more detail see chapter 8. Outlook in this thesis.

¹²² MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 168.

¹²³ Victor SPINEI, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta From the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century* (Leiden, Boston 2009), 201.

¹²⁴ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 114; THREADGOLD mentions that the army numbered a quarter of a million people at the time of Basil II’s death, quoted in THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 537.

¹²⁵ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 114.

¹²⁶ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 80.

was apparently tuned to local specificities.¹²⁷ Already during the time of Basil II, as the primary concern with the Rus' waned, there was no need for an elaborate fortification of Danube, whether naval or otherwise, and instead, the troops were deployed for securing inland.¹²⁸ Basil also put the former patriarchate of Bulgaria, now autocephalous church, under authority of Constantinople; he extended his law, aimed at protecting small landowners against the larger ones, to Bulgarian lands.¹²⁹ There is no evidence to assume Basil II introduced Byzantine civil or financial administration to Bulgaria at the time, nor that the theme of Paristrion was established already then.¹³⁰

Although MADGEARU is of the opinion 'the theme of Bulgaria was organized in [1018] and included the central region of the Balkans conquered from Bulgaria after 1014, but without the region by the Danube, which remained attached to the province of Dristra'¹³¹ it would seem more likely 'that after 1018/1019 in the Balkans, there were three command centers of the highest rank: Thessalonike, Adrianople and Skopje'.¹³² This would mean that the theme of Bulgaria, with the center in Skopje, included the region by the Danube. The territories west of Vidin were organized into another province after 1019, seemingly the theme of Sirmium (today Sremska Mitrovica), itself possibly former theme of Morava (Moravon, today's town of Dubravica¹³³), encompassing former Bulgarian cities of Belgrade and Braničevo, and covering therefore the northwestern part of the former Bulgarian state.¹³⁴ WASSILIOU-SEIBT is of the opinion Serbia still belonged to the theme of Bulgaria at the time.¹³⁵ Moreover, she argues, Sirmium and Serbia are identical in this case, and are not to be seen as successors to Morava.¹³⁶ As WASSILIOU-SEIBT demonstrates, Paradounavon and Dyrrachion were separated from the theme of Bulgaria as means of easier defence against the Pechenegs and Diokleia, in 1037 and 1042 respectively; similar case can

¹²⁷ Marie NYSTAZOPOULOU-PÉLÉKIDOU, *La domination byzantine en Bulgarie (1018 – 1185). Introduction à la problématique*, in: *Byzantium and the Bulgarians (1018 – 1185)*, (ed.) Katerina NIKOLAOU, Kostas TSIKNAKIS (Athens 2008), 13 – 23, here 20.

¹²⁸ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 115.

¹²⁹ THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 509 f., 528.

¹³⁰ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 80.

¹³¹ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 55.

¹³² KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 191 f.

¹³³ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 43.

¹³⁴ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 56.

¹³⁵ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem*, 184.

¹³⁶ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem*, 190.

be observed with Nisos (olim Naissos, now Niš) and Serdica against Diokleia, Pechenegs and the Hungarians.¹³⁷ Since '[Svyatoslav] had also eradicated the potential leaders of Bulgarian resistance to Byzantine hegemony by his slaughter of 300 *boyars*, and Peter's sons were hostages in Constantinople',¹³⁸ with the rest of nobility deported after the 1018 conquest, it is evident it was mostly the Byzantine officials ruling former Bulgarian lands, apparently according to the Bulgarian customs. Therefore, 'the new Byzantine administrative-military organization did not entail a change in the administrative structure of the conquered state but a change of personnel and of a territorial nature'.¹³⁹

Michael ANGOLD argued the instability in the Byzantine Balkans in the eleventh century was due to Basil II leaving a "poisoned legacy"– 'a style of government, which he alone could manage'¹⁴⁰ and a state and army that none of the "civil" emperors in the eleventh century could effectively lead.¹⁴¹ However, such juxtaposition has been outdated in the recent scholarship.¹⁴² Basil had left the state treasury, which was empty upon him ascending the throne, a hefty surplus of almost fourteen and a half million nomismata, accumulated by his taxation program.¹⁴³ It remains to be seen in the following chapters, whether the fortification of the larger sites like Dristra and Preslavitsa¹⁴⁴ and with it a presumed restoration of Byzantine military control in the region is reflected in sigillographic, written and archaeological evidence.

7. Bulgaria 1018 – 1081

7.1 Theme of Bulgaria

Although Bulgaria has so far been referred to as a theme in a broader meaning of a Byzantine administrative unit, sources suggest *doukate/katapanate* would be a more appropriate term. Yahya of Antioch certainly calls it the *katapanate* of Bulgaria.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁷ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem*, 190, KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 196.

¹³⁸ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 55.

¹³⁹ KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 188.

¹⁴⁰ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 28.

¹⁴¹ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 81; cf. ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 34.

¹⁴² STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 9.

¹⁴³ THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 532.

¹⁴⁴ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 114.

¹⁴⁵ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 77.

This is not surprising, since such structures were usually established on the frontiers and could command over several themes.¹⁴⁶ Bulgaria as a *katepanate* served to protect other Byzantine territories, namely, Thrace and Greece.¹⁴⁷ On a more abstract level, Byzantine introduction of own order in conquered lands was meant to combat *ataxia* or disorder, trying to instill a sense of firmness and stability.¹⁴⁸ Whether this was done successfully will be analyzed below.

The date of the establishment of the theme of Bulgaria is hardly disputed – as seen above, 1018 can be taken as a generally accepted terminus post quem for this. However, the exact borders of Byzantine themes are sometimes harder to trace than the date of their establishment. Since the Byzantines themselves left little what could classify as maps, and none of it pertaining to the eleventh century¹⁴⁹, the borders of the territories are usually mapped out by their border outposts. Although KÜHN's use of these to define the territorial scope of the theme of Bulgaria could be subject of debate, the general outline can be traced along the theme of Adrianople in the East, the theme of Thessaloniki in the Southeast, the theme of Nikopolis in the Southwest, Serbian principality of Zeta in the Northwest, and in the North along the river Danube.¹⁵⁰ Alternatively, 'after Basil's victory in 1018, the usual Byzantine application of the term 'Bulgaria' was to the lands around Ohrid, Prespa and Skopje, recreated as an administrative and military district, and not to those around Preslav and Pliska, nor yet Dristra and Presthlavitza. The latter were called 'the lands beside the Danube''.¹⁵¹ Therefore, for STEPHENSON, "Bulgaria" at the time had a narrower territorial connotation – according to him, only when the term 'the whole of Bulgaria' (*pases Boulgarias*) is applied should one understand it to mean both of the abovementioned territories.¹⁵² Zlatarski suggested this phrase in administrative sense meant 'the totality of the traditional Bulgarian territories (including Paristrion)', which was later divided.¹⁵³ JORDANOV reasons that Bulgaria was divided in smaller

¹⁴⁶ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 40.

¹⁴⁷ THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 539.

¹⁴⁸ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 35, 37.

¹⁴⁹ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 3.

¹⁵⁰ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 227.

¹⁵¹ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 78.

¹⁵² STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 78.

¹⁵³ NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 1., 93; for the ecclesiastical meaning see STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 78; KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 193; for organization of the conquered Bulgarian lands after 1018, see also Ivan JORDANOV, *The*

strategiai, but it wasn't until 1050s that the *katepanate* of Paradounavon was managed as a separate unit without further subdivisions.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, the mention of "all Bulgaria" prior to the middle of the eleventh century is to be understood as a rhetorical conveyance.

If after his victory of 1018 Basil really did secure his position by gaining favour of regional aristocracy¹⁵⁵, one might expect more Slavic names appearing on seals found in Bulgaria. On the other hand, once they have received the titles, these men were posted to more remote regions of the Empire.¹⁵⁶ As already seen, the highest positions in the most important cities were taken by the Byzantines – 'the appointments of the *patrikios* Eustathius Daphnomeles as *strategos* in Dyrrachion, of Constantine Diogenes to a position of authority in Sirmium which extended over Raška, and of the *patrikios* David Arianites as *strategos autokrator* in Skopje. This last command was surely the senior position in all the lands north of Thessaloniki and Dyrrachion, with authority over *strategoi* of many *kastra* and districts once subject to Samuil'.¹⁵⁷ Constantine Diogenes' position also shows that it was not until 1019, a year to which his service in Sirmium can be dated, that Basil's conquest was complete.¹⁵⁸ In those terms, a *strategos autokrator* was a superior to other *strategoi* of smaller centers in the theme of Bulgaria.¹⁵⁹ Skylitzes describes David Arianites' investiture with the title.¹⁶⁰ In 1018, although left as a substitute for Emperor's presence, David found his power limited to the theme of Bulgaria; due to lack of other sources or seals, it remains unknown what his career while in power in Skopje looked like.¹⁶¹ Besides serving there in the aforementioned position, David Arianites was previously *doux* of Thessaloniki¹⁶², and was made *katepano* of Bulgaria, possibly at the same time when he was *strategos autokrator* in Skopje; this dual title could date to the time of the very

Katepanate of Paradounavon According to the Sphragistic Data, in: Studies in Byzantine Sigillography 8, (ed.) Jean-Claude CHEYNET, Claudia SODE, (2003), 63 – 74, here 73.

¹⁵⁴ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 73.

¹⁵⁵ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 74.

¹⁵⁶ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 77.

¹⁵⁷ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 74.

¹⁵⁸ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 177, 182.

¹⁵⁹ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 78.

¹⁶⁰ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 228; JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 179.

¹⁶¹ KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 55 – 57.

¹⁶² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 55.

creation of the theme of Bulgaria, with *strategos autokrator* being a temporary investiture.¹⁶³

After him, Constantine Diogenes, having served in Sirmium and Thessaloniki, came to Skopje in 1026 as *doux* and *patrikios* of Bulgaria.¹⁶⁴ Alternatively, he served on both posts simultaneously, as *archon* of Sirmium and *doux* of Bulgaria.¹⁶⁵ However, the term *archon* must be viewed as a periphrasis for *strategos*. Constantine is also known from the narrative sources.¹⁶⁶ The same Constantine Diogenes will be sent back to Thessaloniki a year later as a *patrikios*, from where he served as the *doux* of Bulgaria.¹⁶⁷ Other estimates place him there in 1022/1025.¹⁶⁸ He was also in charge of dealing with the Pecheneg raids south of Danube.¹⁶⁹ According to Skylitzes, by 1028, he was reposted to the theme of Thrakesion.¹⁷⁰

A Christopher, *protospatharios*, *epi tou koitonos* and *katepano* of Thessaloniki and Bulgaria served sometime in the 1020s.¹⁷¹ Another Christopher, in 1028, a *protospatharios*, *epi tou koitonos* and *katepano* of Thessaloniki and Bulgaria is attested by his seals; if the two sets of seals belong to the same man, they were imprinted by different boulloteria.¹⁷² Zacos dated the service of Christopher in Bulgaria to the period before 1028, where he served in Italy after this; Božilov claimed this is the same Christopher, whose epigraphic evidence, apparently dating shortly before Christopher's service in Italy, can be found in a church in Thessaloniki, where he served as a *katepano* of the themes of Thessaloniki and Bulgaria; JORDANOV expresses reservations in regard to the entire timeline concerning Christopher, since the inscriptions in church and on seals do not match; according to Božilov, Christopher was a Bulgarian, and therefore probably entered the Byzantine service in

¹⁶³ KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 55 f.

¹⁶⁴ Robert MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals from the Fortress Kale in Skopje*, excavated between 2007 and 2012. *Byzantion* 86 (2016), 261 – 316, here 265.

¹⁶⁵ MAKSIMOVIĆ, *Organizacija vizantijske vlasti*, 39; cf. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem*, 183 f..

¹⁶⁶ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 229.

¹⁶⁷ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 124; cf. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem*, 183 f.

¹⁶⁸ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 229.

¹⁶⁹ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 180.

¹⁷¹ JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 174; George ZACOS, *Byzantine Lead Seals, Volume II* (ed.) J. W. NESBITT (Bern 1984), no. 969.

¹⁷² MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 265; JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 174.

1018.¹⁷³ The new *katepano* of Bulgaria was likely *protospatharios* Christopher Bulgaros, a man of possible Bulgarian origin; according to BOŽILOV and GJUZELEV, this functionary was a commander of the joint unit of Bulgaria and Thessaloniki, with his seat in Thessaloniki.¹⁷⁴ Attested by sigillographic evidence, the commander of Bulgarian theme after Bulgaros was Bardas, a *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Bulgaria, who was also *anagrapheus*, and served sometime between 1028 and 1030.¹⁷⁵ Bardas is unknown to the narrative sources, but his seal can be dated to 1020s.¹⁷⁶ Alternatively, this Bardas followed David Arianites.¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, *anagrapheus* would usually be in charge of measuring the land, a task sometimes performed by a *krites*, but also could issue tax notices, and was essentially a member of financial administration.¹⁷⁸ According to KRSMANOVIĆ, *anagrapheus* was a standard office of a judge or a *praetor*.¹⁷⁹ Parallels to the function of *anagrapheus* are also to be found in the Eastern themes, making him therefore a common thematic dignitary.¹⁸⁰ This is one of the few known *strategoi* of the theme of Bulgaria, although it is unclear whether as such he represents an anomaly or whether the lack of this title in the theme of Bulgaria has to do with the status of the theme.¹⁸¹

The emperor Romanos III Argyros (1028 - 1034) seemed more preoccupied with Syria¹⁸² rather than with the Balkans, and took a step back from Basil II's strict check over the financial administration.¹⁸³ Some reforms were only introduced under the next emperor, Michael IV Paphlagonian (1034 - 1041).¹⁸⁴ However, here too, recapture of Sicily was given precedence over dealing with the situation in the Balkans and the reforms of taxation were only meant to amass money for military expeditions.¹⁸⁵ As far as the Byzantine control of the territories goes, the uprisings in the last two thirds of the eleventh century reflect the true extent of Byzantine power.

¹⁷³ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 175.

¹⁷⁴ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 344.

¹⁷⁵ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 344 f.; ZACOS, Byzantine Lead Seals, Vol. II, no. 370.

¹⁷⁶ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 158 f.

¹⁷⁷ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 265; JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 159.

¹⁷⁸ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 81; DÖLGER, Beiträge zur Geschichte, 83.

¹⁷⁹ KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten Zusammengesetzten Bezirke, 65.

¹⁸⁰ KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 119.

¹⁸¹ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 179.

¹⁸² THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 584.

¹⁸³ ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 31.

¹⁸⁴ For more detail, see the following chapter.

¹⁸⁵ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 587 f.

The rebellion of self-proclaimed grandson of Samuil, Peter II Delyan in 1040 – 1041, starting from Belgrade, managed to inconvenience lands up to Thessaloniki and mobilize local populations and former Bulgarian nobles, such as Alusian, an alleged son of Ivan Vladislav, who was made a co-ruler to Peter.¹⁸⁶ Delyan's forces were helped by a Bulgarian officer in service of the Byzantines, Tihomir, who was also proclaimed tsar by the Bulgarian troops in Byzantine service.¹⁸⁷ 'Thus Bulgaria was in turmoil with two pretenders to Samuil's title at the head of two armies'.¹⁸⁸ Tihomir was soon done away with and Delyan could take Dyrrachion, as well as Prespa and a portion of northern Greece; however, Alusian, Aaron's grandson and Ivan Vladislav's son, now in Byzantine service, set out for Bulgaria as well and amassed support of the locals.¹⁸⁹ This time, Alusian outplayed Delyan and had him mutilated, only to deflect back to the Byzantines, and be rewarded with additional titles.¹⁹⁰ 'The Bulgarian uprising of 1040 – 41 revealed how weakly based Byzantine provincial administration was in other parts of the Balkans'.¹⁹¹

'After 1042 an official known as the *pronoetes* of all Bulgaria was settled in Skopje'; Basil *synkellos* was the first one filling this function; on his seals he is *monachos*, *synkellos* and *anagrapheus* of Bulgaria; he was also at the head of the campaign of 1048 against the Pechenegs, and died fighting them 1053.¹⁹² This would mean it was Basil, the *pronoetes* of all Bulgaria who was sent, together with the *doux* of Adrianople to assist the commander "of the cities from Istros", when Tyrach crossed the frozen river with his men in 1048.¹⁹³ He therefore commanded *tagmata* in the theme of Bulgaria; he could have also served from 1048 until 1051.¹⁹⁴ 'Pronoetai "of

¹⁸⁶ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 130; THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 588 f; POPOVIĆ, Der Balkan vom Ende des Ersten bulgarischen Reiches, 8f; cf. Alexandru MADGEARU, Centrifugal Movements in the Balkans in the 11th Century, in: Association Internationale d'Études du Sud-Est Européen. Bulletin, 35-39, 2005 – 2009 (2010), 21 – 28, here 24 – 26. See also Jean-Claude CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963 – 1210) (Paris 1990).

