

## The Byzantine Imperial Power and Its Sigillographic Records: Focused on the Images of the Cross during the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries

인장에 기록된 동로마-비잔티움 제국 황제권의 표상:  
8세기-10세기 십자가 이미지와 텍스트를 중심으로

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### Introduction

This article is aimed to examine the images of the Cross recorded on the Byzantine seals used by the imperial and aristocratic personage. This study will highlight the significance of the Cross in the Byzantine and European archival culture. The observations of the cross' images on the coins will be added as a comparative research in the same time.

Having triumphed under the reign of the Emperor Constantine I the Great (r. 305-337), the Christianity became the second foundation of the Byzantine Empire over the Roman heritage. The Cross by which the first Christian Emperor had the victory over his rival Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312 became the *labarum*, symbol of the victory of Jesus Christ.<sup>1)</sup> From then, this Christogram was regarded as the imperial victory and represented by its formula, “*ἐν τούτῳ νικᾷ (in hoc signo vinces)*” or “*Ἰησοῦς Χριστός νικᾷ*” on the imperial documents of the fourth century. While the triumphal formula remained in use even after the fifth century, the *labarum* was replaced by the different types of the cross.<sup>2)</sup>

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1) On the Triumph of Christianity in late Roman Empire, 김덕수, 『그리스와 로마: 지중해의 라이벌 (Greece and Rome: Rivals of Ancient Mediterranean Civilization)』, (살림 2004), p. 81-93; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*: 박창훈(역), 『3천년 기독교역사: 고대사』, (CLC, 2013), pp. 307-364; On the Emperor Constantine I and Christianity, see Friz Heikelheim and C. A. Yeo, *A History of the Roman People*: 김덕수 (역), 『로마사』, (현대지성사, 1999), pp.837-859.

2) On the Roman origins of Imperial representations on the coinage, see Friz Heikelheim and C. A. Yeo, *A History of the Roman People*: 김덕수(역), 『로마사』, pp. 593-595, 769-770; 김덕수, 『아우구스투스의 원수정 : 로마 공화정에서 제정으로』, (도서출판 길, 2014), pp. 45, 81,140,144, 211; Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis, A.D. 235-337* : 김창성(역), 『로마제국의 위기 : 235-337, 로마정부의 대응』, (한길사, 2012), pp.75-106 ; As for the Byzantine Imperial



Figure 1 : The Ticinum silver medallion for the Decennalia of the Emperor Constantine I (issued in 315), depicting the imperial power with a Christogram (Labarum) badge on his helmet and a cross sceptre in his left hand on the obverse, addressing his horse and soldiers on the reverse.<sup>3)</sup>

By the way, to what extent the Constantinian cross and its triumphal formula were documented in the Byzantine literary sources? It is easy to conclude that there are no historical records to be drawn from the images of the cross because some historians suppose that it was frequently written just as a banal religious expression in the medieval Christianity. A more detailed analysis shows that these symbolic signs were rarely mentioned in the literature after the seventh century. Nevertheless, we can find the examples in the time of the Palaeologus or some sources after the fall of Byzantine Empire and some sources were found in the regions which later became independent such as Serbia.<sup>4)</sup>

On the other hand, we can find different types of the cross especially on the official documents such as imperial acts, seals and coins or sometimes on the inscriptions written on behalf of the sovereign during the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. These symbolic signs were also inscribed or described in the churches constructed personally by the

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representations and its influence on medieval European visual Arts, see André Gravar, *L'empereur dans l'Art Byzantin: Recherches sur l'Art officiel de l'Empire Romain d'Orient* (Paris, 1936), pp.31-39, p.239; Idem, *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins* (Princeton University Press, 1968), pp.165ff; Umberto Eco (ed), *Il Medioevo: 『중세』*, 차용구·박승찬(감수), 김효정·최병진·윤종태(역), (2015, 시공사), vol.I, pp.680-808; vol.II, pp.604-809.

<sup>3)</sup> P.M Bruun, *The Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol. VII, Constantine and Licinius A.D. 313 - 337* [RIC VII], (London, 1966). p.364, no. 36; the source of the medallion: Munich, Staatliche Münzsammlung.

<sup>4)</sup> G. Babič, *Les croix à cryptogrammes, peintes dans les églises serbes des XIIIe et XIVe siècles, Byzance et les Slaves Mélanges Dujčev*, (Paris, 1979).

emperors or imperial dignitaries in the majority of the cases. This observation invites us to raise two questions: to what extent the cross and its visual images reflect the historicity, for example, the political intentions and mentality of those who adopted it? Then can we determine a specific social group that was particularly dedicated to the worship of the Cross?

### The Cross recorded on the Imperial Seals and Coins



Figure 2 : Miliaresion (silver coin) of the Emperor Leo III (issued in around 740)

**Obv.** The Cross potent set on the three steps/ the inscription of “Ihsus Xristos Nika” along the circumference,

**Rev.** The Inscription of five lines: “Leon kai Constantinos ek Theou Basilis (emperors Leo and Constantine chosen by God)”<sup>5)</sup>

This is the first silver coin (*miliaresion/miliarensis*) bearing a cross with the triumphal formula. It was created by the Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (r. 717-741), who was the initiator of Iconoclasm.<sup>6)</sup> It is notable that the imperial cross was engraved

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<sup>5)</sup> P. Grierson (Ed), *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* vol. 3: Leo III to Necephorus III (717-1081), (Washington D.C., 1973) [DOC, III], no.22-23.

