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Two Recent Finds of Mediaeval Lead Seals

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Wishing to contribute to the miscellanea dedicated to our highly esteemed colleague Vera Bitrakova Grozdanova, I wish to describe two interesting and valuable specimens of mediaeval lead seals, found recently on territory of the mediaeval state of Croatia, a Byzantine one in the coastal region, the other Papal one on the continent, near Zagreb.

On February 25, 2005 a damaged Byzantine lead seal of Leon VI the Wise (29 August 886 - 11 May 912), the son of Basil I the Macedonian, and his brother and colleague Alexander (September/November 879 - 6 June 913) was shown at the Zagreb Archaeological Museum, together with some other archaeological finds from the same area. The actual owner, Jure Pavić of Podhum nr. Livno, very much interested in

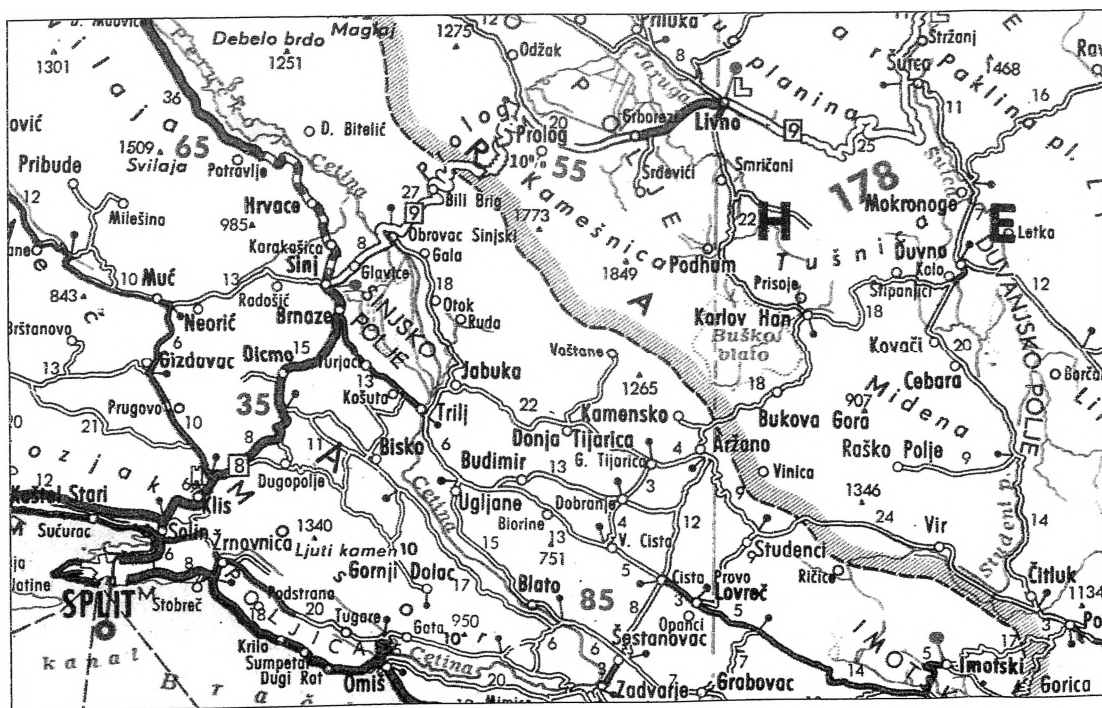


Fig. 1. Buško Blato - the position of the site (1:750.000)