¹⁸⁷ MADGEARU, Centrifugal Movements in the Balkans, 24; THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 588.

¹⁸⁸ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 131.

¹⁸⁹ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 131 f.

¹⁹⁰ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 132 f.; THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 588 f.

¹⁹¹ ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 40; cf. THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 589.

¹⁹² MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 265 f.; STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 137; ZACOS, Byzantine Lead Seals, Vol. II, no. 959; Ivan JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria, Volume 3. Part One – Part Two (Sofia 2009), here part 1, no. 1144.

¹⁹³ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 159 f.

¹⁹⁴ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 229.

all Bulgaria” were stewards of church estates’; alternatively, the function of *pronoetes* was somewhat specific to Byzantine Bulgaria, and in the twelfth century denoted a man who had certain rights, such as tax collection, in exchange for a certain duty, usually a military one.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, *pronoetai* could keep a part of the taxes they collected in their area of jurisdiction; they could also serve as *anagrapheis* in provinces in the eleventh century.¹⁹⁶ *Pronoetes* denotes not just involvement in fiscal administration, but also acting as representative of the emperor.¹⁹⁷ Basil is one of the three known *pronoetai* of Bulgaria; additionally, he is referred to as *hegemon*, *archon* and *satrapes*.¹⁹⁸ As JORDANOV points out, *archon*, *satrapes* and *hegemon* were most likely anachronisms (alternatively, periphrases).¹⁹⁹ On his other seals, Basil is a *monachos*, *synkellos* and *anagrapheus* of Bulgaria.²⁰⁰ Apparently, Basil’s incapability to deal with the nomads prompted Constantine IX Monomachos (1042 – 1055) to a treaty with the Pechenegs in 1053, settling them in the “Hundred Hills” region and establishing Patzinakia, a semi-autonomous territory under command of the Pechenegs.²⁰¹ Nikephoros Proteuon was the next man attested as the *katepano* of the theme of Bulgaria, 1053/1054 – 1055.²⁰² In written sources, he is described as commander of Bulgaria, while his seal does not bear a specific function.²⁰³

1055 saw Leon Drimys, *vestes*, as the *katepano* of Bulgaria.²⁰⁴ MIHAJLOVSKI’S supposition, that by 1060 he was replaced by ‘Constantine *patrikios*, *anthypatos* and

¹⁹⁵ KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 193; cf. Alexandra-Kyriaki WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Der Terminus Προνοητης in der byzantinischen Verwaltung*. Zbornik raodva Vizantološkog instituta 50 (2013), 149 – 162, here 149 f.

¹⁹⁶ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Der Terminus Προνοητης*, 149.

¹⁹⁷ Ivan JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, Volume 1: *Byzantine Seals with Geographical Names* (Sofia 2003), 50.

¹⁹⁸ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Der Terminus Προνοητης*, 157.

¹⁹⁹ JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 161; cf. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Der Terminus Προνοητης*, 157.

²⁰⁰ JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 1, no. 19.1.

²⁰¹ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 92 f. For details on Patzinakia, see the chapter further below.

²⁰² KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 230; MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 266; Werner SEIBT, *Sigillographische Beiträge zur bulgarischen Geschichte*. Dobrudža 12 (1995), 224 – 232, here 226; JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 181.

²⁰³ JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 181.

²⁰⁴ MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 266; cf. JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 168 f.; Alexandra-Kyriaki WASSILIOU, Werner SEIBT, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich*. 2. Teil. Zentral- und Provinzialverwaltung (Vienna 2004), no. 278.

vestes, *logariastes* and *anagrapheus* of the whole of Bulgaria’²⁰⁵ seems rather impossible, since the second man belongs to the civil administration of the theme.



‘Obverse

Splendid half-relief, half-length bust of St. Demetrios holding a spear and oblong shield. Inscription in two columns: Ⓐ|Δ|Η|Μ,–|Ρ.|Ο,; Ὁ ἅγιος Δημήτριος. Border of dots.

Reverse

Inscription of six lines. Border of dots.

ΚΕΡ,Θ,

.WCWΔUΛW

.ῶNΠPΓAN

ΘVΠAT,BCCT,

ΗΛΟΓΑΡΙΑCT,

.ΑΙΑΝΑΓΡΑ

.ΕΑΠΑCΗC

.ΥΛΓ/ΡΙ,

Κύριε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Κωνσταντίνῳ πατρικίῳ, ἀνθυπάτῳ, βέστη, λογαριαστῇ
καὶ ἀναγραφέα πάσης Βουλγαρίας

²⁰⁵ MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 266; STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 136; cf. JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 164; NESBITT, *OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 1, no. 29.1; WASSILIOU, SEIBT, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich*. 2. Teil, no. 112; WASSILIOU, SEIBT, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich*. 2. Teil, 130.

Translation

(...)Lord, help your servant Constantine patrikios, anthypatos, vestes, logariastes and anagrapheus of all Bulgaria.²⁰⁶

The mention of “all Bulgaria” here could refer to the entire theme, or similar to *pronoetes*, this could denote the area of the archbishopric of Bulgaria.²⁰⁷ On one set of his seals, to be dated between 1050s and 1060s, Constantine is *patrikios*, *hypatos* and *anagrapheus* of Bulgaria²⁰⁸, while on the other preserved examples, probably from 1050s, he is *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *doux* of Bulgaria²⁰⁹; a third group of seals lists him as *vestes*, *anthypatos*, *patrikios*, *logariastes* and *anagrapheus* of all Bulgaria²¹⁰; on the fourth set of seals, he is a *vestarches* and *pronoetes* of all Bulgaria, and these are to be dated to 1060s – 1070s.²¹¹ Therefore, as his seals demonstrate, his functions changed over time. *Logariastai*, as accountants, were a part of the financial administration and the office was particularly widespread in the eleventh century.²¹² Civil offices show Byzantium introduced the usual thematic structures at the frontier as well – as a matter of fact, STEPHENSON argues this is evidence of absorption of these territories to ‘internal frontier’.²¹³ Finally, Constantine is also attested by sigillographic evidence as *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *doux* of Thessaloniki, Bulgaria and Serbia around 1050s.²¹⁴ In the narrative sources, Attaleiates refers to the man as *satrapes* and *archegos*, while Skylitzes depicted him as *archon* and *hegemon*.²¹⁵ This man has also been identified as the abovementioned Constantine Diogenes.²¹⁶

²⁰⁶ The picture of the seal and the text quoted from Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, <http://doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1958.106.5614>, accessed on 24 May 2018. Ω is represented by W and the O-V ligature by U. Abbreviation sign is represented by a comma.

²⁰⁷ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 176.

²⁰⁸ ZACOS, Byzantine Lead Seals, Vol. II, no. 423; JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 181.

²⁰⁹ ZACOS, Byzantine Lead Seals, Vol. II, no. 409; JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 181.

²¹⁰ ZACOS, Byzantine Lead Seals, Vol. II, no. 422; JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 181 f.

²¹¹ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 164 – 167, 182; WASSILIOU, SEIBT, Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil, no. 220.

²¹² SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 145.

²¹³ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 137.

²¹⁴ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 168, 181.

²¹⁵ WASSILIOU, SEIBT, Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil, 219.

²¹⁶ Jean-Claude CHEYNET, La société byzantine. L'apport des sceaux, Volume 2 (Paris 2008), 567 f.; KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 229; see also Konstantinos Diogenes, in: Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit Online, <https://www-degruyter-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/view/PMBZ/PMBZ26199>, accessed on 22 June 2018.

Alternatively, BOŽILOV and GJUZELEV argue that Bardas was followed by the (*patrikios* and) *strategos* of Bulgaria, Constantine Tzourvaneles (Georgian by origin²¹⁷), who served from 1030 – 1040.²¹⁸ The term *doux* could be replaced by *strategos* in written sources, which is probably the case here, since according to KÜHN, Bulgaria was already established not as a theme, but rather as a *doukate*; however, it is the seal that identifies Constantine Tzourvaneles as a *strategos*.²¹⁹ Following this timeline, Leon Drimys served not in 1050s, but 1040 – 1048.²²⁰ Therefore, the command of Basil would be dated to 1048 – 1053, and predated that of Nikephoros; Nikephoros in turn was then followed by Constantine 1055 – 1065.²²¹

By 1040s the theme of Bulgaria received its civilian administration with *pronoetes* and *praetor*, and a financial one with *anagrapheus*.²²² Furthermore, by 1060, with tax reforms in place, administration in the theme of Bulgaria was divided into military and civil one, therefore resulting in two heads of a theme, a *doux* and a *praetor*.²²³ It could be that the future emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates, served as a commander with the title of *proedros* in Bulgaria 1064 – 1065.²²⁴ Since Nikephoros Botaneiates was unable to deal with the Uzes south of Danube, a new *katepano* of Bulgaria was appointed – Andronikos Philokales, who served until 1067.²²⁵ On his seal, he is described as *patrikios*, *anthypatos*, *vestes* and *katepano* of Bulgaria; JORDANOV dates his seal to the middle of 1060s, which roughly corresponds to the written record.²²⁶ According to Kekaumenos, between 1064 and 1074, Andronikos Philokales took the place of *patrikios*, *anthypatos*, *vestes* and *katepano* of Bulgaria.²²⁷

²¹⁷ Except of this example, one also finds officers of Syrian or Armenian descent, as quoted from THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 571.

²¹⁸ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 345; cf. KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 232.

²¹⁹ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 232.

²²⁰ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 345.

²²¹ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 345.

²²² STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 136 f.

²²³ MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 266; STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 137.

²²⁴ MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 266.

²²⁵ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 345; MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 76.

²²⁶ JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 157f.

²²⁷ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 230 f.; MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 266; STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 137.

The 1072 rebellion in the theme of Bulgaria, aimed at restoring the Bulgarian Empire, broke out²²⁸ when Georgi Voyteh, helped by the troops of Constantine Bodin, son of Zeta's ruler, was able to take Skopje, Nisos, Ochrid and Devol, before being captured by the Byzantines – this rebellion coincided with the recent Byzantine defeat at Manzikert and the loss of Bari, as well as the Pecheneg revolt in Paradounavon, therefore highlighting once again the precarious situation at Byzantine borderlands.²²⁹ After reestablishment of Byzantine power in Bulgaria, the *magistros* and *doux* of the West, Michael Saronites (1072 – 1073/ 1073 – 1074), was appointed *vestarches* and *katepano* of Bulgaria, according to his seal.²³⁰ He was followed by Nikephoros Bryennios (1074/1075), *doux* of Bulgaria, who was then shifted to Dyrrachion.²³¹ Bryennios was an *ethnarch* at the time of the rebellion.²³² One can witness a series of commanders who served briefly as *doukes* – one of these was Nikephoros Batatzes, *proedros* and *doux* of Bulgaria, otherwise not mentioned by written sources, but known from a seal dating from around 1074/ post 1075.²³³



²²⁸ MADGEARU, Centrifugal Movements in the Balkans, 21 – 23.

²²⁹ POPOVIĆ, Der Balkan vom Ende des Ersten bulgarischen Reiches, 9 f.

²³⁰ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 231; MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267; BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 346.

²³¹ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 231; MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267.

²³² THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 594 f. An ethnarch was a commander of the foreign mercenary armies, as quoted from OIKONOMIDES, L'évolution de l'organisation, 143.

²³³ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 96; BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 346; cf. KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 232; JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 172 f.; NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 29.3; Ivan JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria, Volume 2: Byzantine Seals with Family Names (Sofia 2006), no. 96–98; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1146.

‘Obverse

High-relief image of St. Demetrios standing frontally, holding a spear and a shield resting on the ground. Inscription in two columns: Ⓐ|ΔΗ|Μ|Η – Τ|ΠΙ|Ο|C: Ὁ ἅγιος Δημήτριος. Border of dots.

Reverse

Inscription of six lines; ornament at bottom. Border of dots.

+ ΚΕΡΟΗΘ,

ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΩ

ΠΡΟΕΔΡΩ

ΔΟΥΚΙ

ΒΟΥΛΓΑΡΙΑΣ

Τῷ ΒΑΤΑΤΖΗ

— · —

Κύριε βοήθει Νικηφόρῳ προέδρῳ καὶ δουκὶ Βουλγαρίας τῷ Βατάτζῃ

Translation

(...) Lord, help Nikephoros Batatzes, proedros and doux of Bulgaria.²³⁴

Nikephoros Bryennios and Nikephoros Batatzes could have followed each other in reverse order.²³⁵ ‘The next military administrator as *strategos*, judge of the Vellum and *praetor* of Bulgaria was Theodore (Theodoulos) Triakontaphyllos’.²³⁶ There are also two groups of his seals: those on which he is a *krites* of the Vellum and of Bulgaria, and those on which he is *praetor* of Bulgaria.²³⁷ John, *proedros*, *krites of the velon* and *pronoetes* of Bulgaria, is attested by his seals around 1075.²³⁸ *Pronoetai* in the provinces were under jurisdiction of *krites* or *strategos* of a thema.²³⁹ According to MIHAJLOVSKI, John Triakontaphyllos, *praetor* of Bulgaria, was yet

²³⁴ The picture of the seal and the text quoted from Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, <http://doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1958.106.5695>, accessed on 24 May 2018. Ω is represented by W and the O-V ligature by U. Abbreviation sign is represented by a comma.

²³⁵ As seen in BOŽILOV, GUZELEV, *Istoriya na Bălgarija*, 346.

²³⁶ MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 267.

²³⁷ JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 162 f.

²³⁸ MIHAJLOVSKI, *A Collection of Medieval Seals*, 278; ZACOS, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, Vol. II, no. 988; WASSILIOU, SEIBT, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil*, 219 f.

²³⁹ WASSILIOU, SEIBT, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil*, 220.

another civil official in the theme²⁴⁰, who ‘held the elevated rank of *protoproedros*, which was introduced c. 1060’.²⁴¹ Alternatively, according to the dating of the seals, John was followed in 1080s by John Triakontaphyllos, *protoproedros* and *praetor* of Bulgaria.²⁴² However, JORDANOV warns that the seals bearing these functions and presumably the name *John* can not be definitely linked to John Triakontaphyllos.²⁴³

John Triakontaphyllos ‘may well have been a contemporary of Gregory, *protoproedros* and *doux* of Bulgaria’²⁴⁴. Gregory served previously as *proedros* and *doux* of Thessaloniki, and sometime in the 1065 - 1080 period on the same position in Bulgaria.²⁴⁵ According to BOŽILOV and GJUZELEV, Gregory was preceded by Alexander Kavasila (1077 - 1080), *doux* of Skopje, and with it of Bulgaria, which would place the rule of Gregory to 1080 – 1096.²⁴⁶ Niketas Karikes was referred to as *protoproedros* and *doux* of Bulgaria; KÜHN dates his service there to 1096/1097, while JORDANOV dates it to 1080s and separates him from Niketas, *doux* and *princeps* of Bulgarians, known from the Western descriptions of the First Crusade – instead, this commander of Bulgaria is the Karikes who rebelled in Crete 1092 – 1093.²⁴⁷ Seals of Niketas Karikes, were also found in Skopje; they can be dated to the 1080s, one of them with the inscription on it, ‘I seal the writings of the *doux* of Bulgaria *protoproedros* Niketas Karikes’.²⁴⁸ Itself in the same form, the inscription on the seal is consistent with the seals in dodecasyllabic metric verse inscriptions typical for the period²⁴⁹, which in itself is a step away from the strictly prescribed format of the

²⁴⁰ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267.

²⁴¹ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 137.

²⁴² JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 163 f.; NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 29.4.

²⁴³ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 164.

²⁴⁴ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 137; see also MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267.

²⁴⁵ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267, 277; cf. KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 232; cf. JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 162, JORDANOV dates the seal to 1080s; NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 29.2.

²⁴⁶ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 346.

²⁴⁷ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 231; cf. JORDANOV dates the seal to 1080s, as quoted from JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 19.2.

²⁴⁸ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 279 f.; cf. JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 170 f.; cf. Dating could also be closer to 1096, as quoted from WASSILIOU, SEIBT, Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil, no. 250; see also JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 288; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1145.