<sup>6)</sup> The *miliaresion* was issued for the first time during the joint reign of the Emperor Leo III and his son Constantine V (741-775). It is characteristic to have the triumphal cross in place of the imperial portrait or the triumphal cross in which the imperial portrait was incorporated. According to Cecile Morrisson, the *miliaresion* would have been created in response to the

instead of imperial portrait on the silver coin. Leo III was the emperor who faced with the Muslims' last assault to Constantinople in 718 and he repelled successfully the enemy even though it was very dangerous to the point of threatening the Empire's survival. Thus it is evident that the cross and its triumphal formula symbolize the imperial victory against the Islam. The triumph of Christian armies against the Islam in 718 is well attested by an inscription on the city Walls of Constantinople, dated 740-741.<sup>7)</sup> Furthermore it could be confirmed by another victory of Akroinon in the Anatolic theme in 740.

It is important to note that the emperor Leo III came from a town on the eastern border of the Empire (Germanicee: actually Marash in Turkey). He held post of strategos in Anatolic theme on the strength of his army's support before ascending the throne in 718. It was said that Anatolic soldiers also supported fervently his son Constantine V in Amorion, the fortress located in the same military circumscription. It is interesting to note that the iconoclastic emperor Leo IV (r. 813-820) took charge of the strategos of Anatolic theme. Furthermore the succeeding emperor Michel II (r. 820-829) who was the Amorian dynasty's founder, also came from the same military circumscription in Asia Minor.<sup>8)</sup>

During the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Muslim's attacks had significantly declined, a new imperial appellation of "*philochristos despotes*" (the Emperor loving Jesus Christ) appeared exclusively on the imperial seals. The invocation text "*Insus Xris|tus nica (*Jesus Christ, Victorious*)*" was **particularly** represented on the seals of the emperor Leo VI.<sup>9)</sup>

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*dirham* issued by the calif Abd-al-Malik. On this point, see Cecile Morrisson, *Catalogue des monnaies byzantines de la Bibliothèque Nationale, vol. I: D'Anastase I à Justinien II (491-711); vol.I I: De Philippicus à Alexis III (711-1204)*, (Paris, 1970), p.450.

7) A. Frolow, IC|XC|NI|KA, *ByzSl.* XVII, (1956), p.16.

8) The restauration of the Icons in 843 had no consequence in the dynastic evolution. So it didn't result from modifying the types of coins. In fact, the imperial monetary policy was not an issue of the Iconoclasm. On this point, see A. Gravar, *L'iconoclisme byzantin. Le dossier archéologique*, (Paris, 1957), p.127.

9) Under the Macedonian emperors, the Christian imagery began to blossom, finally freed from Iconoclasm. Basil I's (867-886) coins and seals depicted Jesus, seated on a throne, while the emperor and imperial family members remain secondary on the reverse (DOC III. 2: 1 and DOS VI, no.50.1). With the portrait of Jesus Christ on the obverse thoroughly entrenched into the coinage, Leo VI (886-912) expanded the religious representations for the first time to the saints, starting with the Virgin Mary(DOC III. 2:6.2 and DOS VI, no. 53-54). During the same



Figure 3 : the seal of the emperors LEO VI and ALEXANDROS (Issued in 886-912), depicting the victory of Christ.

- Obv.** The upper body representation of Christ, lightly bearded, wearing a tunic and himation. He raises his right hand in blessing and holds in his left hand a book with a cover decorated with five pellets. He has a cross behind his head. Circular inscription: *Ihsus Xri[s]tus Nica*.
- Rev.** Two upper body figures: at left, Leo VI, bearded, wearing a crown with a cross and a loros; at right, Alexander, more diminutive than Leo and wearing a crown surmounted by a cross and a chlamys pinned with a fibula on his right shoulder. They hold between them a labarum ornamented with an X in the center and streamers. Circular inscription: *Leon (καί) ΑΙ [exan (dros)] Aug (usti).*<sup>10)</sup>

We know that the imperial seals had more freedom to modify designs than the coins had. Therefore it seems that Leo VI had a deliberate choice to add the invocation text “Jesus Christ, Victorious” on his seal.<sup>11)</sup> Leo VI (r. 886-912) was the *basileus* who had never led the army in the military campaigns but he was concerned about the defense of the eastern frontiers of the Empire. During the same period, **the**

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period, the imperial appellation of *philochristos despotēs* appears almost exclusively on the imperial seals. It is evident that **these sigillographic records worked for the dual purpose of both paying homage to the religious icons and raising up the imperial power to that level.**

<sup>10)</sup> G. Zacos and A. Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals* vol I, (Basel, 1972), n.60; J. Nesbitt, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art: Emperors and Patriarch of Constantinople*, vol. 6 [DOSeals 6], no.53.1; the collection of Zacos (BnF), no.5031.

<sup>11)</sup> The invocation text “*Ihsus Xhristos Nika*” was previously engraved on the seal of the emperor Michel II who was related the rebellion of Thomas the Slave. It seems likely that he needed the divine protection for the victory. On his seal, see W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich I, Kaiserhof*, I (Wien, 1978), no.17.