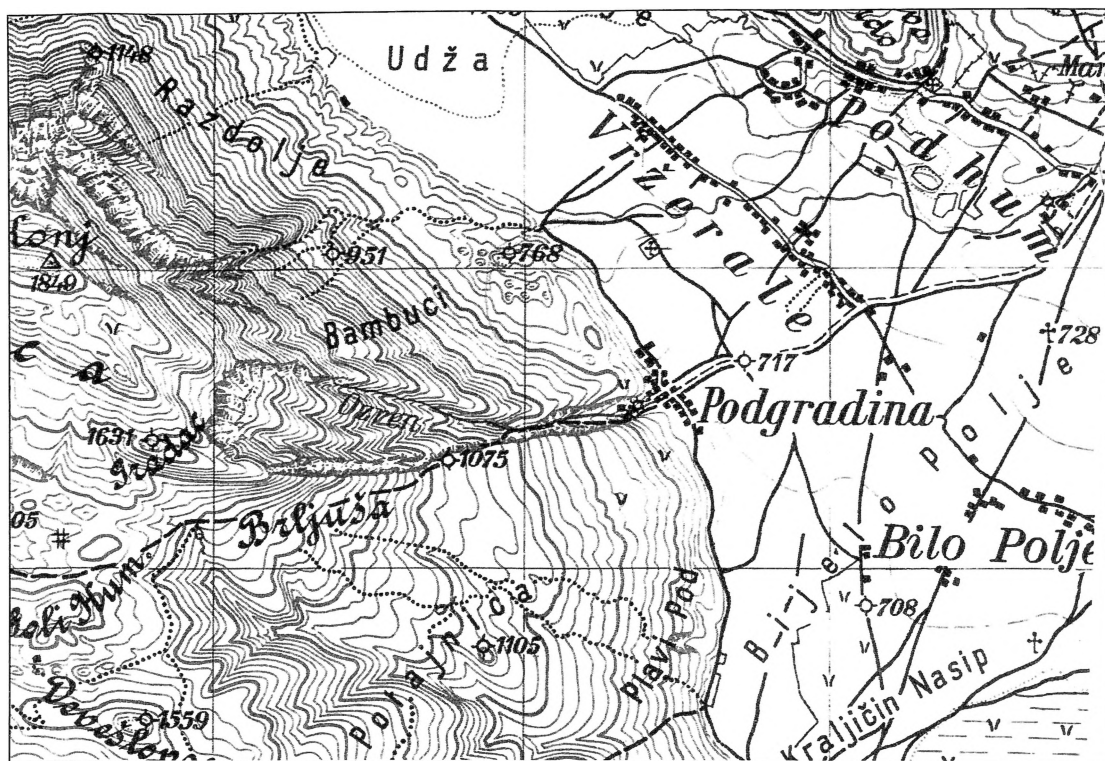


Fig. 2. Buško Blato - the position of the site (1:50.000)

archaeology, brought the items to the Museum, accompanied by our fellow archaeologist Darko Periša. I thank both for most of the information, the former for the permission to scan and publish the *bulla*, the latter for the detailed information on the site.

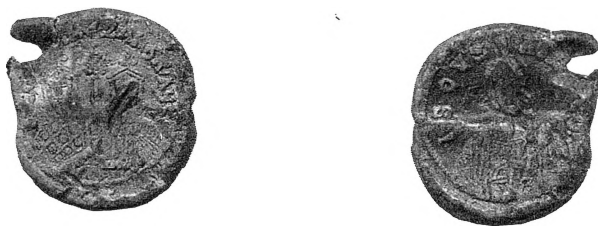


Fig. 3. The molybdebulla of Leon VI and Alexander

The obverse reads:

Obv.: IhSuSXRI(S)uSnICA and there is a bust of Christ, bearded, with nimbus with cross with a line in the middle of each limb, facing; clad in chiton and himation; raising his right hand in benediction; and the Evangile with jewelled cover in left hand Dotted border.

The reverse reads:

Rev.: LEOnSA...AuG. On left, is the bust of Leon VI, bearded, facing, wearing crown with cross, divitsion and loros. On right is the bust of Alexander, beardless, facing, wearing crown with cross, divitsion and chlamys. The two emperors hold between them the labarum ornamented with X. Dotted border. (ZACOS - VEGLERY 1972: 52-53, No. 60 dif.)

Lead, 24.5 x 30mm, 14.04 grammes. There are two holes inside the *bulla* where the strings used to be, one horizontal and one vertical.

This *bulla* was found in the village of Podgradina, situated in the south-eastern part of the Valley of Livno (Livanjsko polje), called Buško Blato, on the slopes of the Dinara mountain, i.e. its part called Kamešnica. The exact site where the *bulla* came from is the vicinity of the Late Roman fort called Tabija by the population, near the creek Ozren. Many specimens of mediaeval weapons have been found here, bearing witness of several battles fought on the same location. If one looks at the map 1:50.000, No. 116/3, the closest cote is 768 (x=4842; y=6416; Livno, Bosnia and Hercegovina).