²⁴⁹ WASSILIOU, SEIBT, Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil, 243; SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 20, 147 ff.; see also Alexandra-Kyriaki WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden. Teil 1. Einleitung, Siegellegenden von Alpha bis inklusive My (Wien 2011); Alexandra-Kyriaki WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Corpus der byzantinischen

seals, therefore potentially indicating stability in the Empire or even the region. What is more, the theme of Bulgaria seems to have existed until the establishment of the Second Bulgarian Empire, although there is a mention of a *doux* of Skopje as late as 1193.²⁵⁰

One thing to remember is that in the East, ‘at a general level it is clear that most *doukes* were appointed on an *ad hoc* basis in response to a variety of constantly changing internal and external political and military pressures’, rendering them commanders of troops on campaigns, rather than static posts, which is why they would sometimes not be replaced once the circumstances that lead to their appointment passed.²⁵¹ The sigillographic evidence, or better said, lack thereof, suggests the same about the Balkans. Similarly, such provisionary solutions led to a complicated, debased, and ultimately unstable system of hierarchy.²⁵² It is also important to point out that KRSMANOVIĆ argues there were composite administrative units in the Balkans – the characteristics of composite themes, actually found on both Empire’s frontiers, are: they are compounds of themes and alternatively of *strategiai*, with own military and civil administration; they were subordinate to a *doux* or *katepano*; they were commanded by a judge or *praetor* for civilian administration; most importantly, they are referred to in both singular and plural forms of the word theme.²⁵³ KRSMANOVIĆ is of the opinion that one of these is Bulgaria-Sirmium-Paradounavon, with Bulgaria established in 1018, Sirmium in 1019 and Paradounavon in the mid eleventh century.²⁵⁴ The commander of Sirmium was therefore promoted to *doux* of Bulgaria after the 1026 Pecheneg attack; a proof of these composite themes can also be seen in a seal of a Constantine, *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *doux* of Thessaloniki, Bulgaria and Serbia, making him allegedly a commander of three separate military administrative units.²⁵⁵ Similarly, such a view shows that the wide-held belief Byzantium ruled through the existing local power-structures, at least militarily, but also when it comes to civilian administration is

Siegel mit metrischen Legenden. Teil 2. Siegellegenden von Ny bis inclusive Sphragis (Budapest 2016).

²⁵⁰ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 228.

²⁵¹ HOLMES, Byzantium’s Eastern Frontier, 91.

²⁵² MAKSIMOVIĆ, Verwaltungsstrukturen, 54.

²⁵³ KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten Zusammengesetzten Bezirke, 69.

²⁵⁴ KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten Zusammengesetzten Bezirke, 76.

²⁵⁵ KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten Zusammengesetzten Bezirke, 76; cf. BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 345.

applicable only to an extent – it is more plausible Byzantium ruled through the adapted, rather than adopted structures.

7.1.1 Skopje

The excavations in the fortress of Kale have resulted in over eighty Byzantine seals found in the period 2007 – 2012; Skopje was an important strategic point, connecting Belgrade and Nisos with Thessaloniki, and Htetovo (today Tetovo) and the coast with Velbužd (today Kjustendil) and Serdica; from 1018 until the restoration of the Bulgarian state, it served as the capital of the theme of Bulgaria.²⁵⁶ This center also made it easier to keep watch over fortresses on both sides of the Vardar.²⁵⁷ At first ‘the fortress of Skopje became the seat of a strategos, but shortly after it was upgraded into a katepanate’.²⁵⁸ From the middle of the eleventh century, the commander of Bulgaria appears more frequently as *doux* of Skopje.²⁵⁹ Moreover, as Skylitzes writes, *doux* of Skopje could be used interchangeably with *doux* of Bulgaria.²⁶⁰ Therefore, there is no reason to suppose, as MADGEARU does, that the mention of the *doux* of Skopje meant the theme of Bulgaria was split into two, with centers in Skopje and Belgrade²⁶¹ or, as JORDANOV writes, that it remains unclear if *doux* of Skopje was also a commander of the theme of Bulgaria.²⁶²

Besides the already mentioned men filling this post, Nikephoros Karantenos served in Skopje from around 1071 as a *doux* and helped subdue the 1072 rebellion of Georgi Voyteh, together with the troops of the *strategos*, whom he commanded over; however, due to his delayed response to the rebellion, he was replaced by Damianos Dalassenos; this *doux* of Skopje was captured by the rebels.²⁶³ Most probably, the

²⁵⁶ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 261 – 263.

²⁵⁷ KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten Zusammengesetzten Bezirke, 77.

²⁵⁸ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 283.

²⁵⁹ MAKSIMOVIĆ, Organizacija vizantijske vlasti, 42; WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 178.

²⁶⁰ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 178. ‘In the Empire’s west, the importance (of the capital cities) of each doukate or katepanate as a well fortified points of defence, military reservoir of troops and a foothold for some undertakings, has showed itself sometimes even clearer than in the eastern part of the Empire’, as quoted from KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 167. The identification of a *doux* of a capital city with the *doux* of the theme is found in the Eastern parts of the empire as well – so the *doux* of Theodosiupolis stands for *doux* or *katepano* of Iberia from the middle of the eleventh century, as quoted from KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 182.

²⁶¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 99.

²⁶² JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 183.

²⁶³ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 230 f.; MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267; BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 346.

already mentioned *doux* of Bulgaria Constantine Tzourvaneles, and a former *strategos* of Berat, was now, according to MIHAJLOVSKI, a *strategos* of Skopje.²⁶⁴ Therefore, one can safely presume, as already mentioned above, he was de facto *doux* of Bulgaria.²⁶⁵ *Magistros* Nikephoros Bryennios was made *doux* of Skopje 1074 – 1075.²⁶⁶ Isaac Komnenos' son John Komnenos served as a *doux* of the theme as well.²⁶⁷ According to the narrative sources, Alexandros Kabasilas served as *doux* of Skopje sometime around 1078.²⁶⁸ This prompted MIHAJLOVSKI to postulate the existence of a theme of Skopje, denoting the city and its immediate vicinity, as seen with other city-themes as well.²⁶⁹ However, as demonstrated above, such a wording could also mean the *doux* of Bulgaria. Despite its favourable position, by the twelfth century the city lost much of its importance.²⁷⁰

7.1.2 Other Examples of Towns

As a comparison, KÜHN suggests that cities such as Skopje, Nisos and Serdica were part of the theme of Bulgaria, while Ochrid and cities-fortresses of Kastoria, Ostrovo, Pelagonia, Moglena, Servia and Soskos possibly formed their own themes.²⁷¹ On the other hand, 'one could assume that in 1018, Ochrid became the seat of the *strategos*, if one were to interpret the data on the appointment of Eustathios Daphnomeles as the "*archon tes poleos*" in that way (...). The *strategos* of Ochrid was attested in the later period, but it was mentioned that in 1072, that city had been left unfortified ever since the time Basil II demolished its fortifications'.²⁷² The alleged composite character²⁷³ of the Bulgarian theme is therefore reflected in the subordination of commanders of smaller units, such as, according to Skylitzes, *strategos* of Ochrid, *strategos* of Kastoria and *patrikios* and *anthypatos* of Devol to Nikephoros Karantenos, the *doux* of Skopje.²⁷⁴ Therefore, Ochrid could not have been a separate theme, either

²⁶⁴ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 266.

²⁶⁵ For details, see KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 232, as well as paragraphs above in this thesis.

²⁶⁶ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267.

²⁶⁷ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 267.

²⁶⁸ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 231.

²⁶⁹ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 269.

²⁷⁰ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 269.

²⁷¹ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 227.

²⁷² KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 192; cf. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 176.

²⁷³ Other examples of these composite administrative units include Voleron-Strymon-Thessaloniki, Thrace-Macedonia and Peloponnes-Hellas; the most important constituent part was named last, as quoted from KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten Zusammengesetzten Bezirke, 70.

²⁷⁴ KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 192.

immediately after Basil II's conquest, or in the last third of the century. Serdica had a *doux* as a commander – Nikephoros Melissenos was a *doux* and *magistros* before Romanos Diogenes, who served as a *doux* there around 1067.²⁷⁵ According to MADGEARU, the *doukate* of Serdica was formed in 1059, while MIHAJLOVSKI claims this happened in 1067.²⁷⁶ Cities like Dyrrachion became a *katepanate* (1042), just like Beroe (now Stara Zagora) in the last third of the eleventh century; from the second half of the eleventh century, the former seat of a *kleisourarches*, then *strategos*, Mesembria could have also gotten its *katepano*.²⁷⁷ Therefore, 'the internal structure of the so-called *doukate* of Bulgaria, formed after 1018, is indicative. It had a composite character, which meant that within its (admittedly, questionable) borders, there were small *strategides*, and homogenisation, at least in the military respect, was carried out through the position of the *doux* of Bulgaria/Skopje'.²⁷⁸

7.2 Theme of Paradounavon

Paradounavon was a military unit attested to have been under the command of a *katepano*, most likely from 1043 until 1091 – 1095.²⁷⁹ There are various speculations on the exact date of its establishment, ranging from as early as 971, mostly in Romanian historiography²⁸⁰, to 1019 and 1020s, to as late as 1050s.²⁸¹ According to KÜHN, Paradounavon replaced Mesopotamia of the West around 1000, while the remaining former Bulgarian territory was organised into *doukate* of Bulgaria.²⁸² However, as already mentioned, Mesopotamia is to be sought in the vicinity of Simeonovgrad and Maritsa, not Danube.²⁸³ In his works, MADGEARU dates the creation

²⁷⁵ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 179 f.

²⁷⁶ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 99; MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 266.

²⁷⁷ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 167 – 170.

²⁷⁸ KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 187.

²⁷⁹ Alexandra-Kyriaki WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση του θέματος Παραδουνάβου και τους ανώτατους στρατιωτικούς διοικητές της [Bemerkungen zur Einrichtung der militärischen Verwaltungseinheit Paradunabon (Παραδούναβον) und Kommandanten], in: Holokotinou. Studies in Byzantine Numismatics and Sigillography in Memory of Petros Protonotarios (Bibliotheca of the Hellenic Numismatic Society 10). (Athens 2013) 181-195, here 181.

²⁸⁰ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 72. BOŽILOV states researchers such as Bănescu were driven primarily by nationalistic tendencies, as quoted from Ivan BOŽILOV, L'administration byzantine en Bulgarie (1018 – 1186): le cas de Paristrion – Paradounavon (Paradounavis), in: Byzantium and the Bulgarians (1018 – 1185), (ed.) Katerina NIKOLAOU, Kostas TSIKNAKIS (Athens 2008), 91 – 97, here 92.

²⁸¹ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 181.

²⁸² KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 167.

²⁸³ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 168.

of the theme of Paradounavon to 1018 – 1020.²⁸⁴ However, since ‘the territorial extend and the capital city of the civil and ecclesiastical administrative structures – usually coincided’ and the archbishopric of Bulgaria had under its ecclesiastical jurisdiction the territory of the former Bulgarian state, as JORDANOV hints, there is no reason to suppose Paradounavon did not originally belong to the theme of Bulgaria.²⁸⁵ The borders of the theme of Paradounavon could roughly be defined by Danube and the Balkan Mountains, the Black Sea and probably Vidin, yielding over a thousand Byzantine seals found in that area.²⁸⁶ ‘The forms *παρὰ τὸν Ἰστρον πόλεις*, *τὰ Παρίστρια*, *Παραδούναβον* and *Παραδούναβις* seem to have not only a general geographical meaning, but also seem to have been used entirely as a denomination for the administrative unit on Lower Danube’.²⁸⁷ “Paradounavon” or “near the Danube” used a Bulgarian-based term for the Istros river.²⁸⁸ Therefore, it was first a geographical denotation, then an administrative one.²⁸⁹ Paradounavon was what would seem to be the official name of the theme, whereas the written sources use the term Paristrion.²⁹⁰ The commanders of the region are referred to as *ἐπάρχωντος κατὰ τὸν Ἰστρον πόλεων* in the primary literature²⁹¹, therefore using the Byzantine name for the river. As with the titles in the theme of Bulgaria, ‘the gulf between ‘rhetoric’ and ‘reality’ in Byzantine literature’²⁹² was often a significant one. The first capital of the theme was Dristra, and it took over the role of both civil and ecclesiastical seat, according to the usual Byzantine practice.²⁹³

As already mentioned above, the final conquest of Bulgaria witnessed somewhat of a reorganization of the administration of the territories, especially with establishment of new themes such as Bulgaria.²⁹⁴ Moreover, as far as the hold on territory goes, ‘Svyatoslav Igorevich had demonstrated that it was possible to dominate the whole of

²⁸⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 63.

²⁸⁵ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, 136; JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 73.

²⁸⁶ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 72; cf. KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 224; MĂRCULEȚ, The archontate of the Paristrion cities, 56; Alexandru MADGEARU, The Military Organization of Paradounavon. Byzantinoslavica 60 (1999), 2, 421 – 446, here 422 f.

²⁸⁷ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 223; cf. MĂRCULEȚ, The archontate of the Paristrion cities, 56 f.

²⁸⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 68.

²⁸⁹ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, Istorija na Bălgarija, 354.

²⁹⁰ cf. MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 68.

²⁹¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 69.

²⁹² STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 11.

²⁹³ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 72 f.

²⁹⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 63.

Paristrion and northern Bulgaria from a few strongholds, which the emperor now held.²⁹⁵ Ultimately, whether a part of the theme of Bulgaria or not, one has to ‘take into consideration the fact that the lands along the Lower Danube were always organized in some kind of military-administrative unit which most frequently bore the name of the largest city, Dristra’.²⁹⁶ MADGEARU deduced Dristra served as an East Danubian theme until Pecheneg raids of the mid 1040s.²⁹⁷ Similarly, MADGEARU is of the opinion, that the theme of Dristra was what is later known as Paradounavon.²⁹⁸ Although he is quick to point out that this Slavic borrowing replaced the name Dristra²⁹⁹ one might wonder if the two themes really did succeed one another, why the sudden name-change occurred. KÜHN takes Skylitzes’ remark about the 1016 *strategos* of Dorostolon (/Dristra) to mean the *doux* of Paradounavon.³⁰⁰ As WASSILIOU-SEIBT argues, the *strategia* of Dristra could also have been placed hierarchically under the new theme of Bulgaria – it is most likely the entire territory of former Bulgarian Empire was organized into a theme of Bulgaria under a *katepano* or a *doux*, and smaller centers were under the jurisdiction of this commander.³⁰¹ For WASSILIOU-SEIBT, 1043 is a definite *terminus post quem* for the existence of Paradounavon as a military administrative unit³⁰², since the raids of 1030s which at first went unchecked, prompted Byzantines to react to this constant threat.³⁰³ However, the actual name of Paradounavon as an administrative unit is attested sigillographically only after 1050.³⁰⁴ JORDANOV agrees the sigillographic evidence supports the thesis that Paradounavon came into existence after being separated from the theme of Bulgaria in composition of which it was included until late 1050s; this establishment of another administrative unit occurred most probably due to the difficulties of leading a defense

²⁹⁵ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 55.

²⁹⁶ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 73; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, 136.

²⁹⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 63. STEPHENSON claims the numismatic evidence suggests the area of Paradounavon saw a period of economic prosperity in 1030s and 1040s, precisely due to money paid as tribute to the Pechenegs, as quoted from STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 86 f. It was precisely trade that kept the cities alive, even in the ‘sparsely populated’ Balkans, as quoted from THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 570, 572.

²⁹⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 59.

²⁹⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 68 f.

³⁰⁰ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 224.

³⁰¹ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 192; WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 177.

³⁰² WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem, 179.

³⁰³ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 183; KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 196.

³⁰⁴ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 73.

against the Pechenegs from Skopje in a theme as large as Bulgaria; namely, now the North of the theme would be ruled from smaller centers like Preslav, Dristra or Preslavitsa.³⁰⁵ Sphragistically, the existence of the *katepanate* is attested until 1070s.³⁰⁶ However, there is a general decline in sources for the administration of this region in the twelfth century, and KÜHN is of the opinion Paradounavon existed until 1185.³⁰⁷

This would also be in accordance with Basil's realpolitik – his confidence in the army he had created, the defeat of Bulgaria, peace with the Rus' and his lapse to perceive the danger the Pechenegs presented³⁰⁸, caused him to see no point in dividing the former Bulgarian imperial territories into more themes than necessary. As already mentioned, the division in the West of the Balkans later on made more sense due to the Hungarian threat and Slavic principalities' denial to peacefully accept Byzantine suzerainty. Similarly, since no contemporary evidence for the existence of civilian administration had been retrieved so far from Paradounavon, the theme could have been a strictly military theme, or alternatively, could have been under the authority of judge/*pronoetes* of Bulgaria.³⁰⁹ To reiterate, judging by the campaigns in Syria and Anatolia³¹⁰, Romanos III Argyros focused more on the Eastern, rather than Western front. Only after the Pecheng raids and the Serbian attempts to shake off Byzantine influence, did the eye of the new emperor, Michael IV Paphlagonian turn towards the West.³¹¹ How are these events reflected in the historical evidence available and how do they modify our understanding of the organization of the territories along the Danube?

The Pecheneg raids of 1036 managed to capture five *strategoi* of unknown cities, presumably along Danube, suggesting a developed (if inefficient) defense system at the frontier.³¹² The raids also influenced the local populace inasmuch that a vast majority of the settlements have been obliterated and the region became a

³⁰⁵ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 73.

³⁰⁶ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 74.

³⁰⁷ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 224 f.

³⁰⁸ cf. STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 114.