**imperial defense** was under the influence of Nikephoros Phokas the Elder. He was a grand general of Cappadocia and the grandfather of future emperor Nikephoros II Phokas.<sup>12)</sup> In the *Taktika*, a large handbook of the military strategy and tactics for land and naval warfare compiled by Leo VI in ca. 905, it is described that the emperor appreciated Nikephoros Phokas's military abilities as much as to call him "my general". By the way, we can assume from the emperor's military writing why he engraved the cross images on his seal. In the same texts, he tried to explain why the Muslims had kept attacking the Empire almost annually. According to his thought, the Arabs could have benefited from military and psychological advantage over "Christian people" thanks to the weapon of *Jihad*. They could mobilize many soldiers attracted by the booties and the assurance that they would go to paradise if they die in battle.<sup>13)</sup> As a viable challenge, it seems likely that Leo VI's cross and triumphal formula on the seal served to **encourage the soldiers** fighting on behalf of the Christian people and to **promote the liturgical service** commemorating the war dead.

If so, where did the imperial idea on the Christian *Jihad* come from? It does not seem to be the imperial entourage at court who inspired such an idea. In fact, we know very well that the Byzantine Orthodox Church, even though recognizing the concept of the *Just War*, condemned all bloodshed and demanded the penitence of the soldiers who had killed the enemy. It is reasonable to think that the concept of the Christian *Jihad* came from the military generals who frequented the imperial court and had much influence on the emperor Leo VI in his own writing *Taktika*. Nikephoros Phokas the Elder, we mentioned above, was at the forefront among these generals. He was the most representative of the Cappadocian aristocracy who had countered Muslim's attacks during the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>14)</sup>

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<sup>12)</sup> Here, Cappadocia refers to the geographical name. It is the hilly and mountainous region of the central Asia Minor stretching from the Pontic Mountains to the Taurus and from the Salt Lake to the Euphrates; on the career of Nikephoros Phokas the Elder under the reign of Leo VI, see J.-C. Cheynet, "Les Phocas", in G. Dagron-H. Mihaescu (Ed), *Le traité sur la guérilla de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas* [J.-C. Cheynet, *Phocas*] (Paris, CNRS, 1985), pp.291-296.

<sup>13)</sup> On the attempt of the emperor Leo VI to promote a Christian Holy War, see G. Dagron, "Byzance et le modèle islamique au Xème siècle. À propos des Constitutions tactiques de l'empereur Léon VI", *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (Paris, 1983), p.219-243.

<sup>14)</sup> The first member of the Phokas family playing an important role was known as a companion of the emperor Basil I. It seems that this lineage was recently found. But there were the other families

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Moreover, the succeeding Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (r. 913-959) remained in the same thought as his father Leo VI because he had to get rid of his political rival Romanos Lekapenos with the support of the Phokas family. It is well known that the famous relic of the True Cross was ordered by Constantin VII who wanted to glorify his own political and military achievements. The dedicatory inscription discouraged the haughtiness of the Barbarians, reminding that the Cross was the *nikopoios* (source of the victory).<sup>15)</sup>

The Emperor Constantine VII relied on the Eastern army and its leader was Bardas Phokas (879-969), the second son of Nikephoros Phokas the Elder, whose son became the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas.<sup>16)</sup> Constantine VII encouraged the soldiers to fight against the famous Sayf at-Daula, emir of Aleppo, risking their lives on behalf of Christians and in the name of Christ. He ensured that the faith of the Cross will protect them in battles<sup>17)</sup>. At the moment of the clash in battles, the troops always rushed toward the enemy shouting out "*We shall conquer through the Cross*". An official inscription commemorating the repair of Antalya city walls, dated 915-916, is particularly interesting because it emphasizes this same concern for **the defence of Christianity**: "*the new wall will save the city for the glory of Christ, for the brilliance of the Romans and for the decline of the Arabs*".<sup>18)</sup> At that times, Antalian sailors were

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of Asia Minor such as the Melissenoi whose members were known from the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>15)</sup> This precious relic of the True Cross was conserved in the famous reliquary so called "Limburg staurotheke". This reliquary was made under the patronage of Basil Parakoimomenos in 968-985. It was taken away by a Latin soldier during the occupation of Constantinople by the fourth Crusaders in 1204 and it is now conserved at the cathedral Museum of Limburg in Germany. The dedicatory inscription on the Limburg staurotheke shows also the Byzantine imperial possession of the True Cross and the power associated with it; On the role of the Emperor Constantine VII as new Constantine I, see A. Schminck, "In hoc signo vinces"-Aspects du "césaropapisme" à l'époque de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, *Constantin VII et son temps* (Athene, 1989), p.103-116; On the Limburg staurotheke and his cultural influence, Cutler, A. and Spieser, J.-M., *Byzance médiévale, 700-1204*, (Paris, 1996), p.163-166, fig. 124 et 125; Klein, H. A., *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz: die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, (Wiesbaden, 2004), p. 105-112 (pl.19a-19h).

<sup>16)</sup> On the career of the Bardas Phokas under the reign of Constantin II, see J.-C. Cheynet, *les Phocas*, pp. 297-299.

