

Tokens Used in the Letoon Sanctuary: Society, Religious Ceremonies and Governance in the Light of Tokens

Letoon Kutsal Alanında Kullanılan Jetonlar: Jetonlar Işığında Toplum, Dinî Törenler ve Yönetim

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Abstract: Tokens are objects that provide a lot of information about the material structure of the society, the form of administration, rituals, festivals and beliefs that constitute social relations evidenced through tokens from prehistoric times to the present day. Tokens of different materials and designs are called tesseræ, spintriae, symbola, voting tokens, countermarks under the "moneti form". The functions of these tokens, which have been found in different archaeological excavations, sometimes singularly and sometimes in large numbers, have not been subject to much focused research. In this study, 179 terracotta tokens recovered from the Lycian sanctuary of Letoon in the 1970s were analysed. The tokens were discovered during the excavation depot works carried out in 2016 and 2018 and studied by the author. There is no information about the detailed findspot, context, stratigraphy of the tokens and they are not mentioned in the excavation reports. The majority of the tickets were recovered from the terrace area in front of the theatre furnacatum vault. It is suggested that the tokens recovered from the Letoon may have served more than one function. Some of the tokens are marked, others have numbers or monograms on them. The fact that the tokens were recovered from an area close to the theatre, where Romania Letoia festivals and agonistic performances were held, and which was also used as a council building, suggests that these little-studied objects may have had a wide variety of uses for the sanctuary.

Keywords: Token • Letoon Sacred Area • Theatres of Lycia • Festival-Agon • Cult

Öz: Jetonlar, tarih öncesi çağlardan günümüze toplumsal ilişkileri oluşturan toplumun maddi yapısı, yönetim biçimi, ritüelleri, festivalleri, inançları hakkında pek çok bilgi veren materyallerdir. Farklı malzeme ve tasarımlara sahip jetonlar, "moneti form" altında tesseræ, spintriae, symbola, oy jetonları, countermark olarak adlandırılmaktadır. Arkeolojik kazılarda bazen tekil bazen de çok sayıda ele geçen bu jetonların işlevleri üzerinde çok fazla durulmamıştır. Bu çalışmada, 1970 li yıllarda Lykia'nın kutsal alanı Letoon'dan ele geçen 179 adet pişmiş toprak jeton incelenmiştir. Jetonlar, 2016 ve 2018 yıllarında gerçekleştirilen kazı deposu çalışmaları sırasında keşfedilmiş ve yazar tarafından çalışılmıştır. Jetonların detaylı buluntu alanı, konteksti, stratigrafisi hakkında bilgi bulunmamaktadır ve kazı raporlarında jetonlardan bahsedilmemiştir. Jetonların büyük bir çoğunluğu tiyatro furnacatum tonozunun önündeki teras alanından ele geçmiştir. İncelenen jetonlardan bazıları işaretlidir. Letoon'dan ele geçen jetonların da birden fazla kullanım amacı olabileceği ileri sürülmektedir. Jetonların bazıları işaretlenmiştir bazılarının da üzerinde sayı ya da monogram bulunur. Jetonların, Romaia Letoia festivalleri ile agonistik gösterilerin yapıldığı, ayrıca meclis binası işlevi ile de kullanılan tiyatroya yakın bir bölgeden, topluca ele geçmesi, az çalışılmış bu objelerin kutsal alan için çok çeşitli kullanımları olabileceğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Jeton • Letoon Kutsal Alanı • Lykia Tiyatroları • Festival-Agon • Kült

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Introduction

During the excavations carried out in 1973 and 1976 at the Letoon, the sanctuary of Lycia, 179 terracotta biconvex-shaped tokens were recovered from different areas in groups. The tokens were discovered and studied by the author during the excavation depot works carried out in 2016 and 2018. There is no information concerning the find-spot context and stratigraphy of these tokens except for the inventory slip. The tokens are not mentioned in the excavation reports, and no publications have been made of them. The majority of the tokens were recovered from the terrace area in front of the theatre *furnicatum* vault. This information results from the grid information on the inventory slips. Some of the tokens analysed are marked. In this study, the marks and traces on the terracotta objects recovered are evaluated, and suggestions are put forward as to their function, use and meanings according to the estimated find areas and from similar examples. In other excavations, such a large number of finds from the material group, which we call tokens, were not recovered, which caused the singularly recovered materials to be overlooked without being studied. Questions will be asked about the functions of the tokens in the sanctuary of the Letoon and the use of the find group in social, administrative and religious festivals. It is thought that this material group, which is undoubtedly unique, will provide a guide for the evaluation of the examples from other sanctuaries and cities through questioning the relationship of the function of the token with the spaces and presenting opinions as to their functions.

Political, Economic, Religious, Cultural, Social Roles and Functions of Tokens

Understanding the function of tokens enables us to comprehend their role in social relations and the material fabric of society in antiquity. The examination of ancient tokens will contribute to the examination of alternative currencies in a broader sense¹. In prehistoric times, tokens were objects of calculation and counting in trade, pre-literate societies contributed to the creation of writing and abstract number². The first tokens emerged with the birth of agriculture and the need to store, protect and redistribute common resources³. The tasks of collecting, saving, retrieving, calculating and communicating required a formalized administration enabled by tokens.

Tokens have been used as numerical value equivalents from antiquity to the present day. They are made of different materials. Labelled as *tesserae*, *spintriae*, *symbolon*⁴, “moneti form” objects, etc., tokens are often forgotten in museum collections when their function cannot be determined. The

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Sema Atik-Korkmaz who was the director of the Letoon excavations (2014-2018) for the permission to publish this group of material, which I worked on during the 2016 and 2018 excavation seasons. The literature research for this article was conducted with scholarships provided by the Koç University Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations ANAMED, Netherlands Institute in İstanbul NIT and IFEA Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes. I would like to thank all institutions for the opportunities they have provided. I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved father (Geodesy and Photogrammetry Engineer Colonel Dr. İlhan Özdilek) who passed away 1 year ago. I am grateful to him for guiding me to choose the profession of archaeology and for his endless support in my progress in my profession. I am grateful to my dear friend Terrance Mikail P. Duggan for editing the article in English.

