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## EARLY MEDIEVAL BULGARIAN SEALS FROM AN AUCTION

KIRIL NENOV/SOFIA

Treasure-hunting in Bulgaria has grown significantly over the past two decades. It is therefore not surprising that more and more often we see antiquities and artifacts found in Bulgaria, intended for sale or trade on the international antiques market. For example, the English auction *Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.*, for some time now, has been publishing on its website different lots of Bulgarian medieval lead seals worthy of attention. The main focus of the article is to make them available to the scientific community as well as the public. Of course, precise information about the place of finding and context of the items is often lost, but it could be assumed that most, if not all of them, have been discovered in Bulgaria. The molybdebulls are dated to the period from the 9th and 10th centuries, and belong to the group of Bulgarian royal/imperial seals.<sup>1</sup>

### ABBREVIATIONS

|                          |                                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>D</i> – diameter      | <i>Rev</i> – reverse              |
| <i>Dat</i> – dating      | <i>SP</i> – state of preservation |
| <i>ID</i> – initial data | <i>T</i> – type                   |
| <i>Obv</i> – obverse     | <i>W</i> – weight                 |

### Boris I/Mihail (852–889), archon of Bulgaria

1. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 82, Lot 1190, sold for \$180 on September 16, 2009, at initial price of \$300. *W* 19.91 g. *SP* fairly well centered, partially effaced, covered with a light brown patina. *T* И. ЙОРДАНОВ. *Корпус*, III.1А.

*Obv* Circular inscription: [+ΧΕΡΟΗΘΗΜΗΧΑΗΛΑΡΧΟΝΤΑΡΟΝΛΓΑΡΙΑС]

Χ(ριστ)ἔ, βοήθη Μηχαήλ ἄρχοντα Βουλγαρίας.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Double border of dots.

*Rev* Circular inscription: [+ΘΚΕΡΟΗΘΗΜΗΧΑΗΛΑΡΧΟΝΤΑΡΟΝΛΓΑΡΙΑС]

Θ(εοτό)κε, βοήθη Μηχαήλ ἄρχοντα Βουλγαρίας.

Bust of the Virgin Orans facing, nimbate, wearing a chiton and a maphorion; she raises her hands in prayer. Double border of dots.

*Dat* 864–889.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The seal typology is based on Ivan Jordanov's *Corpus of the Seals of Medieval Bulgaria*: И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корпус на печатите на средновековна България*, София 2001; ИДЕМ, *Корпус на печатите на средновековна България*. Addenda et corrigenda, *Нумизматика и епиграфика* 1 (2003) 95–113.

<sup>2</sup> See И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корпус*, 33–34.



2. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 79, Lot 1369; sold on September 17, 2008, for \$1650, at initial price of \$300. *D* 26 mm. *W* 15.30 g. *SP* fairly well centered; partially effaced; covered with a light brown patina. *ΤΙ. ΨΟΡΔΑΝΟΒ, Κορνης, ΙΙΙ.1Α.*

*Obv* Circular inscription: [+ΧΕΡΟΗΘΗΜΗΧΑΗΛΑΡΧΟΝΤΑΡΟΝΛΓΑΡΙΑC]

Χ(ριστ)ἔ, βοήθη Μηχαήλ ἄρχοντα Βουλγαρίας.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Double border of dots.

*Rev* Circular inscription: [+ΘΚΕΡΟΗΘΗΜΗΧΑΗΛΑΡΧΟΝΤΑΡΟΝΛΓΑΡΙΑC]

Θ(εοτό)κε, βοήθη Μηχαήλ ἄρχοντα Βουλγαρίας.

Bust of the Virgin Orans facing, nimbate, wearing a chiton and a maphorion; she raises her hands in prayer. Double border of dots.

*Dat* 864–889.



### Symeon (893–927), archon of Bulgaria

3. *ID* Ref. No. 236, Lot 545; sold for \$1300, at initial price of \$300. *D* 25 mm. *W* 17.89 g. *SP* well centered; relatively well preserved, with gray-green surface. *ΤΙ. ΨΟΡΔΑΝΟΒ, Κορνης, ΙΙΙ.2Α.*

*Obv* Circular inscription: +ΧΕΒΟΗΘ[ΗCΥΜΕΩΝ]ΑΡΧΟΝΤΑΒΟΝΛΓΑΡΙ

Χ(ριστ)ἔ, βοήθη Συμεών ἄρχοντα Βουλγαρί(ας).

