

Seven Byzantine lead seals from the museum of Ödemiş in western Anatolia

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This short essay presents seven Byzantine lead seals, all of which originate from the local museum in Ödemiş in the province of İzmir in western Turkey. Almost all of them came as acquisition to Ödemiş by local antique dealers. All the pieces have been treated and interpreted here sigillographically for the first time. This small collection of seals is important regarding the administration of the theme of Thrakesion, especially about the offices of the seal owners, and the society of Cayster valley during the Byzantine period.

Keywords: Lead seals; the museum of Ödemiş; Cayster valley; İzmir; western Asia Minor; Thrakesion; sigillography; Early Byzantine period; Middle Byzantine period; Late Byzantine period

In memoriam Ruth Macrides (1949-2019)

Ödemiş and the Cayster valley in the Byzantine period

Ödemiş (in modern Greek “Οδεμήσιο”, Italian “Odemisio” and in French maps “Eudémich”), second largest township of the province of İzmir, lies on a fertile plane c. 113 km southeast of İzmir, close to the Bozdağlar chain, ancient Tmolus, not far from the Küçük Menderes river, ancient Cayster ([map 1](#)). During the Byzantine period Ödemiş was located near the road linking Sardis, the capital of Lydia, converging with the coastal eastern Aegean *metropoleis*, i.e. Ephesus resp. Smyrna. The character of the Cayster valley is little known in Byzantine world,¹ as most of the archaeological

1 So far, the most detailed study of the Cayster valley during the Byzantine period is done by Andreas Külzer: A. Külzer, ‘Streifzüge durch das Tal des Kaÿstrios (Küçük Menderes): Historisch-geographische Impressionen aus Westanatolien’, in *idem* and M.S. Popović (eds.), *Space, landscapes and settlements in*



Map 1: Map of the Cayster valley during the Byzantine period with the referred places in the text (underlined when possessing an archaeological museum).

surface structures were perhaps of *kerpiç* (mudbrick) and few architectural remains of marble, especially churches, were preserved. This inner Aegean landscape was always an agricultural centre with fertile water sources (especially in Palaiopolis) and therefore, Byzantine economy of the region was isolated and based on agricultural products. There were few large cities, but numerous rural minor sites, including some *höyük* (mound) sites. Most influential Graeco-Roman site in this part of the Cayster valley was Hypaepa (Ἵπαιπα), located *c.* four km northwest of Ödemiş and 56.7 km southwest of Sardis which is also mentioned in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (Segment VIII 5). Hypaepa was formerly the seat of a bishop² and corresponds to the village of Ottoman “Dabbey” or “Datbeyi” and modern Günlüce.³ Some other minor Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine sites in Ödemiş and the rest of the Cayster valley were Pyrgion (Birgi), Neicaea or Nicaea (between Türkönü [Ottoman “Ayasuluk”])

Byzantium. Studies in historical geography of the eastern Mediterranean, presented to Johannes Koder (Vienna and Novi Sad 2017) 195–213 and 475–78.

2 Hypaepa was as *protothronos* a suffragan *episcopric* of Ephesus (Asia) and became a metropolis under Isaac II Angelos, but was again reduced to a bishopric under Theodore I Laskaris in A.D. 1216. Cf. J. Preiser-Kapeller, *Der Episkopat im späten Byzanz. Ein Verzeichnis der Metropolen und Bischöfe des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel in der Zeit von 1204 bis 1453* (Saarbrücken 2008) 115; J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris 1981) e.g. 310, *notitia* 10, 11 and *apparatus criticus*.

3 Külzer, ‘Kaÿstrios’, 204–5; R. Meriç, ‘Das Hinterland von Ephesos. Archäologisch-topographische Forschungen im Kaystros-Tal’, *Ergänzungshefte zu den Jahresheften des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien* 12 (Vienna 2009) 104–105.

and Kurucuova), Palaiopolis (Beydağ), Thyraea (Tire), Arcadiupolis (Arkacılar) and Coloe (Kiraz). At the end of the seventh century A.D. Ödemiş and the entire Cayster valley was assigned to the theme Thrakesion⁴ that included the territory of Lydia. Thrakesion is known to have been dominated by small-scale landed property and relatively dispersed estates between the seventh and 12-13th centuries A.D.⁵

During the 19th and 20th centuries several orientalist and ancient scholars visited and reported about Ödemiş and the Cayster valley which were collected by Andreas Külzer extensively.⁶ Other activities in Ödemiş related to Byzantine archaeology that were not widely known in scholarly literature are as follow: First excavations were done in Ödemiş by a local Ottoman Greek from Smyrna, Demosthenes (Emmanuel) Baltazzi, before the year 1885,⁷ and also the French engineer Paul Gaudin carried out some excavations in Ödemiş in 1905. In the course of the British project of the study of five Medieval castles between 1992 and 1996 one of the focus was the Cayster valley where all the project's sites are to be found, including Yılanlı Kale which lies 15 km north-east of Ödemiş.⁸ Between the years 2011 and 2015 a field survey project was carried out in Hypaepa by the Yüzüncü Yıl University in Van where Byzantine evidence was barely reported. It is obvious that Hypaepa had enlarged its urban territories during the Byzantine period and survived until the 12th-13th century A.D., until the first Turkomen came to the area.⁹ In recent years between 2002 and 2019 there have been several new finds in the Cayster valley in terms of Byzantine archaeology which remain as scholarly unknown: Palaiopolis is briefly excavated both

4 Külzer, 'Kaÿstrios', 200, note 20; 203, note 31; 407, fig. x-4; 408, fig. x-6. For Thrakesion cf. E. Kountoura-Galake, St. Lampakes, T. Loungis, A. Savvides, and V. Vlyssidou, *Η Μικρά Ασία των θεμάτων. Έρευνες πάνω στη γεωγραφική φουσιολογία και προσωπογραφία των βυζαντινών θεμάτων της Μικράς Ασίας (7ος–11ος αι.) / Asia Minor and its themes: Studies on the geography and prosopography of the Byzantine themes of Asia Minor (7th-11th century)*, The National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research, Research series 1 (Athens 1998) 201–34 and 407–24.

5 J. Haldon, 'Military service, military lands, and the status of soldiers: Current problems and interpretations', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993) 48, note 119.