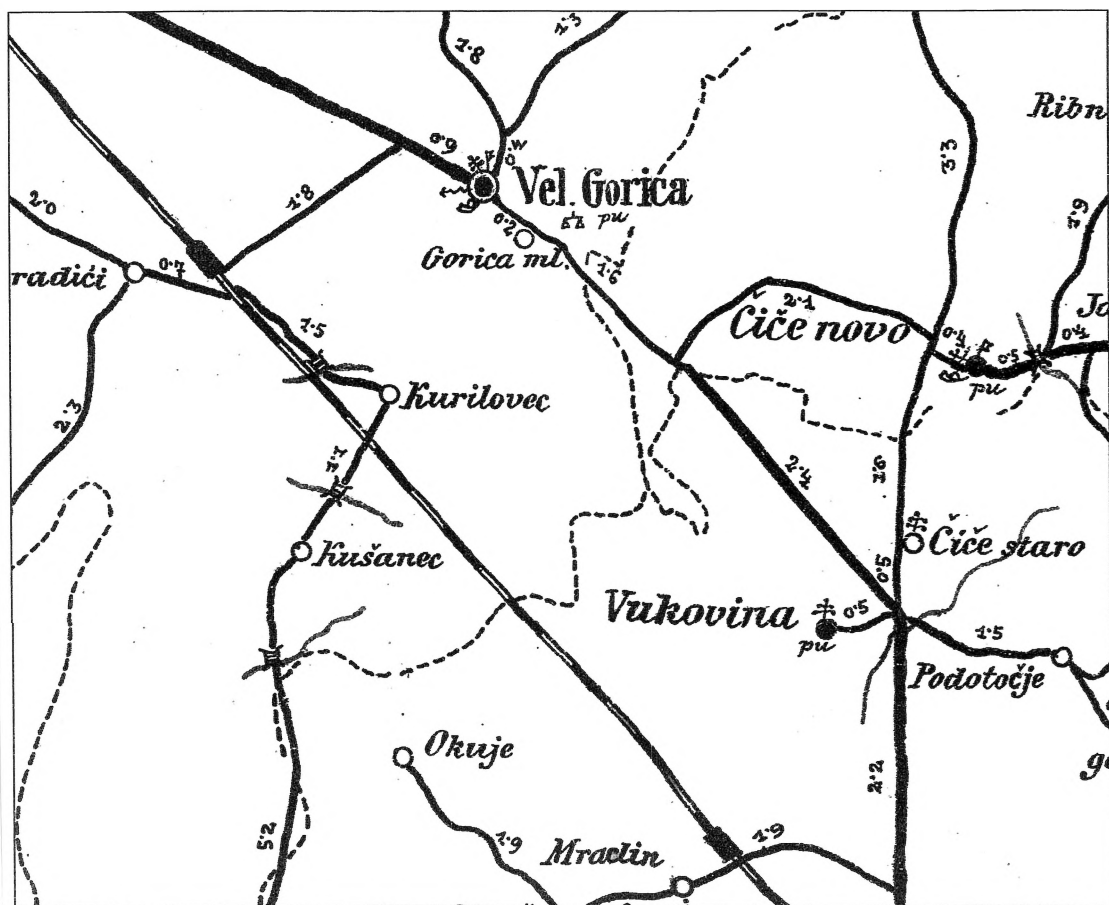


Fig. 4. The site of Staro Čiče (Kilometričke karte i skrižaljke Kraljevina Hrvatske i Slavonije. Zagreb, 1909: Gradjevni odsjek kr. hrv.-slav.-dalm. zemaljske vlade. 1:75.000, No. 21)

