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Contents

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Minima Epigraphica: On Some Roman and Byzantine Inscribed Objects from Elaiussa Sebaste (Cilicia)

EMANUELA BORGIA*

Abstract

This article aims to present some inscribed small finds from former excavations carried out in the years 2006-2011 at Elaiussa Sebaste in Cilicia, under the auspices of the University of Rome, Sapienza. An inscribed base of a glass bottle, a lead seal, two glass weights, a bronze ring and an inscribed potsherd will be analyzed, so as to give new significance to these items that were until now neglected. All the objects pertain to the Late Roman or Early Byzantine period, mainly from the sixth until the mid-seventh century AD. Even if related to various different typologies, these inscribed finds have some common characteristics and shed light on several aspects of public and private life in a port city of southern Anatolia.

Keywords: Cilicia, Elaiussa Sebaste, late antiquity, inscribed small objects

Öz

Bu makale, Kilikia'daki Elaiussa Sebaste'de, Roma Sapienza Üniversitesi'nin himayesinde 2006-2011 yıllarında gerçekleştirilen kazılardan bazı yazılı küçük buluntuları sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Yazılı bir cam şişe kaidesi, bir kurşun mühür, iki cam ağırlık, bir bronz yüzük ve bir yazılı çanak çömlek parçası incelenerek bugüne kadar ihmal edilen bu eserlere yeni bir değer kazandırılacaktır. Tüm objeler, Geç Roma veya Erken Bizans Dönemi'ne, esas olarak MS altıncı yüzyıldan yedinci yüzyılın ortalarına kadar olan döneme aittirler. Bu yazılı buluntuların farklı tipolojileri olsa da bazı ortak özellikleri paylaşmakta ve Güney Anadolu'nun bir liman kentindeki kamusal ve özel hayatın çeşitli yönlerine ışık tutmaktadırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kilikia, Elaiussa Sebaste, Geç Antik Çağ, yazılı küçük objeler

Introduction

In this article some small inscribed finds from the Elaiussa Sebaste excavations, pertaining to the 2006-2011 campaigns, will be presented.[1] In addition to the scientific necessity of giving adequate historical, epigraphic and archaeological significance even to minor objects, these findings can shed new light, even if only partially, on private and public life in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods at Elaiussa Sebaste. The examined finds come from different monuments of the city, that have been excavated and published at different levels: the extra-urban Roman Temple-Byzantine Complex located on the hill south of the city,[2] the residential and

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1 I am grateful to Prof. E. Equini Schneider, former Director of the Elaiussa Sebaste excavations, for assigning me the study of Roman and Byzantine inscriptions uncovered in the 1996-2013 campaigns.

2 Borgia 2017a, 2019, 2020a, 2020b.

industrial quarters on the southern slopes of the promontory,[3] and the area of the Byzantine palace.[4] However, it is worth stressing that none are derived from funerary contexts.

1) Inscribed Base of a Glass Square Bottle from the Byzantine Palace (fig. 1)

Square bottle of blue-greenish glass. Greek mark on three lines on the base. Fragmentary, only the bottom is preserved. Uncovered during the 2011 campaign in the area of the Byzantine Palace (ISO1 812). Preserved in the Mersin Museum (ES.2011.06). 65 x 67 x 2-3 mm. Letters with round section and apices: 8-13 mm. Third-fourth century AD.[5]

Text: Λυσίμα-

χος αἰ{ἐ}-

ποίει.

Translation: Lysimachos made it.

FIG. 1 Inscribed base of glass bottle.

The Greek text is inscribed on the slightly concave bottom of the bottle and has a regular *ductus* with letters inscribed almost carefully on three straight lines. It consists of a personal name in the nominative, Lysimachos, followed by the verb ποιέω. What remains uncertain is the interpretation of the two letters at the end of the second line: ΛΙ, or better AI, even if the alpha is not well written. The hypothesis by Gençler-Güray, who proposes a wrong lettering AI for the sound E and thence the reading ἐποίει, is certainly suitable.[6] After the third line is a decorative motif - maybe a stylized palm branch - made of a line flanked by dots.

