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ПІЗДНЬОАНТИЧНІ ПЕЧАТКИ З ДАВНЬОЇ СЕРДИКИ

LATE ANTIQUE SEALS FROM ANCIENT SERDICA

Summary.

*The subject of this publication is three seals, each raising interesting questions. During the archaeological explorations of the ancient city of Serdica (now Sofia) conducted in the past ten years, 48 lead seals from the 4th – 7th A.D. period have been discovered. The **scientific novelty** of the discovered bullae are little-known specimens, or not described until now in the specialized literature. The description of all of the seals is given.*

The first one relates to John, excavated at the 'Metro station 8 II'. The print is perfectly preserved with a very strong relief of the images of the Virgin with Child between two cypresses is relatively rare in combination with various reverses unpublished till now. It dates back to the 6th A.D. The second Byzantium seal excavated at 'Vesletz' 13. (the territory of ancient Serdica) and there are there are no analogues.

During the early Byzantine Empire, only the first or baptismal name was used on seals. The parents had a large choice of names: Latin names or their Hellenized versions were used in the eastern part of the empire, traditional Greek names with regional traditions were widely used, also names of Christian saints appeared, which gradually became very popular. As a result, every twelfth child was baptized with the name John, and as a result there are a large number of bulls named John, and some have the same name on both sides, which is usually explained by the kinship between the two persons. In order to identify the person, in some cases his position or title is added, but even this information is not enough to identify the owner of the seal, known to us from documentary or epigraphic sources.

Another seal from 'Vesletz' 13 has an image of the Mother of God that is of the earliest type presented on the seals. There are different variants of the described monogram, there is no identical to the one on the seal from Serdica, also difference being in the position of the letter P.

In Bulgaria, only 3 copies of persons with the title patricius (VI–VII c.) are described, two with a block monogram and one with an inscription. In the seals discussed above, the names and the title of the owner are given in monogram form. Generally there are two types of monograms: block and cruciform. It is accepted that the first type appeared not earlier than the fifth century, when on the coins the name was also written in this way. The letters are located at the ends of the cross or at the intersection of its shoulders. This shape, as well as the angles formed, allows a large number of letters to be used.

Conclusions. *Usually, seals like the ones presented above dated to the period 6th-7th A.D. An important circumstance for the bullae from Serdica is that they were found during archeological excavations, in stratified sites and in layers with dated numismatic material, in which the coins of Emperor Justinian I (527–565) and Tiberius Constantine (578-582)*

predominate. This is an important indication, which makes it possible to specify the dating of the bulls no later than 2½ of the 6th A.D.

Key words: *Serdica, Sofia, sphragistics, Byzantium Empire, Justinian I (527–565), Tiberius Constantine (578–582), Christianity, Dacia Mediterranea.*

Анотація.

Об'єктом дослідження в цій публікації обрано три печатки, кожна з яких викликає цікаві запитання. Під час археологічних розвідок стародавнього міста Сердіка (нині в межах Софії), проведених протягом останніх десяти років, було виявлено 48 свинцевих печаток IV–VII століття нашої ери. **Наукова новизна** виявлених бул полягає у маловідомості введених у науковий обіг зразків, неописаних дотепер у спеціалізованій літературі. Надано опис усіх печаток.

Перша печатка з іменем Іоана, знайдена при розкопках на «Станції метро 8 II». Легенда чудово збереглася з дуже високим рельєфом зображень Богородиці з Ісусом між двома кипарисами, що порівняно нечасто трапляється у поєднанні з різними неопублікованими досі типами реверсу. Печатка датується VI століттям нашої ери. Друга візантійська печатка, виявлена на об'єкті «Веслець 13» (територія стародавньої Сердики), також не має аналогів.

За часів ранньої Візантії на печатках використовувалося лише перше чи хрестильне ім'я. Батьки мали великий вибір імен: у східній частині імперії використовувались латинські імена або їх еллінізовані версії. Широко використовувались традиційні грецькі імена з регіональними традиціями. Згодом з'явилися також імена християнських Святих, які поступово набули великої популярності. Як результат, кожна дванадцята дитина була хрещена на ім'я Іоан, в результаті чого з'являється велика кількість бул з іменем Іоан. Деякі мають однакове ім'я з обох сторін, що зазвичай пояснюється спорідненістю між двома особами. Для того, щоб ідентифікувати особу, в окремих випадках додається її посада чи титул, але навіть цієї інформації недостатньо для ідентифікації власника печатки, відомого нам з документальних чи епіграфічних джерел.