<sup>17)</sup> H. Ahrweiler, "Un discours inédit de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète", *Travaux et Mémoire*, vol. II, (1967), p. 398.

<sup>18)</sup> H. Grégoire, *Recueil des Inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure*, (Paris, 1922), no.303. The second inscription of private order in Antalya (no.306), dated the 11<sup>th</sup> century, contains the invocation to the victory of Christ. This inscription implies that the same city's inhabitants remained

famous for the operations against Muslim ships. They shared their booty with the emperor who required tax on the sale of prisoners as well as of goods and ships.<sup>19)</sup>



Figure 4: Miliarion (931-944) of the emperor ROMANOS I LEKAPENOS and CONSTANTINOS VII (r. 920-944), representing the Victory of Christ.<sup>20)</sup>

**Obv.** The Cross potent seated on the three steps, oval medallion at the centre of the cross in which the imperial portrait of Romain I is placed with crowned and facing bust; his name RIII- MA is engraved across the field, pelleted cross decorated below/the circular inscription at circumference: hS4S XRI-Sr4S nICA.

**Rev.** The inscription of five line, texting the names of Romain I and his co-emperors, Constantine VII and Stephen and Constantine: +ROmAnO'/COmStAnr'/SrCFAnOS/CC ConStA'/Cn XIII B' R'; above and below, pelleted cross with wedge to left and right.

When the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969), grandson of Nikephoros the Elder, came to power, he tried to glorify the soldiers died in combat against the Muslims and wanted to honour them on par with the martyrs.<sup>21)</sup> This state of mind can be read also on the wall paints conserved in Cappadocian churches showing frequently “the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste” and “the Five Martyrs of Persia”. The first symbolizes the soldiers having acceded to status of martyr whose spirit is compatible with that of

known to what this text signifies.

<sup>19)</sup> On the texte of Ibn Hauqal, see A. Vasiliev-M. Canard, *Byzance et les Arabes, tome II, La dynastie macédonienne* (867-959): Extraits des sources arabes (Bruxelles, 1950), p.414.

<sup>20)</sup> P. Grierson (Ed), *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* vol. III, no.20.1-16.

<sup>21)</sup> On the career of Nikephoros II Phokas, see J.-C. Cheynet, *les Phocas*, pp.299-301.

soldier. As for the latter, they evoke the resistance to the eastern enemies because the Byzantines regarded the Arabs as the Turks or successors of the Persians. Even a few of byzantine authors used to speak of the Turkish or the Persians instead of the Arabs in their writings. The purpose of Nikephoros II Phokas didn't succeed ultimately because of the opposition of the civil aristocracy and the Church in Constantinople. Nevertheless, the Cross and its triumphal formula on his silver coin demonstrate such a religious mentality he had previously.



Figure 5 Miliaresion of the Emperor NIKEPHOROS II PHOKAS (r. 963-969), representing the Victory of Christ

**Obv.** The Cross crosslet set on Globus above two steps; the medallion of four lobes at center in which the imperial portrait of Nikephoros II is placed with facing bust and short beard, wearing crown and loros / the circular inscription : + IhSUS XRISTUS NICA/ the triple border ornamented with eight equally spaced globules.

**Rev.** the inscription of five lines: + NICHFOR EN XW AVTOCRATOR EVSEB' bASILEVS RWMAIWN/the cross formed of dots above and below inscription/the triple border ornamented with eight equally spaced globules.<sup>22)</sup>

<sup>22)</sup> P. Grierson (Ed), *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. III, no.6.



Figure 6 : Miliaresion of the Emperor JOHN I TZIMISKES (r. 969-976), symbolizing the Victory of Christ.

**Obv.** The Cross and the four crosslet set on Globus above two steps/a circular medallion at center of **the Cross** in which a crowned facing portrait of the emperor John I Tzimiskes is placed/The circular inscription at circumference : ± IHSUS XRISTUS NICA.

**Rev.** The inscription of five lines: the name and title of the emperor.<sup>23)</sup>

John I Tzimiskes (r. 969-976) was the emperor who succeeded Nikephoros II Phokas. It is well known that he made efforts to forge the Byzantine military superiority in the Middle East. Leading the imperial Army to the Palestine, he approached even to Jerusalem. But he didn't take the risk of attacking the Holy City because his Army was too far from the military supplying base. In this occasion, Ashot III, the Armenian prince provided John Tzimiskes with his soldiers in repaying the military support that the emperor had given to him before. His military support served to help glorifying the march of the Christian Army to Jerusalem. In this point of view, it seems that the cross images on his silver coin announced the exaltation of the first Crusaders at the sight of this Holy City, even though the concept of Crusade was quite foreign to the Byzantine Empire.<sup>24)</sup>

<sup>23)</sup> P. Grierson (Ed), *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. III, no.7b.1-6.

<sup>24)</sup> On the military campaigns of John Tzimiskes in Orient during his reign of 972-975, see Yahya d'Antioche II, pp. 353-354, pp. 368-369; Matthieu d'Edesse, pp.28-33. Cf. P.E.Walker, The "Crusade" of John Tzimiskes in the Light of New Arabic Evidence, *Byzantion*, vol.47, (1977), p. 301-327.