³⁰⁹ KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 209, 198.

³¹⁰ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 585.

³¹¹ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 586 f.

³¹² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 88.

demographical wasteland.³¹³ Archaeological excavations reveal destruction in strongholds like Noviodounos, Capidava, Dervent, Garvăn and others; even the fortresses in the inland, such as Tsar Asen, Rujno, or Odârcei were not restored.³¹⁴ This forced Michael IV Paphlagonian to reconsider arming the fortresses on the Danube, in order to avoid the moving of the defense line to the Haemus Mountains.³¹⁵ ‘The transformation of the region between the Danube and the Stara Planina Mountains into a half-open space (ἐρημία) may have been inspired by the experience on the eastern frontier, where Arab and especially Seljuk attacks have rendered obsolete the network of fortifications’.³¹⁶

Although this supposition that a strip of uninhabited “no man’s land” would repulse attacks due to no readily available provisions or booty³¹⁷, both in the East and in the West this tactic was its own vital flaw – namely, it created a space vacuum, making it *de facto* easier for the nomads to settle these regions. Similarly, archaeological evidence from Dobrudja suggests a lively urban life in the eleventh century.³¹⁸ In accordance with the new developments³¹⁹, John the Orphanotrophos, the chief minister, and Michael IV Paphlagonian’s brother, instead tried appeasing the Pechenegs by a treaty as well, so as to avoid further nomadic attacks; this buffer was also provided by the sparsely populated Mysian plain, south of the Danube.³²⁰ This was a typical Byzantine diplomatic strategy, where war was avoided if possible, being more expensive on the long run, as well as demanding a substantial man-power³²¹, the man-power eleventh-century Byzantium lacked. While Basil II’s policy of supporting troops through payments in kind made sense at the time, the second quarter of the eleventh century demanded a different approach – a few outposts were entrusted to individuals, who preferred payment in cash.³²² Therefore, whereas Basil II allowed for the taxes to be paid in kind and at the same rate as in Samuil’s Bulgaria³²³, John discontinued this practice; he also sold the tax-collecting rights in provinces to

³¹³ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 118, 170.

³¹⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 117 f.

³¹⁵ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 82.

³¹⁶ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 169.

³¹⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 169 f.

³¹⁸ MĂRCULEȚ, The archontate of the Paristrion cities, 62.

³¹⁹ ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 56; STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 114.

³²⁰ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 82 f.

³²¹ Dimitri OBOLENSKY, Byzantium and the Slavs: Collected Studies (London 1971), 2/46.

³²² STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 135.

³²³ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 528.

individuals.³²⁴ However, these policies did not pertain to the region where the revolt of Peter Delyan started and moreover, the renewed tax policy could be seen as introducing the same apparatus the other themes had³²⁵ or – a modernization of the theme of Bulgaria. A peace treaty concluded in 1036 promoted trade between the border and the nomads, but it was to be of short duration – namely, the later fight for power between Kegen and Tyrach led to crossing of Pechenegs into Byzantium.³²⁶

This chapter will now look at the men linked with the command of Paradounavon. MADGEARU interprets Skylitzes' mention of Katakalon Kekaumenos as “archon of the towns and lands along Ister” ((βέστης και) ἄρχον ὦν τῶν παρὰ τὸν Ἰστρὸν πόλεων καὶ χωρίων) as evidence for a commander of this theme in 1042/1043.³²⁷ As seen in the case of Bulgaria, an *archon* could denote any commander. Kekaumenos' seals, (dated by JORDANOV to 1050s/1060s)³²⁸, according to MADGEARU, show that Dristra only got its first *katepano* in 1040s, most likely due to the Pecheneg raid of 1036.³²⁹ JORDANOV suggested Kekaumenos was present in the region, as a commander of a *tagma*, but is not sigillographically relatable to administration of the theme since the seals on which he is *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *katepano* bear no toponyms.³³⁰ This would mean Katakalon served in the Danubian province between his posts of *protospatharios* and *archon* in Armeniakon in 1039, and *vestes* and *doux* of Ani and Iberia in 1044 – 1048.³³¹ After the 1043 unsuccessful Russian attack on the capital³³², he sent word to Constantinople of a pending Pecheneg crossing of the Danube – due to the Uzes' pressure, two of the Pecheneg chieftains, Tyrach and Kegen clashed over

³²⁴ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 135; THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 588.

³²⁵ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 135.

³²⁶ Alexandru MADGEARU, *The Pechenegs in the Byzantine army*, in: *The Steppe Lands and the World beyond them. Studies in honor of Victor Spinei on his 70th birthday*, (ed.) Florin CURTA, Bogdan-Petru MALEON (Iași 2013), 207 – 218, here 209.

³²⁷ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 64, cf. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση*, 183; KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 225; Ivan JORDANOV, *The Byzantine administration in Dobrudja (10th – 12th century) according to sphragistic data*. *Dobrudža 12* (1995), 204 – 223, here 210 f.; see also John Skylitzes. *A Synopsis of Byzantine History. 811-1057*, (ed.) John WORTLEY (Cambridge 2010), 21.6.

³²⁸ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 64; MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 64; JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 2, no. 257 – 258; JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1465 – 1466.

³²⁹ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 64.

³³⁰ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 64; JORDANOV, *The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja*, 211.

³³¹ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 63 f.

³³² ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 35 f.

power, with Kegen being a popular usurper who had successfully fought the Uzes³³³; however, having lost the power-struggle with Tyrach, around 1045/1046 Kegen had to flee to Byzantium.³³⁴ He was received by the commander of Paradounavon who sent him to the capital to be baptized, invested with the rank of *patrikios* and put in charge of three unidentified fortresses on the Danube.³³⁵ His men were to serve as defense of the border region, expended by the former raids.³³⁶ The said commander who received him was *patrikios* Michael, son of Anastasios *logothetes*; Michael was, according to Skylitzes, also a “ruler of the Paristran cities” (*ἄρχων τῶν Παριστρίων πόλεων*) sometime between 1045 and 1048.³³⁷ A group of seals clearly mentions a certain Michael as *vestarches* and *katepano* of Paradounavon, and yet, JORDANOV warns one can not with absolute certainty claim this is the same Michael, the son of Anastasios; namely, ‘the date when Michael son of Anastasios *logothetes* took part in the events in Paradounavon was 1048 and at the time he had the title of patrician; and in 1057 he was already magistros. Therefore, he must have been *vestarches* before 1057 rather than in 1048’.³³⁸ On the other hand, JORDANOV dated these particular seals to 1060s – 1070s.³³⁹

Constantine IX Monomachos did initiate reforms in 1043 – 1047: amongst other reforms, he introduced *epi ton kriseon* as a head of a new ministry; the ministry was responsible for synchronizing the administration in the provinces, where a lot of civilian power that used to be designated to military leaders, now rested in the hands of judges; the themes were becoming increasingly civilian, rather than military;

³³³ Marek MEŠKO, Pecheneg Groups in the Balkans (ca. 1053-1091) according to the Byzantine Sources, in: *The Steppe Lands and the World Beyond Them. Studies in Honor of Victor Spinei on his 70th Birthday*, (ed.) Florin CURTA, Bogdan-Petru MALEON (Iași 2013), 179 – 205, here 181.

³³⁴ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 89.

³³⁵ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 89 f.; ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 38; MADGEARU, *The Pechenegs in the Byzantine army*, 209.

³³⁶ MADGEARU, *The Pechenegs in the Byzantine army*, 210 f.

³³⁷ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 38; KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 225; MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 64 f.; JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 64; Tadeusz WASILEWSKI, *L’administration byzantine dans la vallée du bas Danube au X^e et XI^e siècles selon la sigillographie*. Dobrudža 12 (1995), 190 – 203, here 198: WASILEWSKI identifies Michael with Michael Akolouthos. The exact date of Kegen’s crossing, Michael’s command over Paradounavon and subsequent Tyrach’s crossing of the Danube can be placed in the time-frame of 1045 – 1048, but the scholarly opinions on the matter differ. For more on this debate, see MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 65; JORDANOV, *Pečati na tema Bălgarija*, 159, footnote 1.

³³⁸ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 64 f.; cf. JORDANOV, *The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja*, 211.

³³⁹ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 65.

however, this did not apply to the frontier themes.³⁴⁰ Although the themes were demobilized, this refers only to the thematic armies, not the tagmata divisions stationed there – Constantine Monomachos saw the proposed demobilisation, in favour of professional troops, as a saving measure.³⁴¹ Portrayed as a “civilian” ruler by Ostrogorsky, Constantine or the other “civilian” emperors did not abandon the frontier, a fact first hinted at by Paul Lemerle, and had successes in dealing with the barbarians.³⁴² However, all these reforms were meant to be exercised in peaceful times, which could not be afforded, especially at the periphery of the Balkans, with nomadic attacks, and money needed elsewhere.³⁴³ One other significant thing that marked the reign of this emperor was the enlargement of the state apparatus, due to offices gifted by the emperor, which burdened the state treasury significantly.³⁴⁴ Psellos was critical of Constantine Monomachos’ confusion created in the state apparatus by its enlargement, causing ‘inflation of honours’ – for example, *proedros* and *nobellisimos* found themselves ranking above *protoproedros* and *protonobellisimos*.³⁴⁵ Wealth would only mean status if one had the appropriate title and office and with the novelties of the mid eleventh century, ‘the economy had become too complicated’, which then further made vague the hierarchy of the society.³⁴⁶

In 1047/1048 the Pecheneg Tyrach crossed the frozen Danube (possibly in accordance with the Byzantine emperor³⁴⁷ or provoked by Kegen’s incursions north of Danube³⁴⁸), but his pillaging campaign was cut somewhat short by pestilence, forcing him to yield.³⁴⁹ Avoiding Kegen’s retribution – Kegen having demanded Tyrach and his men be executed, Tyrach too was baptized, together with his men, and awarded

³⁴⁰ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 61 f.

³⁴¹ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 62 f.

³⁴² STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 8, 115.

³⁴³ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 69.

³⁴⁴ THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 591; ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 58.

³⁴⁵ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 95.

³⁴⁶ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 96 f.; see also Alexander KAZHDAN, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1985).

³⁴⁷ Oliver SCHMITT, *Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan von 1046 bis 1072*, in: *Pontos Euxeinus. Beiträge zur Archäologie und Geschichte des Antiken Schwarzmeer - und Balkanraumes*, (ed.) Sven CONRAD et alii (Langenweißbach 2006), 473 – 490, here 479.

³⁴⁸ SPINEL, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 109; CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 152; SCHMITT, *Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan*, 478.

³⁴⁹ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier*, 90; ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 38.

high ranks.³⁵⁰ He was given land between Serdica, Nisos and Eutzapolis (today Ovče Pole).³⁵¹ Therefore, calculating the situation might turn out for him as well as it did for Kegen, his men not being forcibly sedentarized, but still enjoying the prestige the Byzantine titles carried with them, Tyrach could have counted on a beneficial unfolding of the situation for him and his men.³⁵² Namely, Tyrach also pushed into the Byzantine territory since the Uzes moved westwards due to Cuman incursions into their territory.³⁵³ Therefore, Attaleiates judges this move of Tyrach to be a migrational one, something not contradicted by Skylitzes, since the Pechenegs also took their women and children with them.³⁵⁴ The episode shows how granting lands and fortresses to nomadic rulers enabled an ostensible Byzantine control, since ‘the imperial power was no more able to maintain the entire system of fortifications, and preferred instead to grant them to various warlords who had the capability and the interest to take care of them, even though, at least theoretically, the emperor was still in charge of these forts’, a practice already seen in the Eastern frontier.³⁵⁵ On the other hand, Byzantine approval of Pecheneg settlement in Byzantium, besides being practically oriented, also maintained an illusion of the status quo – the Empire did not have the resources to stop this migration, so “allowing it” instead of fighting was a more rational choice. It is also after this attack of Tyrach that Michael, son of Anastasius was dismissed from his function in Paradounavon, most likely after failing to defend the frontier.³⁵⁶

The only source for the command over Paradounavon in 1050s is the sigillographic evidence³⁵⁷: Michael’s successor was Leon Drimys, *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *katepano* of Dristra³⁵⁸ or Constantine, *patrikios* and *katepano* of Dristra (1030 – 1040/1047 –); the patronim of Constantine can not be read in its entirety, and alternatively,

³⁵⁰ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 90.

³⁵¹ ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 38; CURTA, The image and archaeology, 148.

³⁵² SCHMITT, Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan, 478.

³⁵³ MADGEARU, The Pechenegs in the Byzantine army, 210; SPINEL, The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads, 110, 113.

³⁵⁴ SCHMITT, Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan, 478.

³⁵⁵ MADGEARU, The Pechenegs in the Byzantine army, 211 f.

³⁵⁶ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 65; MADGEARU, The Military Organization of Paradounavon, 424; cf. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 192: WASSILIOU-SEIBT writes the man served there until 1050.

³⁵⁷ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 192.

³⁵⁸ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 186, 192.

the toponym could be reconstructed as Paristrion.³⁵⁹ Ultimately, Dristra was used as a synonym for Paradounavon, as it was its capital. There are two possible dates for Leon Drimys' command in Bulgaria (1040 – 1048, 1055/1060 – 1065); if one assumes he was the *katepano* of Dristra in the 1050s – this would also mean Constantine preceded him.³⁶⁰ Romanos IV Diogenes (1068 – 1071), the future emperor who, according to the narrative sources, had the function of the *archon* of Paristrion cities (in the usual periphrasis by the Byzantine authors) succeeded this position of *katepano* sometime before 1067.³⁶¹ MÄRCULEȚ dates this post to 1053, dating it from Michael Attaleiates, who calls Romanos *vestarches* and *archon* of the cities from the Istros.³⁶² While the written sources attribute the role of ἄρχων τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἰστρον πόλεων to the man in question, the seals most likely belonging to him identify him as a πατρίκιος καὶ στρατηγός (1050s), πατρίκιος ἀνθύπατος, βέστης καὶ στρατηγός (1050s and 1060s), and βεστάρχης καὶ κατεπάνω (before 1067), albeit omitting 'a definite military or administrative unit', making it more likely 'he was at the emperor's disposal and was sent at the head of the tagma in a region where it was necessary'.³⁶³

WASSILIOU-SEIBT argues that Leon Drimys was succeeded by Demetrios Katakalon³⁶⁴. According to MADGEARU, it 'was Demetrios Katakalon, the first commander to be called *katepano* of Paradunavon' that came after Romanos Diogenes.³⁶⁵ He is not known from narrative sources.³⁶⁶ His five found seals, dated to 1050s, refer to him as *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *katepano* of Paradounavon.³⁶⁷

³⁵⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 65; NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 65.1.

³⁶⁰ cf. MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 65.

³⁶¹ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 65; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 66; JORDANOV, The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja, 212.

³⁶² MÄRCULEȚ, The archontate of the Paristrion cities, 59; Michael Attaleiates, The History (ed.) Anthony KALDELLIS, Dimitris KRALLIS (London 2012), 16.8; cf. MADGEARU, The Military Organization of Paradunavon, 225.

³⁶³ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 65; see also JORDANOV, The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja, 212.

³⁶⁴ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 186, 192.

³⁶⁵ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 67.

³⁶⁶ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 68.

³⁶⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 67; Stanislav IVANOV, Novootkriti molibdobuli ot razkopkite na dvorčovnije Ploštad v Pliska [Newly Found Lead Seals from the Excavations of the Palace Square in Pliska], in: Сто години от рождението на Д-р Васил Хараланов. (1907 - 2007) (2008), 137 – 146, here 140; JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 68; NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 67.1; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals,



‘Obverse

Bust of St. Demetrios holding spear and round shield. Inscription in two columns: Ⓐ
|H – T|PI|O,: ‘Ο ἅγιος Δημήτριος. No visible border.

Reverse

Inscription of seven lines with the final letter between bars. Border of dots.

.....

.HMHTP.

.HVVP,T,ΠΡΙ¹

SKATEPIANU

TUPIAPAΔ,R,

TONKAT,K’

– Λ –

Κύριε βοήθει Δημητρίῳ ἀνθυπάτῳ, πατρικίῳ καὶ κατεπάνου τοῦ Παραδουνάβου τὸν Κατακαλὼν

Translation

(...) Lord, help Demetrios Katakalon, anthypatos, patrikios and katepano of Paradounavon.³⁶⁸

Vol. 1, no. 58.1; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 302 – 303, cf. no. 304; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1373 – 1375, cf. no. 1462.

³⁶⁸ The picture of the seal and the text quoted from Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, <http://doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1958.106.4797>, accessed on 24 May 2018. Ω is represented by W and the O-V ligature by U. Abbreviation sign is represented by a comma.