Ще одна печатка з об'єкта «Веслець 13» має найдавнішого типу зображення Божої Матері, яке представлено на печатках. Існують різні варіанти описуваної монограми, немає ідентичної одиниці на печатці з Сердики, також різниця полягає в розташуванні літери P.

У Болгарії описано лише 3 печатки із титулом «патриціус» (VI–VII ст.): дві – з блок-монограмою та одна з написом. В описаних вище печатках імена та титул власника наводяться у вигляді монограми. Існує два типи монограм: блокова та хрестоподібна. Прийнято вважати, що перший тип з'явився не раніше V століття, коли назва така само в той же час указувалася на монетах. Літери розташовані на кінцях хреста або на перетині його променів. Ця форма, а також утворені кути дозволяли використовувати велику кількість різних літер у легенді.

Висновки. Зазвичай, печатки, подібні до представлених вище, датуються періодом VI–VII століття н.е. Важлива деталь для бул із Сердики в тому, що вони були знайдені під час археологічних розкопок у стратифікованих місцях та в шарах із датованим нумізматичним матеріалом, у якому також наявні монети імператорів Юстиніана I (527–565) і Тиберія Костянтина (578–582). Це важлива вказівка, яка дає змогу уточнити датування печаток не пізніше другої половини VI століття нашої ери.

Ключові слова: Сердика, Софія, сфрагистика, Візантійська імперія, Юстиніан I (527–565), Тиберій Костянтин (578–582), християнство, Середземноморська Дакия.

The problem statement. During the archaeological explorations of the ancient city of Serdica (now Sofia) conducted in the past ten years, 48 lead seals from the 4th – 7th A.D. period have been discovered. Until recently, sphragistic monuments from this late antique center have not been published, which was not logical and very mysterious, given its status of a major city of *Dacia Mediterranea* province¹. **The scientific novelty.** Some of the discovered bullae are little-known specimens, or not described until now in the specialized literature. The subject of this publication is three seals, each raising interesting questions.

The first (Fig. 1) has the following description: *Obverse:* The Virgin Hodeghetria, standing facing, with the Infant Saviour on her left arm; she wears nimbus, chiton and maphorion. Christ wears nimbus and himation. In field left and right, cypress tree with top bending towards the Virgin. Wreath border. *Reverse:* Cruciform monogram². Wreath border. (ά – ν - ω - θ) Ιωάννου. Translation: (Seal of) Joan. Lead, 23–25 mm; weight of 16,58 g. Archaeological excavations at ‘Metro station 8 II’³.

There are no exact parallels. The print is perfectly preserved with a very strong relief of the images. It dates back to the 6th A.D. A bull with obverse The Virgin with Child between two cypresses is relatively rare in combination with various reverses. Until now, there is no seal with this description in the array of sphragistic monuments from Bulgaria⁴, and the published copy by Zacos⁵ has a reverse different from the one of the copy found in Serdica.

The second seal (Fig. 2) presented here is with: *Obverse:* In a grainy circle, a cruciform monogram with the letters A, N, θ, ω. It reads Ιωάννου. *Reverse:* Cruciform monogram A, N, H, θ. In this monogram, the reading is uncertain, and one of the variants may also be Ιωάννου, Lead, 15–20 mm; weight of 10,21 g. Archaeological excavations⁶ at ‘Vesletz’ 13. (the territory of ancient Serdica). There is no known parallel.

During the early Byzantine Empire, only the first or baptismal name was used on seals. The parents had a large choice of names: Latin names or their Hellenized versions were used in the eastern part of the empire, traditional Greek names with regional traditions were widely used, also names of Christian saints appeared, which gradually became very popular⁷. As a result, every twelfth child was baptized with the name John, and as a result there are a large number of bulls named John⁸, and some have the same name on both sides, which is usually explained by the kinship between the two persons⁹. In order to identify the person, in some cases his position or title is added, but even this information is not enough to identify the owner of the seal, known to us from documentary or epigraphic sources.