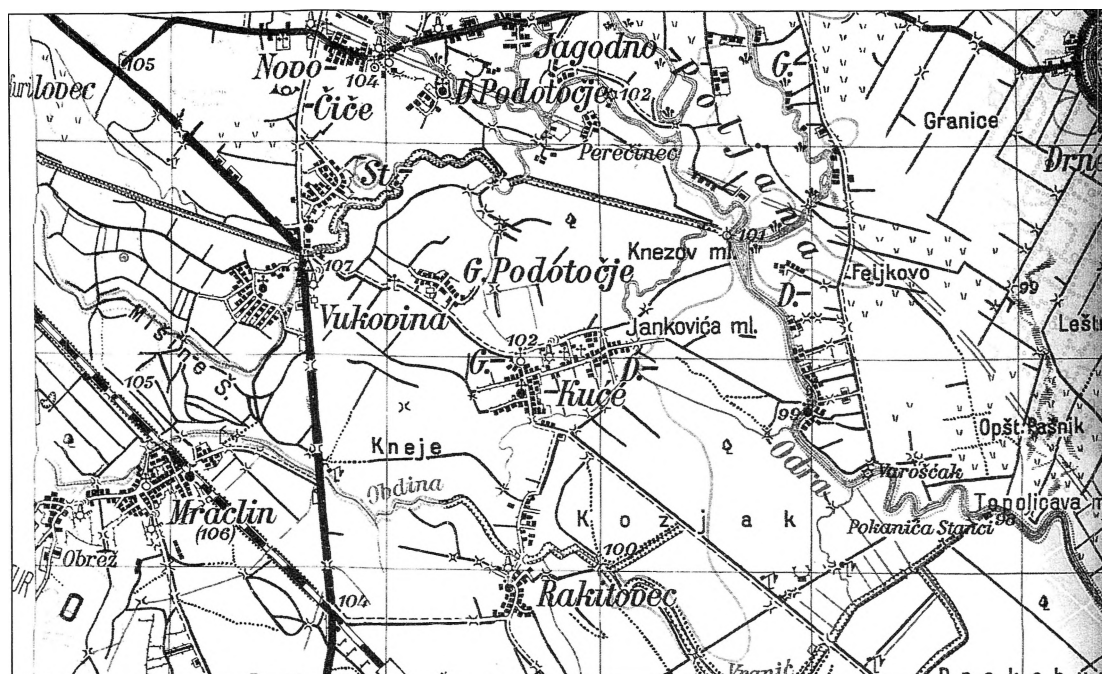


Fig. 5. The site of Staro Čiče (1:50.000)

In the valley itself there was a route used from time immemorial to go from the Adriatic coast into the mainland and it was easily controlled from the surrounding hill-forts. As it must have happened from time to time, travellers both in prehistoric and mediaeval times were attacked and plundered by the local population or highwaymen. So it may have happened in the late 9th/early 10th c with a convoy, carrying a Byzantine imperial document, which, being of no value together with the seal attached to it, only being lead, was either lost or thrown away. Perhaps the motiv was political. We must bear in mind that this must have happened during the early reign of duke Tomislav, who inherited his father duke Muncimir in c. AD 910. Tomislav was crowned king in AD 925 and died in c. 928.

In the Zagreb Archaeological Museum Numismatic Collection there is only one more Byzantine *molybdo bulla*, of Constantine IX Monomachus (1042-1055) (Inventory No. D1318; Type A, variant c - ZACOS - VEGLERY 1972: 71, No 79; pl. 22, 79a), but no information on its provenance has reached us. It has been published (MIRNIK 1986).

The other lead *bull*a, we also wish to describe, is that of a Roman pontiff, Clement IV (Guido Foulques of Narbonne; 1265 - 29 November 1268). It was first shown at the Zagreb Archaeological Museum on 16 October 2001, then kindly presented by Gen. Markica Rebić to the Museum's Numismatic collection on 31 March 2004.

The description of the very battered (a child must have played with it by hitting its edge with a hard object a long time ago), but otherwise well preserved *bull*a from Staro Čiče (nr. Velika Gorica, Zagreb, Croatia), of which pictures have been published by the eminent Croatian historian Lelja Dobronić (2002:232), is as follows:



Fig. 6. The lead bulla of Clement IV (Inv. No. 538:ZAG E48112)

Obv.: busts of S Peter and S Paul, both in three-quarter profile, with dotted haloes, facing each other, with a long cross between them. [Dotted border].

Rev: CLE/MENS/PP (abbreviation above)·III·. Dotted border.