6 On all of the former researches in the Cayster valley cf. Külzer, 'Kaÿstrios', 200–202. A primary survey of Hypaepa and Pyrgion: G. Weber, 'Hypaepa, le Kaleb d'Aiasourat, Birghiet Oedémich', *Revue des études grecques* 5/17 (1892) 7–21 http://www.persee.fr/doc/reg_0035-2039_1892_num_5_17_5531. In a currently ongoing research in the course of his Ph.D. thesis, Ali Özkan at the Dokuz Eylül University in Izmir focuses on the Late Antique-Early Byzantine archaeology and sites in the Cayster valley, especially in the area of Tire.

7 Cf. S. Reinach, 'Chronique d'Orient', *Revue archéologique* 3 (1885) 97–116.

8 For this project and its results: H. Barnes and M. Whittow, 'The Oxford University/British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara survey of medieval castles of Anatolia (1993). Yılanlı Kalesi: preliminary report and new perspectives', *Anatolian Studies* 44 (1994) 187–206; also cf. C. Foss, 'Explorations in mount Tmolus', *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 11 (1978) 21–60; also published as *idem*, *History and archaeology of Byzantine Asia Minor* (Aldershot 1990) paper IX.

9 Külzer, 'Kaÿstrios', 204 and 206.

by the University of Trakya in the 1990s and by the local museum of Ödemiş in 2009 where its citadel with a Roman temple, two Byzantine basilicas and a Post-Byzantine church of 1850s were examined in detail.¹⁰ The second and larger basilica in Palaiopolis features three phases, dating from the fifth-sixth centuries A.D., 12th-13th centuries and a later one. In the first phase of the second basilica an extensive floor mosaic with the geometric and floral decoration of the Early Byzantine period was found. Beside several other finds, a very well preserved *prothesis*, a *naos* with 35 burials as well as a *diaconicon* with three graves were excavated and a fragmentary inscription with the name of the city was discovered in the fill of the church.¹¹ A further church with an extensive mosaic floor was discovered in 2002 in Yolüstü (Ottoman “Bezdegüme”) village, c. five km east of Ödemiş where a rescue excavation was carried out by the directorship of the museum of Ödemiş in November 2012. This church measures 3 x 8 m x h. 0.65 m and dated to the fifth-sixth century A.D.¹² In 2017 the museum of Ödemiş carried out a rescue excavation in another Early Byzantine church in Ödemiş where they have discovered some architectural plastic elements.¹³ Neicaea was known as a mineral deposit of minium (red lead) which was a bright orange red pigment that was widely used in the Middle Ages for the decoration of manuscripts and for painting.¹⁴ At the *acropolis* of Neicaea Victor Schultze, a German church historian and archaeologist, noted an extensive basilical church in 1926¹⁵, accidental re-discovery of which was reported by the Turkish press in 2017. During the construction of a new hospital south of the museum of Ödemiş a late antique villa complex has been discovered in October 2014.¹⁶ In June 2012 in Potamia, c. three-four km north of modern Bademli, on the southern slope of its *acropolis* an olive oil workshop of Late Hellenistic-Roman period has been discovered which was transported to the garden of the museum.¹⁷

10 S. Çetin, ‘İzmir’in Gizemli Antik Kentleri: Palaiapolis ve Neikaia’, *İzmir Kültür ve Turizm Dergisi* 3/18 (2012) 74–78 (hereafter Çetin) <http://www.izmirdergisi.com/tr/dergi-arsivi/42-18inci-sayi/1893-izmir-in-gizemli-etnik-kentleri-palaiapolis-ve-neikaia>.

11 Çetin, ‘Palaiapolis’, 77. Byzantine epigraphic finds in the museum of Ödemiş are currently being studied by E. Lafli.

12 Unpublished; personal observation in March 2017.

13 So far, this excavation remains as unpublished; some architectural blocks, such as an impost capital with a cross, are being exposed in the garden of the museum of Ödemiş. We would like to thank Mrs Feride Kat, the new director of the museum, for this information.

14 Çetin, ‘Palaiapolis’, 78.

15 V. Schultze, *Altchristliche Städte und Landschaften*, vol. 2/2: *Kleinasien* (Leipzig 1926) 84–85 <https://archive.org/details/altchristliche22schu>. Also cf. Çetin, ‘Palaiapolis’, figs. at pp. 77–78. On the topography and archaeological remains of this site cf. V. Sevin, N. Arslan Sevin and S. Çetin, *Neikaia, Unutulmuş Bir Antik Kent*, Ödemiş Müzesi Yayını 1 (Ödemiş 2013); and V. Sevim, ‘Neikaia: Kadim Bir Madenci Kenti’, in M. Arslan and F. Baz (eds.), *Arkeoloji, Tarih ve Epigrafi’nin Arasında: Prof. Dr. Vedat Çelgin’in 68. Doğum Günü Onuruna Makaleler* (Istanbul 2018) 803–808.

16 Unpublished.

17 Unpublished.

The museum of Ödemiş and its Byzantine sigillographical collection

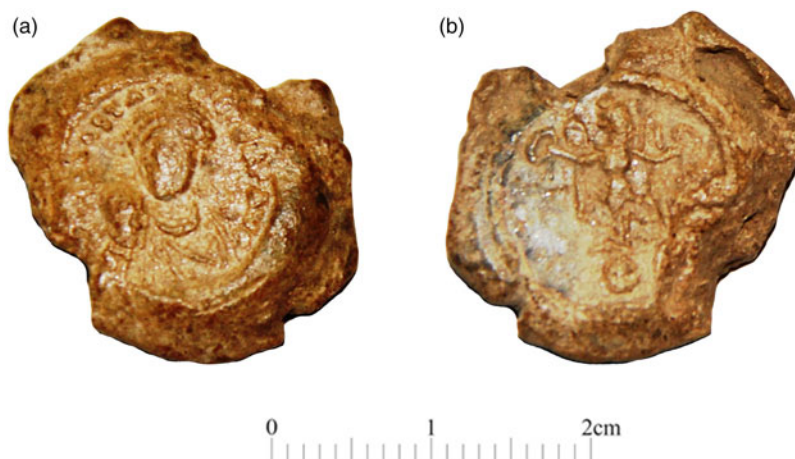
The local archaeological museum of Ödemiş is the fifth local museum in the Turkish province of Izmir, after Selçuk-Ephesus, Bergama, Çeşme and Tire, and the youngest one. Its collection begins officially in 1983, but its exhibition was opened in 1987, on a building site donated to the community of Ödemiş by Mr Mutahhar Şerif Başoğlu, a jurist and local collector in Ödemiş. Local finds from the Cayster valley that were previously kept in the museums of Izmir, Tire, Istanbul and Ankara were transferred to the new museum, which preserves some important Byzantine sculptural and few epigraphic material. So far only few Byzantine and Post-Medieval finds have been published from the museum of Ödemiş.¹⁸ A large collection of Byzantine inscribed *instrumenta*, including, among others, bronze and lead weights as well as bronze crosses etc., were studied by E. Laflı and will be published soon. A small collection of Byzantine architectural plastic elements and epigraphic finds are being exhibited in the garden of the Çakırağa mansion in Birgi which is an offshoot section of the museum of Ödemiş.

