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978-1-108-08150-4 - The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century: With a Revised Text of the Kletorologion of Philotheos

J.B. Bury

Excerpt

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THE IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN THE NINTH CENTURY

A. PRELIMINARY.

(1) *Sources for institutional history.*

FOR the history of the administrative institutions of the Roman Empire in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries A.D., we have material which is relatively ample. We have the lawbooks of Theodosius and Justinian, and the *Notitia Dignitatum*, of which the latest portions date from about A.D. 425. We have further the letters of Cassiodorus, written in his official capacity as quaestor in the palace of Ravenna, and, although he is concerned with the Imperial institutions as they were modified to suit the conditions of the Ostrogothic kingdom, the offices and functions were so little altered that the information supplied by Cassiodorus is, as Mommsen perceived, of the highest value not only for the administration of Ravenna but also of Constantinople. In addition to these authoritative documents, we have the mutilated treatise *περὶ ἀρχῶν* of John the Lydian, which, rambling though it is, furnishes precious material, the author having been himself an official in the reigns of Anastasius, Justin I, and Justinian. These sources—supplemented by inscriptions and the incidental notices to be found in literature—render it possible to obtain a sufficiently clear and fairly complete general view of the civil and military administration as it was organized by Diocletian and Constantine, and as it was modified in details down to the reign of Justinian. But after the death of Justinian we enter upon a period of about three hundred years which is absolutely destitute of documents bearing directly upon the administrative service. We have no source in the form of a code; for the only lawbook that survives, the *Ecloga* of Leo III, does not deal with public law, and casts no light on the civil and military administration. We have nothing in the form of a *Notitia* of offices, no official correspondence like that of Cassiodorus, no treatise like that of John the Lydian. Moreover, in the seventh and eighth centuries there is very little literature, and

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inscriptions on stone are few and far between.¹ Our only compensation is a very small one ; we now begin to get inscribed lead seals of officials, which become numerous in the eighth and ninth centuries. At last, about the middle of the ninth century, a new series of sources relating to the official service of the Empire begins. The first of these is a notitia or *τακτικόν*, as it was called, of the chief dignitaries and officials in order of rank, dating from the early years of the reign of Michael III. It is a bare list, but about half a century later comes the Klêtorologion of Philotheos, which is by far the most important source for the organization of the Imperial civil service in the early Middle Ages. And then about half a century later still we have the Ceremonial book compiled by Constantine VII. This collection contains a great many older documents, some dating from the ninth century, and two or three even from the eighth. We have also other writings of Constantine VII, especially the *περὶ τῶν βασιλικῶν ταξειδίων* and some chapters of the *De administrando imperio*.

Now these documents of the ninth and tenth centuries show us an administrative system quite different from that which prevailed in the days of Justinian. It is probably due, at least in part, to the nature of the documents that this later system has never been thoroughly examined. For the documents, though of official origin, are not directly concerned with administration ; they are concerned with ceremonial and court precedence, and while they reveal a picture of the world of officialdom, they tell little of the serious duties of the officials. They have not therefore invited systematic investigation, like the Codex Theodosianus or the Notitia Dignitatum. One department indeed of the administration has, during the last twenty years, received particular attention, namely, the general administration of the provinces, the system of Themes. We have now a valuable study of the subject by the late Professor H. Gelzer, who has also partially examined the military organization. It must be added that the judicial machinery has been partly explored by Zachariä von Lingenthal. But the general civil administration and the great ministerial bureaux at Constantinople have not been studied at all. This neglect has been a serious drawback for students of the history

¹ For the administration of Egypt the papyri supply considerable material, even for the period from Justinian to the Saracen conquest. Particular attention may be called to the documents dating from the early Saracen period in *Papyri in the British Museum*, ed. Kenyon, vol. iv (accessible to me, before publication, through the editor's kindness). But the Egyptian material helps little for the general administrative changes with which we are here concerned.

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of the Eastern Roman Empire. We can observe its effects in most of the works that are published on the subject. We can see that the writers do not attach clear and definite ideas to the official titles which are mentioned in their pages; they often confound distinct offices, and they confound offices with orders of rank. Schlumberger's magnificent work on Byzantine Seals may be cited in illustration; it is marred by many confusions between different officials and different departments.

