

Nilgün Elam

Unpublished lead seals from Eskisehir, Pamukkale and Yalvaç archaeological museums

Byzantine lead seals (*bullae*) are considered a significant type of historical evidence, because they provide new information about Byzantine history, prosopography, administration, as well as culture. Despite the contribution of sigillographic data to (the writing of) the administrative and ecclesiastical history of all the regions of Byzantine Anatolia from various perspectives, sigillography is a new area of interest among historians in Turkey. In fact, the possibility to complete the missing bishop lists of Byzantine Anatolia, through the examination of the seals belonging to the members of different ranks of ecclesiastical hierarchy, suffices to underline the importance of this discipline.

By using new data offered by lead seals, the historian is able to start filling the gap left by written sources and conciliar register lists, which do not cover all the periods of Byzantine history. Unfortunately, the majority of the sigillographic material in Turkey (except for Istanbul Archaeological Museums and a small number of provincial museums) remains unpublished to this day.

In May 2011, with the financial support of Anadolu University Scientific Project Unit, I launched a research project to identify and locate sigillographic material associated with Side in Pamphylia, in order to contribute to the understanding of the history of this city. The project comprised research at twenty five museums across Turkey, which led to the documentation and study of 500 of previously unpublished seals associated with different regions of Byzantine Anatolia. Among these, three museums stand out with the unique pieces in their collections. Yalvaç (Antiochia in Pisidia) Archaeological Museum comprises 57 unpublished Byzantine lead seals (μολυβδόβουλλα) acquired in 1969-2009. Except for two *bullae*, which originated from the excavations in Antiochia, their provenance is unknown. The collection also holds two imperial seals and a seal of Nicephorus Botaneiates. The Archaeological Museum in Eskişehir (Dorylaeum) acquired its seal collection through donations by local inhabitants in 1967-1983. This collection includes 42 unpublished pieces, three of which are imperial lead seals. Finally, the small collection of 29 pieces in the Pamukkale Hierapolis Archaeology Museum was acquired mainly through purchase from various individuals in 2005-2012. Only six examples come from the archaeological excavations in this region: two from Laodiceia and four from Hierapolis. In this collection, I found two patriarchal seals, a seal of Nicephorus Botaneiates, and an uncommon seal belonging to a *basilikos kommerkiarios strategos tōn Anatolikōn*. This paper aims to present the aforementioned seals from these three museums and discuss their contribution to the history of Byzantine church, as well as the organization of the state-controlled commerce in the provinces.

