

CATALOGUE
OF
BYZANTINE SEALS

AT DUMBARTON OAKS

AND IN THE FOGG MUSEUM OF ART

Volume 5

The East (continued),
Constantinople and Environs,
Unknown Locations, Addenda, Uncertain Readings

edited by

Eric McGeer, John Nesbitt, and Nicolas Oikonomides[†]



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SPECIAL ADDENDUM

114. SEAL IN ARABIC OF AL-ḤASAN IBN GABRAS

The specimen published below is not a Byzantine seal. It is nonetheless appropriate that we publish it in the present volume since it reflects on affairs along the Empire's eastern frontiers. Stefan Heidemann and Claudia Sode are responsible for the transcription of the seal and the essays that follow.

Dumbarton Oaks preserves about 80 seals inscribed with legends in Syriac, Arabic, or Armenian (see B. Coulie and J. Nesbitt, "A Bilingual Rarity in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection of Lead Seals," *DOP* 43 [1989]: 121–23; and N. Oikonomides, *Byzantine Lead Seals* [Washington, D.C., 1985], nos. 58 and 59). With few exceptions oriental languages appear on Byzantine seals after the Xth century as a result of military conquests in the East. The seals often show an image of the Virgin or a saint on one side and an inscription on the other side, or they bear inscriptions on both sides. The legends can be Arabic or Syriac alone or sometimes "mixed," for instance Arabic and Greek or Arabic and Syriac. The owners of these seals were for the most part non-Greek-speaking Christians from (presumably) Northern Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. In some instances names and formulas point to Melkite seal-holders. Cf. S. Heidemann and C. Sode, "Metallsiegel in der islamischen Welt, ihre Forschungsgeschichte und orientalische Bleisiegel aus einem Siegelfund in Konstantinopel," in *Les sceaux d'Orient et leur emploi*, ed. R. Gyselen, *Res Orientales* 10 (Paris, 1997), 41–60. There are about twenty oriental seals in the Oriental Coin Cabinet at the University of Jena (Germany). A catalogue of these seals has been published by S. Heidemann and C. Sode, "Christlich-orientalische Bleisiegel im orientalischen Münzkabinett Jena," in *ARAM* 11–12 (1999–2000): 535–95. Most of these seals were given to the Oriental Coin Cabinet by Dr. A. D. Mordtmann (1837–1912).

Taking into account that the seals in question were used for the authentication of documents and letters, one must conclude that there was a lively correspondence between the eastern parts of the empire and the capital, Constantinople.

114.1 Seal of sultan al-Ḥasan ibn Ghafras (Gabras) (XII c.)

Fogg 3735.— D. 26 mm. W. 12.80 g.

Unpublished.

Obv. Half-length bearded figure wearing a crown with pendilia and holding a lance (r. hand) and an akakia (l. hand). Border of dots.

Rev. Arabic inscription. Border of dots.

al-sulṭān | [Ikḥ]tiyār al-Dīn | al-Ḥasan ibn Ghafra | s

By far one of the most interesting seals with Arabic inscriptions at Dumbarton Oaks is the Fogg 3735. The representation on the obverse corresponds with images of emperors on Byzantine coins from the XIth and XIIth centuries. Comparable representations in an Islamic context can be found on coins of the Seljūq Mas'ūd ibn Qilij Arslān (510/1116–551/1156), of Kaikhusrū, the son of Qilij Arslān II (588/1192–593/1197, 601/1205–608/1211), and of the Mangujakid Bahrāmshāh of Erzincan, the son-in-law of Qilij Arslān II (circa 555/1160–617/1220). For comparison see G. Hennequin, *Catalogue des monnaies musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale: Asie pré-mongole: Les Salḡūqs et leurs successeurs*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des monnaies, médailles et antiques (Paris, 1985), no. 1599 (Mas'ūd ibn Qilij Arslān II), no. 1642 (Kaikhusrū), nos. 1934 and 1935 (Bahrāmshāh). The reverse bears an Arabic inscription: *al-sulṭān Ikhtiyār al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn Ghafras*. The person must be identified with al-Ḥasan ibn Gabras, the amīr and chamberlain (ḥājib) in service of Qilij Arslān (551/1156–588/1192), who is well known from written sources. See C. Cahen, “Une famille byzantine au service des Seldjuquides d’Asie mineure,” in *Polychronion: Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. P. Wirth (Heidelberg, 1966), 147–48; A. P. Kazhdan, *Sotsial'nyi sostav gosподstvuiushchego klassa Vizantii XI–XII vv.* (Moscow, 1974), index, s.v.; idem, *Armiane v sostave gosподstvuiushchego klassa vizantiiskoi imperii v XI–XII vv.* (Erevan 1975), 88–92; H. Bartikian, “Les Gaurades à travers les sources arméniennes,” in *L’Arménie et Byzance: Histoire et culture*, Byzantina Sorbonensia 12 (Paris 1996), 24; and idem, *Η βυζαντινή αριστοκρατική οικογένεια των Γαυράδων (Γαβράδων)* (Athens, 1993), 46ff. The literary sources tell us that at the end of the reign of Qilij Arslān or immediately afterwards he met a most gruesome death, without giving a reason for this. These sources, however, do not indicate if al-Ḥasan ever held the rank of a sultan or claimed to be sultan. This can be concluded only from his seal—the sole existing primary document. The seal of al-Ḥasan ibn Ghafras is therefore of great importance for our understanding of the history of Byzantium and its relations with the Seljūq dominions. A more detailed publication of the seal is being prepared by Stefan Heidemann and Claudia Sode.

[S. Heidemann and C. Sode]