¹ Vladimirova-Aladzova D. A Seal of Constantin I from Serdica. – *Studia Academica Shumenensia* 2016, 3, 2016, 82–88; Владимірова-Аладжова Д. Печат на Приск от Сердика (VI–VII в.) *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 7 (2016), 33–38; Владимірова-Аладжова Д. Печат на император Тиберій II Константин от Сердика. – В: Сборник в чест на професор Петър Делев. София, 2017, 627–632; Владимірова-Аладжова Д. Търговски печати от Сердика. *Studia Archaeologica Universitatis Serdicensis, Supplementum VI* (2018) *Stephanos archaeologicos ad 80 annum professoris Ludmili Getov*. София, 509–514; Владимірова-Аладжова Д. Анонимен печат от края на V и началото на VI век открит в Сердика. В: „Българско царство“ *Imperium Bulgariae* в чест на 60 годишнина на доц. Георги Николов. София, 2018, 125–131; Vladimirova-Aladzova D. Lead plate with the name of Bishop Theodore found in Serdica. – *Studia Academica Shumenensia Contribution to Byzantine Sigillography*. Vol. V, 2018 Shumen University Press, 95–100; Владимірова-Аладжова Д. Монети и пломби от времето на тетрархията, открити в Сердика. – *Нумизматика, сфрагистика и епиграфика*, 14, 2018, 107–114.

² Zacos G. – Veglery A. (1972) *Byzantine Lead Seals*. Vol. I (Basel) no. 249.

³ I thank Dr. Mario Ivanov for the opportunity to publish the artefact.

⁴ Jordanov I. *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*. Vol. I, Sofia, 2003; Jordanov I. *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*. Vol. II, Sofia, 2006; Jordanov I. *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*. Vol. III, Sofia, 2009; Jordanov I. *The Collection of Medieval Seals from the National Archaeological Museum Sofia*, 2011.

⁵ Zacos, G. – Veglery, A. *Byzantine Lead Seals*. Basel 1972, no. 1119.

⁶ Величков, Ж. Спасителни археологически разкопки в УПИ IX – 11 от кв. 16, зона Г – 14, център по плана на гр. София, улица „Веслец“ 13. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2013 г. София*, (2014), 370–371; Владимірова-Аладжова, Д. Нумизматични данни за живота в Сердика през II–III в. (Обект Веслец 13). – *Известия на историческия музей Шумен*. Шумен, (2014), 16, 339–346.

⁷ Cotsonis, J. *The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)*, *Byzantion* 75, 2005, 383–497.

⁸ Cheynet, J.-Cl., Caseau, B. *Sealing Practices in the Byzantine Administration*. – In: Regulski, I., Duistermaat, K., Verkinderen, P. (ed.) *Seals and Sealing Practices In the near East Developments in Administration and magic from Prehistory to the Islamic Period*. Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA, 2012, 134, 133–148.

⁹ Nesbitt, J. W. *Double Names on Early Byzantine Lead Seals*. *DOP* 31, 1977, 109–121.

Description of the third seal: *Obverse*: Bust of the Virgin (*Nikopoios*), nimbate, facing, with head of the Infant Christ before her; she wears the usual dress. In field left and right cross. Wreath border. This image of the Mother of God is of the earliest type presented on the seals¹. *Reverse*: Cruciform monogram as on the horizontal hasta on the left are the letters Π, Ε, on the right Ρ, Κ; on the vertical hasta above Θ, below Α. It reads ΠΕΤΡΘ ΠΑΤΡΙΚΙΘ – seal of Peter Patricius. Lead, 16/19 mm; 8,19g (Fig. 3) Archaeological excavations at ‘Vesletz’ 13 (the territory of ancient Serdica).

There are different variants of the described monogram, but I did not find identical to the one on the seal from Serdica. It is closest to the one reported by *Laurent*² the only difference being in the position of the letter Ρ, which is at the top end of the vertical hasta, and the author reads it as ΠΕΤΡΘ ΠΑΤΡΙΚΙΘ. The same reading with a similar monogram is reported by *Zacos*³.

Patricius is the highest honorary title from the time of the late Roman Empire, which was introduced during the time of Constantine the Great by analogy with the Roman patricians of the Roman Republic. It is awarded to high-ranking officials, including eunuchs and foreign rulers⁴. The review shows that from the *Dumbarton Oaks* collection 52 stamps from VI–VII A.D. with personal names bearing this title were published⁵, at *Zacos* 11 different monograms are deciphered as patricius⁶. In Bulgaria, 3 copies of persons with the title patricius (VI–VII c.) are described, two with a block monogram and one with an inscription⁷, as well as 3 from Romania – two with a cruciform monogram and one with a block monogram⁸. Patricius appears on stamps not only as a title, but as a personal name as well⁹. Dozens of persons with this name are known in prosopography, among them *Orientis, praefectis, honorary consul* and others¹⁰.