¹ https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/research/dept_projects/tcam/about/ (access date: 2.1.2024).

² Schmandt Besserat 1992; Woods 2010, 33-50; Iceland 2013, 31-54.

³ Şeker & Şeker 2019, 1-16.

⁴ Crisà *et al.* 2019, 2.

ancient Greek word for terracotta symbols is σύμβολα. The word *symbolon* is derived from the verb *symbollein*, to bring near, and refers to an object that must be brought near to another in order to gain its full meaning⁵.

In the Roman period, they were called *tesserae* in Latin or *spintriae* for bronze examples (according to the descriptions on the *spintria*, there are suggestions that they were used as a symbol of undress in brothels or suburban baths⁶. Both of these circular objects, called *teseserae*, were used in a single section of text describing the emperor Domitian's gifts to his subjects⁷.

The Use of Tokens from Prehistoric Times⁸ to the Present Day

In prehistoric times, tokens were objects of calculation and counting in trade, and pre-literate societies contributed to the creation of writing and abstract number⁹. Tokens have been used in the Near East since the eighth century B.C. and have common stamps on them¹⁰. The Mycenaean tokens were part of the bureaucratic system and were not used after the collapse of the Mycenaean civilisation. Tokens reappeared in Euboea and Attica after the ninth century B.C. Tokens found in Greece are thought to have been used as vote ballots¹¹, at festivals, in *agons*, as theatre tickets for entry to the Great Dionysia and other theatre festivals, in seating, and exchanged for a portion of meat at a festival *banquet*¹². Tokens from temples and sanctuaries are also thought to have been distributed to control visitors and for pilgrimages.

Tokens in the Hellenistic Period

During the 1950 excavations in the Athenian Agora, Aristotle's *Athenaion Politeia*, Homer A. Thompson found jury tokens with letters on them in what he called the "Ballot Box" and published them in the Athenian Agora journal. This find proved the association of lettered tokens with the allocation of jurors to courts¹³. Lettered tokens have been on icons since their introduction in Athens, and the letters give information about people's seats - the seat of the executive committee of the Council proves this¹⁴ (Fig. 1a). Another group of lead tokens from Athens was found in the "Great Void of Athens" and dates from the Hellenistic Period (Fig. 1b). Other symbols relate to the public sphere and are seal-style uniface and cryptic tokens used by the councillors who governed the *polis* at the *Prytaneion*. These symbols were found in an area close to the *Prytaneion*, where decisions were taken and meetings were held¹⁵.

The letters or monograms on the terracotta tokens found at the Rhodiapolis Theatre in Lycia are

⁵ https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/research/dept_projects/tcam/about/ (Access date: 02.01.2024).

⁶ Fishburn 2007, 225-236.

⁷ Crisà *et al.* 2019, 4.

⁸ For a general overview: Schmandt & Besserat 1992.

⁹ Şeker & Şeker 2019, 1-16.

¹⁰ Schmandt & Besserat 1992.

¹¹ Thompson & Wycherley 1972, 46-56.

¹² Gkikaki 2021, 65, 66, 69.

¹³ Thompson 1954, 31-67.

¹⁴ Thompson 1954, Pl. 39 c,d, Pl. 40 b, c; Gkikaki 2021, 69. https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/research/dept_projects/tcam/about/ (Access date: 02.02.2024).

¹⁵ Thompson & Wycherley 1972, 46-56, Pl. 39 c,d, Pl. 40 b, c.

the same as those that were found at Letoon¹⁶. The function of the terracotta tokens recovered from the Rhodiapolis theatre are theatre tickets or voting tokens (Fig. 1c)¹⁷. As at the Letoon theatre, inscriptions recovered from the Rhodiapolis theatre indicate that it was used as an assembly building until the new *bouleuterion* was built in the second-third century A.D.¹⁸.