It is therefore a task of urgent importance to reconstruct, so far as we can, the official organization of the later Empire at the earliest period for which we have sufficient evidence. It is true that at no period of Byzantine history have we documents that can be remotely compared with the Codes of Theodosius and Justinian or with the *Notitia Dignitatum*; but we must make the best of what we have.

Now the most important document we possess, the only one that gives us anything like a full *notitia* of the bureaux and officials, is the *Klêtorologion* of Philotheos, which was compiled in the reign of Leo VI, in the year A.D. 899. It is therefore the proper starting-point for an investigation of the subject. We may say that for the institutional history of the ninth and tenth centuries it holds the same position, in relative importance, which the *Notitia Dignitatum* occupies for the fourth and fifth.

Once the actual organization existing in the time of Leo VI has been worked out, a further problem presents itself, namely, to trace the steps by which it developed out of the organization existing in the time of Justinian. The evidence of our literary sources shows us that in all main essentials the later system existed in the eighth century. The transformations were effected between the end of the sixth century and the middle of the eighth, in the darkest period of Imperial history, for which we have little more than meagre second-hand chronicles and a few incidental notices in ecclesiastical documents.

In practice, however, it is impossible to separate the two investigations, namely, that of the institutions actually existing in the ninth century, and that of their history. The principal object of the present study is to determine the details of the ninth-century organization, but, as Philotheos, our main guide, only gives the names of the officials and does not indicate their functions, we are obliged to trace the offices, so far as we can, into the past, in order to discover what they were. In the case of many of the subordinate officials we have no data, and must leave their functions undetermined.

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(2) *Text of Philotheos.*

As the foundation of these investigations, a critical text of Philotheos is indispensable. The Klêtorologion has come down to us as part of the second book (cc. 52–54) of the *De Cerimoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenetos. But it was an independent treatise; it formed no part of Constantine's treatise, but was appended to it, along with other documents, probably by the Emperor's literary executors, shortly after his death, as I have shown in a study which I published on the Ceremonial Book in 1907.¹

The treatise known as *De Cerimoniis* was first published by Leich and Reiske at Leipzig, in 1751–4, in two volumes. It was re-edited by Bekker for the Bonn edition of the Byzantine historians in 1829. Bekker consulted but did not make a complete collection of the MS.

The sole MS. in which this work of Constantine has come down to us is preserved in the Stadtbibliothek of Leipzig (Rep. i, 17). It is a fine large quarto parchment; the titles and lists of contents are in red ink, and the initials at the beginnings of chapters are coloured. It seems to have been written about the end of the eleventh century. It contains 265 folia, but ff. 1–212 are occupied by another treatise of Constantine, which in the Bonn edition curiously appears as an appendix to Book I of the *De Cerimoniis*. I have shown that it is an entirely distinct treatise.² It concerns military expeditions conducted by the Emperor in person, and I have designated it as *περὶ τῶν βασιλικῶν ταξιδίων*.

Until recently our only source for the text of the work of Philotheos was the Leipzig MS. But some years ago Theodor Uspenski, the Director of the Russian Archaeological Institute at Constantinople, found a portion of the text in a Greek codex in the Patriarchal library at Jerusalem. This MS. is numbered 39 in the Catalogue of Papadopoulos-Kerameus.³ It was written in the twelfth or thirteenth century. The portion of the treatise which it contains (ff. 181–3, 192–4) is unfortunately small, corresponding to less than eleven pages of the Bonn edition. The fragment begins with τόμος β' = p. 726,⁴ and ends at κατὰ τάξιν τιμάσθωσαν = p. 736. Uspenski collated the fragment with the Bonn text and published his collation in Vol. III of the *Izviestii* of the Russian Archaeological

¹ *English Historical Review*, April, 1907.

² *English Historical Review*, July, 1907, p. 439.

³ *Ἱεροσολυμιτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, p. 115.

⁴ I refer throughout to the pages of Bekker's ed. which are entered in the margin of my text, and in most cases add the line for the convenience of those who care to refer to that ed.