The museum of Ödemiş possesses at least 27 Byzantine lead seals, most of which originate as acquisition to Ödemiş between 1990 and 2015. Between the years 1990 and 2015 25 lead seals were purchased from eight different salesmen: 12 seals from Mr Mehmet Özpınar, a local cobbler in Ödemiş, three seals from Mr Hasan Beden, a known numismatic collector in Izmir who deceased in 2013, each with one seal from Mr Mehmet Adnan Düzalan, a local antique dealer in Ödemiş, from Mr Mehmet Türkan, from Mr Adem Demirel, from Mr Tuncay Üstel, from Mr Hasan Gümüş, a school teacher in Ödemiş, and from Mr Celil Karakuş. Salesmen of three seals were, however, not registered in the inventory. Especially in the year of 2009 a total of 12 seals in total were purchased and inventoried by the museum.

No exact provenances of these seals are known, except no. 3 below which is supposedly found in the village of Aydoğdu that situates six km far from Kiraz, *i.e.* Byzantine Coloe, which is located 29 km east of Ödemiş. As the museum had originally the status of the private collection of Mr Başoğlu and had therefore a very heterogeneous assemblage, most of the acquired seals originate most likely from the Cayster valley or the other countryside inland of the eastern Aegean coast. As their measurements, state of preservations and material seem to be similar to each other, most of them came perhaps together from the same context.

At least 13 of these lead seals are currently being exhibited in the museum, *i.e.* nos. 1–3 and 6, and the rest are kept in the depots of the museum. No fewer than two seals were transferred to the museum through legal courses in 2016 which are kept in a specific section, and therefore excluded from our research.

18 Some *fibulae* as well as Armenian inscriptions were published from this museum: E. Laflı and M. Buora, 'Fibulae in the museum of Ödemiş (western Turkey)', *Archiv orientální* 80/3 (2012) 417–34; *idem* and Y. Deveci Bozkuş, 'Some epigraphic and archaeological documents from western Anatolia during the late Ottoman period', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 48/2 (2014) 295–99, nos. 5–8.



Figs. 1a-b. Obv. and rev. of the imperial lead seal of Anastasius.

Only seven seals from this collection, however, are the focus of this paper, as most of the rest are not legible, and these selected seven Byzantine seals have been treated and interpreted below sigillographically for the first time.

Catalogue of seven selected lead seals from Ödemiş

1. Imperial lead seal of Anastasius (figs. 1a-b)

Acc. no. 1854 (on p. 69 in the inventory).

Provenance. Purchased on November 5, 1991 from Mr Mehmet Özpınar for 20.000 TL (\$US 4.5) and inventoried on November 25, 1991.

Position. In the exhibition showcase, F2-2/13.

Measurements. Diam. 21 mm, th. 4 mm and wg. 15.7 gr.

State of preservation. The seal has breaks at the ends of the channel.

Obv. Bust of the emperor Anastasius, facing, beardless, with a crown (probably with a cross at the top) and *pendilia*. He wears divitision and chlamys, which is fastened in front of the right shoulder by a *fibula* with long cords, decorated with pearls.¹⁹

The circular inscription is partially legible: ...NASCA...ERPAVG

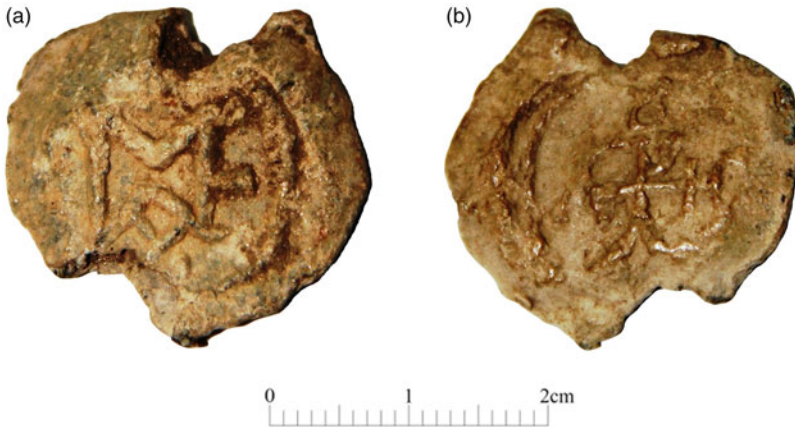
Transcription. [D(ominus) n(oster) A]nasta[sius p]erp(etuus) Aug(ustus).

Rev. Dancing winged Victoria/Nike above a globe, the head turned right, holding a laurel-wreath in both hands.²⁰

Dating. A.D. 491-518.

¹⁹ For similar pieces in recent time cf. A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt and W. Seibt, *Der byzantinische Mensch in seinem Umfeld. Weitere Bleisiegel der Sammlung Zarnitz im Museum August Kestner* (Rahden, Westphalia 2015), no. 1.

²⁰ Such a Victoria was usual on official imperial seals until the mid-sixth century A.D.; Justinian I placed a cross on either side of Victoria, as if it was an angel. Probably Justin II preferred a bust of the Theotokos



Figs. 2a-b. Obv. and rev. of the monogrammatic lead seal of Megas (?) *stratelates*.

2. *Monogrammatic lead seal of Megas (?) stratelates* (figs. 2a-b)

Acc. no. 1831 (on p. 44 in the inventory).