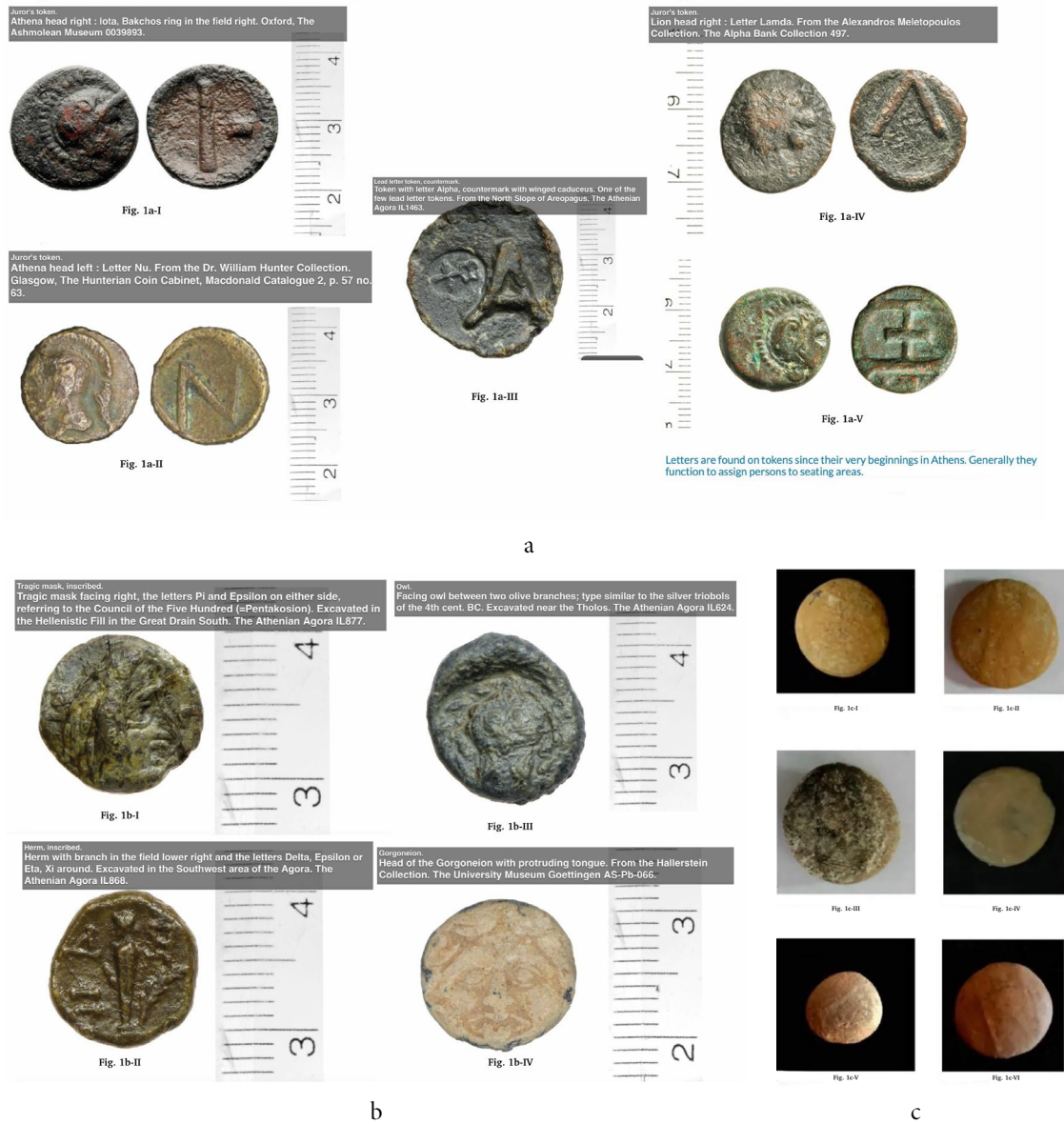


Fig. 1. Athens Hellenistic Tokens (a-b), Rearrangement from https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/research/dept_projects/tcam/about/ (Access date: 02.02.2024); Tokens from Rhodiapolis Theater (Özdilek 2012, Lev. 58)

Three terracotta voting tokens were recovered from the “assembly building/*bouleuterion*” of Rhodiapolis. On these voting tokens there is depicted a group of three gods of Lycia together. Leto, the

¹⁶ Özdilek 2012, 82, 83, 184 Lev. 58.
¹⁷ Özdilek 2012, 82, 83, 184 Lev. 58.
¹⁸ Özdilek 2012, 75, 76, 81, 82 Lev. 58-59.

mother goddess of Lycia, is standing on a throne, her twin children Apollo and Artemis are standing on either side of her and the *ethnicon LYKION* is inscribed on the voting tokens¹⁹ (Fig. 2a). The terra-cotta tokens, which are thought to be associated with the Letoon theatre, are similar to the voting tokens related to the decisions taken in the assembly meetings.



Fig. 2. Rhodiapolis Bouleuterion, Vote Tokens (a) (Özdilek 2012, Lev. 59); Roman Tokens (b) (Crisà 2020, 47-51), Re arrangement from https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/research/dept_projects/tcam/about/ (Access date: 02.02.2024); Roman Theater Ticket (c), retrieved from <http://vroma.org/vromans/araia/theaterticket.html>

Tokens in the Roman Period

In Roman Athens, tokens are associated with the ambitions of the civil elite to maintain their status as gods and heroes, and can be interpreted as the badges of influential clans and families. Tokens were distributed in the exchange of gifts and for admission to banquets and festivals²⁰ (Fig. 2b).

Many ancient theatre tickets have been found in Rome. They are round or square, made of ivory or bone, and usually have a picture engraved on one side and an inscription on the other. The images are very varied and refer to the theatre or the place where the performance took place. The inscriptions consist of Latin and Greek letters and the numbers of the seating section and area numbers. For example, on the obverse there is a stepped depiction of the *cavea* of the Theatre of Pompey leading to the Temple of Venus

¹⁹ Özdilek 2012, 75, 76, 81, 82 Lev. 59.

²⁰ Thompson & Wycherly 1972, 46-56; Crisà 2020, 47-51.

Victrix. The reverse bears the Roman numeral XI and Greek letters²¹ (Fig. 2c).

Roman tokens found in the Roman city of Palmyra were used in religious festivals, ceremonial meals or sacrificial offerings. These tokens date from the first to the third century A.D.²².

Countermarks

Roman tokens are often counter-stamped. The exact function and meaning of the counter-stamp remains unclear. A tentative interpretation could be the approval of a procedure through an authority, in this case the personal stamp of *magistrates* and sponsors.

Almost half of the tokens recovered from the theatre area of Letoon are marked. These tokens are thought to have functioned as countermarks. It is thought that the tokens at Letoon may have been used for several different functions. Therefore, the markings on the tokens may carry different meanings. In cases where the tokens were used as ballot papers, they were marked to indicate that voting had taken place. Similar ballot tokens to those from the Letoon were also found in the *Prytaneion* in the Athenian Agora²³. In cases where the tokens recovered from Letoon were used for entrance to festivals and *agons* held in the theatre, the sign indicates that the entrance fee was paid or that controlled access was ensured. Where tokens were used for the distribution of food and drink at religious ceremonies in sanctuaries, they may have been marked to indicate that they had received the necessary services.

Vote Tokens

The use of tokens can be associated with the gradual democratisation of the constitution during the fifth century B.C.²⁴. In the Hellenistic period, tokens were official and used for governmental activities, especially in the council, assembly, and law courts²⁵. With the emergence of democracy, bouleuterion buildings were built and elections were held for decisions to be taken in city-state administration as a consequence of democracy²⁶. In these elections, symbols were needed to vote and count the votes. In the classical period, they were used as ballot papers in Athens²⁷. Athens has a special place in history for their use in the electoral procedures of democracy²⁸.

The known voting tokens were found in the Rhodiapolis Bouleuterion and the Rhodiapolis Theatre²⁹. There are no finds labelled as voting tokens in the assembly building of the Lycian Province³⁰. The hypothesis that one of the functions of the tokens found around the Letoon Theatre was as voting tokens and that the specimens with marks on them belonged to the people who participated in the elections can be put forward in connection with one of the functions of the tokens and the use of the theatre as a parliament building.