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Institute at Constantinople (pp. 98 *sqq.* Sofia, 1898). The occurrence of this fragment in the Jerusalem MS. illustrates the fact that the Klêtorologion circulated quite independently of the *De Cerimoniis*, with which it has been accidentally connected. Uspenski observes (p. 101) that ‘it is impossible to doubt that as a practical manual the treatise of Philotheos must have been diffused in separate copies’.

But for the main bulk of the text we depend exclusively on the Leipzig MS. With a view to the text which I now publish, I had photographs made (by kind permission of the Oberbibliothekar) of the 27 folia which contain the treatise (cc. 52, 53).¹ A comparison shows that the Bonn text is by no means trustworthy or accurate. The MS. itself is also a very careless copy of the original. It is full of errors, which were left undetected by Reiske and Bekker. Bekker did not study the subject at all, and Reiske, although he published a learned commentary, never made a methodical examination of the official organization, and therefore was not in a position to criticize and control the text, or to detect inconsistencies and mistakes.

The paucity of paragraphs and the absence of any tabular arrangement render the Bonn edition extremely inconvenient for practical use. I have endeavoured to remedy this defect. In introducing tabular arrangement I am only reverting to the form which the author undoubtedly adopted himself. For tabular arrangement is partly preserved in the Lipsiensis, and there can be hardly any doubt that Philotheos wrote his lists of offices in the form of a πίναξ or tabula.

(3) *Contents and sources of the Klêtorologion. The Taktikon Uspenski.*

The superscription of the Klêtorologion states that it was compiled in September of Indiction 3 = A.M. 6408 (= September 1, 899–August 31, 900), i. e. September, A. D. 899. The author describes himself as ‘Imperial protospatharios and atriklines’. The duty of the atriklinai was to conduct the ceremonial of the Imperial banquets in the palace, to receive the guests and arrange them in order of precedence. In the MS. we find the form ἀρτρικλίνης as well as ἀτρικλίνης, but the latter is the true form of the word, which is evidently derived

¹ The ἔκθεσις of Epiphanius, which Philotheos appended to his treatise, and which appears as c. 54, does not concern my purpose, and I have omitted it. I may note here that (except in a few cases like σέκρετον, τοποτηρητής) I have not normalized the orthographical variations of the MS. but have retained the double forms καμίασι : καμήσια, ἀλλαξίματα : ἤματα, στρατόρες : ὠρες, ἀτρικλίνης : ἀρτρικλίνης (but not ἀρτοκλ.), &c.

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from a *triclinio* (cp. ἀσηκρήτις).¹ κλητόριον was a technical word for an Imperial banquet,² and the verb κλητορεύω was used both in the general sense of inviting,³ and also in the special sense of receiving the guests and announcing their names in order of precedence,⁴ a duty which devolved on the atriklines. To fulfil this duty, a list of the ministers, officials, and dignitaries, who had a right to be entertained in the palace, arranged in order of precedence, was indispensable to the atriklines, and such a list was called a κλητορολόγιον. These lists were revised from time to time; for not only might new offices be instituted and old ones abolished, but changes might be made in the order of precedence.

That such changes were made is clear from the comparison of Philotheos with an earlier document which was published by Uspenski from the same MS., in which he found a portion of Philotheos.⁵ This is a Τακτικόν, or table of ranks, which was compiled under Michael III and Theodora. The title is:—

Τακτικὸν ἐν ἐπιτόμῳ γενόμενον ἐπὶ Μιχαῆλ τοῦ φιλοχρίστου δεσπότη καὶ Θεοδώρας τῆς ὀρθοδοξοτάτης καὶ ἀγίας αὐτοῦ μητρός.