Sometime after the middle of the eleventh century, he also became a *proedros*.³⁶⁹ His titles *anthypatos* and *vestis*, which were bestowed upon him while in service in Paradounavon³⁷⁰ seem to suggest his long tenure, which in turn must indicate his service in Paradounavon after 1055, or following Romanos Diogenes.³⁷¹ Two of the seals of Demetrios Katakalon, predating the ones where he appears in his capacity as a *katepano* of Paradounavon, depict him as *patrikios* and *strategos*, and have been discovered in today's Silistra³⁷² and in Krivina.³⁷³ Even after the mentioned command over Paradounavon, probably around 1050 – 1060, he was *vestes*, *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *katepano*, therefore held the same titles, but without the toponym being mentioned on seals.³⁷⁴ Demetrios Katakalon's career therefore seems to be a standard one in terms of commands entrusted to him.³⁷⁵ As JORDANOV points out, Demetrios Katakalon was in the region of former Bulgarian lands for a long time, since his long *cursus honorum* produced seals with almost all of his titles, that were later discovered in Dristra.³⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the seals do tell of a new administrative unit on the Danube frontier.³⁷⁷ According to the seal of Demetrios Katakalon, the actual *katepanate* of Paradounavon was established in 1050s, possibly as a response of Isaac Komnenos (1057 – 1059), again to the Pecheneg and Hungarian pressure³⁷⁸, albeit with little success.³⁷⁹ Isaac Komnenos, did try and introduce reforms to combat corruption in the state apparatus, reinforce the army and lessen the strain on the treasury; he also introduced new tax collectors, but did little for the thematic armies.³⁸⁰ Wishing to 'restore the military might of the Empire', Isaac wanted to amass the funds necessary

³⁶⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 67.

³⁷⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 67; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 302 – 303, cf. no. 304.

³⁷¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 67.

³⁷² JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 68; According to JORDANOV, there are over 230 seals pertaining to Silistra and the surrounding area, as quoted from JORDANOV, The Byzantine Administration in Dobrudja, 208.

³⁷³ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 67.

³⁷⁴ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 68f.; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 304.

³⁷⁵ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 69; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 67.

³⁷⁶ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 69.

³⁷⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 68.

³⁷⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 68; cf. JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 73.

³⁷⁹ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 94.

³⁸⁰ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 598 f.; cf. ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 75.

by reorganizing the overswollen political administration of Constantine Monomachos.³⁸¹

After Demetrios Katakalon, Theodoros Pegonites was the next *katepano* of Paradounavon.³⁸² He is known only from his seals – one of those attests him in his capacity of *patrikios*, *anthypatos*, *vestes* and *katepano* of Paradunaviton, and is to be dated to 1050 – 1057³⁸³ or alternatively to 1050s – 1060s.³⁸⁴ If Demetrios Katakalon served around 1055, then Theodoros Pegonites is to be placed in Paradounavon in late 1050s/early 1060s. As a man in charge of the *doukate* of Paradounavon, he was at one of the most prominent positions in the Balkans; his family is closely linked with the region – his ancestor, Niketas Pegonites, killed Ivan Vladislav, the last ruler of the First Bulgarian Empire.³⁸⁵



Obverse

Inscription of six lines with the final line between bars. Border of dots:

+K̄ER,Θ,

TWCWAU,

ΘEOΔWPO

³⁸¹ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 79.

³⁸² MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 68, cf. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 187, 192; Alexandra-Kyriaki WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Gelesen und Geschriebenes. Zur Interpretation byzantinischer Bleisiegel aus Bulgarien. Der Familienname Pegonites, in: Сто години от рождението на Д-р Васил Хараланов (1907 - 2007), (2008), 133 – 136. here 134.

³⁸³ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 59; JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 69; JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 1, no. 58.2; JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 2, no. 573; JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1376.

³⁸⁴ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 69.

³⁸⁵ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 60.

ΠΙΙΑΝΘΥ

ΠΙΑΤ, REC

– TH –

Reverse

Inscription of six lines with the final line between bars. An X with four dots fills the horror vacui on top. Border of dots:

– x –

ΚΑΙΚΑ

ΤΕΠΑΝΩ

ΤΩΝ ΠΑΡΑ

ΔΥΝΑΡΙΤ,

ΤΩ ΠΗΓΩ

– NIT, –

+ Κύριε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Θεοδώρῳ πατρικίῳ ἀνθυπάτῳ βέστη καὶ κατεπάνω τῶν Παραδουναβιτῶν τῷ Πηγονίτῃ.

Translation

Lord, help your servant Theodoros Pegonites, *patrikios*, *anthypatos*, *vestes* and *katepano* of Paradunavites.³⁸⁶

A seal of Theodore Pegonites as *patrikios* and *strategos* was also found, predating his function in Paradounavon.³⁸⁷ It is worth noting that ‘commando of a *strategos* was ranked significantly lower than that of a *dux* or *katepano*; around mid-eleventh century the themes under [*strategos*] were already relatively small’.³⁸⁸ One can also see that men moved mostly either to the same positions in different themes or up the hierarchical ladder, with similar functions in both themes analyzed here, concluding that the theme of Bulgaria and the theme of Paradounavon were not so different in terms of military organization.

³⁸⁶ The seal, its description, transcript, solving of abbreviations, and translation quoted from SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 59, 131. Ω is represented by W and the O-V ligature by U. Abbreviation sign is represented by a comma. A lowercase x stands for floral decoration of a cross with dots.

³⁸⁷ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 69.

³⁸⁸ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 60.

It has also been ‘proposed that in 1065 the theme of Paradunavon had been divided into two smaller provinces – Western and Eastern Paristrion’; the division also possibly dates to 1059, with Basil Apokapes as commander of Western Paristrion.³⁸⁹ This theory is based on the Attaleiates’ remark about Basil Apokapes and Nikephoros Botaneiates as “rulers of the Danubian cities” or “ἐπαρχόντων τῶν κατὰ τὸν Ἰστρον πόλεων”.³⁹⁰ However, as will be demonstrated further below, there was no such division of this theme. WASSILIOU-SEIBT is of the opinion that magistros Basil Apokapes, *katepano Paradounavon* ruled in 1059 – 1064/1065³⁹¹, which coincides with Bănescu’s dating as well.³⁹² Therefore, he is the *Βασίλειος Ἀποκάπης* from Skylitzes and Attaleiates’ accounts, who ended up in the captivity of the Uzes.³⁹³ Based on the sigillographic and written evidence, most of which was unearthed in the Lower Danube region, Basil also served as *vestarches* and *katepano* of Vaspurakan and *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Manzikert before 1064/1065; when he arrived to the Balkans, undoubtedly on military business, he obtained the title of *magistros* and was made *doux* of the army against the Uzes.³⁹⁴ It does remain a fact, that the seals of Basil Apokapes discovered in the Balkans witness him to be a *magistros*, *vestes* and *doux*, but none of them so far mention the geographical domain under his command.³⁹⁵ JORDANOV presumes Nikephoros Botaneiates carried similar functions as well.³⁹⁶ According to the written sources, Basil became *magistros* and *archon* of Danubian cities in 1064/1065.³⁹⁷ Although Skylitzes and Attaleiates refer to the commanders of the province as *archontes*, a title bestowed upon autonomous rulers under Byzantine sphere of influence, one has to agree such a case of autonomy can not be considered for Paradounavon.³⁹⁸ Rather, this parallel dating and titles show once again the flexibility of naming someone *archon* in written sources. During his stay in Paradounavon, Basil Apokapes received a title of *vestarches*, commonly

³⁸⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 69; cf. with *cursus honorum* in WASILEWSKI, L’administration byzantine dans la vallée du bas Danube, 199;

³⁹⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 69; Attaleiates, History, 14.6.

³⁹¹ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 192.

³⁹² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 69.

³⁹³ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 66.

³⁹⁴ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 66; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 73 – 75.

³⁹⁵ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 66; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 71; cf. JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 43 – 45; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1449 – 1451.

³⁹⁶ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 182.

³⁹⁷ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 66; cf. KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 225 f.

³⁹⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 87.

bestowed upon army officers in the period 1040 – 1080.³⁹⁹ The fact that his seals were found in the area of Paradounavon simply implies a correspondence with the officials there, not necessarily his command over it or alternatively, he could have been physically present in the theme, commanding troops transferred there.⁴⁰⁰ Therefore, it is most likely the man in question really was summoned to defend Paradounavon and push the Uzes back across the Danube.⁴⁰¹ The one seal of a “Basileios ek prospopou tou Paradounavon” can not be unequivocally linked to Basil Apokapes.⁴⁰²

TAPKOVA-ZAIMOVA saw Basil Apokapes as the ruler of the Eastern Paradounavon, and Nikephoros Botaneiates as the commander of Western Paradounavon.⁴⁰³ Other than the abovementioned quote from Attaleiates, similar mention is to be found in Ioannes Zonaras (*ἐπάρχοντος τῶν κατὰ τὸν Ἰστρον πόλεων*), while Skylitzes refers to them as having “*commanded the territories near the river of Istros*”.⁴⁰⁴ This might be understood as referring to his previous function in Paristrion, since after his captivity, Basil held an office in Edessa.⁴⁰⁵ However, the same Basil Apokapes features in Theodoulos’ note, a will dating to 1059, in his capacity as the commander of Paradounavon together with commanders of the eastern provinces – a mention which remains unexplained.⁴⁰⁶ It could very well be that the phrasing *Ἀαρὼν προέδρου καὶ αὐτοδέλφου τῆς αὐγούστης Μεσοποταμίας τοῦ Παραδούναβι, Βασιλείου μαγίστρου* refers to Aaron as *magistros* instead of Basil, and the wording Paradounavi implies the area of origin.⁴⁰⁷ SEIBT interprets the note as evidence of Basil Apokapes’ commando over Paradounavon.⁴⁰⁸ Lastly, since after 1050s only *tourmarch* and *ek prosopou* appear on seals of the cities in Paradounavon, instead of *strategoï*, it could be interpreted as an administratively unified *katepanate*, with no divisions within it.⁴⁰⁹

³⁹⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 74. In comparison, Antioch also had its own *vestarches* and *katepano* in the mid eleventh century, as quoted from SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 99.

⁴⁰⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 71 f.

⁴⁰¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 129 f.

⁴⁰² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 76.

⁴⁰³ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 70.

⁴⁰⁴ MĂRCULEȚ, The archontate of the Paristrion cities, 59.

⁴⁰⁵ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 66: see *ibid.* for further details on this part of his *cursus honorum*.

⁴⁰⁶ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 70.

⁴⁰⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 70 f.

⁴⁰⁸ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 60.

⁴⁰⁹ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 73; cf. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση, 193.

“*Ek prosopou*” meant they were appointed by the emperor to either represent or even replace a commander of a theme.⁴¹⁰

Constantine X Doukas (1059 – 1067) did little to stop the raids of the Uzes in 1064 – 1065, allowing them to reach as far south as Greece, and only fought them once they were decimated by a disease.⁴¹¹ It was later that they were given permission to settle in the region of Macedonia.⁴¹² ‘The mild criticism there was of [Constantine Doukas]’ rule centered on his neglect of the army and his lack of concern for the provinces’.⁴¹³ If Basil Apokapes was in command of troops from several provinces, as suggested in the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa, sent to Paradounavon to deal with the Uzes in 1065, it should be of little surprise his seals bear no specific regional marks.⁴¹⁴ As demonstrated above, one could argue similarly in the case of Katakalon Kekaumenos.

A possible commander of Paradounavon for 1063 – 1065 was Nikephoros Botaneiates, since he served as commander of Thessaloniki until 1063 and from 1065 as commander of Cyprus.⁴¹⁵ He seems to have commanded over Bulgaria, or at least over the troops there, as seen in the written sources.⁴¹⁶ Unless the title of Romanos Diogenes as *doux* of Serdica 1067 can be interpreted as having command over Western Paradounavon, it would seem the theme of Paradounavon had only one commander.⁴¹⁷ On the other hand, ‘the office of duke of Serdica does not concern the command over that city. Apparently, Serdica was in 1067 the center of a new military and administrative unit, (...) but there is no proof that that unit extended to the north as far as the Danube. (...) It is possible that parts of the theme of Bulgaria were re-shuffled in 1059 to form a separate province based on Serdica, as a measure against Hungary’.⁴¹⁸ Therefore, it was not Paradounavon that was divided, but rather the theme of Bulgaria that had to cede territory to the new theme of Serdica,

⁴¹⁰ Ivan BOŽILOV, Vasil GJUZELEV, *Istoriija na Bălgarija*, Volume I: *Istoriija na srednovekovna Bălgarija*, VII – XIV vek [History of medieval Bulgaria, VII – XIV century] (Sofia 1999), 354.

⁴¹¹ SPINEI, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 114.

⁴¹² ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 39.

⁴¹³ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 77.

⁴¹⁴ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 72 f.

⁴¹⁵ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 76.

⁴¹⁶ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 230.

⁴¹⁷ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 76.

⁴¹⁸ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 76 f.

encompassing the region from Philippoupolis to Nisos.⁴¹⁹ Consequently, Basil Apokapes was sent to the region from Vaspurakan to aid the official commander of Paradounavon and the titles granted to Basil discussed above were given to him on temporary basis, therefore serving in full capacity, but only for the duration of the campaign – hence, the theme of Paradounavon did have only one commander, separate from the military aid he received.⁴²⁰ According to SEIBT, since Basil Apokapes was a *magistros dux* of Paradounavon in 1064, and used his forces, together with the contemporary *proedros* and *doux* of Bulgaria, Nikephoros Botaneiates, to defer the Uzes' attacks, one needs to place the commando of Nikephoros over Paradounavon in the period before these events.⁴²¹ At this time, the Uzes north of the Danube kept Pechenegs unwilling to retreat from their territories south of the river; however, by 1064 Uzes too crossed the Danube.⁴²²

Although several seals of a certain *vestarches* Michael, *katepano* of Paradounavon presumably following Nikephoros Botaneiates, have been discovered and attributed either to Michael, son of Anastasios or general Michael Dokeianos, in case of the first one, as already elaborated above, his *cursus honorum* in written sources depicts him as *patrikios* in late 1040s, therefore possibly being a *vestarches* prior to 1057, when he became a *magistros*⁴²³; in the case of the later, he had died fighting the Pechenegs in 1050.⁴²⁴ As mentioned, the seals are to be dated to 1060s (– 1070s); since two of his bulloteria were found, one can safely assume he was very much engaged in local administration.⁴²⁵ As the campaigns show, the late 1060s also saw more interest being dedicated to Armenian lands, rather than the Balkans.⁴²⁶ After Michael, a *vestes* and *katepano* Symeon⁴²⁷, is attested as commander of the region in 1060s/1070s – the same Symeon who served as *vestarches* – a title he might have gotten while still in

⁴¹⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 77.

⁴²⁰ cf. MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 75.

⁴²¹ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 60.

⁴²² STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 95.

⁴²³ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 77; JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 64 f., 71; ZACOS, Byzantine Lead Seals, Vol. 2, no. 602; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1378 – 1379.

⁴²⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 77; STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 94.

⁴²⁵ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 71; IVANOV, Novootkriti molibdobuli, here 140f. However, in written sources, Michael, son of Anastasios *logothetes* is attested as *archon* of the cities along Ister, as quoted from JORDANOV, The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja, 211.

⁴²⁶ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 602.

⁴²⁷ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 94; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 58.3; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1377.

command in Paradounavon, in the office of *katepano* of Adrianople and Mesembria.⁴²⁸ There seems to be a gap in the available sources for the mid 1060s until 1072/3 for the command of Paradounavon.⁴²⁹

In 1072, parallel to the one of Georgi Voyteh in Bulgaria, a rebellion broke out in Paradounavon as a response to the policies of Nikephoritzes, a minister under Michael VII Doukas, aimed at reform; the rebellion was mainly fueled by the increase in wheat prices and a halt on cash payments in Paradounavon (in an attempt to return the control of the finances in the hands of the government in Constantinople and to improve the taxation of the grain-sale⁴³⁰); this in turn endangered the peace with the Pechenegs sustained through tribute, and earned the central government enemies both amongst the *stratiotai*, since they were not allowed to partake in thematic administration any more, and amongst the local populace in Dristra, which turned to the Pecheneg Tatuos, possibly the *archon* of Patzinakia, and named him their ruler.⁴³¹ This was problematic, because Byzantium relied on local populace for loyalty, and help in defending the mountain passes which were crucial points along the land routes from Constantinople.⁴³² Therefore, since the Pechenegs in Paradounavon did not receive tribute anymore, they moved south in search of it, raiding Thrace.⁴³³ As a matter of fact, ‘Tatuos represented a new generation of Pecheneg leaders (...) who were ready to question the loose Byzantine supremacy over the whole province’.⁴³⁴ Consequently, a certain Nestor was sent to the region to reinstate order.⁴³⁵ Being mentioned by Skylitzes and Attaleiates, he became the commander of the theme of Paristrion around 1071 – 1072.⁴³⁶ ‘In this case too, no seals of Nestor as katepano of Dristra or doux of Paristrion have come down to us’.⁴³⁷

⁴²⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 77 f.; JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 70.

