Seals

Ring seals of the patrician Koubrat (c. 635–665), ruler of Great Bulgaria, father of Asparuch and Kouber, founders of Bulgar polities south of the river Danube.

These three gold ring seals were discovered in a rich funeral find at the village of Malaja Pereshchepina, Ukraine, northeast of the Sea of Azov, dated around the third quarter of the seventh century. The seals are monograms and require untangling. The inscriptions identify the owner with the father of Asparuch, the leader of the Bulgar migration south of the Danube in 680 and the traditional founder of the Danubian Bulgar state, and with the ruler named Kurt in the Name List of the Bulgar Khans. The ninth-century Byzantine annalists Theophanes, Patriarch Nicephoros, and John of Nikiu inform us that Kurt-Koubrat was most likely the Bulgar ruler who visited Constantinople in 619 and was baptized there, led a successful rebellion against the Avars ca. 635, and ruled over a short-lived Great Bulgaria, a tribal confederation dominated by the Bulgar tribe of Hunnugunduri around the Sea of Azov until the late 660s. His polity was destroyed by a massive Khazar invasion shortly after his death. Edition: Jordanov, Korpus, 11–12.

XOYBPA(T)OY
XOYBPATOY P(ATPI)K(IOY)
XOYBPATE

Lead seal of the patrician Mauros.

All of the information about this Bulgar noble comes from the Byzantine Greek collection known as the Miracles of St Demetrius of Thessaloniki, II, 5:292 sq. Mauros was a relative of Kouber, Koubrat’s son, and a member of the Bulgarian ruling elite who led a large group of Bulgars to the district of Thessaloniki in the last quarter of the seventh century. As part of the plan to take over the city, in the late 670s Mauros feigned defection and accepted Byzantine office. When the plan was foiled, he and the contingent he led, a mixed population referred to as Sermesianoi, were moved outside the town walls. Somehow Mauros managed to clear his name and was appointed military commander in the diocese of Thrace. Years later he got involved in another
of Kouber’s plans to take over Thessaloniki. This time around he was supposed to assassinate the emperor. The plan failed, for Mauros’ son informed the authorities. Again, Mauros’ Bulgar connections saved his life; he was put under home arrest in a suburb of Constantinople outside the city walls. His subsequent fate is unknown. The invocation of the Mother of God does not indicate conversion to Christianity. Edition: G. Zacos and A. Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals* I: 1–3 (Basel, 1972), # 934; Jordanov, *Korpus*, 13–15.

+ *Patrician* Mauros, prince of Sirmisians and Bulgars.

3 *Lead seal of Esagis, spatarokandidate and prince of the Vihite Slavs.*
The seal records all that is known about this tribal leader or prince, one of the several Slavic leaders who led migrating Slavic groups into the territory of Byzantium in the seventh and eight centuries. His title reflects the Byzantine effort to co-opt Slavic leadership. Edition: Zacos and Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, # 1877.

+ Mother of God help your servant Esagis, imperial spatarokandidate and prince of the Vihites.

4 *Lead seal of Tarasius, hipatus and prince of the Kouberian Bulgarians.*
Nothing more is known about Tarasius, another defector and highly placed member of the group led by Kouber. As in the case of Mauros, his co-optation was an attempt to split Bulgar leadership and neutralize the threat of the large force led by Kouber, as well as an expression of the barbarian leaders’ striving for legitimacy within the Byzantine imperial framework. Edition: Zacos and Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, # 2408.

+ Mother of God help Tarasius, hipatus and prince of the Kouberians.

5 *Lead seal of N. imperial spatarius and prince of the Evidit Slavs.*
The seal is the only evidence about this unknown seventh-eight century prince of the Evidit Slavs. Edition: Zacos and Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, # 2647.

+ Mother of God help... your servant, imperial spatarius and prince of the Evidits.

6 *Lead seal of the caesar Tervel, Bulgar khan.*
Tervel (701–718) was the second recorded ruler of the Bulgars south of the Danube. His relatively peaceful relationship with the Empire documented by a trade treaty, his assistance of Emperor Justinian II’s second accession to the Byzantine throne, and the military assistance he offered Byzantium in the repulsion of the Arab siege of Constantinople in 717–718 all account for the high title with which he was rewarded. Editions: Zacos and Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, # 2672; Jordanov, *Korpus*, 19.

+ Mother of God help the caesar Tervel.