Uspenski has not touched upon the limits of the date of this document, but it can be fixed within fourteen years. The fall of Theodora occurred at the beginning of A.D. 856,⁶ so that the Taktikon must have been compiled before that year and after A.D. 842, the year of the accession of Michael. Internal evidence bears out the date of the superscription. The Stratêgos of Cherson (στρατηγὸς τῶν κλιμάτων) is mentioned; the first Stratêgos of Cherson⁷ was appointed by Theophilus (c. A.D. 834). The Charsian province appears as a kleisura not a stratêgis⁸; this agrees with the Arabic lists which describe the themes as they existed in the period A.D. 838–845.⁹ In

¹ It occurs in Gen. 31₁₁ τοῦ τὴν ἐπιστάσιαν ἔχοντος τῶν εἰς τράπεζαν κεκλημένων ὄν ἀτρικλίην φημίζουσι. The Latin version renders rightly a *triclinio*, and Sophocles gives the same explanation. The word does not appear in Ducange.

² Suidas explains κλητόριον as ἡ βασιλικὴ τράπεζα. Cp. Pseudo-Symeon 703, Leo VI crowned Anna, διὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι ποιεῖν τὰ ἐκ τύπου κλητόρια μὴ οὔσης Ἀγούστης.

³ Theoph. 375₁₉ (Justinian II) πρὸς ἀριστόδειπνον κλητορεύων.

⁴ We meet it in this sense in Philotheos.

⁵ loc. cit. 109 sqq. A notable example of changes in precedence is furnished by the different positions of the Domestic of the Excubiti and the Prefect of the City in the two lists.

⁶ See the evidence in Hirsch, *Byzantinische Studien*, 60–1.

⁷ Cont. Th. 123.

⁸ P. 123, where we must read the singular ὁ κλεισουράρχης Χαρσιανοῦ.

⁹ Of Ibn Khurdâdhbah, Ibn al-Fakih, and Kudâma, depending on a work of Al-Garmi, who had been a captive among the Romans and was redeemed in

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A.D. 873 the Charsian theme was under a Stratêgos.¹ Kolonea, a theme in A.D. 863, is omitted, as in the Arabic lists.² The earliest mention hitherto known of the Stratêgos of Chaldia was in the Arabic lists; he appears in the Taktikon.³

The Taktikon is an epitomized catalogue of officials and dignitaries, for the purpose of showing their order of precedence. It is therefore not arranged like the Notitia Dignitatum (of the fifth century) in which the subordinate officials are placed under their chiefs. It is arranged in classes, according to ranks (patricians, &c.). It is not a klêtologion (or it would have been so named), but it must have served court ceremonials; perhaps it was a handbook of the master of ceremonies (ὁ τῆς καταστάσεως). Τακτικὰ βιβλία are mentioned by the biographer of Theophilus (Cont. Th. 142), and evidently mean books which deal with court ceremonial. τὰξις meant, among other things, a ‘ceremony’,⁴ and we might render τακτικόν as ‘ceremonial list’.

A new list of this kind was naturally compiled with the help of older lists which it was intended to supersede. Philotheos tells us, as we shall see, that he made use of older klêtologia. Now in the Taktikon we can detect certain inconsistencies which must have arisen in the process of bringing an older Taktikon up to date. (1) The governor of Chaldia appears both as stratêgos (113) and as archon (123). I infer that Chaldia had been an archontate till recently, when it had been made a stratêgis. The new dignity is duly inserted, but the compiler omitted to strike out the old title. (2) The same thing has happened in the case of Crete. We did not know before the position of Crete in the administrative organization, before the Saracen conquest. The Taktikon shows that it was

A.D. 845. For these lists see Brooks, *J. H. S.*, xxi. 67 sqq. (1901) and Gelzer, 81 sqq.

¹ See Gen. 122. But in A.D. 863 it was still a kleisurarchy, Cont. Th. 181.

² Cappadocia, which is still a kleisurarchy in the Arabic lists, is omitted altogether in the text. But this is probably a scribe's mistake. The text has (p. 123) :—

οἱ κλεισουράρχαι
οἱ κλεισουράρχαι Χαρσιανοῦ
οἱ κλεισουράρχαι Σωζοπόλεως

In the second and third cases οἱ κλ. must clearly be errors for ὁ κλεισουράρχης. But the first οἱ κλ. cannot be right. ‘The kleisurarchs’ would not be followed by a list of particular kleisurarchs. I have no doubt that we should read ὁ κλεισουράρχης (Καππαδοκίας).

