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New Byzantine seals in the collection of Regional Historical Museum of Shumen

Bulgaria is a place with high concentration of Byzantine lead seals. There are several preconditions for this statement -Bulgaria arises from the territory of Byzantine Empire and during the whole period of its existence both countries are in an unbreakable connection. The seals from the period 971-1185 are numerous, because at that time Bulgaria was again a part of Byzantium. A large quantity of the seals is concentrated in the North-East territory -the main land of the mediaeval Bulgarian state. Here arise the first and the second Bulgarian capitals -Pliska and Preslav. All these circumstances tend to the fact that the biggest collection of seals in Bulgaria is a part of the Regional Historical Museum of Shumen.

The exact number of sigillographic materials forming up the collection of seals of the Regional Historical Museum of Shumen is 1196 specimens. The Byzantine seals are the largest in number -1014, 45 of which belong to the Byzantine rulers' families. The focus is on the 10th-12th centuries, the time of the highest concentration of sigillographic artifacts on the territory of modern Bulgaria -a fact that can be explained bearing in mind that Bulgaria was a part of the Byzantine Empire at that juncture.

The *Catalogue of Medieval Seals at the Regional Historical Museum, Shumen* was out of print in 2007. Are there any changes in the collection since 2007? From 2007 till 2014 the Shumen collection has increased in number with 300 new specimens. 26 of them are Bulgarian medieval, and the rest 274 are Byzantine seals. Predominant role of the Byzantine seals over the Bulgarians is still observed. The chronological frame of the seals is mainly in the 10th-11th centuries. A part of the newly acquired seals are of familiar types, but the others are quite new specimens for the collection.

The most interesting newly obtained artifact is a half part of a boulloterion, which was found last year in South Bulgaria. Only two boulloteria from the territory of Bulgaria were known till now. The Shumen specimen is the third one. Its deciphering has yet to be done.