The bottle is a well-known type, Isings form 50a / b, examples of which have been found in most parts of the Roman Empire, but especially in the western provinces.[7] They can have a plain bottom or a decoration with geometric, floral or figured motifs, and in some rarer cases they can bear a base mark. Both the decorations and the inscriptions are indicative of production centers or workshops but, of course, marks are easier to identify. The inscription was realized during the manufacturing of the bottle and aimed at pointing the attention to the glass workshop and / or to the glassmaker, as a guarantee of the quality of what was contained in the jug. Scholars generally agree that, when the name is expressed in the nominative, it must refer to the glassmaker who signs his work, whereas if the name is in the genitive it can be a reference to the owner of the workshop.

As far as Asia Minor is concerned, at the present time only 72 mold-blown glass vessels with base marks are known. At least 15 different names of glassmakers, glassblowers or producers are recorded, among which a Lysimachos is already attested on a square bottle from a

3 The excavations in this area are ongoing, but at the present time only the kiln complex for the production of Late Roman 1 amphorae has been thoroughly studied; see Borgia and Iacomi 2010.

4 This monumental complex is still awaiting its final archaeological report. For some preliminary considerations see Cassiani 2018.

5 Gençler-Güray 2017, 230-31.

6 Some examples of the transcription AI for E are listed in Gençler-Güray 2017, 230-31. See, for instance, the Cilician case of Rhosos: Heberdey and Wilhelm 1896, 21, no. 52.

7 A fundamental study on base marks on glass vessels is that edited by Foy and Nenna 2006-2011. For a thorough synthesis on these marks in Gaul, see Foy 2015.

Turkish private collection.[8] It is impossible to understand if we are dealing with the same artisan, since the shape of the mark and the rendering of the texts are different.[9]

Apparently signed glass bottles must have originated in the western provinces (this would explain the abundance of Latin inscriptions) and were produced later also in the eastern Mediterranean. Single-handled square bottles were normally dated in a range between the second quarter of the first until the late second-early third centuries AD. However recent studies have demonstrated that the production of prismatic glass bottles in the East continued until the fifth century AD, and that a large part of the inscribed ones refers to the fourth or fifth century AD.[10] As concerns the fragment under examination, it should be dated to the third or fourth century AD, as confirmed by the stratigraphic context.

2) Inscribed Lead Seal from the Roman Temple-Byzantine Church Complex (fig. 2)

Round lead seal, inscribed on both sides. Intact. Uncovered during the 2010 campaign in a Byzantine level (TR 682) of the Christian complex built inside the Roman Temple. Preserved in the storeroom at Elaiussa Sebaste. Diameter: 21-25 mm. Sixth-early seventh century AD.[11]

Text: Obverse: Inscription of four lines, the first and last ones bearing only a crosslet. Wreath border.

\+
IωAN
NOY
\+

Reverse: Inscription of three lines. Wreath border.

CTPA
THΛA
TOY

Text: Ἰωάννου στρατηλάτου.

Translation: (Seal of) John, *stratelates*.

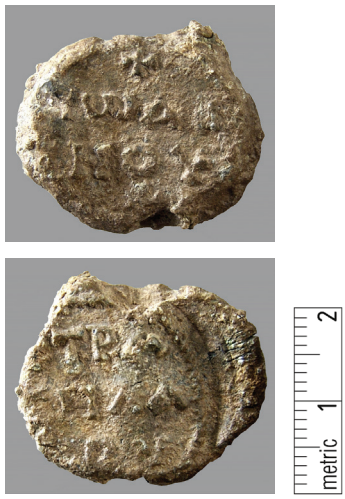

FIG. 2 Inscribed lead seal.

The text, introduced by a cross, is very short and mentions only the owner's name, Ioannes, and his duty, that of *stratelates*. It is well known that the onomastic form Ioannes is among the most widespread throughout the Byzantine period and so it is nearly impossible to correlate him with any otherwise known historical person.

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8 Triantafyllidis 2006, 373, 386; pl. 8, no. TR33. The bottle is in the Hüseyin Kocabaş Collection. For a thorough study of glass bottles with Greek inscriptions from archaeological contexts at Arykanda, see Tek 2003.

9 The text ΛΥΣΙΜΑΧΟΥ is written in a circle between two concentric circles; a small knob occupies each corner. The mark is dated to the second century AD, but no stratigraphic information is available.