³ Ἀν ἀρχῶν Χαλδίας is also mentioned (123).

⁴ Cp. e.g. *Cer.* 510, 516₁ ἡ τακτικὴ μέθοδος 517₁₂. Phil. (790₄) ἐκ τοῦδε τοῦ τακτικοῦ παραγγέλματος.

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governed by an archon (123). But a stratêgos of Crete also appears (115), and it seems curious that this change should have been made in the period immediately after the loss of the island.¹ Perhaps we may suppose that some small islands of the Aegean were included in the circumscription of Crete, so that the Cretan commander was not quite without a province. It is possible that the appointment of a stratêgos of Crete might have been made in connexion with the expedition of Theoktistos in A.D. 843 (George Mon. ed. Bonn, 814), in anticipation of the reduction of the island. In that case the date of the Taktikon would be 842–3.² (3) The same explanation must also apply to the duplication of ὁ πατρίκιος καὶ σακελλάριος (111 and 115).

The treatise of Philotheos is divided into four Sections, τόμοι. The beginning of the first is not clearly marked, for τόμος α' has been omitted in the MS. The editors have inserted it before the list of ἀξιώματα διὰ βραβείων (p. 708 B), without any indication that it is an insertion of their own. What led them to do this was, I have little doubt, the occurrence in the margin of the words κεφάλαιον α'. They took it for a heading corresponding to the subsequent τόμος β', γ', δ', and silently substituted τόμος for κεφάλαιον. But it is clear that κεφάλαιον α' refers to the first of the eighteen classes of dignities, each of which is marked by a numeral in the margin. It is not quite certain where τόμος α' originally stood. The most probable place seems to be at the end of the Preface, before the heading ἀρχὴ τῆς ὑποθέσεως λόγου, and I have placed it here conjecturally, but it is possible that it may have stood before the paragraph beginning Εἰσὶ δὲ πᾶσαι ὁμοῦ.

Section I is introductory to the klêtorologion (ἐν εἰσαγωγῆς τάξει) and consists of a πλῆθις or *laterculus* of the ranks and official dignities of the Empire. It falls into five parts: (1) orders of rank; (2) great

¹ If the seal found at Gortyn, with the legend Σ[τ]εφανου στρατ' (published by Xanthudides, *Byz. Zeitschrift*, 18, 177, 1909), belonged to a stratêgos of Crete it must be referred to this period.

² I may call attention here to the fact that an archon of Dalmatia appears in Takt. Usp. (124) and a stratêgos is not mentioned. This bears on the date of a ninth-century seal of Bryennios, stratêgos of Dalmatia: Βρυεν(ιφ)β(ασιλικῶ) σπαθ(αρίφ) καὶ [στ]ρ(α)τ(ηγῶ) Δαλματία(ς), Sig. 205. (There is another example in which Br. is protospatharios.) Schlumberger ascribes it to Theoktistos Bryennios and dates it 'vers 840'. But there seems to be no authority for this. All we know of Theoktistos Bryennios is that he was στρατηγός of Peloponnesus in the reign of Michael III (*De adm. imp.* 221). It is a mere guess that he is the Bryennios of the seal. In any case the Taktikon shows that the seal is later than A. D. 842.

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official posts ; (3) minor offices in the staffs and bureaux of the great officials ; (4) orders of rank of eunuchs ; (5) great offices confined to eunuchs.

Section II and Section III contain lists of the officials in the order in which they are introduced by the atriklines, according as they belong to different orders of rank. Section II deals with the highest ranks ; Section III with the lower, beginning with the protospathars. These Sections ought to form one ; the division is not logical or convenient. To the end of III are appended explanations as to the treatment of ecclesiastics from Rome, Antioch, and Jerusalem, and of Saracen, Bulgarian, and German guests.

Section IV, which is the longer half of the treatise, contains directions for the conduct of the court banquets throughout the year : what guests are to be invited, how they are to be introduced, where they are to sit, what they are to wear, &c. It is arranged in the order of the calendar, beginning with Christmas. There follow two memoranda (which are marked off in the MS. as cap. 53 of *De Cerimoniis*, Bk. 2), (1) on the pious largesses (εὐσεβίαι) given by the Emperor to the officials on certain occasions, and (2) on the fees received by the atriklinai. These memoranda might appropriately have formed a separate Section, but mediaeval compilers were so clumsy and careless in the arrangement of their books that it would be imprudent to guess the omission of a τόμος ε΄.