Provenance. Purchased on July 13, 1990 from Mr Mehmet Özpınar and inventoried on May 31, 1991.

Position. In the exhibition showcase, F2-2/11.

Measurements. Diam. 25 mm, th. 2 mm, h. of central My on obv. 6 mm and wg. 13.1 gr.

State of preservation. Heavy outbreaks at the ends of the channel.

Obv. Simple name-monogram with a large central My, combined with an Alpha at the bottom and probably an Epsilon at right. In the Alpha a Lambda, perhaps even Omicron and Ypsilon can be placed, and in the Epsilon also a Sigma and Gamma. Usually in monograms Iota is not written separately, and therefore it can be set in every vertical line. Perhaps there was no letter above the My where only unclear vestiges are placed. The combination A, E, Λ, M, O, C, V could read Μεσσαλίου, the combination A, E, Λ, M, O, V Εύμαλίου, Αμελίου, Εύλαμίου, the combination A, Γ, E, Λ, M, O, V Μεγάλου, the combination A, Γ, E, Λ, M Μελιγαλᾶ. We prefer the name Megas, but that is only a preliminary hypothesis.²¹

Rev. This damaged cross monogram presents a title or an office. In the vertical line we read V, O, T, P, and A, in the horizontal line probably Λ and H ligated with C (sigma);²² we should interpret the monogram as στρατηλάτου.

Translation. (Seal of) Megas(?) *stratelates*.

instead of Victoria for the first time [cf. W. Seibt, 'Review of Zacos and Veglery', *Byzantinoslavica* 36 (1975) 208–209, conc. no. 3c], though in *DOSeals* VI 6.1 this type is again attributed to Justinian I.

21 A Meligalas was mentioned by some seals of the ninth century A.D.; cf. G. Zacos and A. Veglery, *Byzantine lead seals* I (Basel 1972) nos. 2172–2178.

22 This monogram is similar to the type 453 in: Zacos and Veglery, I, pl. 241.



Figs. 3a-b. Obv. and rev. of the monogrammatic lead seal of Ioannes *anthypatos*.

Prosopographic comments. In this time *stratelates* can be a high ranking military commander²³ or only a title, yet again high ranking.

Dating. C. end of sixth-first half of the seventh century A.D.

3. Monogrammatic lead seal of Ioannes *anthypatos* (figs. 3a-b)

Acc. no. 2003/2 (formerly 2812; on p. 39 in the inventory).

Provenance. Found in the village of Aydoğdu that is located six km far from Kiraz, purchased on January 16, 2003 from Mr Adem Demirel for 15.000.000 TL (\$10.- US) and inventoried on July 31, 2003 by Mr Yılmaz Akkan, a staff of the museum of Ödemiş.

Position. In the exhibition showcase, F2-7/9.

Measurements. Diam. 24 mm, th. 5 mm, h. of let. 1 mm and wg. 12.2 gr.

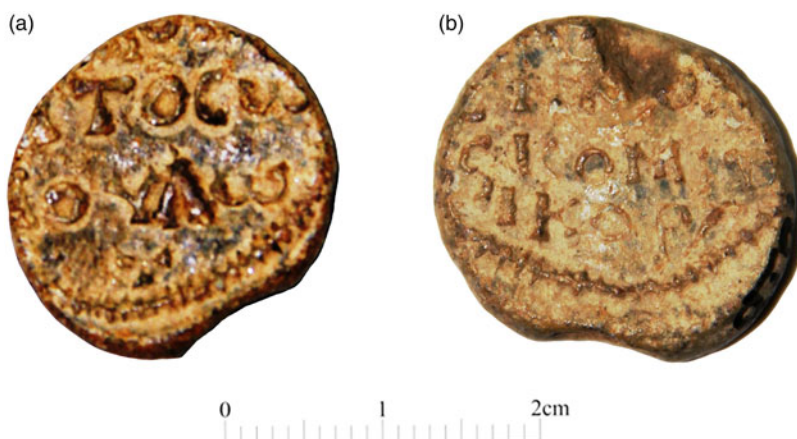
State of preservation. The seal is struck off-centre, with small parts of the field lost. A break at the upper end of the channel.

Obv. Cruciform monogram with a name. At left A, at right N, at the bottom Omega, at the top an O is visible, but the V above is lost. This is a quite commonly attested monogram (type no. 249 of Zacos and Veglery) and should be probably read as Ἰωάννου.²⁴

Rev. Cruciform monogram, probably representing a title or office. In the center a dominant Theta, at left a Pi, at right a Ny, but ligated with a relatively modest Tau (above the left vertical line of the Ny), at the bottom Alpha, at the top Omicron, probably together with a (lost) Ypsilon. The solution of the monogram should be

23 From the fourth to the sixth century A.D. the Latin *magister militum* could be translated as στρατηγός or στρατηλάτης, but after the reforms of Heraclius at the latest only στρατηγός was the *terminus technicus* for the highest military commands, and στρατηλάτης one step lower. Cf. A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, 'From magister militum to strategos: The evolution of the highest military commands in early Byzantium (5th-7th c.)', *Travaux et Mémoires* 21/1 (=Mélanges J.-Cl. Cheynet) (Paris 2017) 789–96.

24 Cf. Zacos and Veglery, I, no. 1945 and pl. 236.



Figs. 4a-b. Obv. and rev. of the lead seal of N.N., *spatharios* and *komes kortes*.

ἀνθυπάτου representing the office or title of *anthypatos*. A similar monogram is not attested to our knowledge.

Translation. (Seal of) *Ioannes anthypatos*.

Prosopographic comments. *Anthypatos* is the translation of Latin *proconsul*. The province of Asia was still in this time governed by a (civil) proconsul / *anthypatos*. – Though *anthypatos* can also be a title in the seventh century A.D., in our case we prefer to interpret it as the office.²⁵

Comparandum. A nearly contemporary seal of a *Ioannes anthypatos* (only with text on both sides) was published by Zacos and Veglery.²⁶

Dating. Ca. first half of the seventh century A.D.

4. Lead seal of N.N., *spatharios* and *komes kortes* (figs. 4a-b)

Acc. no. 1818.

Measurements. Diam. 26 mm, th. 4 mm; h. of let. – obv. 3 mm, – rev. 2 mm and wg. 10.9 gr.

State of preservation. The imprint is strongly off-centre and much of the upper part is lost.