On the death of John Tzimiskes in 976, the succeeding emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII, who were too young for their own ruling, were placed under the guardianship of their uncle Basil parakoimomenos. However, the Anatolian aristocracy's influence including the Phokas family remained strong until the first years of the young emperors' reign. It was only after the revolt of Bardas Phokas in 989 that the predominance of Anatolian aristocracy ceased at the imperial court. Thus it seems that the cross images and its unique triumphal formula on the seals & coins of the Macedonian emperors imply the political alliance with the Anatolian aristocracy. The common formula on both seals & coins of the Macedonian dynasty and the Anatolian aristocracy represent the worship of the cross as the **authentical symbolic empowerment**. The marriage-related-emperors such as Nikephoros II Phokas and John I Tzimiskes stand for the Anatolian aristocracy while the emperors such as Leo VI and Constantine VII represent the Macedonian dynasty.

## The Cross recorded on the Aristocratic Seals

As well known, the silver coins (*miliaresion/miliarensis*) constituted one of the imperial instruments of propaganda in the Roman and Byzantine Empire. They were even more aimed at the local population while the gold coins were widely circulated outside the borders of the Empire. The *miliaresion* appearing at the time of the emperor Leo III ceased to show the invocation to the victory of Christ, precisely in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century when the influence of the Anatolian aristocracy was considerably reduced. The last issue of this type of *miliaresion* was dated to 977.<sup>25)</sup>

If so, in which way the imperial worship of the Cross had influenced on the Anatolian aristocracy during the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries? We need to find out additional clues manifesting the dedication of the Anatolian aristocracy to the cult of the Cross.

Many historians who had studied Cappadocian churches and their iconography tried to analyse the importance of the cross images from the Cappadocian aristocracy's point of view.<sup>26)</sup> But it had been very difficult to find historical documentations from

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<sup>25)</sup> P. Grierson (Ed), *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* vol. 3, p. 627.17.

the frescos and inscriptions in these monuments because of their bad conservation conditions. Now, some recent studies could somehow analyze the frescos and inscriptions from around 150 churches above and beyond the previous studies<sup>27)</sup>. The five churches decorated the cross image with the inscription “**ἸΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΝΙΚΑ**” (Jesus Christ Victorious). Four churches among them are located in and around Çavuşin and Göreme, the center of the Phokas family’s influence zone: the church no.4 of Zelve, church of Haçlı Kilise and church of Akköy<sup>28)</sup> contain the cross image in the apse. The fourth church is situated also in Zelve having the cross out of the apse<sup>29)</sup>. The fifth church with the cross in the apse is located in Hasan Dağı, always in Cappadocia but near Aksaray.<sup>30)</sup> All these five monuments could date to the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century or to the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and therefore, it would be correspondent to the reign of the first emperors of the Macedonian dynasty.<sup>31)</sup> The number of five cases in a small area may only evoke a doubt on the historical importance. But we can claim its significance in relation to what we know from other provinces, that is, little evidence on the cross in other provinces. The absence of the compilations of inscriptions on the medieval byzantine period prohibits any statistical comparison between the different provinces in the Empire. Even though, there are some surveys in well-documented European provinces such as the Peloponnese, there is no example of the relevant citation<sup>32)</sup>. Thus, it is very likely that the presence of the

26) On the the most complete study, see N. Thierry, Le cult de la croix dans l’empire byzantin du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle au Xe siècle dans ses rapports avec la guerre contre l’infidèle. Nouveaux témoignages archéologiques, *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* I (1981), pp. 205-228.

27) Jolivet-Levy, *Églises de Cappadoce* (Paris, 2001).

28) The church so called Grand Pigeonnier in Çavushin contains the portraits of the Phokas family members, including Nikephoros II Phocas and his wife Theophano. On this point, see, N.Thierry, Une image du triomphe impérial dans une église de Cappadoce, *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1985), p.28-35. The patron of the "new Church of Tokali in Göreme would have belonged to the Phokas family, see N. Thierry, La peinture de Cappadoce au Xe siècle. Recherches sur les commanditaires de la Nouvelle Église de Tokali et d’autres monuments, *Constantin VII Porphyrogénète et son temps* (Athenes, 1989), p.217-246.

29) G. de Jerphanion, *Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce Une nouvelle province de l’art byzantin* (Paris, 1925-1942), vol. I, p.574.

30) Jolivet-Levy, *Églises de Cappadoce*, p.7, 51, 148.

31) The date of some churches is still uncertain. In fact, the big crosses extending their arms on the vaults and ceilings still are decorated in some churches; see A. Wharton-Epstein, The “Iconoclast” Churches of Cappadocia, in *Iconoclasm. IX symposium of Byzantine Studies*, A. Bryer and J. Herrin (ed.), (Birmingham, 1977), p.103-111.

32) D. Feissel, A. Philippidis-Braat, Inventaire en vue d’un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. III. Inscriptions du Péloponnèse (à l’exception de Mistra), *Travaux et Mémoire*, vol. 9 (1985), p.267-395.

five cross images and inscriptions in Cappadocia reveals a preference. These inscriptions are preserved in the region where the Phokas family would have been very accustomed to the cult of the Cross.

