

Report of the commission of sigillography

Introduction

The activity of sigillographers has not slowed down since the Venice Congress. New international projects have been substantially funded (Cologne, Paris, see below), and others are in preparation, but they are not mentioned here because the outcome of the applications is not known. The increase in the number of sigillographers is supported by teaching sessions. This is also reflected in the parallel development of an increasing number of articles, either on the publication of seals or on works in which sigillographic sources play a predominant role. As a result, the prosopography of the great families has been strengthened, as has our knowledge of the administration. Some projects are centered on the question of *themata*, their gradual emergence and development.

The main change compared with previous decades - without being a complete novelty - is the place that the digital humanities are taking in our discipline. This takes the form of databases but also digital publications. Artificial intelligence is summoned to decipher letters and identify iconography.

To make our work easier, the DO team is undertaking major updates on Athena Ruby making it easier to use in all cases but also much easier to incorporate into web-based projects. Work on that begins this summer. When the time comes, J. Shea will solicit suggestions for new characters from our colleagues.

In the following lines, we have endeavoured to give as complete a picture as possible of current activities, but in a succinct manner and without mentioning the articles for which we refer to the very complete bibliography of the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (by Werner Seibt).

Publications

Publications since the Venice Congress:

Byzantine Lead Seals in Thrace (6th-12th c.), *Proceedings of the International Conference Sigillography meets Historical Geography*, Vienna, 19 April 2023, ed. A. Gkoutzioukostas, A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, D. Drakoulis, Thessaloniki 2023.

Other books should appear before the next Congress in Vienna

(alphabetical order of authors)

J.-C. Cheynet, The second book of the Kofopoulos collection should appear before the end of 2024.

M. Filosa, Cl. Neufeind, and Cl. Sode, *Digital Approaches to Medieval Sigillography, Digital Medievalist Journal before the end of 2024.*

Seals with Family Names Beginning with A by the late J. Nesbitt and W. Seibt The DO series volume 8 (should appear soon)

The volume 9 of the DO, Seals with Family Names is in preparation, entrusted to Ch. Stavrakos.

E. Stepanova, *Catalogue of Byzantine seals with geographical names from the collection of the State Hermitage Museum. Part 1: Constantinople and the Western Provinces, themes, cities* (in press).

W. Seibt – Oleksandr Alf'orov, Byzantine Seals and Rus' seals in the Byzantine style found on the territory of Ukraine

Al. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus der byzantinischen Bleisiegel mit metrischen Legenden. 3. Teil. Legenden von Sphragisma bis Omega* (WBS 28/3). Wien 2026.

Major collection publication projects

Martina Filosa, Vivien Prigent, and Alessio Sopracasa are preparing the publication of the British Library 700 Seals

Future International Symposia

XIIIth International Symposium of Byzantine Sigillography - Part I (Köln, 27-28.03.2025),

XIIIth International Symposium on Byzantine Sigillography - Part II (Thessaloniki 6-8.10.2025).

On the occasion of the centenary of the Turkish Republic, a symposium “Rethinking Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Concepts, terms and methods” include contributions on sigillography. 29th November - 1st December 2024, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul

International collaborative projects

The only project completed since the Venice Congress is: Byzantine Lead Seals in Thrace (Thessaloniki-Vienna-Shumen) resulted in a Conference at Vienna (April 2023 (Cf the book above).

Cl. Sode and Al. Sopracasa work on a joint project set to release the first digitally published seals using SigiDoc in 2024. This release includes the first edition of 100 seals from the Robert Feind collection, as well as a digitally edition of approximately 200 seals from the already published Seyrig and Tatış collections.

There is a Bulgarian funded project on the digitization of the Byzantine and medieval Bulgarian seals kept in Bulgarian collections. The team is using an advanced photo-scanner for the images and SigiDoc for the encoding of information. They will be all presented on the website of the National Archaeological Institute (Pantelis Charalampakis).

In view of its expansion over more themes, the *TAKTIKON* project comprising over 1100 thematic molybdoboulla secured funding for a second year (February 2024) from the Research Committee of the Academy of Athens towards its necessary technical update.

The first Artificial Intelligence project on seals is lead Victoria Eyharabide in Paris (with the help of Isabelle Bloch, Laurence Likforman and Béatrice Caseau). They work on character recognition and train the computer to recognize elements of iconography

Teaching and diffusion of science

- the Coins and Seals Summer Program taught by J. Shea and A. Stahl will return in July 2025. At DO also, 300 students come to DO to learn about seals

- The Department of Byzantine Studies in Cologne is pioneering new teaching and presentation formats for Byzantine seals as part of DiBS (Digital Byzantine Studies). A successful international workshop was conducted during the winter term of 2023/24, engaging 20 local and international graduate students. This workshop will evolve into a digital exhibition titled “Approaching Byzantium Through Seals”. The aim of the digital showcase is to illustrate the history of Byzantine society through its seals, featuring 35 seals that were studied and annotated by the participants of the international workshop. To enhance the presentation of the seals, 3D models and Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) reproductions of a portion of the seals are incorporated, making the exhibition even more visually captivating.
- Several professors teach sigillography at their universities (Ioannina, Thessaloniki, Paris, Cologne).
 - The exhibition 'The Odyssey of Byzantine Studies in Turkey, curated by the Sevgi Gönül Center for Byzantine Studies on the occasion of the sixth International Symposium of Byzantine Studies and in celebration of the centenary of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, with a section on sigillography. Location: ANAMED Koç University, Merkez Han, Beyoğlu, Istanbul. Dates: 22.06.23 - 15.12. 2024. Curator: Koray Durak

Awards for sigillographers et books of sigillography

The book TAKTIKON, *Studies on the Prosopography and Administration of the Byzantine themata*, eds. O. Karagiorgou, P.Charalampakis, Ch.Malatras, Athens, 2021 has been awarded the newly created prize in memory of Vasso Penna.

In conclusion, it is worth noting the remarkable mobility of colleagues, particularly Turkish colleagues, who have obtained funding from their country and have been able to join centres with excellent libraries (Paris, Vienna, Cologne).