10 Tek 2003, 82-84.

11 Equini Schneider 2011, 200, 207, fig. 10; *SEG* 64, no. 1482.

The charge of *stratelates* is a well-known duty in the Early Byzantine period and in Cilicia, it is attested for instance in a text from Diokaisareia dated to AD 479[12] and in an inscription from Misis-Mopsuhestia dated to AD 559-560.[13] A *stratelates* named Tryphon is mentioned on a seal from Ephesos dated from the seventh century.[14] On a Christian painting in a basilica at Iotape[15] the term *stratelates* is attributed to Saint Theodore, a common practice for saints having military prerogatives.[16]

When considering the *stratelates,* we are dealing at first with a military charge corresponding to the Latin *dux* or *comes*, a senatorial dignity immediately inferior to that of governor. In the sixth-seventh century AD it became synonymous for *magister militum*, both indicating an effective rule over a specific region and (afterward) a personal command.[17] Nonetheless it can be found frequently also in the *cursus honorum* of civilian magistrates (see for instance the Egyptian papyri). Thence it was often attributed as an honorific title more than as an effective dignity. This dignity, which reached its peak in importance in the seventh century when its holders were among the most important functionaries of the empire, began to decline already in the eighth century.

In the case under examination, since we are quite certainly dealing with a seal used for official purposes and to endorse documents, it is highly plausible that Ioannes was a public official performing a real duty. In the late fifth or early sixth century AD the Roman Temple was transformed into a Byzantine Complex, composed by a church, its forecourt, a residential area and some annexed cellars. The complex was in use until the seventh century. Given the find place of the seal, we can argue that Ioannes was one of the functionaries in charge of controlling at a higher level the warehouses linked to the Byzantine compound.

3) Glass Weight from the Residential and Industrial Quarter (fig. 3)

Purple glass weight with gilded and iridescent patination. Box monogram in circular stamp on one side; the reverse is plain. Intact. Uncovered during the 2008 campaign in a Byzantine level (ISO2 708) in the Residential Quarter on the southern slopes of the promontory. Preserved in the storeroom at Elaiussa Sebaste. Diameter: 21.8 mm; thickness: 5 mm; weight: 2.21 g. Sixth-early seventh century AD. Unpublished.

Obverse: Box monogram with central *ny* to which the following letters are attached: O, T and Y in ligature, A, C.

Text: Ἰουστινιανοῦ.

Translation: of Ioustinianos.

FIG. 3 Glass weight from the residential and industrial quarter.

12 Heberdey and Wilhelm 1896, 89, no. 168; Hagel and Tomaschitz 1998, 331, no. OlD35 (AD 448).

13 Dagron and Feissel 1987, 141-46, no. 89.

14 Cheynet 1999.

15 Paribeni and Romanelli 1914, 183, no. 129; Hagel and Tomaschitz 1998, 129, no. Iot15.

16 Cotsonis 2005, 451-57 on the figure of Saint Theodore *stratelates* and his representation on seals.

17 Durliat 1979; cf. also Demirer and Elam 2018, 257-59.

4) Glass Weight from the Roman Temple-Byzantine Church Complex (fig. 4)

Olive green round weight, no patination. Cruciform monogram in circular stamp on one side; the reverse is plain. Intact. Uncovered during the 2010 campaign in a Byzantine level (TR 650) of the church built inside the Roman Temple. Preserved in the Mersin Museum (ES.10.TR-650). Diameter: 23 mm; thickness: 6 mm; weight: 4.13 g. Mid-sixth to mid-seventh century AD. Unpublished.

Obverse: Cruciform monogram with ω to the left, A on the lower vertical arm of the cross, N to the right and OY on the top vertical arm of the cross.[18]

Text: Ἰωάννου.

Translation: of Ioannes.

FIG. 4
Glass weight from the Roman Temple-Byzantine Church complex.