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Double border of dots.

*Rev* Circular inscription: +ΘΚΕΒΟΗ[ΘΗCΥΜ]ΕΩ[Ν]ΑΡΧΟΝΤΑΒΟΝΛΓΑΡΙ

Θ(εοτό)κε, βοήθη Συμεών ἄρχοντα Βουλγαρί(ας).

Bust of the Virgin Orans facing, nimbate, wearing a chiton and a maphorion; she raises her hands in prayer. Double border of dots.

*Dat* 893–c. 900.





It has already been clarified that this type of seals copy the iconography and inscriptions of the “Boris, archon of Bulgaria” type of seals (И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Копнyc*, III. 1A). This could serve as conclusive evidence that it belongs to the type of seals which Symeon used in the early years of his rule. If we could with some certainty place the beginning of the chronological framework of those sygillographic monuments in 893, its ending point is quite unclear. Undoubtedly *terminus ante quem* is 913, when the Bulgarian ruler was proclaimed tsar (basileus) – a fact which is reflected in the inscriptions accompanying the ruler’s seals. Some additional data, however, allow assuming even earlier date. Considering the iconography of the “Boris, a monk and archon of Bulgaria” type of seals (И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Копнyc*, III. 1Б) which is radically different from the type in question, there are grounds to assume that the period when the seals of the “Symeon, archon of Bulgaria” type were used ended earlier than 907 (the year when knyaz Boris died). There is another important fact which should be taken into account: for an extended period of time before Symeon started using the seals bearing the title *basileus* he stamped his documents with seals of the type known today in historiography as “Anonymous” (И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Копнyc*, III.2Б–III.2В). On the basis of these considerations it can be concluded that the seals of the “Symeon, archon of Bulgaria” type were used from 893 until around the end of the 9th century.

#### Symeon (893–927)

4. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 79, Lot 1370; sold on September 17, 2008, for \$900 at initial price of \$500. *D* 28 mm. *W* 20.84 g. *SP* fairly well centered; relatively well preserved; with a scratch on both sides. *T* unknown.

*Obv* Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Dat* c. 900–913.



The lack of inscriptions and royal image hampers the identification of this type of seals. The auction house defines it as Bulgarian, perhaps on the basis of its origin. This statement finds additional support in the fact that the seal does not have analogues among the Byzantine monuments. Should we overcome the reasonable reservations about its Bulgarian origin, it should be noted that it fits best the group of the so-called “Anonymous seals of Symeon”.

5. *ID* Ref. No. Triton XI, Lot 1214<sup>3</sup>; sold on January 7, 2008, for \$4600 at initial price of \$5000. *D* 30 mm. *W* 25.57 g. *SP* well centered; well preserved; covered with brown patina. *Т. И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, III.2B.*

*Obv* Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Bust of Symeon facing, with a short beard, wearing a richly decorated garment<sup>4</sup> and a hemispherical crown with pendoulia. Single border of dots.

*Dat* c. 900–913.



Although dating and identification of this group of seals have a relative character, traditionally it is seen as part of Symeon’s anonymous seals, and is dated before 913. It is also possible the beginning of their use to coincide in time with the circulation of the “Boris, monk and archon of Bulgaria” type of seals (*И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, III. 1B*).

<sup>3</sup> Partially published in *И. ЙОРДАНОВ, България и Византия (864–971). Приноси на сфрагистиката*, in *Пътувания в средновековна България. Материали от Първата национална конференция „Пътуване към България. Пътуванията в средновековна България и съвременният туризъм“*. Шумен, 8–11.05.2008 г., Велико Търново 2009, №2, 52.

<sup>4</sup> According to *К. ТОТЕВ, За иконографията на анонимните печати на цар Симеон (893–927)*, *РВг* 24/4 (2000) 43, the ruler is dressed in a chlamys, but his statement seems to be inaccurate.

6. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 94, Lot 1639; sold on September 18, 2013 for \$650, at initial price of \$750; comes from an American collection. *D* 27 mm. *W* 27.16 g. *SP* partial seal imprint; damaged image of the ruler, half-effaced image of Christ; covered with brown patina. *Т И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, III.2B.*

*Obv* Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Bust of Symeon facing, with a short beard, wearing a richly decorated garment and a hemispherical crown with pendoulia. Single border of dots.

*Dat* c. 900–913.



#### Symeon (893–927), basileus of the Romans

7. *ID* Ref. No. 254, Lot 506<sup>5</sup>; part of a lot of five lead seals of the Roman-Byzantine world; sold for \$300 at initial price of \$100. *SP* well centered; half-effaced; slight shallow depressions on the image of the ruler. *Т И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, III.2Д.*

*Obv* Circular inscription: [+CVMEONENXPICT' RACILE' POMEΩN'+]

Συμεὼν ἐν Χρισ(τῷ) βασιλε(ὺς) Ρομέων.

*Rev* Symeon stands facing, bearded, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia, he holds in his right hand a processional cross with arms crossed by Christ monogram (Χ) and in the left a globus cruciger<sup>6</sup>. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 917–927.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>5</sup> It was published without illustration in *И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Печати на Симеон, василевс на ромсите (?–927), ВМ 2 (2011) № 23, 92.*

<sup>6</sup> According to the description of *И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, 48*, the ruler is standing on a suppedaneum, but such a detail is not detected in the image.

<sup>7</sup> Different assumptions have been made in regard to dating of this type of seals. Recently this dating refers to the period 917–927. See: *И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, 51*; *Р. РАШЕВ, Цар Симеон – адепт и опонент на „гръцкия модел“, ПКШ 9 (2006) 386*; *Т. СЛАВОВА, Владетел и администрация в ранносредновековна България. Филологически аспекти, София 2010, 246–248*; *И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Печати на Симеон, василевс на ромсите, 94.*

The spelling of the Bulgarian ruler's name – Συμεὸν – is typical of his seals from the period when he was proclaimed tsar/basileus (cf. the form Συμεῶν, manifested between 893 and 904 on Symeon's seals as archon of Bulgaria (И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корнус*, III.2A), as well as in the inscription of tsar Symeon from the village of Narāsh/Nea Filadelfeia).<sup>8</sup> Whether similar patterns could be traced in the Cyrillic texts of this era is a question that has yet to be clarified. For example in the inscription of Mostich, which has survived until today in its original form, we find the expression ΠΡΗ СΥΜΕΟΝЪ ЦРН.<sup>9</sup> Literary monuments, however, are known only from later transcriptions, so the spelling of the name could have deviated from its original form.

### Petär (927–969), basileus (of Bulgaria?)

8. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 79, Lot 1371; sold on September 17, 2008, for \$400, at initial price of \$300. *D* 17 mm. *W* 7.14 g. *SP* partial seal imprint; fairly well preserved. *TI*. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корнус*, III.3Ав.

*Obv* Arched inscription: [+ΙΗΣΥΣ ΧΡΙ]ΣΤΟΣ\*<sup>10</sup>

Ιησους Χριστος.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: ΠΕΤΡΟΣ [ΡΑCΙ'ΕΝCΗC]

Πέτρος βασι(λεὺς) εὐσ(εβ)ής.

Two busts facing. On the left, Petär, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them.<sup>11</sup> Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



At this stage the reading εὐσ(εβ)ής, proposed by the first publisher of that type of seals, seems to be the most acceptable one.<sup>12</sup> In fact, this interpretation is required

<sup>8</sup> В. БЕШЕВЛИЕВ, *Първобългарски надписи*, София <sup>2</sup>1992, № 46, 183.

<sup>9</sup> В. БЕШЕВЛИЕВ, *Първобългарски надписи*, № 71, 241.

<sup>10</sup> The sign \* is a monogram consisting of the first letters of Ιησοῦς Χριστός.