Wt.: 41,42gr. Dim.: 41x48mm. Axe 12. Damaged. Inv. No. 538:ZAG E48112 (12277).

With this *bullula plumbea*, the collection of papal *bullae* of the Zagreb Archaeological Museum Numismatic Collection was considerably enriched, especially because we know where it was found. On the other hand, the second papal bulla and most of Venetian *bullae* in this collection have either greatly suffered or desintegrated during the twenty years (1945/46 – 1966) of their being deposited in the vaults of a bank in Prague Street in Zagreb, together with the entire collection. The other 13th c bulla in the collection, now only partly preserved, together with its string, from the novellist and Senator August Šenoa Collection belongs to Alexander IV (1254-1261; No. E2682) and was bought in 1898.

The bulla we are writing about was found outside the present village of Staro Čiče near Velika Gorica (Zagreb), on its eastern side, with a creek (Siget) flowing on its southern and eastern side of the site called Gradišće (Map 1:50.000, 51/4, Zagreb; x= 5588, y= 5062), on the site where a monastery of the Knights of St John, the seat of the preceptorate of Čičan, might have stood in the Middle Ages (DOBRONIĆ 1992: 133, 231-233). Luckily this toponym has been preserved in several written documents.

Thus for instance, the land called Čičan was confirmed by King Béla IV in a document issued on 29 January 1238 to the “*Domui itaque Hospitalis Ierosolymitani*”: “*Item permissimus eidem domui terram de Zickuan cum omnibus pertinentiis suis.*” (CD, IV, 1906: 49). The lands belonging to the preceptorate of Čičan covered a considerable portion of Turopolje (*Campus Zagrabiensis*), reaching from the area around the Odra to the lower course of the Kupa and they were given to the Knights by kings Emeric and Andrew already before 1211.

On 26 February 1328 the Prior of the Knights of St. John, “*vir religiosus frater Philipus prior ordinis Cruciferorum sancti Johannis Hyerosolimitani*” made an agreement with king Charles I Robert to exchange the possessions Čiče, Peščenica and Kravarsko, Jamnica and Kupčina (“*quasdam possessiones Chychan, Peschenycza, Krawarska, Jamnycza et Kwlpchyna vocatas inter Zawam et Kwlpam existentes*”) for the lands of Starča and Trnava (“*quarundam possessionum nostrarum Ztharcha et Thornowa*”) in Slavonia (CD, IX,: 380-381; DOBRONIĆ 2002: 231). Lelja Dobronić

lists five preceptors of Čičan mentioned in various documents, three of whom are not known by name (DOBRONIĆ 2002: 233):

- on 1 September 1270: “...*perpreceptorem de Chychan...*” (CD, V, 1907: 557, No. 14);
- in 1275: “...*fratre Gvyllermo de sancto Paulo preceptore de Chychan...*” (CD, VI, 1908: 137, No. 123);
- on 4 July 1279: “...*comes Petres filius Petrila pro preceptore de Chychan...*” (CD, VI, 1908: 305, No. 253);
- on 23 March 1293: “...*discretorum virorum fratrum videlicet Oris de Chychan... nec preceptor dicte ville Chychan...*” (CD, VII, 1909: 134, No. 114);
- on 3 June 1327: “*in preceptorio nostro de Chichano sitas...; preceptori nostro, qui pro tempore fuerit in domo nostra de Chichano...*” CD, IX, 1911: 342, No. 284).

This most interesting and colorful document from 1293, containing some information not only on legal matters and common penal law, as well as quantities of money of that period, is of particular interest, as a fire is mentioned there, by which the castle was destroyed, and some charters in it: “...*quod cum durantibus articulis incapati temporis quondam castrum inter ipsos constructum extitisset per combuscionem eiusdem castri privilegium...*” (CD, VII, 1909: 134, No. 114). Unfortunately there is no specification which castle “constructed among them” it was, the castle belonging to the Order of St John, or another castle.

Near the site where the bulla was discovered, in the village of Staro Čiče (libera villa de Chichan; cf. CD, VII, 1909: 134, No. 114), there was a church in the Middle Ages, dedicated to St. George (DOBRONIĆ 2002: 133).

Acknowledgements

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