In the seals discussed above, the names (№№ 1, 2) and the title (№ 3) of the owner are given in monogram form. Generally there are two types of monograms: block and cruciform. It is accepted that the first type appeared not earlier than the fifth century¹¹, when on the coins the name was also written in this way. In the middle of VI A.D., the cruciform monograms appeared, which are considered to be the typical Byzantine model¹². Initially, it coexisted with the block type, but gradually replaced it. This is connected with the final affirmation of Christianity in Byzantium, when the cross as its simplest and most expressive symbol was placed at the base of the cruciform monogram. The letters are located at the ends of the cross or at the intersection of its shoulders. This shape, as well as the angles formed, allows a large number of letters to be used. This gives the opportunity to encrypt long inscriptions, which fully meets the requirements of a country with an overdeveloped bureaucratic system. Later, when iconoclasm banned the worship of images, the interest towards the cruciform monograms increased¹³. They appear everywhere on objects of monumental and applied art, on the capitals

¹ Bulgurtu, V., Ilash, A. Seals from the Museum of Afyon (Turkey). – *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, 8, K.G. Saur München–Leipzig, 2003, 132, no. 1; Seibt, W. Die Byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich. 1 Teil, Wien 1978, no. 63.

² Laurent, V. Documents de sigillographie byzantine. La collection C. Orghidan (Bibliothèque byzantine – Documents, 1). Paris 1952, № 598.

³ Zacos, G., Veglery, A. Byzantine Lead Seals. I. Basel, 1972, no. 1193.

⁴ Kazhdan, D.P. (ed.) The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium. Oxford University Press, 1991, 1600. The wives of the patricians wore the title patrician.

⁵ http://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/#b_start=15&c4=6th&c15-operator=or&c15=Patricios. (26.02. 201). The seal of Peter Patricius is not published in the collection.

⁶ Zacos, G., Veglery, A. Byzantine Lead Seals. I. Basel, 1972, Pl. 239, no. no. 360–370.

⁷ Yordanov, I. Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria III, Sofia 2009, №№ 469–470.

⁸ Barnea I. Sigilii byzantine din colecția Muzeului de istorie al Republicii Socialiste România. – *Studii șirceta și cercetări de Numismatică*, VIII, 100, no. 5, 11, 12.

⁹ Cheynet J.-C., Gökyıldırım T., Bulgurlu V. Les sceaux byzantins du Musée archéologique d’Istanbul. Istanbul, Juillet 2012, 8.174. Undoubtedly, the variety in the monograms, which are read in the same way, is probably due to the popularity of the name in the period of the early Byzantine Empire. Regarding the title of patricius in this period, the published seals suggest the possibility that she experienced a revival.

¹⁰ Martindale, J. The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire A.D. 527–641. Cambridge, 1992, III-B, 971–972.

¹¹ Seibt, W. The Use of Monograms on Byzantine Seals in the early Middle-Ages (6th to 9th centuries). – *Parekbolai* 6 (2016), 2. <http://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/parekbolai> In fact, in the fifth century, during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) and his successors, square monograms appeared on their coins, see Carson, R. A. G., Kent, J. P. C., Burnett, A. M. The Roman Imperial Coinage. The divided empire and the fall of the western parts A.D.395–491. X, London, 1994, p. 277, №№ 462–465; p. 282, №№ 535–570 (Marcian); p. 293–295 №№ 681–719 (Leo I).

¹² Seibt, W. Op. cit., 2.

¹³ Степанова, Е. В. К эволюции монограмм на ранневизантийских печатях. – *Византийский временник*, 59 (84), Москва, 2000, 233.

of temples, rings, on consular diptichs, silver vessels, coins, seals and more¹. But the monograms were most widely spread on lead seals, where they fit into the field of the matrix².

The Conclusions. Usually, seals like the ones presented above dated to the period 6th-7th A.D. An important circumstance for the bullae from Serdica is that they were found during archeological excavations, in stratified sites and in layers with dated numismatic material, in which the coins of Emperor Justinian I (527–565) and Tiberius Constantine (578–582) predominate. This is an important indication, which makes it possible to specify the dating of the bulls no later than 2 ½ of the 6th A.D.

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¹ Аладжов, Ж. Кръстовиден монограм върху ранновизантийска апликация. – Нумизматика, сфрагистика и епиграфика, 11, 2015, 179–183.

² Степанова, Е. В. К эволюции монограмм на ранневизантийских печатях. – Византийский временник, 59 (84), Москва, 2000, 234.

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List of illustrations:



Fig. 1.
Seal of John



Fig. 2.
Seal of John



Fig. 3.
Seal of Peter Patricius