<sup>11</sup> According to И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корнус*, 58, they hold a patriarchal cross, but this is not entirely accurate.

<sup>12</sup> Т. ГЕРАСИМОВ, Оловни печати на българските царе Симеон и Петър, *ИБАИ* 12 (1938) 360–362. See also comment on the term εὐσεβής in: V. BEŠEVLIJEV, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften*, Berlin 1963, 333–334; J. SHEPARD, A marriage too far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria, in *The empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the turn of the first millennium*, ed. A. DAVIDS, Cambridge 1995, 143.

by the simple logic of the last two letters – HC, as RACIEVC could be read also as βασι(λ)εὺς. Whether the end on the inscription is not BC, corresponding to the content of the types subjected to the further discussion, at this point cannot be clarified with certainty. Seals of tsar Petăr, who is depicted with tsaritsa Maria Lekapena (III.3A), are dated by I. Jordanov from 927 to the 950s.<sup>13</sup> Given the assumption that Maria Lekapena died around 962, V. Gjuzelev suggests they should be dated between 927 and 962.<sup>14</sup> The stated opinion runs somewhat contrary to the fact that so far there have been found seals of Petăr with Maria, and with Petăr alone, in approximately a 2:1 ratio. All this leads us to the conclusion that Petăr, in the last third of his reign, or from about 956 to 969, began to seal his correspondence with molybdo bulls, on which he is depicted alone. Of course, the beginning of this tradition could not be categorically assigned to the year 956, though it seems that the emission of seals, representing the tsar standing solitary, without his wife, started somewhere around this particular year. This fact also indicates that the molybdo bulls in question appeared a few years before the death of Tsaritsa Maria,<sup>15</sup> because it is difficult to accept that all these seals derive from the period 962/3–969.

9. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 69, Lot 2283; part of a lot of three seals of Tsar Petăr<sup>16</sup>; sold on June 8, 2005 for \$650; at an initial price of \$300. *D* indicated approximately.<sup>17</sup> *SP* partial seal imprint; fairly well preserved relief.<sup>18</sup> *Т И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, III.3Ав.*

*Obv* Arched inscription: [+IHСΥSXRISTΥS\*]

Iηsus Kristus.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: [ΠΕΤΡΟCΡΑCΙ'ΕVC]HC

Πέτρος βασι(λεὺς) εὺσ(εβ)ής.

Two busts facing. On the left, Petăr, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.

<sup>13</sup> И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корнус*, 58–60.

<sup>14</sup> В. ГЮЗЕЛЕВ, Значението на брака на цар Петър (927–969) с ромейката Мария-Ирина Лакапина (911–962), in *Културните текстове на миналото – носители, символи, идеи, I. Текстове на историята, история на текстовете. Материали от юбилейната международна конференция в чест на 60-годишнината на проф. д-р Казимир Попконстантинов. Велико Търново, 29–31 октомври 2003 г.*, София 2005, 27.

<sup>15</sup> In all probability tsaritsa Maria has died either in 962, or in the beginning of 963. More on this problem see in *PMZ* 4 (2013) 342.

<sup>16</sup> See here no. 10 and no. 11.

<sup>17</sup> It is noted that the average diameter of the three seals is 18 mm.

<sup>18</sup> It is noted that two of the seals are covered with cream-coloured patina.



10. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 69, Lot 2283; part of a lot of three seals of Tsar Petär;<sup>19</sup> sold on June 8, 2005 for \$650, at initial price of \$300. *D* indicated approximately.<sup>20</sup> *SP* partial seal imprint; fairly well preserved relief.<sup>21</sup> *Т И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, III.3АВ.*

*Obv* Arched inscription: [+IHSYXCRIS]TYS\*

Iñsus Xristus.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: ΠΕ[ΤΡΟCΡΑCΙ'ΕVΧΗC]

Πέτρος βασι(λεὺς) εὐσ(εβ)ής.

