

Byzantine seals in the Tunay Demran Collection



Abstract: The Collection of Tunay Demran, officially registered in the Manisa Archaeological Museum, contains seven seals, six of lead and one of silver, and one blank. Manisa, the Byzantine Magnesia Anelios on Mount Sipylus, with its fertile lowland and strategic location in Western Anatolia, has been home to different civilizations over the centuries, including the Lydian Kingdom, one of the most important ancient civilizations. In the 13th century, it became one of the more important cities of the Nicene Empire (established after the Latin invasion in 1204) and the seat of Ioannes III Doukas Vatatzes, who located an actively working mint there. Later on, the city and its environs came under the rule of the Beylik of Saruhan and the Ottoman Empire. There is a rich archaeological record of civil and religious architecture in Manisa and its surroundings, still awaiting full investigation. The article presents Demran's collection of seals and explores potential ties with the archaeological remains of historical Magnesia.

Keywords: Byzantine, seal, Magnesia, Manisa Museum, Turkey

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Collector, Mr. Tunay Demran, for opening to us his collection, which contains very important and unique examples of Roman and Byzantine art. We would also like to thank art historian and museum researcher Merve Toy for her assistance in the photographing of the seals.

THE ANCIENT CITY OF MAGNESIA

The earliest settlement in the region of Manisa has yet to be established in archaeological excavations.¹ In Oktay Akşit's study, a 5th millennium BC date is given, in line with the information provided by Helmuth Bossert and David H. French about the artifacts they had found in Manisa and its vicinity (Akşit 1983: 26). Finds made along the line following the Gediz/Hermos River and others from a cave site near Yoğurtçu Kale have been assigned to the Neolithic period (Doğan 2007: 5).

The ancient city of Magnesia ad Sipylum, now within the borders of the modern city of Manisa, was one of the main centers of Lydian civilization. It was lo-

cated on the slope of Mount Sipylus and it is strategically located in a highly protected landscape, overlooking the fertile plain watered by the Hermos/Gediz river and an important ancient trade route (Sargın 2020: 439). The Royal Road continued to be used as a commercial tract in Byzantine and later times. The maritime trade went through the Lydian ports of Ephesus, Smyrna and Phokaia. Magnesia was located on the road connecting the capital in Sardis with the ports of Phokaia and Smyrna. The road started in Sardis, passed through Magnesia, and forked at Menemen, one branch going north to Phokaia and the other south to Smyrna (Tok 2012: 5). The ports in



Fig. 1. Location of Magnesia (Drawing M. Toy)

- 1 M. Umut Doğan's 2007 master's research on Magnesia ad Sipylum, published as a book and in a number of academic articles (Doğan 2007a; 2007b; 2008; Kahyeoğlu and Doğan 2015), makes up for the most detailed study conducted so far. Very little research has been done in Manisa and its vicinity (Doğan 2007: 79). Magnesia and its surroundings in the medieval period were studied by Emine Tok for his doctoral dissertation (Tok 2012). However, archaeological surveys and fieldwork are still sadly lacking and much more research, both in the field and in the written sources, is needed in order to gain a full understanding of Magnesia from ancient to Byzantine times.

Smyrna and Phokaia continued as safe ports through the 10th–13th centuries (Tok 2012: 5, Note 2).

In the 13th century, Magnesia became the main center of the Nicene Empire, which existed from 1204, after the Latin

occupation of Constantinople. In addition to refugees from the capital city, Magnesia and its surroundings were settled also by people fleeing from the islands of Chios, Samos, and Kos (Tok Bayrakal 2005: 262).

SEALS IN THE TUNAY DEMRAN COLLECTION

The Byzantine seals presented here come from the collection of Tunay Demran, a high school social science teacher from Manisa, who upon retiring became an officially registered collector.² His collection is kept in the Manisa Archaeological Museum. Demran started to collect coins from Manisa (ancient Magnesia Anelios *πρὸς τῷ Σιπύλῳ ὄρει*) and its environs in particular and later moved on to other small objects, like medallions, seals and weights. The first published catalog of his collection presented 253 coins ranging in date from the Hellenistic to the Byzantine, Islamic and Western medieval (Ünal, Tatar, and Toy 2017). Today, the collection contains 341 coins and 44 minor objects with an increasing share of Byzantine material.

The seven Byzantine seals and one blank from the collection³ date from the 7th to the 10th centuries. They come from

the region of Manisa, although the exact location of the findspots is not known.