We turn finally to sigillographic archives that have been much neglected by the immense literature on Iconoclasm. To what extent did the aristocratic seals show the same mentality marked on the imperial seals & coins during the same period? Indeed, a motif called the **“cruciform monogram”** predominated on the obverse of aristocratic seals during the Iconoclastic period. The name itself indicates clearly that this representation evokes the faith of the Cross as it does by its form. Therefore, it is not surprising that the iconoclasts very attached to the worship of the Cross might have used this motif exclusively. “The triumph of the Icons” in 843 caused the return of the saints and especially of the Virgin on the right side of the seals, but they remained in minority. Indeed, from the mid 9<sup>th</sup> century until the mid next century, the **“patriarcal cross”** became the predominant motif, acceptable both to the iconoduly and those who would possibly have remained supporters of Iconoclasm. Everyone knows that this time marks the preponderance of the Anatolian aristocracy, especially within the army. As we have already note above, this predilection for the “patriarcal cross” resides in the fact that the Anatolian aristocracy had been attached to the cult of the Cross. At the same time, we have also a small number of seals who conserved the **“cruciform monogram”**, characteristics for the previous period, deliberately chosen by the lead seal owners. To understand the reason why they conserved this motif in detail, we must identify the seal owners. The task is not be easy because the family names are still rarely mentioned on the seals of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. To accomplish this research, the conditions below are to be fulfilled to get the discrimination capacity: The first-names of the seal owners should not be too common to avoid ambiguity; the office titles or the honorary titles should be very high and preferably they should be conferred on a very small number of people; the seal owners should be mentioned in other literary sources in order to confirm their social identities in a geographical context.

As result, we can find a dozen of the seals carrying the types of the cruciform monograms on them and whose owners were well identified in the literary sources.

**(1) BARDAS, patrikios and stratege of Anatolic Theme (first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century) 33)**

**Obv.** Cruciform invocative monogram of ΘΚ Ε ΡΩ [Η] Ε Ι and Four syllable words in four each quarter of the cruciform: Τω-Ϟω-Δ -Λω/each one decorated with star like sign [Θε (οτό) κε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλω: Saint Mother, help your servant]

**Rev.** the Inscription of five lines beginning with small cross:

+ΡΑΡΔΑ | ΠΑΤΡΙΚΙΟ | ΣΤΡΑΤΙΓ | ΤΟΝΑΝΑΤ | ΩΛΙΚΩ: Βάρδα πατρικίφ (καί) στρατιγ (ῶ) τῶν Ἀνατολικῶ (ν)/Bardas patrikios and strategos of Anatolic theme.

\* Bardas Phocas (879-969) is known as the second son of Nikephoros Phocas the Elder and the father of the Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas.<sup>34)</sup>

**(2) LEON, magistros and domestikos of the Scholes of West (961-963)<sup>35)</sup>**

**Obv.** Cruciform invocative monogram of ΚΥΡΙΕ ΡΟΙΘΕΙ; four syllable words in the four quarters of cruciform of Τω-Ϟω-Δ.-Λω [Κύριε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλω] (lord, help your servant)

**Rev.** The inscription of five lines beginning with star like sign:

ΛΕΟΝ | .ΙΜΑΓΙΣΤΡ | .ΣΔΟΜΕΤΤ | ΤΟΝϞΧΟ. | . ΤΗϞΔΥ. | ΕωϞ [+ Λέον[τ]ι μαγίσρ[φ] (καί) δομερτ (ικω) τῶν σχο [λῶ (ν) τῆς Δύ[σ]εως.] (Leo, magistros and general of the imperial army of West)

\* Leo was identified to be the second son of Bardas Phokas and brother of the Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas. He was also nominated to the commander-in-chief of the Imperial western Army in around 961-963.<sup>36)</sup>

**(3) NIKETAS, imperial ostiarios and manager of the Domains of Leo, kuropalates and logothetes of the Dromos (963-969)<sup>37)</sup>**

**Obv.** Cruciform invocative monogram of ΘΚ Ε ΡΩ ΘΕ; four syllable words in the four quarter of cruciform:

33) G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol. II [Zacos II], (Bern, 1985), no.1062.

34) On the career of Bardas Phokas, see J.-C. Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, pp.297-299

35) G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seal*, vol. II, (Bern, 1985), no. 1077.

36) On the career of Leo, see J.-C. Cheynet, *Les Phocas*, pp. 301-303.

37) G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol. II (Bern, 1985), no.1081.

NIK-TAR-OCT-IAP [Θε (στό) κε βωήθει Νικήτα Βασιλικῶ ὄστιαρίῳ: Saint Mother, help Niketas, imperial orstiaris)]

**Rev.** the Inscription of five lines beginning with small cross: + SK A T | ΠΑΝ ΤΚ  
 ΤΗ | ΜΑΤ ΛΕΩΝΤ | Κ\_ΡΟΠΣΑΟ | ..Θ Τ ΔΡΟ. [Καὶ κατ (ε) πάνῳ τῶν κτημάτων  
 Λέωντος κουροπαλατου (καὶ) λογοθέτου τ (οῦ) δρό [μ (ου)]]

\* When the Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas promoted his brother Leo Phokas to *kuropalates* in 963, Niketas was known as the manager of the domains of the same Leo Phokas.