Glass weights, or *exagia*, were common in the Early Byzantine period, between the late fifth-early sixth and the mid-seventh centuries AD.[19] As is well known, in this period the Byzantine Empire saw manifold fiscal reforms, within which the new monetary system of the *solidus-nomisma*, the *semissis* and the *tremissis* is included. Glass weights were introduced with the aim of controlling the weight of gold coinage. It is worth stressing that the function of these objects was disputed in the past, mainly because their weight often does not correspond exactly to known coin denominations. But they were aimed at defining the tolerance above or below which a coin would not be accepted. We have some archaeological contexts that confirm their function as weights. Moreover, early Arab glass weights, whose function is established by their inscriptions, provide decisive evidence for the interpretation of their Byzantine counterparts.[20]

The reason for the choice of glass was because it is a cheap material that could be easily manufactured and not susceptible to alteration, for it was not difficult to distinguish potential tampering. It is thence more than probable that the production of such weights was under an official control, maybe of the imperial mints such as that of Constantinople. If at the beginning of the sixth century glass weights bore mainly the names of the emperors, of imperial officers or of eparchs, the transformation of the financial system at the end of the same century gave progressively a major role to local prefects.

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[18] Other cross monograms with the name Ioannes are known, with different placement of the letters on the arms of the cross; cf. Perassi 2008, 304.

[19] For glass weights see, apart from the pioneering study of Schlumberger 1895, some selected most recent studies with bibliography: Perassi 2000, 2008; Lightfoot 2012, 379, 382, pls. 11.3, 11.9, no. 11; Entwistle and Meek 2015. See also Dalton 1901, 133-35. For a chemical analysis of glass weights see Schibille et al. 2016.

[20] See, for instance, the case of Sardis where a hoard composed by 21 glass weights was found in the western suburb of the city; cf. Fulghum and Heintz 1998. Another comparable context is that of a sixth century AD workshop discovered at Tell Naharon in Palestine, where several sets of weights made of bronze, glass and haematite were uncovered in association with balances and scales; see Vitto 1980; cf. Entwistle and Meek 2015, 2-3.

Glass weights were discoidal in shape with a protruding rim, round in section.[21] The impression in the center consisted of various types, such as monograms, imperial busts and busts of eparchs surrounded by inscriptions. The examples from Elaiussa Sebaste are both well preserved, and the first (no. 3) refers to the *semissis*, the second (no. 4) to the *nomisma*. Number three pertains to the box type and thence must be dated slightly earlier within the sixth century AD, whereas number four with a cross monogram belongs to the second half of the sixth or first half of the seventh century, when this kind of monograms was introduced.[22] As far as Cilicia is concerned, there are not many published parallels to these glass weights. One unpublished example from Anemourion is cited by Fulghum and Heintz.[23]

In both cases the monograms bear individual names: the first one (no. 3) is possibly a Ioustinianos whereas the second (no. 4) is certainly a Ioannes. The names must relate to the relevant issuing authorities, the emperor, the prefects of Constantinople, or to provincial officials and local functionaries responsible for secondary production centers. If Ioannes is a very widespread name and the identification of the personage is far from possible, the hypothesis of referring the other seal to the emperor Justinian is tempting.[24] Was it an imperial glass weight, or a weight used in his name by members of the government? Or was it only a personal seal of a homonymous local functionary? At the moment the question cannot be answered, but it is important to stress that the name Ioustinianos is not so common. Anyhow most probably these glass weights represent distinct regional types originating from major provincial centers in the Eastern Mediterranean.

5) Bronze Ring with Inscribed Bezel from the Residential and Industrial Quarter (fig. 5)

Bronze ring with round bezel. Engraved inscription of four lines on the bezel, preceded and ended by a horizontal line probably marking the abbreviations. Intact. Uncovered during the 2006 campaign in a Byzantine level (ISO2 162) in the Residential and Industrial Quarter on the southern slopes of the promontory. Preserved in Mersin Museum (ES.06.15). Diameter of bezel: 10.5 mm; diameter of hoop: 19 mm; thickness: 1.5 mm. Sixth-early seventh century AD.[25]

Text: Χ(ριστ)ὲ
βοήθη
εὐ ζ-
οή ἀ(μή)ν.

Translation: Christ help, good life, amen.

FIG. 5
Bronze ring with inscribed bezel.

[21] The diameter ranged from 12 mm to 30 mm, the thickness was about 3 mm to 6 mm, and the weight between approximately 0.4 g and 4.5 g. For average measures and weights see Schibille et al. 2016, 2.