Magnesia Anelios was a bishopric first in the metropolitan see of Ephesos and then in that of Smyrna. Bishops are known from the sources, e.g., a Basileios, who participated in the second council of Nikaia in 787 (Gelzer 1903: 74, Note 1; Lamberz 2004: 53). A different Basileios as bishop of Magnesia Sipelou, dated to the first half of the 11th century (the present authors prefer a date in the second half of the 10th century), appears on two seals (Laurent 1963: 747). As for other seals from the collection, it is hard or impossible to discriminate between Magnesia Anelios and Magnesia *Μαιάνδρου*, e.g., a seal type (from 1030–1080),⁴ featuring the name of Basileios referred to simply as bishop of Magnesia. On another seal of a bishop called Basileios, found in Preslav,

2 Demran received official permission from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey. As a teacher, he also worked in other Turkish provinces, e.g., Erzincan, Sivas and Afyon.

3 Five seals from the Manisa museum collection have already been published (Cheynet 1998). The proposed family name on the first seal (Madytenos) is not certain; it could be read ANT: [Π]αντ(ο)λ(έοντι) or [Μ]αντ(ού)λ(η). Finding a parallel might help to resolve this uncertainty. Regarding the fourth seal (Gregorios doux), see Wassiliou-Seibt 2016: 2216; for the fifth seal (Konstantinos Tzimpeas) cf. Wassiliou-Seibt 2011: 313; more seals of the latter type were offered in the auctions Roma Numismatics 9 (22 March 2015: No. 1003) and Leu, Webauktion 12 (30–31 May 2020: No. 1591).

4 This type is auctioned sometimes, most recently: Gorny & Mosch 160, 8–9 October 2007: No. 2841.

the proposed reading of the bishopric as Magnesia is problematic (Jordanov 2009: 1730A). Magnesia Anelios was still active and popular with pilgrims in the 13th century, just like Nymphaion/Kemalpaşa and Smyrna/Izmir (Külzer 2018: 170).

Among the objects from the Demran collection, one is a Latin seal mentioning a Theodorus *comes*; the other six are in Greek. A silver stamp is that of a Theophanios, and the seals mention *inter alia* a Theodoros *notarios*, a Rendakios *komes* (perhaps a *komes* of Opsikion), a Ioseph imperial *kandidatos* and *kommerkiarios* of Thessaloniki, and a Theodoros *despotikos* (scil. *basilikos*) *notarios*.

It is believed that the seals come most probably from the Halitpaşa neighborhood of the Saruhanlı District of Manisa Province. Halitpaşa is referred to locally as Papazlı (place/town of priests), but it is not clear when this name first appeared. Since the location of the bishop's residence at Manisa is not known, this speculative provenance of the seals could perhaps be taken as an indication that

it had been at Halitpaşa/Papazlı.⁵ So far the region has not been investigated archaeologically. Other tentative locations include Çınarobası and its surroundings, situated 5–6 km away from Halitpaşa. An ancient settlement called Çimenika Castle is found in the upper part of the village of Çınarobası. There are also some architectural remains, referred to by the local people as a monastery area, located near Gümülceli. The distance from this site to Halitpaşa is about 15–20 km. However, a preliminary survey of the available information from the region has not yielded any definite proof of remains of either a castle, a civic settlement, or a monastery complex.

Even if the provenance of the seals is not known, they were attached to documents, either official or religious, or private, sent to individuals living and working (at least for a time) in the region of Magnesia/Manisa in the period between the 7th and the 10th century. Therefore, they are an important contribution to the medieval history of a still little known region.

CATALOG

1. THEODORUS COMES

First half of 7th century

Inv. No. 44

W. 11.63 g; Dia. 20 mm

Obv.: Block monogram with Latin letters. Left, a **T** (in the common form **Ζ**), ligated with the letter **H** (**h**); though the upper part is lost, parts of a star can be observed at left. There was also certainly

an **R** on the right (almost wholly lost; the upper part of the **R** could include a **D**). A similar obverse is found on a seal of a Theodorus *primicerius et patricius* (Zacos and Vegler 1972: 532 with correct transcription but too early date); a seal from Cyprus is a parallel (Metcalf 2004: No. 5).⁶ *Rev.*: Latin letters, in cross form, reading from top to bottom **C**, **O**, **M**, **I**, and from

5 Another possibility is Hyrkanis, where there was a church. The authors are grateful to Andreas Külzer for this information.