²¹ <http://vroma.org/vromans/araia/theaterticket.html> (Access date: 01.02.2024).

²² Makrypodi 2016; Crisà 2018, 803-810.

²³ Thompson & Wycherley 1972, 46-56, Pl. 39 c, d, Pl. 40 b, c.

²⁴ Crisà *et al.* 2019, 2.

²⁵ Gkikaki 2021, 69.

²⁶ Thompson & Wycherley 1972, 48-54.

²⁷ Thompson & Wycherley 1972, 46-56, Pl. 39 c,d, Pl. 40 b, c.

²⁸ Crisà *et al.* 2021, 2.

²⁹ Özdilek 2012, 81-83, Lev. 58-59.

³⁰ Korkut & Grosche 2007, 101-156.

Tokens in Early Byzantine Period

Early Christianity icons were called “*Tesserae Pelegrinorum*” both in the East and West Rome. Pilgrims could keep these tokens as souvenirs and take them back to their homeland after fulfilling their religious duties on pilgrimage³¹.

Specimens Similar to Tokens but Serving Different Functions

Game pieces are made of terracotta, stone and bone. They can be produced in different forms, but their common feature is that those used for table games have flat bottoms³². On the *stylobate* of the temple of Leto at Letoon, the *ludus latruncularum* gaming table is engraved as a square grid³³. Therefore, there were also game stamps/parts from Letoon to play on this table. The history of game boards dates back to prehistoric times as much as game pieces and they can be made from different materials³⁴. In the Roman and Early Byzantine Periods, it is seen that architectural structures such as seating benches in the theatre, stylobate of temples and stoa could be inscribed. The concept of play has itself a ritualistic aspect. A comparison with Roman examples shows that the game *counters* at Tralleis may also have been used as storage covers³⁵. The finds from Amorium, consisting of bone, ivory and stone game *counters*, and stone game boards, are dated to the Late Antique Period, tenth-fourteenth century A.D.³⁶. Bone, ivory and paste game pieces were found at Komana; these are dated to the Danishmend or Ottoman periods³⁷. The Letoon examples were not used as game stamps because they have a biconvex form, so they would not rest easily on the game board.

Bullas seal impressions were obtained by pressing the ring stone into clay. Seal impressions were used for the security of goods, the identification of the bearer, in worship and religious rituals, correspondence, notary documents and tax receipts³⁸. Important letters, monetary documents and petitions were sealed. The clay seals found in Zeugma show that there were archives in the city where official documents were kept³⁹.

Letoon Sanctuary

The Letoon, the sacred area of the Lycian region, is located in the Kumluova neighbourhood of Seydikemer district of Muğla province, in the area known as the Teke Peninsula in the Western Lycian Region. The sanctity of the Letoon has been recognised since the Bronze Age. The Letoon is a sacred region of Lycia due to its natural water resources and rocky geomorphology⁴⁰. The fact that the people of the region living in Kumluova today, where Letoon is located, inhabit a healing area brought by the water cult as in ancient times that the worship for the treatment of various diseases and childbearing continue around this spring water today, and the fact that the theatre where festivals were held in

³¹ Makrypodi 2016.

³² Bener 2013, 77.

³³ Bener 2013, 8.

³⁴ Tatar 2018, 32-33.

³⁵ Ünal *et al.* 2021, 49-50.

³⁶ Witte 2012, 282, 291 Fig. 9/3-9/4.

³⁷ Koyun 2019, 192-194.

³⁸ Önal 2007, 6-7.

³⁹ Önal 2007, 8.

⁴⁰ Metzger 1980, 20-28; Laroche 2005, 467-471.

ancient times is still called the festival area by the people of the region today, are very important in terms of showing the transfer of cultural heritage⁴¹ (Fig. 3). The Letoon, which has a very important place in reflecting the culture and history of Lycia together with the city of Xanthus⁴² is also included in the UNESCO Cultural Heritage List.

Although the Letoon is known as the sanctuary of the city of Xanthus, it is actually the sanctuary of all the Lycian cities and is neighbouring; Patara, Pydnai, Sidyma, Pinara, Arsada and Tlos. Being close to the port of Patara, which has been an important gateway to the Mediterranean throughout the ages, the port of Pydnai and the river Eşen, provided easy access to people coming from overseas and for the distribution of imported materials via the port and the river. Since the Letoon was the sanctuary of the Lycian League⁴³, there are temple-oriented religious spaces in the settlement, in addition to the places where the priests lived. Among the buildings