Having concluded with a recommendation that his ‘Order of Rank’ (τακτικόν) should be adopted as canonical, Philotheos adds an appendix on ecclesiastical precedence and reproduces a list of episcopal sees by Epiphanius of Cyprus (= *De Cer.* ii. c. 54). I have omitted this list, as it has no interest for the purpose of this study.

The author had before him older lists of dignities and descriptions of ceremonies, to which he refers in his preface as ἀρχαία συγγράμματα, αἱ τῶν ἀρχαίων ἐκθέσεις or συγγραφαί. Some of these were doubtless *Taktika* or tables of rank, of which a specimen is extant in the τακτικόν of the reign of Michael III, described above ; and others were κλητορολόγια which dealt especially with the arrangements at the Imperial table. The title states that the work is compiled from old klétorologia, and according to the first words of the preface this was the task imposed on the writer by his friends, men of his own calling. But afterwards he says that he did not use lists which were out of date, so that ἀρχαίων is hardly an appropriate description of his sources. For he writes : ‘ Since I have purposely passed over the expositions of the ancients, not all of them but those which time has rendered obsolete, I will subjoin in the form of a table, line by line,

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the expositions which are both recognized and practised in the time of our sovran's Leo and Alexander.’

Now we find in the paragraph on the functions of the eunuchs (725) a distinct proof that this was transcribed from an *ecthesis* published in the name of an emperor, whom we cannot hesitate to identify with Leo VI.

Τὰ δὲ πάντα φυλάττεσθαι, τηρεῖσθαι τε καὶ πράττεσθαι ἀπαρασάλευτα καὶ διαμένειν βέβαια καθὼς ἡ εὐσεβῆς καὶ ἔνθεος βασιλεία ἡμῶν ἐξέθετο, ὡς καὶ ἐξ ἀρχαίων τῶν χρόνων παρὰ τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν εὐσεβῶς βασιλευσάντων δικαίως ἐξετέθη.

Here Leo is speaking, not Philotheos. The *ecthesis* of Leo can hardly have been concerned exclusively with the dignities of the eunuchs, and I think we may conjecture with great probability that one of the lists of offices contained in Section I was transcribed from the Emperor's official book. In this Section the high officials are enumerated three times: (1) a full list, in order of precedence; (2) a full classified list; (3) a list of the staffs, &c. (this is not complete, because only two *stratêgoi* are named as samples, and a few high officials who have no subordinates are omitted). Now of these three lists (1) and (3) are completely in agreement. But (2) exhibits one important difference. (1) enumerates 60 officials, while (2) enumerates 61. The additional dignitary is the *ἐταιρειάρχης*. This raises a presumption that (2) was derived from a different document, and the words which conclude the first list καὶ αὐταὶ τὰ νῦν τιμηθεῖσαι ἀξίαι ἐπὶ Λέοντος δεσπότου are in accordance with the hypothesis that the transcriber at this point passed to a different source. The use of different sources here may be supported by the fact that, while (2) divides the officials into *seven* classes, this division is also mentioned at the beginning of the Section, where only *six* classes (ἐξ μέρη) are given (the *stratarchai* being omitted).

It might be thought that we have further evidence that the source of Philotheos for his first list dated from the early years of Leo VI. It does not mention the theme of Longobardia. Now this province was not, as is generally supposed (for instance by Gelzer, 133), organized as a theme by Basil I. The *stratêgoi* who command in South Italy during and immediately after the conquest are not yet *stratêgoi* of Longobardia. The first who bears that title is Symbatikios in 891, but even then Longobardia has not yet been established as a distinct theme; for this commander is ‘*stratêgos* of Macedonia, Thrace, Cephallenia, and Longobardia’,¹ and his successor George

¹ Trinchera, *Syllabus graecarum membranarum*, No. 3.