6 Neither name nor office deciphered, but attributed to the group of Heraclius as an Imperial and quasi-Imperial seal.

left to right **Ζ, Ο, Υ**; the last letter is a rare form for **Σ** (Stepanova 2006: 121).

Find location: Afyon.

The legend reads: *Th(eo)d(o)r(u) comitos* (although it is in Latin letters, a Greek ending is offered, which is not uncommon).



2. DOKIOS (?) OR DEKIOS (?)

Late 7th–early 8th century

Inv. No. 28

W. 30.55 g; Th. 5 mm; Dia. 30 x 32 mm

Obv.: Nimbated standing figure of St George with the lance in his right hand, the left set on a shield resting on the ground. The face damaged under pressure, but the usual curly hair is still partly visible. Inscription on either side;

Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ – ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ

ὁ ἅγιος Γεώργιος.

Saints are seldom identified by name in pre-iconoclastic times. There are usually crosses on either side of the bust or standing figure.

Rev.: Cruciform monogram indicating the name of the sealing person. The letters: **Delta** at the left, **Kappa** at the right, and **Omega** at the bottom, are clear; even though the letter(s) at the top are damaged, there could have been a ligature: **Omikron–Ypsilon**. The name **Δωκίου** would be a possibility only with these

letters. But considering the lines in the center of the monogram, a **Sigma** could be included in the **Kappa**, perhaps even a **Tau**; in this case the alternative reading of **Κουστοδίτω** would not be impossible. Both names are rare. If there was an **Epsilon** instead of the **Omikron–Ypsilon** ligature at the top, **Δεκίω** (the transcription of Latin Decius, the name of an old senatorial family), but in the dative, could also be a possibility.

Find location: Kale Village, Manisa.



3. THEODOROS NOTARIOS

First third of the 8th century

Inv. No. 27

W. 8.77 g; Th. 4 mm; Dia. 23 x 20 mm

Obv.: Cruciform invocative monogram of the most common form, Laurent type V, in large letters, accompanied in the quarters by the rare tetragram **ΤΩ ΔΘ–ΛΩ** **CΘ**, in smaller, partly damaged letters – **Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῷ δούλῳ σου**. The **Beta** at the bottom is tall, reaching the central **Theta**.

Rev.: Nearly a quarter of the field is lost, but the legend can be restored with certainty:

+ ...|**ΟΔ**... | **NOT.Π|ΙΩ**. –

[Θε]οδ[ώρω] νοτ[α]ρίω.

Find location: Kale Village, Manisa.

The first line begins with a cross; because of the inner symmetry there could have been another cross at the end of the line; and the two letters of the last line are between ornaments (probably stars).

There is some similarity to a synchronous seal in Athens (Koltsida-Makri 1996: No. 95), but the Demran seal is of higher quality. There were *notarioi* in many different offices of the administration, but also public notaries.



4. RENDAKIOS KOMES

First half of the 8th century

Inv. No. 26

W. 13.87 g; Th. 3 mm; Dia. 29 mm

Obv.: Cruciform invective monogram of the most common form, Laurent type V, accompanied in the quarters by the usual tetragram ΤΩ CΩ—ΔΔ—ΛΩ: Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ. In comparison, the *Beta* at the bottom seems rather small. *Rev.*: Legend with letters in three lines, above and under the legend, a cross (probably without tendrils).

+ ΠΕΝΔ. | ΚΗΩ ΚΩ | ΜΗΤΗ

+ : Πενδ[α]κ(ι)ω κ(ό)μ(ι)τ(ι).

The *Rho* has a nearly round top, the letters are big and massive.

Find location: Halitpaşa, Manisa.

Some seals of a Rendakioi/Rentakioi from the second half of the 9th and

10th centuries are known, but the above type is the first one from the 8th century. Well known is a Sisinnios Rendakios *patrikios*, who was sent as ambassador of the emperor Leon III to the Bulgarian khagan Tervel to ask for support against the Arabs in 717/718, but was killed soon afterwards (perhaps in 720), suspected of rebellion (see *PmbZ* 6752).

Komes (from the Latin *comes*) can have many different meanings, the most prominent one is *komes* of Opsikion, one of the highest military commands, which may be further corroborated by the seal's impressive appearance. In this case the identification with Sisinnios would be the first possibility.



5. THEOPHANIOS

Second half of the 9th century

Inv. No. 1

W. 10.96 g; Dia. 23 mm

Silver stamp (signet) with a negative cut inscription in five lines (to produce a positive impression):

+ ΚΕ Ρ | ΟΗΘΗ ΤΩ | CΩ ΔΟΝΛ | Ω
ΘΕΟΦΑ | ΝΩ

Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Θεοφανῶ.