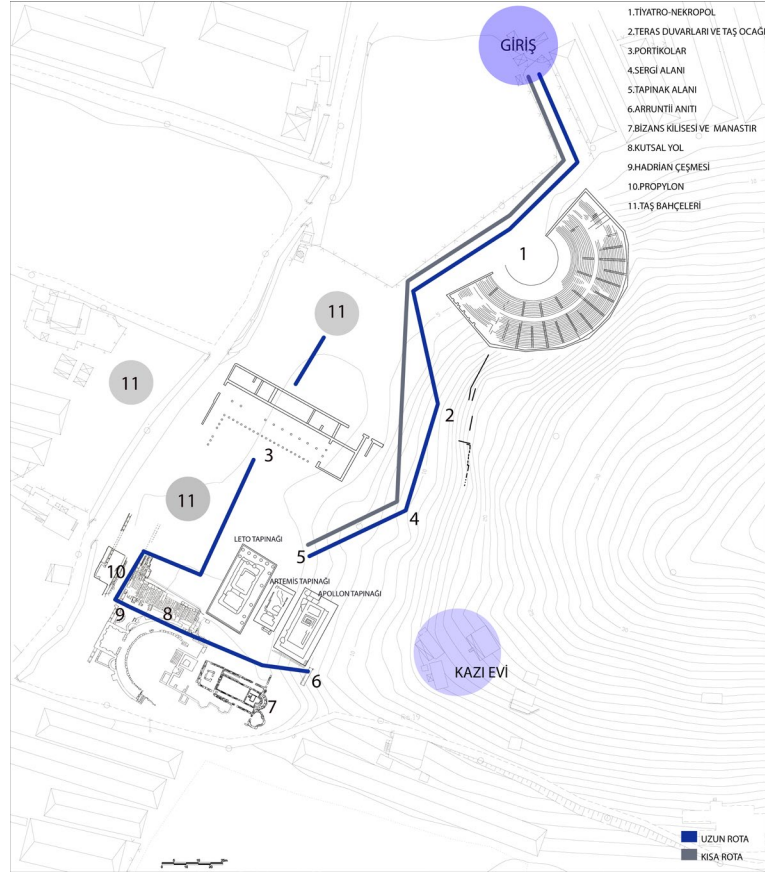


Fig. 3. Letoon Sanctuary Plan, Letoon Excavation Archive 2017

in the city, the theatre was used for festivals, competitions, religious ceremonies and for meetings of the Lycian Union⁴⁴. The Letoon consists of *Agoras*, temples of Leto, Artemis and Apollo (Fig. 4), the Letoon Trilingual Stele, A Sacred Rock Stepped Cult Area (Fig. 5), the Sacred Road, the Sacred Water Spring, the Priest's Residence, the Monument of Arrunti, the Hadrian *Nymphaion*, the Basilica, terrace walls and quarries and different types of tombs⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Metzger 1980, 20-28.

⁴² Atik Korkmaz 2016, 197-200.

⁴³ des Courtils 2003, 133.

⁴⁴ Metzger 1973, 117-127; des Courtils 2003; Atik Korkmaz 2016, 186-205; Özdilek 2022, 245.

⁴⁵ Metzger 1975, 81; des Courtils *et al.* 1997, 323; Laroche & Bernard 1998, 485; des Courtils & Laroche 1999, 396; 2002, 329-330; Laroche 2007, 325; Hansen & Le Roy 2012; Önder 2015, 437-444; Atik Korkmaz 2016, 197-201; Özdilek & Atik Korkmaz 2018, 395-433; Özdilek 2019, 229-280; 2020, 451-487.

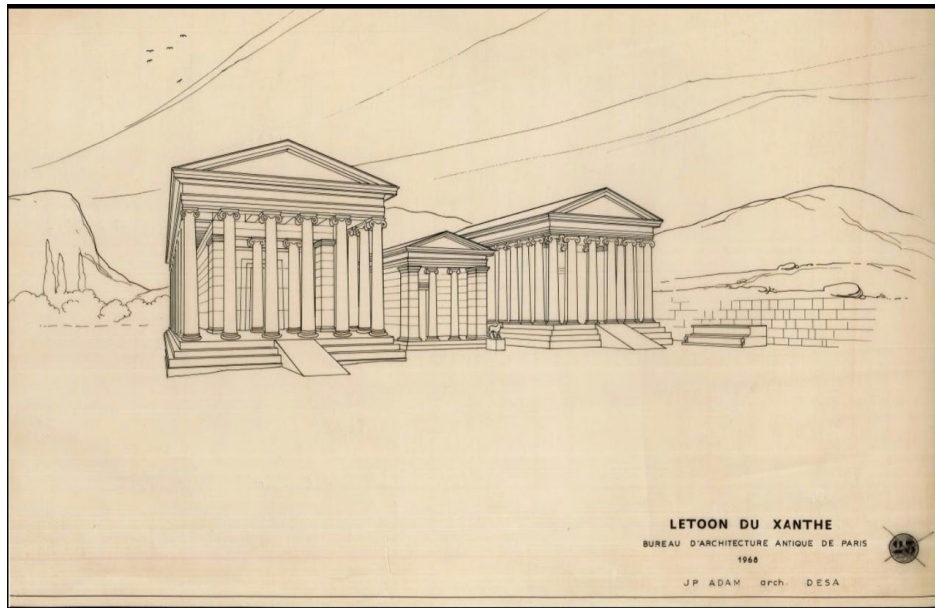


Fig. 4. Illustrations of the temples Leto, Artemis and Apollon and Arrunti Monument (Archive ouverte de la mission française)



Fig. 5. Stepped Cult Area (photographed by B. Özdilek)

The theatre in the sanctuary was used for festivals (Fig. 6a), religious ceremonies, *agons*-theatre competition and *venationes*⁴⁶. *Romania festivities* were organised by the Lycian Union⁴⁷. In the light of the inscriptions found in the theatres of Letoon, Korydalla, Kyaneai, Telmessos, Tlos and Pinara in Lycia, it is known that bull, wild boar hunting and dog fights were held and even a copy of the decisions taken in the Lycian Union was found in the Letoon, indicating that the theatre building was also used

⁴⁶ Özdilek 2016, 163.

⁴⁷ Badie *et al.* 2004, 145-147.

for meeting purposes⁴⁸. The activities listed here regarding the function of the theatre are also attested from epigraphic documents⁴⁹. The inscriptions suggest that it was a place where agonistic competitions were held and its architecture suggests that it was a theatre. In the south vault of the theatre facing the sanctuary, there is an architectural arrangement with a temple facade decorated with a Doric fronton⁵⁰. The vaults overlook the road coming from Xanthus to the North⁵¹ is a road is older than the theatre constructed in the Hellenistic Period. There is a necropolis at the side of the road. At the entrance of the south vault, there are Ionic architraves in Doric-Composite order, Doric triglyphs and masks on the metopes⁵². The hippodrome structure is not visible today. It should probably be searched for in the plain. Due to the morphological structure of the city, it is likely to have been buried beneath the alluvial earth fill⁵³.



Fig. 6. Letoon Theater (a) (photographed by B. Özdilek); Token Studies (b) (photographed by B. Özdilek)

After the typological grouping of the terracotta tokens recovered from the Letoon excavations according to their characteristics, hypotheses regarding their functions are presented below. Comparative examples are presented, clay paste characteristics are compared with the local productions of the region and opinions are expressed on the information that the palm prints can provide us. The fact that singular or few examples similar to this group of finds have been recovered from other sanctuaries and cities makes it difficult to comment on the function of these finds.