Obv.

....
 ..O..
 ..TOCΩ
 ΔOVΛΩ
 +

25 For the civil functions of the *anthypatos* in the seventh century A.D. cf. L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the iconoclast era c. 680–850. A history* (Cambridge 2011) 671–79.

26 Zacos and Veglery, I, no. 2881; cf. J.R. Martindale, *The prosopography of the Later Roman Empire 3/ 1-2. A.D. 527–641* (Cambridge 1992) 698, *Ioannes* 212 (dated to A.D. 550–650). In this case we do not know its provenance, perhaps Istanbul, where most of the Zacos collection was acquired.

Rev.

....

 ΣΠΑΘΑ
 ΣΚΟΜΙΤ
 ΙΚΟΡ/

Transcription. [Κύριε οἱ Θεοτόκε β]ο[ήθη] τ(ῶ) σῶ δούλω [NN] σπαθα(ρίω) (καὶ) κόμυτι κόρ(της).

Translation. Lord, help your servant N.N., spatharios and komes kortes.

Sigillographic comments. The letters are of different size; some Omicra are quite small, though the *siglum* for καὶ, S, is very tall. The abbreviation sign, which is an oblique line, is long. On the obv. at the beginning of the third line there seem to be traces of an H, pointing to βοήθη instead of βοήθει. The cross under the obv. legend is a rare phenomenon, especially when there is no further one at the end of the rev. legend.

The name of the seal's owner is completely lost – probably it was a long name; possibly the man had the title of β(ασιλικός) σπαθάριος.

Prosopographic comments. There are attested imperial *kometes* of *korte*, “comes of the tent”, i.e. a kind of chief of the staff; but in our case this person was a thematic “comes of the tent”, probably of Thrakesion.²⁷

Dating. Ca. first half of the eighth century A.D.

5. Lead seal of Theodoros, imperial spatharios and strategos of Thrakesion (figs. 5a-b)

Measurements. Diam. 28 mm, th. 4-5 mm and wg. 12.3 gr.

State of preservation. Outbreaks at the ends of the channel.

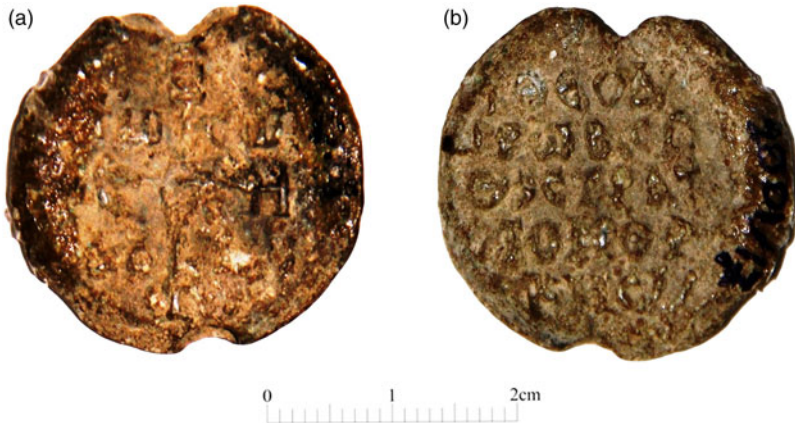
Obv. Traces of a cruciform invocative monogram, probably Laurent V, with the usual *tetragram*: Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῶ σῶ δούλω.

The Beta of the monogram at the bottom is relatively small. At the top we assume to have a small Tau and an Omicron. At left there was probably a Kappa (including the Epsilon) and the Eta at right is clearly visible.

Rev.

+ΘΕΟΔ
 ΩΡΩΒ/ΣΠ
 .ΘΣΤΡΑΤ.
 Γ/ΤΟΝΘΡ
 .ΚΗΚ/

²⁷ Several thematic *kometes* of *korte* are attested in sigillographic sources; see, for example, a later κόμης τῆς κόρτης τοῦ Ὀψικίου in J. Nesbitt and N. Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art* (hereafter *DOSeals*) III: *West, Northwest and Central Asia Minor and the Orient* (Washington D.C. 1996) 39.40. For κόμης τῆς κόρτης under the *strategos* cf. N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles. Introduction, texte et commentaire* (Paris 1972) 341.



Figs. 5a-b. Obv. and rev. of the lead seal of Theodoros, *spatharios* and *strategos* of Thrakesion.

Transcription. + Θεοδώρω βασιλικῷ σπ[α]θ(αρίω) (καὶ) στρατ[η]γ(ῶ) τ(ῶ)ν Θρ[α]κησι-
(ίων).

Translation. Mother of God, protect your servant Theodoros, imperial *spatharios* and *strategos* of Thrakesion.

Prosopographic comments. The title of (imperial) *spatharios* was modest for an important commander like the *strategos* of Thrakesion, but in the second half of the eighth and early ninth centuries A.D. there are also other similar examples for this case.²⁸

When the important *magisterium militum per Thracias* was abolished, some regiments were transferred to southwestern Anatolia. This region did not need a strong army for centuries, but after the progress of the Arab invasions around A.D. 694/695 it became necessary to defend also these provinces by a high ranking *strategos*; thus, this military command was called “Thrakesion”.²⁹

Comparanda. There are two very similar seals, one in Dumbarton Oaks³⁰ and one in Istanbul.³¹

Dating. Second half of the eighth century A.D.

6. Lead seal of Leon (?), *patrikios protospatharios* and *strategos* of Thrakesion (figs. 6a-b)
Acc. no. 1815 (on p. 30 in the inventory).

28 Cf. *DOSeals* III 2.50–51.

29 Cf. Wassiliou-Seibt, ‘From magister militum to strategos’, 799–800, 802.

30 DO 55.1.1213 (photo no. BZS 1955.1.1213), eds. Zacos and Vegler, I, no. 2462; *DOSeals* III 2.53. Cf. R.-J. Lillie, C. Ludwig, T. Pratsch, I. Rochow et al., *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit. Erste Abteilung (641–867)*, 6 vols. (Berlin-New York, 1999–2002) (hereafter *PmbZ*) #7618.