**(4) BASIL LEKAPENOS, proedros of the Senate (second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>38)</sup>**



\* Basil Lekapenos came from the eastern province and he was a military companion of the Emperor John I Tzimiskes against the Muslims and he was promoted to *proedros* of the Senate by the Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas thanks to his political support for the latter. He was also well known as the dignitary who ordered the famous “Limburg An-der-Lahn reliquary of the True Cross (968-985)”.<sup>39)</sup>

<sup>38)</sup> V. Laurent, *Documents de Sigillographie byzantine. La collection C. Orghidan*, (Paris, 1952), no.186 et 187.

<sup>39)</sup> *Basil Lekapenos was known as Basil the Parakoimomenos*, the bastard son of the Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (919-949). The reliquary of the True Cross dates from between 968, the date when Basil the Parakoimomenos acquired this title, equivalent to that of grand chamberlain and 985, the date he was exiled by the Emperor Basil II (976-1025). On the Limburg staurotheke and his cultural influence, Cutler, A. and Spieser, J.-M., *Byzance médiévale, 700-1204*, (Paris, 1996), p.163-166, fig. 124 et 125 ; Klein, H. A., *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz: die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, (Wiesbaden, 2004), p. 105-112 (pl.19a-19h).

(5) **PETROS, protospatharios and domestikos of the Imperial Scholes of Western Army.**<sup>40)</sup>



\* Petros was called "ὁ τοῦ Φωκά" in the literary sources. He could not be a son of the Phokas as sometimes interpreted but he is regarded as the servant of the Phokas family and the best general who played an important role in the imperial Army during the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>41)</sup>.

(6) **MALEINOS, ostiarios and primikerios of the notaries (the 10<sup>th</sup> century).**<sup>42)</sup>



\* The Maleinoi was the closest allies by the blood of the Phokas, because Nikephoros II Phokas's mother also came from the family of Maleinos.<sup>43)</sup>

<sup>40)</sup> I. Jordanov, Molybdobulles de domestiques des Scholes du dernier quart du Xe siècle trouvés dans la strategie de Preslav, *Stuides in Byzantine Studies* vol. 2 (1990), p.203-204; There are various types of Petros' seals. It is evident that when he obtained the higher dignity of patrikios, he used to engrave the "patriarcal cross" decorated with tall flower and to inscribe the triumphal formula instead of the cruxiform monogram on the obverse of his seals.

<sup>41)</sup> On the career of Petros, see J.-C. Cheynet, les *Phocas*, p.306; cf. Zonaras, (Bonn), III, p.541.

<sup>42)</sup> W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich I, Kaiserhof*, no.51

<sup>43)</sup> I think that the exact relation of the seal to the homonymous family of Maleinos is unclear. Because the function of *ostiarios* implies that the seal's owner would have been a eunuch but it does hardly suit the offspring of such a lineage.

(7) THEOPHILOS, *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and *quaestor* (the 10<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>44)</sup>



\* Theophilos was nominated to *quaestor* (a senior judicial officer of Constantinople) under the sole reign of Constantine VII who was also placed then under the influence of the Phokas. He belonged to the family Erotikos who was related to the entourage of the same family of Phokas.<sup>45)</sup>

(8) THEOPHANES, *patrikios* and *parakoimomenos* (941-ca.946).<sup>46)</sup>



**Obv)** Cruxiform invocative monogram at center/the circular inscription in the circumference

: ...VPOCCKEΠHΦωCΔO...: OHTOITωCωΔOV...:

[Στα] υρός σκέπη, φῶς, δό [ξα τῶ]. [Κύριε β] σήθει τῶ σῶ δού [λω]

**Rev)** the inscription of 5 lignes at center/the circular inscription in the circumference

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<sup>44)</sup> G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol. II, (Bern, 1985), no.1088.

<sup>45)</sup> On the family of Erotikos, see J.-C.Cheyne, *Pouvoir et contestation (963-1210)*, (Paris, 1999), p.218.

<sup>46)</sup> G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol.II, (Bern, 1985), no.1084-86; N. Oikonomides suggests that the presence of the cross on Theophanes's seal could have to do with his brilliant victory against the Rus in 941. See. N. Oikonomides, *A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals*, (Washington D.C., 1986), no. 59, 62, 64.

: +ΘΕΟΦ, ΠΑΤΡΙΚΙΩ | SCVMMAXIA | ΘΥΠΑΡΑΟΙ | ΜΩΜΕΝ

Θεοφ (άνει) πατρικίω (Καί) συμμαχία Θ (εο) ὃ παρακοιμωμέν (ω).

- \* Theophanes could be linked to the same political group because he was known to have served the Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos who also came from the eastern part of the Empire but remained the political rival against the Phokas. The official position of *parakoimōmenos* (grand Chamberlin) confirms his proximity to the emperor as well as his influence at the imperial court during the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

One should not conclude that they were the only people dedicated to the worship of the Cross in Asia Minor, because we have many seals of later type of “cruciform monogram” whose owner is not known. It is likely that a majority of dignitaries from Asia Minor would emerge if their identifications were available.<sup>47)</sup>

On the other hand, the preference for “**cruciform monogram**” does not necessarily imply a rejection of the cult of saints and the Virgin, as in the time of the Iconoclasm. For example, when the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas had been still only the strategos of the Anatolic theme, he was placed under the protection of St. Theodore, the military saint especially venerated in Cappadocia. In addition, the images of two saints Germanos and Tarasius were represented in the church built in honour on his family land near Çavushin in Cappadocia. These two saints, who had been the patriarchs of Constantinople and ardent supporters of the Images, are found also in Tokali Kilise in Turkey<sup>48)</sup>, another church built at the instigation of his parents.