In some cases, isolated groups of unqualified material were not considered worthy of analysis and no opinion was offered on their function. The fact that the Letoon was a sanctuary and that the assemblage was evaluated in conjunction with other archaeological data on the site and its use, resulted in a very dense assemblage.

Description

A total of one hundred and seventy-nine terracotta tokens from the 1973 and 1976 excavations were recovered from the Letoon excavation depot during the inventory work carried out in 2016 and 2018

⁴⁸ des Courtils 2003, 133; Özdilek 2022, 245.

⁴⁹ Badie *et al.* 2004, 145.

⁵⁰ Ferrero 1970, 80.

⁵¹ Ferrero 1970, 80.

⁵² des Courtils 2003, 138; Badie *et al.* 2004, 147; Laroche 2006, 305.

⁵³ Atik Korkmaz *et al.* 2015, 417-424.

(Fig. 6, 7a). The average diameter of the 178 biconvex-shaped terracotta tokens is 3.2-3.3 centimetres. The only example that differs from all others has a planoconvex shape and a diameter of 2.60 centimetres.

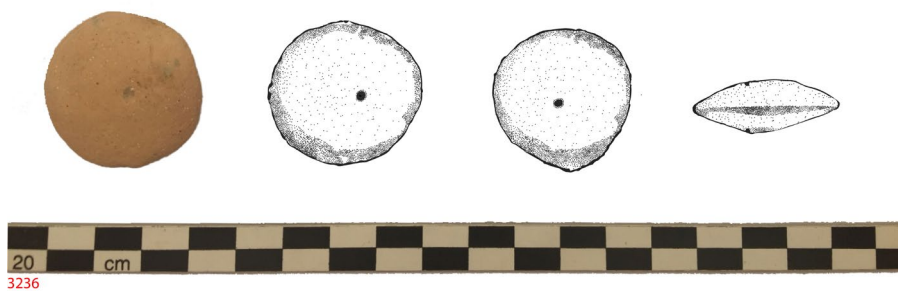


a



Let.1976 No: F16.17 G17 3320

b



3236

c

Fig. 7. Letoon Tokens (drawn and photographed by B. Özdilek)

Typology

The forms of these objects are similar, but the most important information about their function is provided by their find-spots and, if available, descriptions, monograms and marked examples (Fig. 6b).

The terracotta biconvex shaped artefacts called tokens show five different form characteristics within themselves. Analysed in five groups, the sizes of the artefacts are close to each other.

1. Unmarked tokens (Fig. 7b).
2. Marked tokens (Fig. 7c).
3. Tokens with monograms (Fig. 8a, Fig. 8b).
4. Tokens with high reliefs (Fig. 8c).
5. Marked token with a planoconvex shape (Fig. 9a).



Fig. 8. Unmarked Tokens (a); Tokens with Monograms (b); Reliefs on Tokens (c) (drawn and photographed by B. Özdilek)

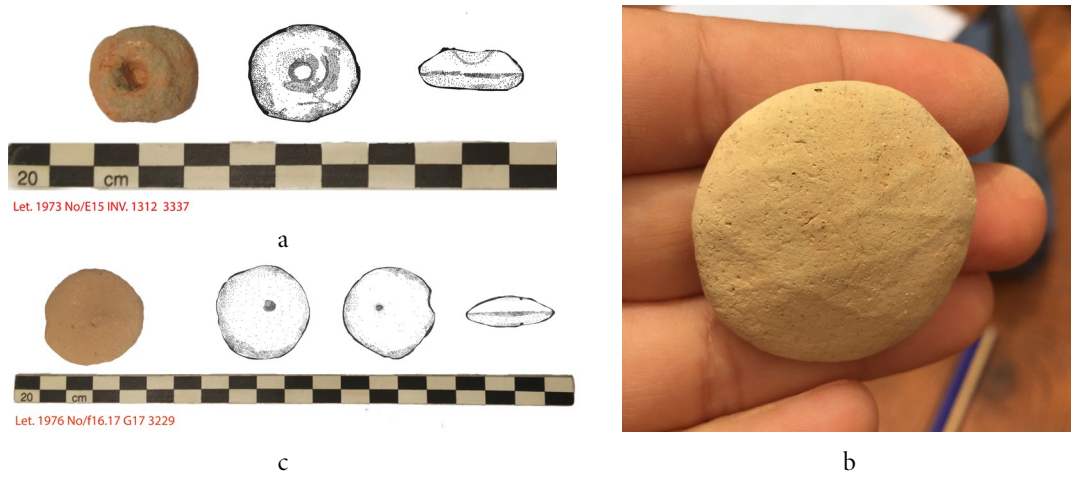


Fig. 9. Plano-Convex Token (a); Handprints on Tokens (b); Marked Tokens (c) (drawn and photographed by B. Özdilek)

Clay Properties-Monograms and Numbers-Finger and Handprints

When the clay was wet, small balls of clay were rolled in both palms and shaped into flat forms. As they were shaped by hand, their forms are asymmetrical and show palm lines and fingerprints (Fig. 9b)⁵⁴. As they were shaped by hand, they were different in size and have irregular outlines. After being shaped by hand, their surfaces appear to have been smoothed with a small spatula.

⁵⁴ Analyses of hand and fingerprints on terracotta objects provide information on gender, child-adult, age and height characteristics. Thus, we can learn of the roles and activities attributed to men and women in societies. See, Arslan 2023, 1-16.

Almost half of the tokens found at Letoon are marked. One of the first questions is whether the corresponding grooves on the terracotta tokens were marked when the paste was dry or when it was slightly wet. In my opinion, it seems unlikely that they were marked when the dough was dry, because the holes made were very smoothly and without evidence of any force being applied. Had they been made when the clay was dry, it is likely that the brittle clay would have broken (Fig. 9c, 10a).