31 Istanbul, Archaeological Museum 370, ed. V. Bulgurlu, *Bizans Kurşun Mühürleri* (Istanbul 2007) no. 191; J.-Cl. Cheynet, T. Gökyıldırım and V. Bulgurlu, *Les sceaux byzantins du Musée archéologique d’Istanbul* (Istanbul 2012) no. 3.129. This seal was already mentioned in J. Ebersolt, ‘Sceaux byzantins du musée de Constantinople’, *Revue numismatique* IV/18 (1919) 403, no. 534, though with the incorrect name Ioannes. The same mistake is repeated in *PmbZ* #3275.



Figs. 6a-b. Obv. and rev. of the lead seal of Leon (?), *patrikios protospatharios* and *strategos* of Thrakesion.

Provenance. Purchased on July 10, 1990 from Mr Mehmet Adnan Düzalan and inventoried on May 30, 1991.

Position. In the exhibition showcase F2-2/9.

Measurements. Diam. 27 x 21 mm, th. 3 mm, h. of let. 3 mm and wg. 16.65 gr.

State of preservation. The seal is struck off-centre, the upper part, especially the first line of the rev., is nearly lost. In addition to this the lower part of the reverse is partially damaged.

Obv.: Invocative monogram of the type Laurent VIII with the usual *tetragram*. The ligature O-V at the top is lost, but the Rho is visible. The Beta at the bottom is very large, reaching nearly the central Theta; the two loops are not connected. This type was frequent in the later eighth century A.D.

Transcription. Κύριε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ.

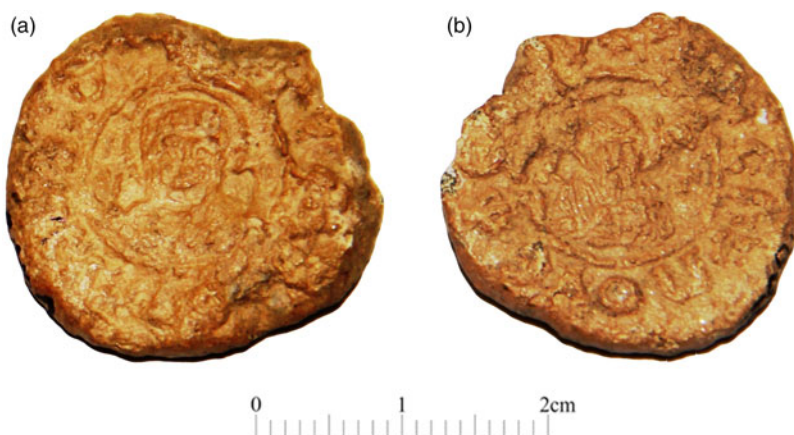
Rev.

.....
ΤΠΑΤΡ.Κ
Α/ΣΠΑΘ/Σ.
ΤΡΑΤ.Ω.
.ΡΑΚ.

Transcription. [+ Λέον]τ(ι)(;) πατρ[ι]κ(ίω) (πρωτο)σπαθ(αρίω) (καὶ) [σ]τρατ(ηγῶ) [τ]ῷ[ν
 Θ]ρακ(η)[σ(ίωv)].

Translation. Lord, help your servant Leon, *patrikios*, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of the Thrakesion.

Sigillographic and prosopographic comments. The name Leon is not sure, but the vestiges seem to point in this direction. In the fourth line there could be traces of a quite narrow Tau, in contrast to the Tau before. This person was a high ranking commander of Thrakesion; Asia and Lydia belonged to the same *thema*.



Figs. 7a-b. Obv. and rev. of the lead seal of Konstantinos (?).

Comparandum. A seal in Dumbarton Oaks (acc. no. 58.106.3156)³² offers some similarities to our type, as its rev. legend calls Leon *patrikios* and *strategos* of Thrakesion. This seal is probably elder than our one, but it is not clear if this person was the Leon *patrikios* and *strategos* of the Thrakesion who was killed in A.D. 758/759 in the Bulgarian war.³³

Dating. Late eighth century A.D.

7. Lead seal of Konstantinos (?) (figs. 7a-b)

Acc. no. 1882 (on p. 97 in the inventory).

Provenance. Purchased on August 27, 1992 from Mr Mehmet Özpınar for 40.000 TL (\$5,80 US) and inventoried on November 24, 1992.

Position. In the exhibition showcase F2-2/14.

Measurements. Diam. 20 mm, th. 4 mm, h. of let. 3 mm and wg. 11.1 gr.

State of preservation. The surface of this seal is heavily crumpled.

Obv. In the central circle appears the bust of a *virgo orans*, the type of Theotokos of Blachernae (without the bust of Christ). The *sigla* are not visible; we therefore would prefer only M / Θ.

Around the figure there was a circular inscription, beginning at the top with a cross, but not a single letter can be read with certainty; perhaps there was an invocation of the Theotokos.

Rev. In the central circle there is a male bust, probably a bearded bishop with the Gospels in his left hand whereas his name is not clear through the unclear traces of the letters. Therefore his identification remains as unidentified.

32 Zacos and Veglery, I, no. 2132; *DOSeals* III 2.43.

33 Theophanes I 431. Cf. also W. Seibt, 'Drei byzantinische Bleisiegel aus Ephesos', *Litterae Numismaticae Vindobonenses* 1 (1979) 148–151 (seal of a Leon *patrikios* and *hypostrategos* of Thrakesion).

Also here the circular inscription started at the top preceded by a small cross. Some letters seem to offer the verb σκέποις; the three letters before that, the beginning of the legend, could perhaps offer the name Konstantinos.

Transcription. It is only hypothetical: + ΚΩ.ΚΚΕΠΟΙ|CΦΕ..V: Κω[v(στατῖνον)] σκέποις ΦΕ..V.

Dating. Second half of the 11th/beginning of the 12th century A.D.