Two busts facing. On the left, Petär, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



11. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 69, Lot 2283; part of a lot of three seals of Tsar Petär;<sup>22</sup> sold on June 8, 2005 for \$650, at initial price of \$300. *D* indicated approximately.<sup>23</sup> *SP* partial seal imprint; fairly well preserved relief.<sup>24</sup> *Т И. ЙОРДАНОВ, Корнус, III.3АВ.*

*Obv* Arched inscription: [+IHSYXCRISTYS\*]

Iñsus Xristus.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

<sup>19</sup> See here no. 9 and no. 11.

<sup>20</sup> See n. 17.

<sup>21</sup> See n. 18.

<sup>22</sup> See here no. 9 and no. 10.

<sup>23</sup> See n. 17.

<sup>24</sup> See n. 18.

*Rev* Arched inscription: [ΠΕΤΡΟCΡΑ]CΙ'ΕVCHC

Πέτρος βασι(λεὺς) εὐσ(εβ)ής.

Two busts facing. On the left, Petär, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



12. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 94, Lot 1640; sold on September 18, 2013 for \$600, at initial price of \$750; part of an American collection. *D* 22 mm. *W* 13.84 g. *SP* well centered; well preserved; covered with dark brown patina. *T* И. ЪОРДАНОВ, *Копиyc*, III.3AB.

*Obv* Arched inscription: +IHСYСX [RIS]TYS\*

Iηsus Xristus.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: ΠΕΤΡΟCΡΑCΙΕVCHC

Πέτρος βασι(λεὺς) εὐσ(εβ)ής.

Two busts facing. On the left, Petär, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



13. *ID* Ref. No. 240, Lot 551; sold for \$330, at initial price of \$100. *D* 20 mm. *W* 7.36 g. *SP* well centered; fairly well preserved; half-effaced obverse. *T* unknown.

*Obv* Arched inscription: +IHСYСX[RISTYS\*]

Iηsus Xristus.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel

book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: ΠΕΤΡΟCΡΑCΙ'ΕΥC'RC

Πέτρος βασι(λεὺς) εὐσ(εβή)ς Β(ουλγαρία)ς.

Two busts facing. On the left, Petăr, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



This type of seals is very similar to another group classified in I. Jordanov's *Corpus*.<sup>25</sup> The difference is most noticeable in the content of the inscription. Although these molybdebulls depict the royal couple, they have been incorrectly identified as seals of "Petăr and Maria, pious basileis".<sup>26</sup> The inscription on the reverse side clearly identifies the seal and indicates to whom it belongs. As pointed out by A. Nikolov the image rather sought to elicit propaganda effect, aiming to demonstrate the legitimacy of the Bulgarian ruler's title achieved through the marriage with the Byzantine princess.<sup>27</sup> The inscription could be read also as: Πέτρος βασι(λ)εὺς Β(ουλγαρία)ς. At the same time, relying on the traditional reading, it could be reproduced as follows: Πέτρος βασι(λεὺς) εὐσ(ε)β(ή)ς. However, if the form Β(ουλγαρία)ς is to be seen as more reliable, then this type of seals introduce in sigillography for the first time a formula which combines the title βασιλεύς and territorial name Βουλγαρίας.<sup>28</sup>

14. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 82, Lot 1191; sold on September 16, 2009 for \$180, at initial price of \$300. *W* 18.37 g. *SP* not well-centered; with damaged surface and half-effaced. *T* unknown.

*Obv* Arched inscription: +Ih[ΣΥC]X [RISTYC\*]

Ih̄sus Xristus.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: [ΠΕΤΡΟCΡΑ]CΙΛΕΥCRC

Πέτρος βασιλ(εὺς) εὐσ(εβή)ς Β(ουλγαρία)ς.

<sup>25</sup> И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корпус*, III.3Ав, 60–63.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корпус*, 60.

<sup>27</sup> А. НИКОЛОВ, *Политическа мисъл в ранносредновековна България (средата на IX–края на X век)*, София 2006, 239.

<sup>28</sup> See however comment to no. 8.