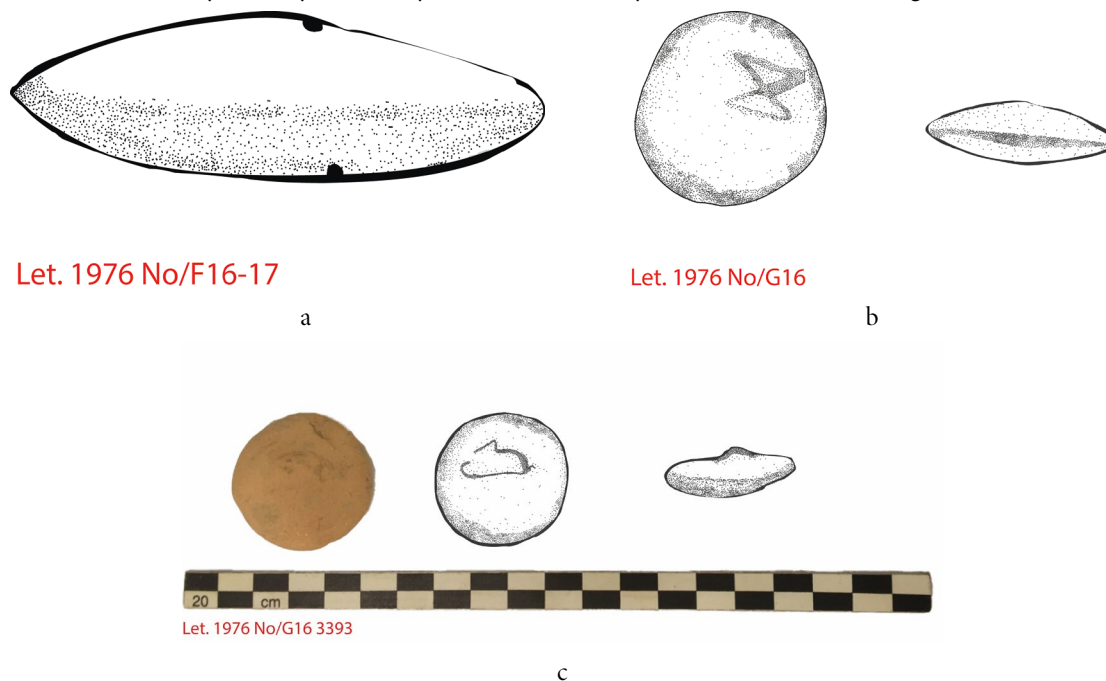


Fig. 10. Marked Tokens (a); Monograms, Marks on the Tokens (b); Reliefs on Tokens (c) (drawn and photographed by B. Özdilek)

In the examples with gouges, it is observed that 1-2 millimetres deep gouges were made with a punch-like metal tool in both directions, although not on the same axis. These gouges do not meet in the centre and are not in the form of holes (Fig. 10a).

A few specimens have monograms or imprints that may be numbers. The numbers or monograms were in the form of X or a monogram in the form of a butterfly (Fig. 10b). Since the tokens from Letoon are under-fired, the prints on them have been eroded due to the soft and puffy texture of the clay. In some cases, there are even doubts as to if they could be impressions or not.

The legends with the names of individuals on Hellenistic tokens from Athens refer to private benefactors who, in their official capacity as magistrates, sponsored certain elements of the festivals⁵⁵.

The reliefs on the tokens are applied in applique technique. Two examples have a relief projection on one side. This relief may be an animal or an object (Fig. 10c).

The average thickness is 1.1 - 1.2 centimetres. The paste has two shades of colour: pinkish and reddish yellow clay. The majority of the sherds are 7.5 YR 7/8 reddish yellow clay. The pastes show the local paste colour characteristics of the region. The lime and sand inclusions are less in the light coloured samples (Fig. 11a), while the dark coloured samples have more lime, tile and sand inclusions (Fig. 11b). The light coloured pastes are softer, underfired and powdery. The darker coloured pastes

⁵⁵ Gkikaki 2021, 69.

are medium hard and porous due to the sand and lime inclusions. While most of the pastes are not slipped, some of the samples are red slipped. They are soft and made of the local clay⁵⁶.

According to the determinations regarding the production of the tokens found at Letoon and the analyses of the ceramics recovered from the sanctuary, it has been determined from archaeometric studies that the local clay of the Eşen Valley was used at the Letoon as at Xanthus⁵⁷. It is observed that the terracotta tokens analysed in this study bear the clay characteristics of the Eşen Valley. The producers of the tokens were the local people in the Letoon.

Find Locations

From 1973 there are two specimens from grid E 15 and 9 specimens without grid information. From 1976, six tokens from grid E 16-17, one hundred and sixty-one tokens from grids F 16-17 and G 16-17, and one coin from grid BC were recovered. Although the grid information is not known clearly, during the terrace wall excavations I conducted from 2016 to 2019, the grid information of the excavated area was obtained, and although it is not possible to determine the F and G grids as a point area, it can be said that they are located on the line extending from the southern vomitorium of the theatre to the agora at the lower level of the terrace walls. The find-spots of the terracotta tokens provide information about their intended use. These were found near the entrance of the theatre. The theatre in the sanctuary of Letoon was used for many purposes, such as Lycian League meetings and *Romania-Letoia* religious festivals⁵⁸.

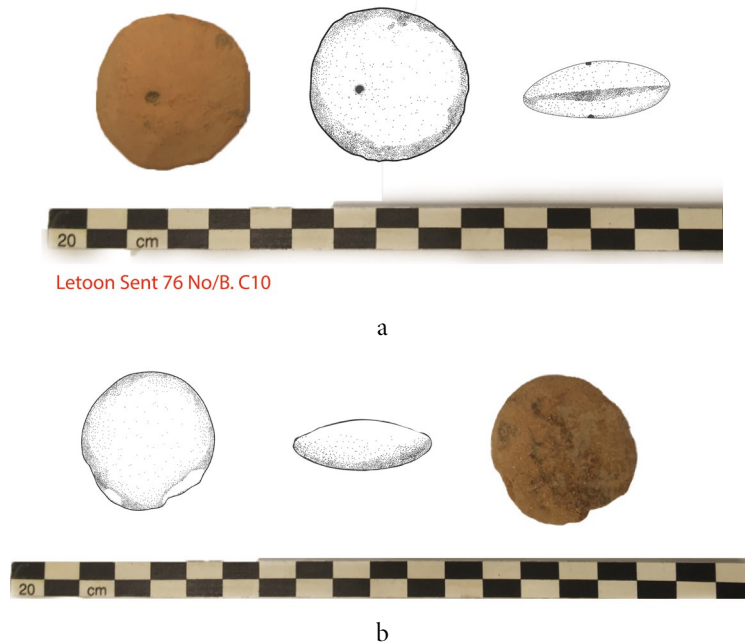


Fig. 11. Clay (a); Calcareous clay (b) (drawn and photographed by B. Özdilek)

Analogy and Dating

Since the exact location and stratigraphy of the excavation areas where the tokens were recovered are

⁵⁶ The manuscript is currently being prepared for publication by the author.