Other Byzantine lead seals and sigillographical *instrumenta* from the museum of Ödemiş

A further 18 Byzantine lead seals from the museum of Ödemiş which were not presented above are as follows: Acc. nos. 2001/17 (A) (formerly 2771; diam. 28 mm and th. 4 mm), 2005/13 (A) (formerly 2884; diam. 15 mm, th. 6 mm and wg. 5.9 gr), 2007/4 (M) (formerly 2932; diam. 28 mm), 2009/01 (M) (formerly 2943; diam. 13 mm; obv. a cruciform monogram, rev. inscription in five lines), 2009/03 (M) (formerly 2944; diam. 20 mm; rev. inscription in four lines), 2009/04 (M) (formerly 2945; diam. 25 mm and th. 6 mm; obv. a cruciform monogram, rev. inscription in three lines), 2009/05 (M) (formerly 2946; diam. 25 mm; obv. a cruciform monogram, rev. inscription in four lines), 2009/07 (M) (formerly 2949; diam. 19 mm and th. 6 mm; obv. a cruciform monogram, rev. inscription in three lines), 2009/08 (M) (formerly 3040; diam. 26 mm and th. 3 mm; obv. a cruciform monogram, rev. inscription in three lines), 2009/10 (M) (formerly 3041; diam. 20 mm and th. 6 mm; obv. a cruciform monogram, rev. inscription in four lines), 2009/11 (M) (formerly 3042; diam. 26 mm; obv. a cruciform monogram, rev. inscription in three lines), 2009/12 (M) (formerly 3043; diam. 17 mm; obv. a cruciform monogram, rev. inscription in three lines), 2009/13 (M) (formerly 3044; diam. 18 mm; rev. inscription in five lines), 2009/15 (M) (formerly 3046; diam. 22 mm; rev. inscription in six lines), 2009/16 (M) (formerly 3047; diam. 17 mm), 2015/61 (formerly 2015/2M; diam. 31 mm; rev. inscription in six lines), 2015/62 (diam. 23 mm) and 2015/63 (diam. 23 mm). A lead seal bearing on the obv. a winged and nude Eros standing right, legs crossed over, resting on torch sitting on altar (?) (acc. no. 2007/26, formerly 2928; diam. 19 mm, th. 2 mm and weight 3.19 gr; rev. no decoration) as well as few other earlier seals have been excluded from this study, as they belong to the Roman period.

Two last Byzantine sigillographical *instrumenta* in the museum of Ödemiş are the fragments of a steatite casting mould for a magical amulet and other instruments with the acc. no. 1746 (figs. 8a-9c).³⁴ Measurements of the plate 1 are l. 31.0 cm, w. 13.0 cm, th. 2.1 cm; and the plate 2 are l. 27.2 cm, w. 14.1 cm, th. 2.0 cm. These steatite mould plates were acquired by the museum for 40.000 TL (\$US 28) on September 23,

34 Their pictures were published in an exhibition catalogue: A. Ödekan (ed.), "Kalanlar", 12.-13. Yüzyıllarda Türkiye'de Bizans / The "remnants", 12th and 13th centuries Byzantine objects in Turkey (Istanbul 2007).

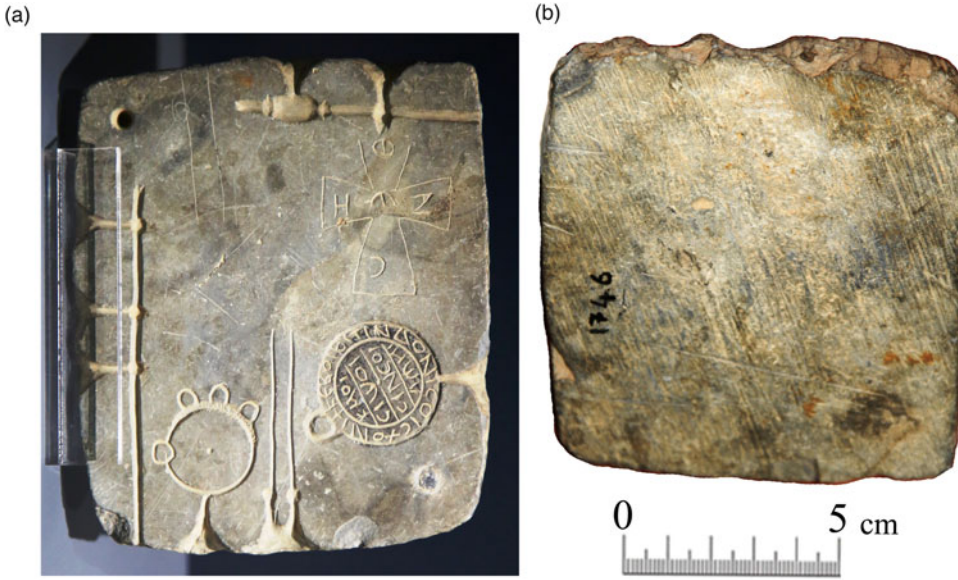


Fig. 8a. Obv. of the steatite casting mould plate 1 for a magical amulet and other instruments.



Fig. 8b. Obv. of the magical amulet.

1988 from Mr İlhami Boz and inventoried on November 1, 1991. Both of them are currently being exhibited in the showcase O2-1/1 of the museum. On the plate 1 the upper right and left bottom edges are broken and missing. Except for some scratches and little missing chips, both are very well preserved. They are fashioned from a pale greenish gray steatite or soapstone which is a talc-schist and type of metamorphic rock.



Figs. 9a-b. Obv. and rev. of the steatite casting mould plate 2.



Fig. 9c. Rev. of the magical amulet.

The plate 1 was a casting mould for the obv. of a magical amulet, two reliquary crosses and six other instruments forms of which were carved in linears on the stone (figs. 8a-b). The obv. of the magical amulet on this plate consists of a figure in the middle of a medallion that looks like a crudely executed head of Medusa which is surrounded by a crude inscription with + ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟ + Ο-Κ ΚΟ ΣΑΒΑΘΩ, that reads (with errors) as Ἅγιος Ἄγιο(ς) Θ(εὸ)ς Κ(ύρι)ο(ς) Σαβᾶθ. Similar inscriptions

Table 1: Byzantine sigillographical evidence from the museum of Ödemiş.

