



**Bulgarian
Numismatic
Journal**

COMMERCIAL LEAD SEALING OF TRALLEIS FOUND IN CABYLE

NIKOLAY DIMITROV

ТЪРГОВСКИ ОЛОВЕН ПЕЧАТ НА ГРАД ТРАЛ,
НАМЕРЕН В КАБИЛЕ

НИКОЛАЙ ДИМИТРОВ

DOI: 10.60053.bulgnej.2026.4.1.37-39



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

<https://bulgnj.com>

ISSN: 2815-4827

Commercial Lead Sealing of Tralleis found in Cabyle

Nikolay DIMITROV

NAIM-BAS
nikolay.d.dimitrov1992@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-6861-7654

Търговски оловен печат на град Трал, намерен в Кабиле

Николай ДИМИТРОВ

НАИМ-БАН
nikolay.d.dimitrov1992@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-6861-7654

Abstract: Archaeological excavations of Late Antique structures in Sector V of the Cabyle Archaeological Reserve have been ongoing for more than a decade. In 2024, more than 160 coins were discovered, including a gold solidus of Emperor Valentinian I; they were published last year. Another artefact from these excavations, which demonstrates the commercial connections of the city of Cabyle with other parts of the empire in Late Antiquity, will also be presented.

Keywords: Cabyle, Tralleis, Ephesus, Sealing, Late Antiquity, 4th Century.



Lead sealings from Late Antiquity have been found in many archaeological sites in Bulgaria. One such example is the city of Serdica, where numerous imperial sealings and those with mythological images have been published (Марков 2010, 152-156; Владимирова-Аладжова 2018, 509-513; Владимирова-Аладжова 2022, 75), with others still awaiting publication. Another group of sealings from this period can be defined as commercial or civic sealings, bearing the name of the city from which they originate (Chiriac, Munteanu 2014, 299-301)¹. Such a sealing was discovered in 2024 during the excavations at Cabyle, in a securely dated layer from Late Antiquity².

The sealing is not preserved in perfect condition, but most of the inscription with the name of the city is visible. The name [TR]A/ΛIC can be restored (**Fig. 1**), i.e., the city of Tralleis in Lydia.

¹ A more significant publication on the subject of late Roman seals was published by Costel Chiriac and Lucian Munteanu in 2014 (Chiriac, Munteanu 2014, 299-330).

² The idea for this publication came about after a discussion at the 13th International Symposium of Byzantine Sigillography in Cologne, where similar commercial sealings without clear dating and context of discovery were presented.

The diameter of the artefact is between 1.5 and 1.7 cm. The seal was found in a layer together with three coins from the 4th century: one of Constantius II of the GLORIA EXERCITVS type, minted between 330 and 336 (RIC VII, pp. 523-526, nos. 183, 198; LRBC I, 835); one of the type SPES REIPUBLICAE, issued between 355 and 363 (RIC VIII, pp. 461-462; LRBC II, 689); and one of the type SECVRITAS REIPUBLICAE, minted between 364 and 378 (RIC IX, p. 221; LRBC II, 710-738). Based on these materials, we can assume that the Tralleis sealing dates from the 330s of the 4th century at the latest to the late 370s. In the period AD 377-378, Cabyle suffered severely from the attacks of the Goths, when the buildings in the current Sector V of the Archaeological Reserve were burned down, so it is certain that the sealing of the city of Tralleis ended up in Cabyle before these events (Dimitrov 2025, 47).

In previous surveys in Cabyle, a similar commercial sealing with a comparable shape and dimensions was discovered. However, it belongs to the city of Ephesus, as the inscription ΕΦΕ/CIQN is clearly legible. The researchers who published this sealing date it to an earlier period, with Gerasimova-Tomova mentioning that the sealing is from the time when Ephesus was under Roman control (Герасимова-Томова 1982, 144, № 6), and Gerasimov suggesting a date of the 3rd century AD (Герасимов 1974, 318-319). Most likely, their dates are incorrect, and the Ephesus sealing should also be dated to the 4th century.

There are studies in which the dates of these types of commercial sealings are referred to a later period, the 5th-6th century. In Paraschiv-Grigore's studies, the sealings from Tralleis, and some of Ephesus, Smyrna, and other cities have been published, dating from the 5th to the 6th century (Paraschiv-Grigore 2020, 162-165). However, the statement by Chiriac and Munteanu, who associate commercial sealings with an earlier period of Late Antiquity, is more likely to be correct. In their publication, numerous such sealings of Ephesus, Smyrna and Tralleis were published and dated to the 4th century AD, probably in the rule of Valens before his Gothic Wars (Chiriac, Munteanu 2014, 304-308).

Although it is only one commercial sealing of Tralleis from the new excavations in Cabyle, it clearly confirms the dating proposed by Chiriac and Munteanu for this type of civic commercial sealings – in the time of 4th century and more precisely around the middle of the century and the reign of Emperor Valens. Further studies on various urban centres whose occupation continued after the Gothic wars of Valens are necessary to confirm whether this type of commercial sealings continued to be used in later periods.



Fig. 1. Sealing of the city of Tralleis.
(Photography: Nikolay Dimitrov)

Bibliography

- Владиминова-Аладжова, Д., 2018. Търговски печати от Сердика. – В: *Stephanos archaeologicos ad 80 annum professoris Ludmili Getov (Studia Archaeologica Universitatis Sercicensis, Supplementum VI)*. София, 509-514.
- Владиминова-Аладжова, Д., 2022. Сердика през VI и VII век. Парично обращение, теже-

- сти, печати. Разкопки и проучвания, XLVII. София.
- Герасимов, Т., 1974. Митническа пломба с името на град Ефес в Мала Азия. In: ИАИ, XXIV. София, 318-319.
- Герасимова-Томова, В. 1982. Търговски пломби и марки от Кабиле. In: Поселищен живот в Тракия, I. Ямбол, 141-152.
- Марков, Н., 2010. Бележки за две сердикийски митнически пломби от IV век. In: Сердика – Средец – София, 5. София, 152-156.
- LRBC: R.A.G. Carson, P.V. Hill, J.P.C. Kent. Late Roman Bronze Coinage, part I and II. New York, 1989.
- Chiriac, C., Munteanu, L., 2014. Trade Connections between Asia Minor and the Western Pontic Area in the 4th Century CE. Some Sphragistic Considerations. In: Interconnectivity in the Mediterranean and Pontic World during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. Pontica et Mediterranea, vol. III. Cluj-Napoca, 299-330.
- Dimitrov, N. 2025. A gold solidus of Valentinian I from the excavations of Sector V in Cabyle. In: Bulgarian Numismatic Journal (BulgNJ), Vol. 3 No. 1, 46–48.
- Paraschiv-Grigore, E., 2020. Sigilii Romano-Bizantine și Bizantine din Dobrogea. Cluj-Napoca.
- RIC VII: P. M. Brunn. The Roman Imperial Coinage. Vol. VII. London, 1966.
- RIC VIII: J. P. C. Kent. The Roman Imperial Coinage. Vol. VIII. London, 1981.
- RIC IX: J. W. E. Pearce. The Roman Imperial Coinage. Vol. IX. London, 1951.