⁴²⁹ MADGEARU, The Military Organization of Paradounavon, 428.

⁴³⁰ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 99 f.

⁴³¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 79; cf. MADGEARU, Centrifugal Movements in the Balkans, 21 f.; MADGEARU, The Pechenegs in the Byzantine army, 216.

⁴³² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 143 f.; A similar scenario is to be observed in Armenia, where Byzantium preferred to keep control through some local forts and loyalty of the locals (as seen in both instances – this policy failed), as quoted from ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 42.

⁴³³ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 100.

⁴³⁴ MEŠKO, Pecheneg Groups in the Balkans, 189.

⁴³⁵ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 67; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 80; Victor SPINEL, The Great Migrations in the East and South East of Europe from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Century (Cluj-Napoca 2003), 137.

⁴³⁶ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 67; Attaleiates, History, 26.2.

⁴³⁷ JORDANOV, The Katepanate of Paradounavon, 67.

However, according to the narrative sources, instead of subduing the rebellion, Nestor, a man native to the Balkans (as Attaleiates puts it: *τῷ ὁμοτίμῳ τοῦ γένους*), joined the insurgents instead.⁴³⁸ Indeed, if Nestor really used to be a local potentate from the Balkans⁴³⁹, this would also explain his high status at court.⁴⁴⁰ If one accepts the interpretation by KÜHN, the katepanates were more likely to absorb themes (see above) but even more importantly, a *doukate* or a *katepanate* got its name from the main city, therefore Nestor is present as *doux Paristrion* and *katepano Dristras*, both phrases referring to the same function; as seen from the previous example this model is also valid for the theme of Bulgaria and Skopje.⁴⁴¹ One might not necessarily agree with the interpretation that once in Dristra, ‘Nestor had no choice but to put himself at the head of the rebellion against the emperor’, especially if ‘discovery of two seals of Nestor in Silistra shows that prior to his joining the rebels, he had been in contact with them or with someone in the city’; what is more certain is the fact this act exacted revenge against Nikephoritzes who had previously stripped him of his possessions; JORDANOV offers an alternative interpretation, where his arrival had been pre-arranged, and upon Nestor joining the rebellion, his property had been confiscated.⁴⁴² Nestor probably shared power with Tatuos⁴⁴³, since it is unlikely the Pecheneg chieftain would have given it up. The alliance fell apart when allegedly Tatuos attempted to have Nestor assassinated.⁴⁴⁴ This instance is also an example of how Byzantium could effectively exert control only in Northern Dobrudja, therefore making Noviodounos (today Isaccea) a new center of Paradounavon.⁴⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, one could argue Byzantium only managed to keep control over Noviodounos, Carsium (today Hârşova), Axiopolis and Dristra.⁴⁴⁶ During the rebellion, Mesembria was transformed into a *katepanate*, headed by Symeon, previously commander of Paradounavon, and

⁴³⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 81; Alexandru MADGEARU, The Periphery against the Centre: The Case of Paradounavon. Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta 40 (2003), 49 – 57, here 50; Attaleiates, History, 26.2.

⁴³⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 81.

⁴⁴⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 80 f. MADGEARU also points out, that in written sources, the man is referred to by phrases of distinguishment such as *doulos*, *anthropos autou* and *oikeiotatos*, as quoted from MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 80 f. See also MADGEARU, The Periphery against the centre, 50.

⁴⁴¹ KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee, 166.

⁴⁴² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 81; cf. JORDANOV, The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja, 213; THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 607.

⁴⁴³ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 82; MADGEARU, The Periphery against the centre, 51.

⁴⁴⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 82.

⁴⁴⁵ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 131.

⁴⁴⁶ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 168.

later by Valatzertes, son of Kegen.⁴⁴⁷ As seen in other uprisings, ‘the separatist rebellions were not specific for the Balkans. In the same period the Byzantine Empire was confronted with similar movements in Apulia (1040), Armenia (1051 – 1052), or Antiochia (sic) ((...) after 1073)’.⁴⁴⁸

MADGEARU defines Gregory Maurokatakalon as the commander of northern Paradounavon post 1087.⁴⁴⁹ The last mentioned *doux* of Paradounavon is Leon Nikerites, *kouropalates*, whose career is well known; according to the written sources, he became *doux* in 1091, having previous experience in dealing with the Pechenegs.⁴⁵⁰ However, due to lack of sigillographic evidence linking him directly to the region, JORDANOV expresses some doubts on whether he was actually the commander of the theme, or simply sent there as a *doux*.⁴⁵¹ Paradounavon itself seems to record no dukes postdating the 1095 Cuman raid.⁴⁵² After the Komnenian reform, Danubian frontier was being safeguarded by a decreased number of troops.⁴⁵³ Therefore, for the period of 1072 – 1091, it seems Paradounavon was not under Byzantine, but instead local, control.⁴⁵⁴ This premise is fortified by the fact that there are no seals of commanders of Paradounavon retrieved for the period 1072 – 1081, therefore possibly calling into question the existence of the *katepanate* of Paradounavon during this time.⁴⁵⁵ However, once again, one needs to look at other available sources to reach a conclusion. SPINEL, for example, contradicts this premise by mentioning archaeological finds such as seals and coins from the area as evidence that at least some parts of Paradounavon stayed under Byzantine control post 1072.⁴⁵⁶ On both eastern and western front, the Byzantines ‘were willing to tolerate a reasonable level of local independence, but intended to hold on to the main fortresses and towns, which would be garrisoned with professional troops. They hoped to

⁴⁴⁷ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 83; the katepanate of Mesembria also records ‘six ek prosopou (deputy commanders) (...): Andronikos, Theodore, John, Leo, Kyriakos and Himerios Solomon’ as quoted from MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 83. Valatzertes is yet another example of the absorption of foreigners into the Byzantine military and civil administrative system.

⁴⁴⁸ MADGEARU, *Centrifugal Movements in the Balkans*, 21.

⁴⁴⁹ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 83.

⁴⁵⁰ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 67.

⁴⁵¹ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 68.

⁴⁵² MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 84 f.

⁴⁵³ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 86.

⁴⁵⁴ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Das byzantinische Verteidigungssystem*, 181.

⁴⁵⁵ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 82.

⁴⁵⁶ SPINEL, *The great migrations*, 142; As a comparison, in the East in 1050s the defence system was kept by few troops in key positions, and it relied on the loyalty of the local populace, as quoted from ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 41 f.

protect these buffer zones by cultivating friendly relations with neighbouring powers'.⁴⁵⁷

Therefore, the written records tell of the commanders of the cities of Ister, but there is no sigillographic evidence to support such mentions; the seals corresponding to the persons mentioned refer to them as *katepano* or *doux*, in charge of regional *tagma*, and therefore most probably there due to specific military tasks.⁴⁵⁸ Vice versa, not one person attested as *katepano* or *doux* of Paradounavon through sigillographic evidence, is mentioned as such in written sources.⁴⁵⁹ The claim that the phrase “of the cities (/territories) of” is not found in any other sources for Byzantine themes of the eleventh and twelfth century⁴⁶⁰ is simply not true if one looks at ‘the foundation of the theme of “the *poleis* on the Euphrates”’, with the commander possibly being a *doux/katepano*, who was referred to by Skylitzes as *strategos*.⁴⁶¹ Moreover, the fact that it is Skylitzes who uses the same phrase, leads to the conclusion he was referring to at least very similar administrative units. Therefore, the military offices directly linked with Paradounavon were *katepano/doux*, *ek prosopou* and *tourmarches*.⁴⁶²

7.2.1 Dristra

The city of Dristra, now Silistra and previously called Dorostolon and possibly Theodoroupolis, took a new form from the Bulgarian name Drăstăr.⁴⁶³ The initial creation of the separate unit of Dristra as a seat of *strategos* could be placed to 971.⁴⁶⁴ Sigillographically, commanders of Dristra appear either as *katepano* or as *strategos*; the third group of seals testifies to the existence of *kommerkiarios* in Dristra⁴⁶⁵. Right after the establishment of the theme of Bulgaria, the *strategos* of Dristra would have been under command of the *doux* of the theme of Bulgaria.⁴⁶⁶ A seal shows that Leon Drimys, as *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *katepano* of Dristra, was in charge of a theme, rather than just the city of the same name, implying at the same time, according to

⁴⁵⁷ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 46 f.

⁴⁵⁸ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 68.

⁴⁵⁹ JORDANOV, *The Katepanate of Paradounavon*, 71.

⁴⁶⁰ MĂRCULEȚ, *The archontate of the Paristrion cities*, 65 f.

⁴⁶¹ KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 183 f.

⁴⁶² JORDANOV, *The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja*, 207.

⁴⁶³ MADGEARU, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 38.

⁴⁶⁴ OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes de préséance byzantines*, 269, 362; MADGEARU, *The Military Organization of Paradounavon*, 421.

⁴⁶⁵ JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 1, 62 f.

⁴⁶⁶ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με την ίδρυση*, 192.

MADGEARU, that this was the official name of this theme until that point.⁴⁶⁷ However, the name was most probably a synonym for the theme of Paradounavon. JORDANOV dates this seal specimen prior to 1060.⁴⁶⁸ As seen above, the same Leon Drimys is attested as *vestes* and *katepano* of Bulgaria sometime in the period from mid 1050s to mid 1060s.⁴⁶⁹ Similar can be said about Constantine, *patrikios* and *katepano* of Dristra in 1050s⁴⁷⁰.

As mentioned above, as a city, Dristra had a *strategos*, and a *kommerkiarios*.⁴⁷¹ John Spondyles' seal describes him as one such *kommerkiarios*.⁴⁷² According to JORDANOV, the establishment of this office in Dristra dates to the earliest years of the eleventh century, when the Byzantine border on Danube was reestablished.⁴⁷³ The seals of certain Andronikos, without the patronym, place him as an imperial *protospatharios* and *kommerkiarios* of Dristra into the eleventh century.⁴⁷⁴ Another man directly linked with Dristra is a certain Dionysios, *spatharokandidatos* and *kommerkiarios* of the city.⁴⁷⁵ Yet another sigillographically attested *kommerkiarios* was a man named Ioannes, although his seal also can not be dated to any particular period of the eleventh century.⁴⁷⁶ Therefore, a picture painted here is of Dristra as a commercial hot-spot from the onset of the eleventh century, strengthened later by the trade with the Pechenegs.

As far as the names according to the sources are concerned, Dristra and Paradounavon appear as *katepanate*, Paristrion and Paradounavon as *doukate* and "Paristrion cities", "cities from Istros" or "cities and territories from the Istros" as *archontate*.⁴⁷⁷ As

⁴⁶⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 63 f.; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, 62.

⁴⁶⁸ JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 169.

⁴⁶⁹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 63; JORDANOV, Pečati na tema Bălgarija, 168 f., 182; SEIBT, Sigillographische Beiträge zur bulgarischen Geschichte, 227.

⁴⁷⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 65.

⁴⁷¹ JORDANOV, The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja, 205.

⁴⁷² NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 65.2.

⁴⁷³ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, 64.

⁴⁷⁴ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 23.6; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1172.

⁴⁷⁵ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 23.7; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1173.

⁴⁷⁶ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 23.8; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1174.

⁴⁷⁷ MĂRCULEȚ, The archontate of the Paristrion cities, 57 f.

MAKSIMOVIĆ says, the plural form also meant that Dristra was one of those cities.⁴⁷⁸ As far as the commanders of the theme are concerned, ‘Ioannes Skylitzes and Ioannes Zonaras used the names *archon* and *doux*, Michael Attaleiates – *archon* and *katepano*, Georgios Kedrenos – *archon* and Anna Comnena (...) *doux*’.⁴⁷⁹

7.2.2 Pliska and Preslav

As a comparison, some other towns in the theme have to be mentioned. As the seal of Philotheos Ph(a)ragkopoulos, a man of Western origin and a *protospatharios epi tou Chrisotriklinou* and *strategos*⁴⁸⁰ shows, Pliska’s importance as a residence of the *strategos* – decreased with a devastating raid of the Uzes in 1065.⁴⁸¹ Namely, even the reinforcement of the region with troops moved from Armenia did not stop the raids.⁴⁸²

The restoration of Byzantine control of Preslav in 1060s, after the Pecheneg raids, is reflected in the seal-archive unearthed.⁴⁸³ Similarly, there are no bullae found in Preslav post 1088, suggesting an end of Byzantine presence there around that time.⁴⁸⁴ The discovery of the Preslav seal archive brought to light three seals naming the *strategoi* of the city: Constantine Karantenos who served there before he became the *doux* of Antioch around 1030 – this position would have been considered relatively low for a brother in law of Emperor Romanos III Argyros, especially since Preslav was not the main seat of the theme; he is attested as *protospatharios epi tou chrisotriklinou* and *strategos* of Preslav sometime before 1025⁴⁸⁵; he was followed by Andronikos Doukas *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Preslav⁴⁸⁶, and a certain Ioannes, imperial *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Preslav.⁴⁸⁷ JORDANOV actually suggests a possible reading of the toponym on the seal of Andronikos Doukas as

⁴⁷⁸ MAKSIMOVIĆ, Organizacija vizantijske vlasti, 36.

⁴⁷⁹ MĂRCULEȚ, The archontate of the Paristrion cities, 58.

⁴⁸⁰ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 62.1; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 731; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1384.

⁴⁸¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 89.

⁴⁸² MADGEARU, The Military Organization of Paradunavon, 436.

⁴⁸³ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 127.

⁴⁸⁴ Nicolas OIKONOMIDES, Problems of Chronology and the Seals of Preslav, in: Studies in Byzantine Sigillography 7 (ed.) Werner SEIBT (Washington D.C. 2002), 1 – 9, here 2.

⁴⁸⁵ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.6; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 273 – 278; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1407 – 1413.

⁴⁸⁶ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.2; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 192 – 195; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1393 – 1396.

⁴⁸⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 89; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.3; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1397 – 1403A; see also BOŽILOV, L’administration byzantine en Bulgarie, 95.

Great Preslav or Preslavitsa.⁴⁸⁸ Ioannes Maleas, *protospatharios* and *strategos*' seals also allow for two possible reading of the toponym – Preslav or Preslavitsa.⁴⁸⁹ Seals of Aetios, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Preslav, can be dated to the eleventh century; if the reading of the toponym as Preslav is accurate, the man also served on the same function later on in Presthlavitza.⁴⁹⁰

7.2.3 Varna

‘Nothing is known about the place and role of the mediaval city of Varna in the Byzantine administration. The name of Βάρνας is mentioned for the first time in 1043 in connection with the victory of Katakalon Kekaumenos over the Russian troops which returned from Constantinople’.⁴⁹¹ Varna served as a seat of *strategos* as well – however, this is true only for the 1050s and 1060s, since the defense of Paradounavon demanded that the Black Sea coast be protected as well.⁴⁹² Asotios was Varna's *patrikios anthypatos* and *strategos*; ‘the rank-title πατρίκιος ἀνθύπατος indicates for this time, that the seat of the *strategos* of Varna did not count as one of the lowest [seats]’; Asotios was most probably Armenian.⁴⁹³

7.2.4 Preslavitsa

The exact site of Preslavitsa remains uncertain – it has been identified with cities such as Preslav⁴⁹⁴, Theodoroupolis⁴⁹⁵ and Nufăru.⁴⁹⁶ In the Russian Primary Chronicle, it is probably Preslavitza that is referred to as Pereiaslavets.⁴⁹⁷ In other written sources it is

⁴⁸⁸ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.2; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 192 – 195; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1393 – 1396.

⁴⁸⁹ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.4; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 410 – 411; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1404 – 1405.

⁴⁹⁰ NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 69.1; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.1; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1385 – 1392.

⁴⁹¹ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, 44.

⁴⁹² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 89; WASSILIOU, SEIBT, Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil. Zentral- und Provinzialverwaltung (Vienna 2004), 289.

⁴⁹³ WASSILIOU, SEIBT, Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Österreich. 2. Teil, no. 304; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 89; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 15.1; cf. JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1134.

⁴⁹⁴ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 92.

⁴⁹⁵ Ivan JORDANOV, Dobrudža (491 – 1092) – selon les données de la numismatique et la sphragistique, in: Dobrudža. Études (1987), 182 – 207, here 200f.

⁴⁹⁶ MADGEARU, Rethinking the Byzantine Balkans, 206; for Nufăru also see STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 56 f.; for overview of the sources and debate see also Nicolas OIKONOMIDES, Presthlavitza, the little Preslav. Südost-Forschungen 42 (1983), 1 – 9.