## CONCLUSION

A.D. 62, the Apostle Paul addressed an evangelic message to the Ephesians who were undergoing the conflict between the Jews and the Gentiles. The purpose of his

<sup>47)</sup> For example, we could have no idea of the social identity of a judge of Thessaloniki named Samonas if there were no monogram on his seal. See N.Oikonomides, *Dated Seals*, no.60 and 61. But his name itself allows us to understand his oriental origin because there was a dignitary who called Samonas from Arabic land and served the Emperor Leo VI.

<sup>48)</sup> Jolivet-Levy, *Église de Cappadoce*, (Paris, 2001), p. 17, 103, 105

message was to give an emphasis not only on the vertical relationship between God and Church but also on the horizontal affiliation of all Christians in the light of the Cross (Ephesians 2:14-21)<sup>49</sup>).

Two and a half centuries later, his message's meaning might have been well adopted on the coins of the first Christian emperor Constantine I who was looking forward to restore the *salus rei publica* through the Christianity. The Constantinian cross became widespread with the imperial cult of the Cross in the Byzantine Empire during the 8<sup>th</sup> century when the Eastern Roman Empire was on the brink of the ruin under Muslims' annual attacks. Since this epoch, the cross image and its triumphal formula have been engraved the most frequently on the seals and coins, serving to encourage the imperial resistance for the defense of the Christianity.

The seals and coins show that the cross images' propagandizing function was more intensified during the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, following the new political atmosphere in which the Byzantine imperial authority was expanding to the Middle East. It is good reason that the 10<sup>th</sup> century's cross images could be combined with the portrait of Jesus Christ or/and Emperor. The sacred Cross began to play the most prominent role in propagandizing the imperial legitimacy and the status of emperor as God's regent on the earth. In the case of co-emperors who ascended to the throne through the marriage alliance with the Macedonian dynasty, the imperial effigy was placed into the right center of the cross image on the silver coins, emphasizing the central position of the rulers exercising effective power.

This imperial Cross and its political function were reflected on the aristocratic/bureaucratic seals of the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Different types of the imperial cross were well documented on the lead seals of the dignitaries from the Anatolian grand families such as the Phokas or their relatives. While the imperial Court titles on the reverse showing the title holders' hierarchical relationship with the Macedonian emperors, the "cruciform monogram" or "cross images" on the obverse demonstrate the horizontal

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49) ... *His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through **the Cross**, by which he put to death their hostility...* For through him we both have access to the Fathers by one Spirit... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians 2: 15-21, New International Version).

solidarity (political and social alliance) between the Imperial dynasty and the Anatolian aristocracy.

Throughout the history of medieval and modern Monarchy of Europe, the cross image has survived and it has been adopted on innumerable official documents and monuments, for example, on the coats of arms and military standards as well as on the royal great seals and coins. It continued to serve as effective means of forging people's collective identity (or self-esteem) and as valuable ways of diffusing political ideology in and out of the sovereign's territory.<sup>50)</sup> Though the modern European history had a number of political divisions, social conflicts, religious schisms and military troubles, the cross image and its archival heritage still remains illuminating on the municipal, regional and national emblems of so many contemporary sovereign states and furthermore on the flags of transnational organizations such as International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Key Words: Triumphal Cross, Byzantine Imperial Power, Christian Empire, Imperial cult of the Cross, Sigillographic and Numismatic Records, Imperial Propaganda, Social Communication and Integration.

<sup>50)</sup> In fact, the Byzantine imperial symbolic representation had an impact on the medieval European monarchies during the period of 11<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> centuries when the social contacts and cultural exchanges increased between the two Christian worlds. As for the Constantinian cross, it might have been adopted by the French, German and English rulers who had passed through Asia Minor for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the period of Crusades. The influence of Byzantine imperial symbols on the medieval European insignia is well attested on the Carolingian and Ottonian dynasty's visual Arts. (ex. **The Marriage of the Byzantine Princess Theophano with the Holy Roman Emperor Otto II**). On this topic, see Marc Bloch, *Les Rois thaumaturges*: 박용진(역), 『기적을 행하는 왕』, (한길사 2015), pp. 253-293; see also Umberto Eco (ed), *Il Medioevo*: 『중세』, 차용구·박승찬(감수), 김효정·최병진·윤종태(역), (시공사, 2015), vol. I, pp. 680-808; vol.II, pp.716-730, 773-782; On the medieval Origins of the European Sovereignty, see Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* : 중앙대학교 서양중세사연구회 (역), 『국가의 탄생 : 근대 국가의 중세적 기원』, (학고방, 2012) pp.7-239; Ferdinand Seibt, *Glanz und Elend des Mittelalters*: 차용구 (역), 『중세 천년의 빛과 그림자』, (현실문화, 2013), pp.17-136, see also the page 416 , it is also significant to notice **the seal of Edward the Confessor** (r. 1042-1066), on which the King of England **is seated on the throne and hold the scepter of the Cross** in his right hand, declaring himself "**Basileus Anglorum**" instead of Rex.