[22] The *exagia* were introduced in the sixth century AD, and the first ones were those with box monograms. Cross monograms appear in AD 534 and, after a period of overlapping of the two types, the second one prevails. It is common knowledge that, with the advent of the Arabs in the mid-seventh century, Byzantine glass weights disappear, but the Arabs themselves resumed the same system, producing glass weights with ponderal marks. For a synthesis of the matter see Perassi 2008, 291.

[23] Fulghum and Heintz 1998, 113, no. 24 (AN 76.115).

[24] Some direct comparisons on lead seals are in the same way uncertain.

[25] The ring was briefly presented by Ferrazzoli 2012, 294, 304, pl. 5, no. 55.

The ring pertains to the type of Byzantine invocation signet rings, usually bearing on the bezel a short prayer calling upon the help of God or of a saint for the bearer.[26] The ring is perfectly preserved, and the text carved on the bezel is easily readable. It contains an invocation to Christ and is closed by the abbreviated form of "amen." It poses only a problem of interpretation as far as the central letters are concerned.[27] The best solution is to consider εὐ ζοή as a second invocation to a good life, as in the Byzantine period the term ζοή often recurs in prayers and short invocations together with other words, such as ὑγία or φῶς.[28] But *Zoe* can be intended also as an individual name, and this name is attested in Cilicia since the Early Imperial period, for example, at Anazarbos.[29] Anyhow the first hypothesis seems preferable because it better explains the presence of εὐ that would be difficult to interpret if followed by a personal name. Furthermore, this type of ring could be also inscribed with generic protective formularies without mentioning a specific wearer, so that they could be produced independently from the future customer. The anonymity of the wearer was also, in some way, linked to the protective function of these apotropaic objects.[30]

It is well known that, starting with the late Roman Empire, rings with wish formulas started to be produced in almost large numbers. Wishes consisted of auguries of good luck, good health, long life, and from Early Byzantine times, of divine protection from God, Christ, the Lord and the *Theotokos* who are among the main invoked divine entities. Bronze inscribed rings comparable to the one under examination are quite common in the Early Byzantine period and usually bear apotropaic and salvific formulas or prayers. These are the poorer versions of more elaborate and expensive rings with cameos and intaglios of precious and semiprecious stone that were used as bezels. Very similar examples for what concerns the shape of the bezel and the form of the engraved letters are two rings, maybe arising from the same atelier: one from Apollonia and one from Masada.[31] In both cases the text foresees the term ὑγία followed by a local personal name, and this brings again the attention to the possibility that a personal name appears also on the ring from Elaiussa.

What is interesting is that the ring was found in a domestic area (and not in a funerary context, as very often occurs), thus offering a glimpse of the use of these artefacts in common life of the Byzantine period. This object would not have served just as an ornament or symbol of status. As its inscribed message makes clear, it was evidently intended to be a good-luck charm for its wearer who was a fervent Christian.

6) Inscribed Fragment of a Basin from the Residential and Industrial Quarter (fig. 6)

Fragmentary rim of a common-ware basin. Fragmentary Greek inscription on three lines immediately under the rim. Letters engraved before cooking with a pointed instrument. To the left of the inscription a palm is engraved. Uncovered during the 2006 campaign in the residential and

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26 Baldini Lippolis 1999, 188-91.

27 Note the wrong spelling of ζωή, which is not so rare in the Byzantine period. The term recurs, for instance, on a silver ring preserved in the British Museum; see Dalton 1901, 25, no. 153.

28 See, for instance, *SEG* 41, no. 1483.1.

29 Sayar 2000, 195, no. 414; 227, no. 509; 272-3; nos. 642-43. The form Ζωή is attested also at Korasion in a Christian text; see *MAMA* III, no. 134; Hagel and Tomaschitz 1998, 175, no. Krs 36.

30 van den Hoek et al. 1994, 45-52. Of course, in a larger part of cases the name of the owner is engraved on the ring. For some direct comparisons of formulary with the present ring bearing the owner's name, see Dalton 1901, 23, nos. 138-39; Baldini Lippolis 1999, 200, no. 16.

31 Cotton and Geiger 1995 (with further bibliography).

industrial quarter in a Byzantine layer. Preserved in the storeroom at Elaiussa Sebaste. Diameter of rim approx. 35 cm; thickness 18 mm. Letters: cursive and irregular, 12-20 mm. Late sixth-mid seventh century AD.[32]

[---]ANIAN τούτον [---]
+ Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθ[ει ---?]
τοῦ ποΐ[σαντος αὐτόν?].