⁴⁹⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 92; Valentina S. ŠANDROVSKAJA, Die Bedeutung der Bleisiegel für das Studium einiger Aspekte der byzantinischen Geschichte, in: Akten des XVI.

referred to as Little Preslav.⁴⁹⁸ It is known the city fell under the jurisdiction of Paradounavon and ironically, many of the seals of *strategoi* of Preslavitsa remain preserved.⁴⁹⁹ If, as Petre Diaconu suggests, pairs of names such as Preslav and Preslavitsa, as a diminutive, meant these had to be close to one another⁵⁰⁰, than it would not make sense to identify Nufăru as Preslavitsa. If, as suggested by some, Pereiaslavets is Preslav⁵⁰¹ then Preslavitsa and Pereiaslavets are indeed Diaconul's pair.

Dignitaries serving there include Aetios, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of the city, attested by his seals, and Leon Pegonites, otherwise unfamiliar to written sources, also *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Preslavitsa sometime around the mid-eleventh century; he is also possibly the father of the *katepano* of Paradounavon, Theodore Pegonites.⁵⁰² Although unsure when exactly, two other commanders of Preslavitsa, attested sigillographically, were Malis and Melias, both *protospatharioi* and *strategoi* of the city.⁵⁰³ JORDANOV suggested that the toponym on the seal of Melias could be read as Presthlava.⁵⁰⁴ The remaining commanders were also *protospatharioi* and *strategoi*, save for one *patrikios* and *strategos* of Preslavitsa – Ioannes Maleses.⁵⁰⁵ As far as reconstruction by sigillography for non-military administration goes, a seal of Sergios, *chartularios* and *kommerkiarios* of Preslavitsa, dated to 1050, was found in the Kale fortress in Skopje; his duties included collecting taxes and keeping register of the local army.⁵⁰⁶ Eustratios (Romaïos) was another *spatharokandidatos* and *kommerkiarios* in the eleventh century Preslavitsa, as was John, *kommerkiarios* of the

Internationalen Byzantinistenkongresses, Wien 4. – 9. Oktober. II. Teil: Soziale Strukturen und ihre Entwicklung, (ed.) Herbert HUNGER = Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik 32/2 (1982), 165 – 173, here 168.

⁴⁹⁸ ŠANDROVSKAJA, Die Bedeutung der Bleisiegel, 168.

⁴⁹⁹ For a detailed list, see MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 90 f.

⁵⁰⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 91.

⁵⁰¹ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 92 f.

⁵⁰² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 90; WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Gelesenes und Geschriebenes, 134 f.; NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 78.4; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.7; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 580 – 584; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1414 – 1419.

⁵⁰³ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.8, 63.9; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1420, no. 1421 – 1422.

⁵⁰⁴ JORDANOV, Addenda et Corrigenda, 202.

⁵⁰⁵ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 91; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 63.5; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 412; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1406.

⁵⁰⁶ MIHAJLOVSKI, A Collection of Medieval Seals, 303 f.; NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 78.3; ZACOS, Byzantine Lead Seals, Vol. II, no. 1043; cf. JORDANOV, The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja, 206.

same city.⁵⁰⁷ Since three *kommerkiarioi* sat in Preslavitsa⁵⁰⁸, the city must have been geographically close to a border.⁵⁰⁹ *Kommerkiarioi* in Preslavitsa, and in Dristra, were meant to regulate trade with the Pechengs, North of the Lower Danube.⁵¹⁰ Preslavitsa therefore had a *strategos* as military administrator, and a *kommerkiarios* as an office of a financial functionary in the eleventh century.⁵¹¹

Therefore, Paradounavon had a *strategos* in each of the following: Preslav, Pliska, Varna, Noviodounos, Preslavitsa, Garvăn, Krivina and Vetren, with a possibility that additionally, *strategoi* were appointed to significant keeps as well.⁵¹² The *strategoi* of Varna, Pliska, Preslav and Preslavitsa, attested by their seals are to be interpreted, according to KRSMANOVIĆ, as evidence of organization of the region along Danube even before mid eleventh century through *strategides*; she also argues these *strategides* were in turn, due to lack of evidence of existence of Paradounavon at the time, a part of the theme of Bulgaria.⁵¹³ Due to the Pecheneg settlement south of Danube – despite reports of existence of large cities, Paradounavon bears no witness to the activity of civil commanders of the theme; one does find them in limited amount in Bulgaria; this could also imply that in terms of civilian administration, Paradounavon was subordinate to Bulgaria.⁵¹⁴

7.2.5 Patzinakia

The only available source for Patzinakia in the eleventh century is sigillography.⁵¹⁵ As seen, the Pechenegs were used by the Byzantine Empire as allies when it suited Byzantine needs.⁵¹⁶ Since large parts of the territory south of the Danube were depopulated, presumably to stop Pecheneg raids⁵¹⁷ it is of little surprise the nomads simply moved further south. From 1045 onwards, the Pechenegs were granted the bribes, but were also settled on the Byzantine soil – a solution, which was still

⁵⁰⁷ NESBITT, OIKONOMIDES, Catalogue of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 78.1, no. 78.2.

⁵⁰⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 91; see also OIKONOMIDES, Preslavitsa, 1 – 9.

⁵⁰⁹ MADGEARU, The Military Organization of Paradounavon, 429: However, it needs to be said that at this point MADGEARU equates Preslav and Preslavitsa.

⁵¹⁰ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 122.

⁵¹¹ JORDANOV, The Byzantine administration in Dobroudja, 205 f.

⁵¹² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 94.

⁵¹³ KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 187 f., 196.

⁵¹⁴ KRSMANOVIĆ, Das Problem der sogenannten Zusammengesetzten Bezirke, 77 f.; KRSMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change, 198.

⁵¹⁵ JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, 138.

⁵¹⁶ SPINEL, The Great Migrations, 137.

⁵¹⁷ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 170.

favourable to Byzantium, since they kept the official rule over the fortresses and hoped the nomads could be turned to allies.⁵¹⁸ The territory was not split from Paradounavon – instead, it is to be viewed as a part of it.⁵¹⁹ It is also referred to as The Hundred Hills or Hekaton Bounoi.⁵²⁰ In other words, Patzinakia was a territory in Southern Dobrudja, granted to the Pechenegs sometime after 1053.⁵²¹ It served as a buffer zone against the nomads beyond Danube.⁵²² It also was a “permeable frontier” – a transition zone of *mixobarbaroi*, or half-barbarians.⁵²³ Borders at both ends of the Empire were therefore not absolutely demarcated, and served as a space for diplomacy, with important fiscal roles, and yet were never far removed from possible conflict.⁵²⁴

‘Principal weapons in the Byzantine diplomatic armoury were tribute, trade and titles’.⁵²⁵ As already mentioned, Constantine Monomachos’ grant of the lands of Patzinakia as a move to stunt ‘an independent colonization of Paristrion’⁵²⁶ was nothing more than throwing a stamp of Byzantine approval over events that would have taken place in any case. And so, a 1053 peace treaty, tribute and titles⁵²⁷ were the only way for Byzantium to save their face. Moreover ‘relying on those unreliable barbarians for the defense of the theme of Dristra must have been a desperate measure to cope with the lack of resources’.⁵²⁸ Therefore, naming John Kegenos *magistros* and *archon* of Patzinakia for the years 1050 – 1051, reflects the state of the Empire, which, faced with onslaught of Ouzes and Cumans from the east, had to absorb a large number of Pechenegs crossing the Danube and entering Byzantine Balkans as far as Adrianople.⁵²⁹ As seen above, after his rivalry with Tyrach, Kegen crossed over

⁵¹⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 168.

⁵¹⁹ MADGEARU, The Periphery against the centre, 51.

⁵²⁰ MEŠKO, Pecheneg Groups in the Balkans, 182. JORDANOV thinks this territory did not use to belong to the Bulgarian empire, as quoted from JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, 138. Although much earlier, Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913 - 959) reports that ‘Patzinakia stretched from the bank opposite Distra (modern Silistra) to Sarkel on the Don’, as quoted from SPINELI, The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads, 94.

⁵²¹ MADGEARU, Centrifugal Movements in the Balkans, 24.

⁵²² STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 96.

⁵²³ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 125 and footnote 115.

⁵²⁴ HOLMES, Byzantium’s Eastern Frontier, 101 – 103.

⁵²⁵ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 45.

⁵²⁶ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 91.

⁵²⁷ STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 93; cf. CURTA, The image and archaeology, 151.

⁵²⁸ MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 124.

⁵²⁹ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 131; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 1, no. 59.1; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 2, no. 307; JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals, Vol. 3, part 1, no. 1380.

to the Byzantines sometime around 1045⁵³⁰, received baptism (hence the new name) and was made a *patrikios*, and later an *archon*, in charge of the Danubian frontier.⁵³¹ The terms of Kegen's command remain unclear, and it has been suggested he is one of the earliest examples of Byzantine system of temporary exchange of land for military service, or *pronoia*.⁵³² 'Two seals with the inscription *Ioánnes magistros kai archon Patzinakias* (...) most certainly have belonged to Kegen (...). They point to a moment in the Pecheneg chieftain's career later than 1045, as the title *magistros* was higher than that of *patrikios*. (...) That territory remained under imperial control, for the [office] of *archon* was only given to rulers of autonomous regions on the periphery. It is obvious that the Pechenegs from that territory could operate within the Empire only as *stratiotai*'.⁵³³ 'Byzantine influence in the northern and central Balkans was now very largely exercised through a series of local communities, enjoying a greater or a lesser degree of autonomy from the central government. This was not how Basil II intended his Balkan territories to be organized'.⁵³⁴ The local populace of territories where now Pechenegs were based had to be appeased and their loyalty bought with tribute; similarly, since the entire border region was controlled from a few keeps, *kastrophylakes* (the commanders of fortresses⁵³⁵) were given more privileges.⁵³⁶

However, the Empire also found it increasingly hard to control their nomadic neighbours, even with bribes and trade. One could even argue that trade only strengthened Pechenegs, turning them into the *mixobarbaroi*. Byzantium's usual techniques of dealing with their neighbours bore the same gamble and only occasional success. This was demonstrated in 1048, when Constantine Monomachos sent the enemies-newly-turned-allies to Asia Minor as troops against Seljuk Turks to Armenia, only to rebel upon crossing Bosphorus and returning to the Balkans.⁵³⁷ However, some fifteen thousand returning Pechenegs settled in the lands of Preslav or Hundred

⁵³⁰ MADGEARU, *The Military Organization of Paradunavon*, 424; ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 38.

⁵³¹ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, 132.

⁵³² SCHMITT, *Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan*, 477; CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 154.

⁵³³ MADGEARU, *The Pechenegs in the Byzantine army*, 211; JORDANOV has also suggested that a man from the seal is a son or a grandson of Kegen from the sources, where Kegenos is a new patronym, as quoted from JORDANOV, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals*, Vol. 1, 142.

⁵³⁴ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 39.

⁵³⁵ KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee*, 134.

⁵³⁶ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 93 f.

⁵³⁷ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 91; THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 594; ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 38.

Hills region (later Patzinakia), rather than back in Serdica; moreover, they looted Thrace together with Kegen's Pechenegs, after this one had been arrested for conspiracy.⁵³⁸ Kegen himself was killed in 1050 by the rebelled Pechenegs on his mission to negotiate with them.⁵³⁹ The Pecheneg assimilation, with their unwillingness to integrate and change their way of life, failed.⁵⁴⁰ 'The settlement of the Petcheneks (sic) was mismanaged. (...) They were settled along a section of the military road across the Balkans to the north of Sofia. This would both drive a wedge between different groups of Bulgarians and ensure control of one of the vital arteries of the Balkans. What the government of Constantine Monomachos did not take into account was that the lands they gave the Petcheneks were quite unsuited to their traditional way of life. In addition, it was dealing with vast numbers of people, far in excess of other military colonies established in the Balkans.'⁵⁴¹ Therefore, Byzantium could manipulate Pechenegs to an extent, but never control or subdue them.

8. Outlook

8.1 The Pechenegs

'The Pechenegs lived a primarily nomadic life, moving according to the season, together with their families, herds and possessions along pre-established routes in search of good pastures'.⁵⁴² The move of the Pechenegs, pushed by the Uzes, seems to be a result of more than just steppe political turmoil – it was also driven by climatic changes.⁵⁴³ In his work, *De Administrando Imperio*, Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos divides the Pechenegs into eight "themes" or tribes.⁵⁴⁴ Skylitzes later mentions thirteen tribes.⁵⁴⁵ There is nothing unusual about the Byzantine portrayal of the Pechenegs – savage barbarians, without culture, discipline or any other sort of refinement – a clear antipode to Byzantium. As such, these "Patzinaks" were also referred to as "Scythians near the Danube" or just "Scythians", a standard

⁵³⁸ THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 594.

⁵³⁹ THREADGOLD, *A History of Byzantine State*, 594.

⁵⁴⁰ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 40, 47.

⁵⁴¹ ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, 47.

⁵⁴² SPINEL, *The Great Migrations*, 96.

⁵⁴³ SPINEL, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 65 f.

⁵⁴⁴ SPINEL, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 257; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, Volume I (ed.) Gy. MORAVCSIK – R. J. H. JENKINS (Washington D.C. 1967), chapter 37, p. 168 f.

⁵⁴⁵ SCHMITT, *Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan*, 474.

name for barbarians.⁵⁴⁶ And yet, Byzantium's own writings betray that there was much more to these wandering nomads. Skylitzes mentions they did possess tools associated with crops, which has been taken to mean Pechenegs were possibly agriculturalists.⁵⁴⁷ Anna Komnena also mentions some tribes grew crops.⁵⁴⁸ These claims are contradicted by their (semi-)nomadic lifestyle and intense involvement with pastoralism, and therefore seasonal migration as well.⁵⁴⁹ The sedentary lifestyle they were exposed to in Byzantium, did little to affect their nomadic ways on the pastures south of Danube.⁵⁵⁰ On the other hand, the confusion might arise from treating the Pechenegs as a monolithic block. The differences within the Pecheneg groups can also be accounted for by different policies they were meant to follow. Byzantium's administration over Pechenegs was not uniform – Tyrach's Pechenegs were given lands in the theme of Bulgaria, around Naissos, Serdica and Euzapolis (today Ovče Pole), but were stripped off their weapons, while Kegen's Pechenegs were treated as *foederati* of the Empire.⁵⁵¹ Byzantium also saw more in the newly baptized Tyrach's nomads – they saw potential recruits and taxpayers, while being under better governmental control than in the Danubian region.⁵⁵²

Even though Psellos writes Pechenegs do not follow any war tactics, the raids of 1027 and 1036 south of Danube seem to suggest Pechenegs did target different provinces, either to avoid the attacks on the same cities or due to easy access to less fortified areas.⁵⁵³ Also, despite their reputation as unruly, Anna Komnena claims they could form a phalanx.⁵⁵⁴ Kegen's knowledge of Scythian fighting strategies in 1047 against Tyrach might have been the reason he was in charge of armed forces of Thrace, Bulgaria and Paristrion.⁵⁵⁵ More than just fighting on horseback, they also seem to be acquainted with siege techniques⁵⁵⁶, leading one to a conclusion Pechenegs were better military tacticians than the sources give them credit. Their impact is also seen

⁵⁴⁶ MEŠKO, *Pecheneg Groups in the Balkans*, 183; CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 145.

⁵⁴⁷ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 148.

⁵⁴⁸ SCHMITT, *Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan*, 474.

⁵⁴⁹ SPINEL, *The Great Migrations*, 99.

⁵⁵⁰ SPINEL, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 356 f.

⁵⁵¹ SCHMITT, *Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan*, 480.

⁵⁵² SCHMITT, *Die Petschenegen auf dem Balkan*, 480; Peter CHARANIS, *The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire. Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3/2 (1961), 140 – 154, here 150.

⁵⁵³ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 149.

⁵⁵⁴ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 149.

⁵⁵⁵ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 149.

⁵⁵⁶ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 150.

elsewhere: archaeological evidence shows that ‘the Danubian forts were first garrisons, but next they became fortified settlements, peopled also by civilians’.⁵⁵⁷ The first signs of destruction after the epoch of Basil II can be linked to Pecheneg raids of 1036, with destruction and fire signs at the fortresses in the inland as well, whereas the invasions of 1046/1047, although destroying some fortresses like Capidava completely, have not caused a complete havoc.⁵⁵⁸ Much greater damage was done by the Uzes in 1065.⁵⁵⁹ Furthermore, CURTA criticizes the notion the Pechenegs transformed once south of the Danube.⁵⁶⁰ Moreover, the cemeteries in Pliska and Odărcei reveal more about the preferred ‘regional identity’ and ‘political aspirations of those who buried that person’, ultimately suggesting the local populace ended up imitating the Pechenegs.⁵⁶¹

Although due to their mobility the nomads are difficult to trace archaeologically⁵⁶², when this is done, it can also help fill the gaps in the written records – Pliska’s destruction by fire is laid at Pecheneg feet; Odărcei skeletons’ traumas could be linked to 1030s Pecheneg raids; Garvăn and Capidava are sights of mass burials, while in Derwent some victims had been decapitated – all of which the modern scholarship links to Pechenegs.⁵⁶³ For archaeological artifacts, ‘it is not always possible to say if these objects were obtained by commercial transactions, if they were offered as gifts, or if they were plundered from more civilized centers’.⁵⁶⁴ CURTA warns that ‘any effort to recognize the Pechenegs in the archaeological record by means of specific artifact categories must be regarded with suspicion, especially when associated with the idea that the archaeological record is expected to illustrate what we already know from the written sources’.⁵⁶⁵ Equating ornaments or kitchen utensils with Pechenegs, but with no warrior graves found either in contemporary Bulgaria or in contemporary Romanian Dobrudja is in contrast with burials north of the Danube in the same period.⁵⁶⁶ This is especially telling, if one interprets the burials as ‘monuments of

⁵⁵⁷ MADGEARU, *The Military Organization of Paradunavon*, 434.