Theophano would be a female name, but as the owner of the stamp was a man (τῷ σῷ δούλῳ!), the correct form of the da-

tive should be Θεοφάνει or Θεοφανίω.

Find location: Halitpaşa, Manisa.

The *Beta* in the first line is not very clear but has the form of a Latin R (with an open bottom), dating the signet to a period after the mid 9th century.



6. IOSEPH IMPERIAL SPATHAROKANDIDATOS AND KOUMERKIARIOS OF THESSALONIKI

About 920/960

Inv. No. 2

W. 8.71 g; Th. 3 mm; Dia. 21 mm

Obv.: Patriarchal cross (with two horizontal bars) above three steps and a small globe. The lower horizontal bar is additionally crossed. On either side are tendrils, reaching the lower horizontal bar.⁷ The damaged circumscription (starting at 7 o'clock) reads:

ΚΕ ΡΟΗΘΕΙ .Ω Ω ΔΟΝΛ – Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθει [τ]ῷ σῷ δούλ(ῳ).

Rev.: Legend of five lines, beginning with a cross, probably without ornaments:

+ ΙΩΧΗΦ | Ρ, ΣΠΑΘ, Ρ, Κ. | ΔΔ,
Σ ΚΟΥΜΕ. | ΚΙΑΡ, ΘΕΣ. | Λ, ΝΙΚΙΣ

Ἰωσήφ β(ασιλικῷ) σπαθ(α)ρ(ο)κ[ι]α
ν[δ]ιδ(α)τ(ω) (καὶ) κουμει[ρ]κιαρ(ί)ω
Θεσ(σ)[α]λ(ο)νίκ(η)ς.

Find location: Halitpaşa, Manisa.

Two seal types are known: a Ioseph as imperial *bestitor* and *koumerkiarios* of Thessaloniki and Kephallonia (Zacos 1984: 1075, assuming *abydikos* instead of *b. bestitor*) and a Ioseph as imperial *bestitor*, *abydikos* and *koumerkiarios* of Thessaloniki, Dysis and the *thema* Hellas (Nesbitt and Oikonomides 1994: No. 8.30). But they belong to an earlier homonymous individual from the later 9th century (monogram of the Laurent type V with a tetragram on the obverse; see also *PmbZ* 23519). In the middle Byzantine period “*koumerkiarios*” is the usual form instead of the earlier “*kommerkiarios*”. In this time the *kommerkiarioi* were subordinates of the *genikos logothetes*, primarily responsible for the control of the (international and national) trade and the gathering of customs.



7. THEODOROS DESPOTIKOS NOTARIOS

Second half of the 10th century

Inv. No. 3

W. 8.71 g; Th.: 3 mm; Dia. 21 mm

Obv.: Standing figure of the archangel Michael in imperial garments, with a long cross in his right hand and a *globus*

⁷ The tendrils on either side of the patriarchal cross aid in a more precise dating.

⁸ A similar invocation could have appeared on the seal of a Theodotos, imperial *kandidatos* and *koumerkiarios* of Thessaloniki, now in Dumbarton Oaks (58.106.5622) (Nesbitt and Oikonomides 1991: No. 18.46).

cruciger in the left. The circumscription (starting at 7 o'clock) reads:

+ APXIC.. – ... CΩ .OV –

Ἀρχισ[τρ(άτηγ)ε] β(οή)θ(ει) τῷ σῷ [δ] ού(λω).⁸

Rev.: Legend in four lines, probably with ornaments above and under the legend:

+ ΘΕΟΔ|ΩΡΩ ΔΕΣ|ΠΟΤΙΚ, | ΝΟΤΑΡ –

Θεοδώρ(ω) δεσποτικ(ῶ) νοταρ(ίω).

Find location: Halitpaşa, Manisa.

Despotikos is just another (though rare) form of βασιλικός (imperial). But it is not known which department of the civil administration Theodoros served in.

BLANK

A blank.

Inv. No. 4

W. 6.89 g; Th: 2 mm; Dia. 24 mm

Find location: Manisa.



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How to cite this article: Seibt, W. and Ünal, C. (2021). Byzantine seals in the Tunay Demran Collection. *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, 30/2, 513–523. <https://doi.org/10.31338/uw.2083-537X.pam30.2.08>

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Abbreviations

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