FIG. 6 Inscribed fragment of basin

The basin pertains to a local production of common-ware manufactured at Elaiussa Sebaste in the same ateliers as the Late Roman 1 amphorae, and is attested from the fifth to the mid-seventh centuries AD.[33] As far as this specific fragment, its shape and clay lead to propose a chronology in the late sixth or early seventh century. It has a projecting horizontal rim, triangular in section, decorated with an incised wavy line; the lower portion of the rim is slightly rounded. An incised decoration covers part of the rounded wall to the left of the fragment. It consists of a palm tree, the trunk realized with double triangular rouletting. The other details - leaves and dates - are carved out with a pointed tool. This otherwise rare motif does not find direct comparisons on pottery. Recent research centered on different supports, such as mosaics and reliefs, suggests that the date palm in the Early Byzantine period could refer to the Holy Land and was certainly a symbol of life, wealth and the promise of eternal life (Garden of Eden).[34]

The inscription runs on three lines and was engraved by a pointed instrument before cooking the vessel, possibly at the same time as the palm tree. The letters are irregular in height, and their shape tends to cursive writing, mainly as far as the *alpha*, *ypsilon*, *eta* and *pi* are concerned. The first line is fragmentary both to the left and to the right, so we can suppose that it was longer than the following ones. Due to its partial preservation, it is difficult to propose any convincing integration. A personal name, maybe of the owner or the recipient of the basin, may fit well in the context, but the remaining letters point to an accusative (the name of the object?). The second and third lines seem to be independent from the text directly above and are engraved only to the right of the palm. The text, preceded by a cross, begins with the common Christian invocation Κύριε βοήθ[ει], followed by a lacuna of uncertain length, where only the two missing letters ει may have taken place. But it is also possible to postulate a longer text, integrating a personal name in the genitive. In the second line I tentatively propose to

32 This fragment has been briefly described by Ferrazzoli and Ricci 2010, 805, 812, fig. 7, no. 56 (wrong reading of some letters).

33 Ferrazzoli and Ricci 2007, 674, 687, fig. 17.85-87; 2010.

34 Generally, the palm branch is most commonly attested both in Christian and Jewish artworks, whereas the single date palm with birds and animals is rarer. Normally this motif is a testimony of wealth and richness of nature, mainly in arid climates such as in Palestine. For some notes on this motif on Early Byzantine mosaics, see Kalla 2018.

read the formula τοῦ ποΐ[σαντος][35] or τοῦ ποι[οῦντος],[36] maybe followed by αὐτόν, according to some comparable inscriptions from the same period bearing the same formula. If the longer integration is accepted, also in the first line we must imagine a similar length, and so the presence of the personal name of the artisan who made the basin must be assumed.

Conclusive Remarks

Even if minor and seemingly insignificant, the analyzed objects can contribute to understanding the cultural, economic and administrative complex life of the province of Cilicia and of the city of Elaiussa Sebaste during the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods. It is well known that since the late fourth century the province of Cilicia - alongside all the provinces of the empire - underwent deep transformations from an administrative perspective. With Diocletian's reform of the provincial system the provincial territory of Cilicia was subdivided in two sections - Cilicia and Isauria with their capitals respectively at Tarsos and Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos. Later under Theodosius II it was split into three sections - Cilicia Prima with its capital at Tarsos, Cilicia Secunda with its capital at Anazarbos, and Isauria. Elaiussa, then called mainly Sebaste, fell within the province of Cilicia Prima, but was at the border of Isauria. So we may suppose various mutual influences between the two provinces.[37]

To the new administrative system must be related the *stratelates* Ioannes mentioned on lead seal no. 2. The office of *stratelates*, even if military in origin, may be also interpreted within a wider administrative perspective, and so the seal may have proved the authenticity of the document and / or the trade goods on which it was attached. What is worth emphasizing is that the same name Ioannes appears also on one of the glass weights (no. 4). Both the seal and the weight were uncovered in the Byzantine complex built inside the Roman Temple in the late fifth or beginning of the sixth century. The archaeological context is identical, even if they were found in different layers. Maybe we are dealing with the same person in both texts, as the coincidence would be odd. If this hypothesis was correct, the figure of the *stratelates* Ioannes would emerge as an important official in the economic organization of the city in the late sixth or early seventh century.