⁵⁵⁸ MADGEARU, *The Military Organization of Paradunavon*, 435.

⁵⁵⁹ MADGEARU, *The Military Organization of Paradunavon*, 436.

⁵⁶⁰ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 179.

⁵⁶¹ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 181.

⁵⁶² MEŠKO, *Pecheneg Groups in the Balkans*, 179; cf. CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 162.

⁵⁶³ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 156 f.

⁵⁶⁴ SPINEL, *The Great Migrations*, 100, 102.

⁵⁶⁵ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 158 f.

⁵⁶⁶ CURTA, *The image and archaeology*, 159, 164.

power and prestige’ therefore highlighting the difference between the Pechenegs in the Byzantine territory and the Pechenegs north of the Danube.⁵⁶⁷ As far as the “nomadic pottery”, as CURTA calls it, is concerned, ‘there is nothing nomadic about the eleventh-century clay kettles, but it is not impossible that they became fashionable at the time of the Pecheneg raids into the Balkans’; CURTA deduces that ‘there is no indication that this particular ceramic category served as a badge of Pecheneg, or any other kind of ethnicity’.⁵⁶⁸ Neither the Pechenegs, nor the Uzes or the Cumans can be viewed as a homogenous group⁵⁶⁹ despite the fact the Byzantines remain unobservant of any potential differences amongst Pecheneg groups.⁵⁷⁰ To synopsise, ‘written sources are late and in any case can not be trusted, while the archaeology has been largely misused to fit preconceived ideas about barbarians’.⁵⁷¹

8.2 Bulgarian Elite post 1018

After the conquest of 1018, the Bulgarian elite was seen as potential rebels.⁵⁷² They were, however, integrated normally into the Byzantine administrative structures. One such example is that of Aaron, *magistros* and *dux* of Edessa – as a son of Ivan Vladislav, Aaron entered Byzantine military service in 1018.⁵⁷³ He is also attested by his seal as *magistros* and *doux* of Ani and of Iberia.⁵⁷⁴ In literary and sigillographic sources, one can follow his career from his station as a *patrikios* to *patrikios anthypatos vestes*, *dux*, *magistros*, *strategos autokrator*, *proedros* and *protoproedros*.⁵⁷⁵ Presian, another son of Ivan Vladislav, was integrated as *magistros*.⁵⁷⁶ Samuel Alusianos is another example – this *proedros* and *dux*, therefore distinguished by high title and commando, was a grandson of Ivan Vladislav.⁵⁷⁷ In general, after 1018, Bulgarians were scattered in Thessaly and Western Thrace; the ones from Macedonia were moved to lower Danube, while some were moved to Asia Minor, to Ephesus region.⁵⁷⁸ Perhaps the fact their seals are found in regions far from

⁵⁶⁷ CURTA, The image and archaeology, 166.

⁵⁶⁸ CURTA, The image and archaeology, 161 f.

⁵⁶⁹ SPINEL, The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads, 181.

⁵⁷⁰ CURTA, The image and archaeology, 180.

⁵⁷¹ CURTA, The image and archaeology, 178.

⁵⁷² STEPHENSON, Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier, 77.

⁵⁷³ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 57 f.

⁵⁷⁴ OIKONOMIDÈS, Byzantine Lead Seals, 24.

⁵⁷⁵ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 58.

⁵⁷⁶ PETKOV, The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, 141.

⁵⁷⁷ SEIBT, Ein Blick in die byzantinische Gesellschaft, 73.

⁵⁷⁸ CHARANIS, The Transfer of Population, 148 f.

home, although not unusual for Byzantine officials, speaks of the Empire's willingness to integrate, but also decisiveness to displace the unstable elements from their domestic territories.

8.3 Reforms of Alexios I Komnenos

The epoch of Alexios I Komnenos ushered changes in Byzantine policies. Alexios Komnenos saw the necessity of concluding peace with the Pechenegs; although he was willing to temporarily put aside 'any plan to recover the land between the Haemus and lower Danube', his peaceful tactic bore little fruit; this standoff culminated at Levunium in 1091, when the Pechenegs were defeated, never to regain significant power.⁵⁷⁹ The Uzes, pushed south by Cumans were Alexios' next challenge – the emperor moved the frontline to the Haemus Mountains.⁵⁸⁰ It took him until 1094 to successfully deal with them and push the border back to Danube.⁵⁸¹ He is therefore credited with the restoration of the Danube as an effective frontier.⁵⁸² Alexios also inherited a state corrupt by supporters of the leaders who were easy to manipulate.⁵⁸³ Often, even before Komnenian period, the titles and offices were used as a reward system for loyalty to the emperor.⁵⁸⁴ In this respect, Alexios introduced little reforms.⁵⁸⁵ He lined the government with his own family members.⁵⁸⁶ The permeability of the aristocratic ranks now depended primarily on connections with the ruling family.⁵⁸⁷ In his reforms of the administrative titles and offices, Alexios 'created a new ranking system based on the title *sebastos*' and 'created the title of *sebastokrator*'; next in the new hierarchy was *protosebastos*; both titles were reserved for the imperial family.⁵⁸⁸ Therefore, the new hierarchy unfolded as follows: *sebastokrator*, *kaisar*, *panhypersebastos*, *sebastohyperatos*, *protosebastos*, *sebastos*,

⁵⁷⁹ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 102 f.; Peter GOLDEN, An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples. Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East (Wiesbaden 1992), 270.

⁵⁸⁰ STEPHENSON, Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, 104 f.; MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 85.

⁵⁸¹ ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 134.

⁵⁸² MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization, 137.

⁵⁸³ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 611.

⁵⁸⁴ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 97.

⁵⁸⁵ cf. ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 155.

⁵⁸⁶ THREADGOLD, A History of Byzantine State, 613; MAKSIMOVIĆ, Verwaltungsstrukturen, 55; ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 21, 155.

⁵⁸⁷ SEIBT, ZARNITZ, Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk, 45.

⁵⁸⁸ ANGOLD, The Byzantine Empire, 128.

protonobelissimos, nobelissimos, protokouropalates, kouropalates.⁵⁸⁹ He emphasized the importance of family name, rather than title; after 1081 the form of the seals also changed – instead of the traditional invocative formula, a metrical inscription became more common.⁵⁹⁰

8.4 The Perception of Byzantine Rule in Bulgarian Historiography

Bulgarian historiography has a somewhat different approach leading to and postdating 1018. Essentially, the Byzantine rule over Bulgarian lands is split into two periods: 971 – 1018 and 1018 – 1185.⁵⁹¹ The idea of the Bulgarian elite having been obliterated by Basil II is prominent.⁵⁹² The establishment of the theme of Bulgaria in 1018 on the territory of former Bulgarian state is accepted, and the prosopographic details of the commanders such as David Areianites include their service in the war against Bulgaria.⁵⁹³ The presentation of dignitaries both in the theme of Bulgaria and in the theme of Paradounavon does not otherwise differ significantly from other works on the topic.⁵⁹⁴ The Byzantine ‘ethno-demographic politics’, in the sense of displacing populace, and especially the surviving elites is deemed, quite naturally, unfavourable.⁵⁹⁵ Furthermore, Byzantine rule is seen as an epoch of attempted Romanization of Bulgarian lands, as in politics and in marital alliances, so in culture and literature too.⁵⁹⁶

9. Conclusion

Byzantium and Bulgaria – two states, which had fought for the primacy on the Balkans since the seventh century, soon had to fight against each other for survival. For well over a century and a half, Bulgaria had to cede this fight, its lands being managed by the Byzantines and mismanaged by the nomads. After 1018, Byzantium organized the (re)conquered Bulgarian lands into one theme, namely Bulgaria, with the theme of Paradounavon being created a quarter of a century later. As this thesis has demonstrated, the administration of the two themes echoes the late tenth century

⁵⁸⁹ OIKONOMIDES, *L'évolution de l'organisation*, 127.

⁵⁹⁰ OIKONOMIDÈS, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 23; see also WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel*, Teil 1.

⁵⁹¹ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 350.

⁵⁹² BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 343.

⁵⁹³ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 344.

⁵⁹⁴ See BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 343 – 359.

⁵⁹⁵ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 383.

⁵⁹⁶ BOŽILOV, GJUZELEV, *Istorija na Bălgarija*, 387 ff.

transition from being ruled by a *strategos*, to a *doux* or a *katepano*. One difference necessary to emphasize is the establishment of Paradounavon as a military district, whereas Bulgaria bears some marks of civil administrators. This difference is linked with the nomadic incursions from the north. Therefore, while Bulgaria was to repulse attacks from Hungary and possibly Duklja, but was exempt from being on a constant war footing, Paradounavon had the same task with the Pechenegs, and later Uzes on the Danube, serving as a permanent buffer zone. Byzantium sought to harvest the military as well as monetary potential of their enemies by trying to assert its authority over nomadic groups, which settled within the Empire's borders. As far as the centers of Byzantine authority in the themes of Bulgaria and Paradounavon are concerned, these did comply with the essential functions of Byzantine provincial centers – they served a protective function, reflected in the titles of their commanders – therefore making them the strongholds of Byzantine authority in those lands.

When viewed in the context of the time, none of the title and office combinations one encounters in the themes of Bulgaria and Paradounavon were unusual for a thematic system. The evidence of military administrators, whether appointed on temporary or permanent basis, demonstrated the themes of Bulgaria and Paradounavon fell under what one might call standard Byzantine militarized borders. However, as examples of neighbouring themes show⁵⁹⁷, the civil administration of other themes in the eleventh century was much more developed than one sees in the themes of Bulgaria and especially Paradounavon; this is possibly due not only to the different political predicaments the themes found themselves in, but also to the distance from Constantinople, and therefore the amount of authority Byzantium was able to assert. As for the question of the exercise of control over these territories – border as a concept is hardly applicable – it was fortress, which enabled control over neighbouring territory, whereas larger areas were more difficult to control, especially in time of foreign incursions. Danube, the “natural” border of the Empire⁵⁹⁸ that the emperors strived to maintain, was difficult to hold, and despite all efforts extremely porous to the nomads beyond it.

⁵⁹⁷ Ivan JORDANOV, *Vizantijski pečati s imeto na Silistra (Dorostolon/Dristras)*, in: *Dobrudža* 20, (2002), 80 – 90; Ivan JORDANOV, *Byzantine Lead Seals from the Village of Melnitsa (district of Elkhovo, Bulgaria)*, in: *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 7 (ed.) Werner SEIBT (Washington D.C. 2002), 21 – 57, here 23 ff.

⁵⁹⁸ STEPHENSON, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 5, 155.

Similarly, the somewhat unclear organization of the two themes mentioned here, and especially Paradounavon, could lead one to conclude the Byzantines themselves saw the situation as extremely flexible; this certainly would have helped to adjust more quickly to constantly changing conditions on the frontier. Perhaps as seen in the themes of Thrace and Macedonia in previous centuries, ‘the terminological inaccuracies certainly contributed to the lack of a clear picture of the territorial and administrative division of these themes’.⁵⁹⁹ This is reflected in the discrepancies between sigillographic and textual evidence. Of course, the lack of contemporary understanding of the subject could be due to incomplete sources available. One needs to consider that ‘it is highly likely, also, that in these districts not all the important administrative units have yet been identified’, with the greatest odds of this happening lying in ‘finding new sigillographic material’.⁶⁰⁰ Although HOLMES comments on the East when she says the ‘Byzantine military authority was inconsistent and intermittent, and where diplomatic relationships were of greater importance’⁶⁰¹, the same could be said about the Balkans – the Empire could not afford to have it differently, nor was such a policy a non-standard practice. The critique of the interpretation of primary sources for thematic administration has to be considered, since it ‘has led some historians to overemphasize both the rigidity and the martial nature of the frontier’; moreover, local contracts with nobles and neighbours played a big a role in military administration of the territories in question.⁶⁰² As seen, the posts in the (military) administration, were open to former enemies – both Bulgarian and Pecheneg, and parts of the territory even given to those for administration.

Therefore, despite its flaws, the Byzantine administrative model has also shown its resilience when put into practice – enduring conflicts with the former Bulgarian Empire in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the nomadic attacks in the eleventh century, as well as reforms, ultimately managing to assert itself in an adapted form, and with it ensure the Byzantine rule in the themes of Paradounavon and Bulgaria.

⁵⁹⁹ KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change*, 131.

⁶⁰⁰ MAKSIMOVIĆ, *Organizacija vizantijske vlasti*, 42.

⁶⁰¹ HOLMES, *Byzantium’s Eastern Frontier*, 96.

⁶⁰² HOLMES, *Byzantium’s Eastern Frontier*, 86.

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11. Abstract

After decades of hostilities with Byzantium, the remnants of an entity known as the First Bulgarian Empire (680/681 – 1018) have been extinguished by 1018, with the Byzantine (re)conquest of former Bulgarian lands; these were put under the administration of Byzantium. The territory was soon divided into several Byzantine themes, the local elite absorbed through Byzantine functions, and the land left to be defended against the attacks of the nomads and the neighbours of the Empire. It is in focus of this study to present available narrative sources, sigillographic evidence and archaeological finds and based on those, to reflect how the administration of the themes of Bulgaria and Paradounavon, covering the largest parts of the former Bulgarian state, was managed under Byzantine rule until the change of dynasty in 1081. The titles of the dignitaries, such as *doux* and *katepano* for military administration, or *krites* for civil administration are found in the theme of Bulgaria, whereas the military theme of Paradounavon bears no such division of administration. The nomadic incursions of the eleventh century brought into question this Byzantine model of governance, since the Empire was only able to hold larger cities and keeps that served as a buffer zone. This thesis shows that Byzantium exercised its power in the here analyzed conquered territories through its familiar mechanisms of administration, but also, at least in the beginning, took into consideration the pre-existing local structures, and modified their own.

12. Zusammenfassung

Die Reste des Ersten Bulgarenreiches (680/681-1018) wurden in der zweiten Dezenie des 11. Jahrhunderts nach einer einige Jahrzehnte gedauerten Auseinandersetzung durch Byzanz (zurück-)erobert und in das byzantinische Verwaltungssystem integriert. Das Gebiet des vorigen Gegners wurde in drei *themata* aufgeteilt, ein Teil der Elite wurde in die neue Administration aufgenommen und die ehemaligen Territorien des bulgarischen Staates waren den Überfällen der Nomaden und der Nachbarn ausgesetzt. Der Schwerpunkt dieser Untersuchung liegt in der Auswertung verschiedener Quellen (Geschichtsschreibung, Siegel, archäologische Funde) und hat das Ziel, im Hintergrund dieser Quellenbasis die Entwicklung der neuen byzantinischen Verwaltungsbezirke (*themata*) von Bulgarien und Paradounavon, welche den größeren Teil der ehemaligen Kerngebiete des Bulgarenreiches bildeten, zu präsentieren. Die obere chronologische Grenze stellt das Jahr 1081 dar, als mit der Dynastie der Komnenen ein neues Zeitalter in der Geschichte der byzantinischen Administration eintrat. Die normale Teilung eines Themas auf *doux* und *katepano*, die zu den Spitzen der militärischen Administration gehörten, und *krites*, der ein Vertreter der Zivilverwaltung war, sind in dem Thema Bulgarien teilweise reflektiert, während eine solche Teilung in dem militärischen Thema Paradounavon fehlt. Dieses Verwaltungsmodell wurde während der Einfälle der Nomaden in Frage gestellt, als das Reich in der Lage war, nur die größeren Städte, die die Rolle einer Pufferzone gegen die Steppenvölker innehatte, unter seiner Kontrolle zu halten. Die Erkenntnisse dieser Untersuchung zeigen, dass die Byzantiner ihre Macht in den neuen Gebieten zwar durch die alten, obwohl modifizierten, Mechanismen der Reichsadministration ausübten, doch die, zumindest am Anfang, vorhandenen Bedingungen in diesen Territorien vor allem auf Lokalebene stets berücksichtigten.