⁵⁷ The manuscript is currently being prepared for publication by the author.

⁵⁸ Balland 1981, 270; des Courtis 2003, 133; Badie *et al.* 2004, 167.

unknown, their dating is not possible from archaeological excavation methods. In addition to the function of the tokens in the sanctuaries, it is thought that most of them are related to the theatre from the grid squares they were recovered from. The Letoon theatre was built in the Late Hellenistic - Early Roman period, and meetings, festivals and agons were held in the Letoon theatre structure during the Roman Period.

The dating can be assigned to a wide range of dates such as the Late Hellenistic and Roman Periods as a result of comparisons with the Rhodiapolis tokens, where the closest similar examples are found, and which are related to the theatre and festivals held in the city. The tokens found in the theatre of Rhodiapolis and the monogram prints on them are similar to the examples found in the Letoon⁵⁹. Apart from the Letoon, similar finds were not found in the sanctuaries of Claros⁶⁰; Didyma⁶¹; Sura⁶² and Pessinus⁶³; while, at Palmyra, terracotta tokens thought to be associated with the festivals in the sanctuary were recovered⁶⁴.

The Function of the Terracotta Tokens Recovered from the Letoon

The Lycian confederation organised the *Romaia*, the famous competition held in honour of Rome, Deese Epiphanes and Evergetis, attended by Leto and later Augustus, included music, gymnastics and equestrian events. Three musical events are known from an *agonistic* catalogue from Letoon dating to the late second or first century B.C. These were: *auletes*, *citharist* and *citharedes* competitions. The celebration of the contest presupposes the existence of a theatre, which should probably be identified with the theatre.

Agons and animal fights discovered at Letoon⁶⁵. According to the inscriptions found, one of the Lycian high priests, who was organising a festival, organised *venationes* in the sanctuary of Leto, probably in the Letoon theatre, in order to gain fame⁶⁶.

One of the important questions to understanding the function of the tokens is the meaning and function of the grooves on them. In the logic of a contour-mark, these marks may indicate that tokens have been used by the checker in return for the required transaction. It is thought that the token is marked as a numerical equivalent for a fee or free of charge.

The statement regarding the coexistence of marked and unmarked tokens has not yet been responded to. Another question regarding token usage is whether these tokens are single-use or multi-use. It is possible that these tokens were reused after being collected by the authority. If they were disposable, they would have to be recovered in much larger numbers than the tokens used repeatedly.

There is a possibility that they could have been used as vote tokens in cases where the Letoon theater was used for meetings related to the Lycian League. According to the principle of using vote tokens, it can be hypothesized that the marked ones may be the tokens participating in the voting.

⁵⁹ Özdilek 2012, Lev. 57-58.

⁶⁰ Şahin 2011, 80-89; 2014, 13-32.

⁶¹ Furtwangler 2011, 64-80.

⁶² Çevik & Öztürk 2011, 90-98.

⁶³ General overview Verlinde 2015.

⁶⁴ Makrypodi 2016.

⁶⁵ Balland 1981, 269, 270.

⁶⁶ Akdoğan Arca 2001, 22.

In connection with the use of theatres as assemblies in the early period, meetings related to Dionysus were called “*ekklēsia en Dionysou*” and general public meetings were called “*ekklēsia en toi theatroi*”⁶⁷. The tokens used in the theatre during the agon and religious festivals were used as entrance tickets, and those marked could be the audience members who passed the control⁶⁸. The tokens were exchanged for a portion of meat at the festive *banquet* in the sanctuary. Whatever function they were used for, they were the equivalent of a numerical value controlled by power and authority.

Conclusions

The tokens used in the Letoon theatre are believed to have served multiple purposes: entering festivals, receiving meat distributed during sacred ceremonies, and voting in the theatre. Voting tokens here were principally a democratic device used in the process of distributing offices, they enabled the participation of citizens in running the affairs of the city⁶⁹. Tokens recovered from the Letoon were exchanged for a portion of meat at the festive *banquet* held within the Sanctuary. The result of the use of these terracotta tokens in the sanctuary of Letoon shows that they were under the control of specially authorised religious officials in charge of the safe.

Since the surviving finger and palm prints were not analyzed, we cannot provide information such as the gender, age range and height of the producers, but the production method, forms and clay properties suggest that these may have been produced within the sacred area. The production of tokens was carried out within a short time employing a very simple method.

The form and simple functionality of the objects found at Letoon and the possibility that they may have been used in different functions described here were taken into consideration.

In ancient and modern societies, tokens are means of calculation used in economic, political, religious and cultural fields. Their proper analysis is a prerequisite for understanding how ancient society was materially constituted. Tokens continue to be found in archaeological excavations, but due to a poor understanding of them they are often not published or are only briefly mentioned in reports⁷⁰.

At the end of the study, it was concluded that the terracotta biconical-shaped objects are tokens when interpreted together with the location and context of the finds and the marks and imprints upon them. The fact that the tokens recovered during the Letoon excavations were very dense and in groups helped in indicating their use.

⁶⁷ Wurster 1993, 30.

⁶⁸ Özdilek 2012, 40, 72; Gkikaki 2021, 60, 64.

⁶⁹ Crisà *et al.* 2019, 2.

⁷⁰ https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/research/dept_projects/tcam/about (Access date: 02.01.2024).

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