Two busts facing. On the left, Petär, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



Obvious striving for realistic individualization of images could be noticed in this and the following seals of tsar Petär. It is remarkable that there is letter Λ engraved on this type of seals, missing in the previously discussed inscriptions of the tsar Petär's seals. The content of the inscription gives grounds to read it: Πέτρος βασιλεὺς Β(ουλγαρία)ς. In fact, if BC (instead of HC) stands at the end of the inscription on the seals from the first group, then it could be assumed that the text of the three (sub)groups is identical, but shortened in a different manner: Πέτρος βασιλεὺς Βουλγαρίας. That, of course, seems very likely if we consider the titles of tsar Petär recorded in some Byzantine sources.<sup>29</sup>

15. *ID* Ref. No. 203, Lot 512; sold for \$361, at initial price of \$100. *D* 21 mm. *W* 14.48 g. *SP* not well-centered; deformed at one end; fairly well preserved. *T* unknown.

*Obv* Arched inscription: [+ΙΗΣΥΣ]Χ RΙΣΤΥΣ\*

Ιησους Χριστος.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: [ΠΕΤΡΟ]CRACIAE[VCRC]

Two busts facing. On the left, Petär, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



This exemplar is the same type as no. 14.

<sup>29</sup> See Т. СЛАВОВА, *Владетел и администрация*, 257.

16. *ID* Ref. No. 207, Lot 475; sold for \$265, at initial price of \$100. *D* 21 mm. *W* 8.72 g. *SP* well-centered, but not intact; well preserved relief. *Т* И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корнус*, III.3А6.

*Obv* Arched inscription: [+I]h[SЧ XR]IS[TC]S\*

Iηsu(s) Xristus.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: ΠΕ[ΤΑ]Ω[.]Ρ[.]ΡΙΜΡΙΑΤ[ΑΡ]

Two busts facing. On the left, Petâr, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



The reading suggested here comes with a high level of uncertainty, since the submitted photos do not provide a possibility for a much higher precision. For that reason alone no attempt is made to interpret the inscription. In previous research forms of reading that differ significantly from the one suggested above have been published, but they are probably inaccurate. Cf.: ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΜΑΡ ΕΝ ΧΩΑΝΒ = Πέτρος (καὶ) Μαρ(ία) ἐν Χ(ριστ)ῶ αὐ(τοκράτορες) Β(ουλγάρων);<sup>30</sup> Πέτρος (καὶ) Μαρ(ία) ἐν Χ(ριστ)ῶ αὐ(γουστοί) β(ασιλείς);<sup>31</sup> +ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΜΑΡΙ Ν ΧΩ ΑΤΒ = Πέτρος (καὶ) Μαρί(α ἐ)ν Χ(ριστ)ῶ α(ὐ)τ(οκράτορες) Β(ουλγάρων)/Πέτρος (καὶ) Μαρί(α ἐ)ν Χ(ριστ)ῶ α(ὐ)γ(ουστοί) β(ασιλείς).<sup>32</sup> Without comparison of all known seals of this type, the content of the inscription remains unclear.

17. *ID* Ref. No. Triton XI, Lot 1215; sold on January 7, 2008, for a \$650, at initial price of \$1000; comes from the collection of Robert E. Hecht. *D* 25 mm. *W* 16.14 g. *SP* well-centered; fairly well preserved, although damaged where the image of the tsar is; covered with gray-brown patina. *Т* И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корнус*, III.3А6.

*Obv* Arched inscription: +IhSЧX [RI]SЧS\*

<sup>30</sup> Т. ГЕРАСИМОВ, Български и византийски печати от Преслав, *Преслав* 2 (1976) 130.

<sup>31</sup> J. SHEPARD, *A marriage too far?*, 142.

<sup>32</sup> И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корнус*, 59. For critical view on the reading βασιλείς and αὐτοκράτορες regarding the seals of Petâr, see И. БОЖИЛОВ–В. ГЮЗЕЛЕВ, *История на средновековна България VII–XIV век* (История на България в три тома I), София 1999, 276.

Ιησu(s) Χρισtu(s).

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross behind his head, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: ΠΕΤΑΩ[.Ρ.]ΡΙΜΡΗΛΤΑΡ<sup>33</sup>

Two busts facing. On the left, Petär, bearded, wearing a divitision, a chlamys, a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; on the right, Maria/Eirene Lekapena, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; they hold a globus cruciger surmounted by a long patriarchal cross between them. Single border of dots.

