

Dear Mr. President, Secretary, Treasurer, dear colleagues,

In the 70s and 80s of the last century the monumental publications of G. Zacos / A. Vegliery and V. Laurent provided us an already known but rarely used *instrumentum* for our studies and research, useful in a really wide area of the Byzantinology, from the Philology/Literature and History to the Byzantine Art and Archaeology. The period after these publications was/still is a time of flourishing of the Byzantine Sigillography. One after the other the biggest seal collections all around the globe were published (Dumbarton Oaks, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Athens, Istanbul and Geneva). For first time PhDs dedicated to the byzantine seals were written and then published. Researchers published big sigillographical findings (Bulgaria) in several volumes. Within this *Zeitgeist* of the modern study of seals more and more private collectors gave us the permission and the opportunity to publish their collections (Dimitri Theodoridis in Munich, Savvas Kophopoulos on the island of Lesbos, Zafeiris Syrras in London and others). Our colleagues, the archaeologists (alone or in cooperation with us), published in local or international Symposia their findings (in Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Italy and Turkey; here I have to notice the even bigger interest in publishing of byzantine seals by Turkish colleagues). This is an increasing progress which continues to offer us very interesting scientific contributions. For example, in the very future you will enjoy the publication of the byzantine seals found at the Acropolis of Athens during the excavations of the metro line of Athens.

A milestone in the modern Byzantine Sigillography is the organization of the International Symposia of Byzantine Sigillography between our International Congresses. The first one took place in Athens, the last in Istanbul and the next will take place in St. Petersburg (May 2019). The 10<sup>th</sup> took place in Ioannina 2010 and the proceedings are already published. Together with Alexandra Wassilou-Seibt (Vienna-Thessaloniki), we are working on the publication of the proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of Byzantine Sigillography (Istanbul) and the round table during the International Byzantine Congress of Belgrade. These will be the next volume of the series *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* in the publishing House Brepols.

Ladies and gentlemen, a lot of progress is done but we think that a significant further progress is necessary in order to achieve the standard enjoyed by comparable scholarly fields. The new commission should become the driving force of this evolution. The commission's role will be multi-faceted. We will work on three levels: the scientific, the academic/pedagogic one and the promotion ("advertising") of the Byzantine Sigillography. We will observe scholarly developments, coordinate/propose international sigillographic projects, (co)organize targeted symposia, and workshops, cooperate and encourage on the editing of new sigillographic material (we are very interested to encourage the publication of seals which are products of excavations) and correcting mistakes of earlier publications as well as promote the scientific cooperation with other disciplines such as Byzantine Archaeology and Art, Numismatics, Epigraphy Historical Geography etc. . We will not be a strictly closed club of specialists. Our knowledge and experience will be offered and distributed to everyone is interested on seals. *Novi homines* are welcome. All this will present the seals in the right way for better integration into the primary sources, on which many aspects of modern Byzantine Studies are based.

On the other hand we will provide colleagues all over the world with the necessary advice and material in order to create sigillographic courses or sigillographic lessons/units in their courses. We also intend to organize summer schools for students and scholars interested on seals.

At the end allow me some words about *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*. Apart from catalogues of special collections, the *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* is the most important journal where scholars can find publications containing new sigillographic material, new methods or scholarly approaches and new perspectives on Byzantine Sigillography. We hereby take the opportunity to offer our thanks, to the Bureau of AIEB for the financial support for the next volume of *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, which will once again be peer-reviewed. Our periodical already boasts 12 volumes.

We would like to extend to you our sincere thanks for giving us the opportunity for the formation of an international Commission of Byzantine Sigillography within the framework of the AIEB. We firmly believe this will not only reinforce the role of

Byzantine Sigillography within Byzantine Studies, but will also offer further incentives for young scholars to specialize in this field.

As members of the commission we propose the following colleagues (in alphabetical order):

Vera Bulgurlu (Turkey)

Béatrice Caseau (France)

Jean-Claude Cheynet (France)

Ivan Jordanov (Bulgaria)

Ioannis Leontiades (Greece)

Vivien Prigent (France)

Werner Seibt (Austria)

Claudia Sode (Germany)

Lena Stepanova (Russia)

Christos Stavrakos (Greece)

Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou-Seibt (Austria)