The typological analysis of glass weights offers a very interesting insight into the monetary reform introduced by Anastasius (AD 491-518) and continued by Justinian I (AD 527-565). They provide important information on the metrological and fiscal systems and the technological evolution in relation to geopolitical changes. This reform is witnessed by the proliferation of the *solidus-nomisma* (about 4.55 g) and its divisions: the *semissis* (about 2.27 g) and the *tremissis* (about 1.52 g). The find contexts of the two glass weights from Elaiussa Sebaste seem to confirm what occurs also in other sites, where those items were uncovered in safe rooms, often pertaining to an ecclesiastical space.

This is true mainly for the glass weight from the Byzantine complex built within the Roman Temple. Here we can imagine an actual organization of supply and distribution of goods that

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35 Ramsay 1897, 745-46, no. 690 (ποΐσαντος). The invocation is engraved on the rock in the marble quarries of Docimeum, to the right of a very rude incised drawing of a praying figure surmounted by two birds that must be related to the text. This example is not dissimilar from the one under examination, since the text on the shard may refer to the drawing of the date palm to the left of the inscription.

36 Bruneau 1965, 143, no. 4729, pl. 34; *SEG* 23, no. 516. The text is inscribed on the disc of a lamp from Delos, dated to the fifth-sixth century AD. It reads: Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθι τῷ ποιοῦντι.

37 Borgia 2017b, 309-10 (with bibliography).

were kept in the storerooms and controlled by a local authority. This representative was at a certain time between the sixth and the early seventh century the *stratelates* Ioannes. It is possible that the same person (or a homonymous Ioannes?) stamped the glass weight found in the same building. If this hypothesis is correct, the glass weight must have been locally made and distributed on demand to shopkeepers or merchants. A Novel in the Justinian code dated to AD 545 was addressed to the praetorian prefect of the east and aimed at protecting taxpayers against unscrupulous tax collectors using weights and measures heavier than standard. It explicitly records that: *has mensuras et pondera in sanctissima uniuscuiusque civitatis ecclesia servari, ut secundum ea extra gravamen collatorum et fiscalium illatio et militares et aliae expensae fiant.*[38] Accordingly, a secure room within an ecclesiastical complex, such as a sacristy, would have perfectly fulfilled this purpose. And we can imagine the existence of such a room within the Byzantine complex built in the Roman Temple.

The glass bottle with mark (no. 1) is a very important clue to try to analyze the production and distribution of these special objects, which are yet quite rarely attested in Asia Minor. Without having more precise indications it is impossible to ascertain if the bottle was locally produced or, as seems more probable, it was imported. The other known bottle marked by a Lysimachos unfortunately does not have a precise provenance since it is preserved in a private collection. This peculiar kind of vessel was used mainly for liquids, even if it is not easy to determine its contents with precision. Their wide distribution and peculiar craftsmanship incline toward a valuable and popular content such as, for instance, olive oil, wine, liqueurs and sauces. The shape of the bottles granted easy storage and a secure trade. Anyhow, the study of base marks in Asia Minor is still to be improved because it can give important glimpses into commerce and the circulation of products throughout the eastern Roman Empire.

As a final point, the other small finds examined, such as the ring (no. 5) and the fragmentary inscribed basin (no. 6), are evidence of a more private and intimate life and testify how Christian religion was deeply rooted in local society at different levels. Both of these objects originate from the residential quarter of the city, which developed in the Early Byzantine period next to the kilns that produced the Late Roman 1 amphora and other kind of vessels. These were not aristocratic residences but artisanal neighbourhoods where medium-lower classes lived. It is remarkable that even in this location some "valuable" objects such as the bronze ring were in use. Moreover, if the proposed interpretation of the reading of the pottery fragment is correct, we are dealing with an artisan (maybe working in the nearby kiln?) who was proud of his work and of its peculiar, even if coarse, decoration, and who signed his vase, asking for the help of God.

All figures are from the Archive of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Elaiussa Sebaste.

[38] *Corpus Iuris Civilis III, Novellae*, CXXVIII, caput 15.

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