*Dat* 927–c. 955.



18. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 94, Lot 1641; sold on September 18, 2013, for \$360, at initial price of \$500; comes from an American collection. *D* 22 mm. *W* 7,41 g. *SP* not well-centered; fairly well preserved; damaged image of Jesus Christ; covered with brown patina. Τ.Ι. ΨΟΡΔΑΝΟΒ, *Κορυς*, III.3Ба.

*Obv* Horizontal inscription: ΙC ΧC

Ι(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς.

Bust of Christ Pantokrator facing, bearded, with a cross nimbus, wearing a chiton and a himation; he raises his right hand in benediction and holds a Gospel book in the left. Single border of dots.

*Rev* Arched inscription: ΠΕΤΡΟC ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC

Πέτροc βασιλεὺc.

Bust of Petär facing, bearded, wearing a divitision, a loros, and a stemma with a cross and pendoulia; he holds in his right hand a globus cruciger. Single border of dots.

*Dat* c. 956–969.



<sup>33</sup> See comment to no. 16 relating to the identical type of seals.

19. *ID* Ref. No. CNG 94, Lot 1642; sold on September 18, 2013, for \$240, at initial price of \$300; comes from an American collection. *D* 27 mm. *W* 11.60 g. *SP* not well-centered; fairly well preserved; covered with gray and brown patina. *T* unknown.

*Obv* Inscription: (?).

Bust of the Virgin Blachernitissa facing, nimbate, with a star on her forehead, wearing a chiton and a maphorion; on her breast, a medallion of the infant Christ facing, with a cross nimbus. Double (?) border of dots.

*Rev* Circular inscription: (...) [BOV] ΛΓΑΡ(...)

Lion in heraldic posture facing, it stands with left foreleg raised. Double border of dots.

*Dat* c. 956–969.



According to data provided by the auction, on the obverse side of the seal traces of the sigla: [M]P [ΘV] could be seen. The fragment of the inscription on the reverse side could be deciphered as *Βουλγαρίας*. Deciphering it as *Βουλγάρων* is also possible but less probable. If it will be confirmed that it is really a seal of a Bulgarian ruler, it will be the only one with a heraldic symbol, at least for the present. Of course, the dating as well as any reference of the seal to tsar Petăr cannot be conclusive as they only rely on the iconographic features of the exemplar. It is also possible that the seal belonged to some of tsar Petăr's successors. Another acceptable hypothesis is that the seal was used by a representative of the Byzantine administration of the theme of Bulgaria. It is striking that, instead of the image of Christ Pantocrator, traditional for the obverse of rulers' seals, the image of the Virgin Blachernitissa is engraved, which in this form is commonly found on sigillographic monuments from the 10th–12th centuries. A similar iconographic theme in Bulgarian milieu is only found on the type of seals of Boris as a monk and archon and on some of the so-called anonymous seals of Symeon. The image of the lion on the reverse is another striking difference from the practice rulers' images to be engraved on royal seals. Actually images of animals (especially lions) on seals are fairly rare in the Byzantine tradition, which was followed in modeling the Bulgarian monuments of this type. The question who this seal belonged to will have its conclusive answer only when an exemplar with a completely preserved inscription is found. At this stage, the fragments of the inscription, the image of the lion, the stylistic similarity with some seals of tsar Petăr,<sup>34</sup> and

<sup>34</sup> Cf. И. ЙОРДАНОВ, *Корпус*, III.3Аб, III.3Ба.

not least the high artistic qualities of the molybdobull associate it most convincingly with the Bulgarian royal court.

Medieval Bulgarian seals have proven to be important sources for the titlature, institutions, insignia and acclamations in the Bulgarian tsardom. Unfortunately, many of the previously known seals are in poor condition, which creates a number of difficulties in their interpretation. It might be added that seals have been found, with content of the inscriptions and iconography not yet fully established, therefore it is essential to publish all known items, whether kept in museums or in private collections. Moreover molybdobulls presented here give rise to new possible reconstructions, but they can be verified only through a direct contact with the artifacts found so far.