Nos.	Accession numbers	Military or prosopographic personalities	Datings
1	1854	Anastasius	A.D. 491-518
2	1831	Megas (?) <i>stratelates</i>	ca. end of sixth-first half of the seventh century A.D.
3	2003/2 (formerly 2812)	Ioannes <i>anthypatos</i>	ca. first half of the seventh century A.D.
4	1818	N.N., <i>spatharios</i> and <i>komes kortes</i>	ca. first half of the eighth century A.D.
5	?	Theodoros, imperial <i>spatharios</i> and <i>strategos</i> of Thrakesion	Second half of the eighth century A.D.
6	1815	Leon (?), <i>patrikios protospatharios</i> and <i>strategos</i> of Thrakesion	Late eighth century A.D.
7	1882	Konstantinos (?)	Second half of the 11th/beginning of the 12th century A.D.

are known.³⁵ Its center represents probably a human head, from which serpents radiate in every direction (fig. 8b). In the study of Campbell Bonner such a type is interpreted as “uterine symbol derived from the *octopus* version”.³⁶ Though there are many such magical amulets preserved, no exact parallel is known.³⁷

The plate 2 has the reverse of the magical amulet, a cross with the inscription of ΦΨC - ΖΩΗ and two other instruments (fig. 9a). The amulet features four underlined lines of an horizontal inscription that reads ΚΜΟΙΙCΙΨΟΙΙCΙΝCΟΙΙΑΜΗΙ (fig. 9c). Its last line intends probably Αμήν, but the rest remains enigmatic. This central inscription is surrounded with another circumscription in a circular ring that reads: + ΚΕ ΒΟΙΘΙ ΤΙΝ ΔΟΝΙCΟΙCΧΟΝΙ, starting with + Κ(ύρι)ε βο(ή)θ(ει) τ(ή)ν δ(ούλην), but the rest is

35 E.g. G. Schlumberger, ‘Amulettes byzantins anciens, destinés à combattre les maléfices et maladies’, *REG* 1892, l.c. 137; and J. Spier, ‘Medieval Byzantine magical amulets and their tradition’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993) pl. 3, no. 37.

36 C. Bonner, *Studies in magical amulets chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, *University of Michigan Studies* (Ann Arbor, MI 1950) 90; and H. Björklund, ‘Classical traces of metamorphosis in the Byzantine hystera formula’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 70 (2016) 151–66. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26497732>.

37 Cf. for a Judaeo-Christian amulet from the British Museum with the reference to St Sisinnios (posted on the website of the BM): A.A. Barb, ‘Three elusive amulets’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964) 13–16. We would like to thank to Georgi Parpulov for this reference. Cf. also G. Schlumberger, ‘Amulettes byzantines anciennes’, in *idem*, *Mélanges d’archéologie byzantine: monnaies, médailles, méreaux, jetons, amulettes, bulles d’or et de plomb, poids de verre et de bronze, ivoires, objets d’orfèvrerie, bagues, reliquaires* (Paris 1895) 117–40; G. Vikan, ‘Art, medicine, and magic in Early Byzantium’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984) 65–86; K. Schoneveld, ‘Ein frühbyzantinisches Bronzeamulett im Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum. Zur Genese der mittelbyzantinischen Hystera-Amulette’, *Jahrbuch des RGZM* 61 (2014) 267–306; and A. Bosselmann-Ruickbie, ‘A Byzantine casting mould for a hystera (womb) amulet and a cross in the Museum Schnütgen, Cologne: A contribution to the cultural and religious history of Byzantium and the material culture of Byzantine magic’, in J. Drauschke, E. Kislinger, K. Kühtreiber, T. Kühtreiber, G. Scharrer-Liška and T. Vida (eds.), *Lebenswelten zwischen Archäologie und Geschichte, Festschrift für Falko Daim zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Monographien* 150 (Mainz 2018) 629–44.

enigmatic. This amulet has perhaps some relationships to Saint Sisinnios of Parthia who was sometimes mentioned in similar contexts. Rest of the surface of these plates was polished. The back of the moulds are left unworked (fig. 9b). The dating of these plates is problematic; some similar material is assigned to the Early Byzantine period, but we would rather prefer a later period, perhaps seventh–eighth century A.D.³⁸

Conclusion

These seven seals range from the fifth to the eleventh/twelfth century A.D. (table 1, p. 37). The first is an imperial seal from the early fifth century; the last, probably a private seal, is from the second half of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century. All the others stem from the seventh or eighth century, with a clear majority of military personalities, whereas there is only one civil governor present. As these seals were most probably found in the Cayster valley they point to a certain importance of this fertile region, as an agricultural and commercial source and route for Byzantine Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis and Constantinople.

Notes and acknowledgements

Some abbreviations in alphabetic order: acc. no.: accession number; diam.: diameter; h.: height; h. of let.: height of letters; l.: length; obv.: obverse; p.: page; rev.: reverse; th.: thickness; w.: width; and wg.: weight.

This collection was studied with an authorization granted by the directorship of the museum of Ödemiş on September 22, 2011 and enumerated as B16.0.KVM.4.35.74.00-155.01/555. The necessary documentation was assembled on November 18, 2011. The map was prepared by Dr Sami Patacı (Ardahan) in 2017 who also took the photographs in 2011, whom we would like to express our

38 The story of St Sisinnios (also Sissinnios and latinized as Sisinnius), assisting his sister Melitene against the demon Gyllou and depicted in “holy rider” charms, occurs in a group of different texts, material and contexts: Cf. R.P.H. Greenfield, ‘Saint Sisinnios, the Archangel Michael and the Female Demon Gyllou: the typology of the Greek literary stories’, *Βυζαντινά* 15 (1989), 83–142; W. Fauth, ‘Der christliche Reiterheilige des Sisinnios-Typs im Kampf gegen eine vielnamige Dämonin’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 53/4 (1999) 401–25 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1584489>>; P. Donceel-Voûte, ‘The (in)visible evil in sacred space: Codes, keys and clues to reading its image’, in W.E. Keil, S. Kiyarad, C. Theis and L. Willer (eds.), *Zeichentragende Artefakte im sakralen Raum, Zwischen Präsenz und Unsichtbarkeit*, *Materiale Textkulturen* 20 (Open access 2018) 17–54 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbkk499.5>>; Ü. Demirer and T.J. Kraus, ‘Ein Bronze-Amulett aus Kibyra mit Reiterheiligem und griechischem Psalm 90,1’, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 195 (2015) 58–62 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43909895>>; and O. Pancaroğlu, ‘The itinerant dragon-slayer: Forging paths of image and identity in Medieval Anatolia’, *Gesta* 43/2 (2004) 152–53 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25067102>>. Furthermore, a boundary stone from Dorylaeum near modern Eskişehir (=MAMA V 55) refers to a church or a monastery named after Sisinnios: P. Nowakowski, *Inscribing the saints in Late Antique Anatolia*, *Supplements to the Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 34 (Warsaw 2018) 418.

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