

CLOTH SEALS FROM THE ROMANIAN MEDIEVAL SPACE. CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING SOME ITEMS ALREADY DISCUSSED IN THE LITERATURE

MARCIANA HASAN¹

Abstract: The aim of this article is to debate some aspects regarding a number of cloth seals already published from 1950 to 1990. Those cloth seals were partially identified but some were not. Therefore, the idea of this article was to point toward a proper identification of these cloth seals. I also tried to discuss some aspects of the cloth commerce in the Carpathian Basin during the Middle Ages in connection with large commercial hubs, like Sibiu and Brasov, placed on the Southern border of the medieval kingdom of Hungary.

Keywords: Transylvania, cloth seals, cloth commerce, Vienna, Voivodes, Erfurt

Rezumat: Scopul articolului îl constituie dezbaterăa unor aspecte privind o serie de sigilii de postav publicate în perioada 1950–1990. Aceste sigilii de postav au fost parțial identificate, iar altele nu. Prin urmare, ideea articolului a fost de a obține o identificare corectă a sigiliilor de postav. Am încercat, de asemenea, să discut și unele aspecte ale comerțului de/cu postavuri din bazinul carpatic în perioada Evului Mediu în legătură cu marile centre comerciale, precum Sibiu și Brașov, amplasate la granița de sud a regatului medieval al Ungariei.

Cuvinte cheie: Transilvania, sigilii de postav, comerț cu postavuri, Viena, Voivozi, Erfurt

Through this study we want to point out the growing importance, duly noticed over the past few decades, of the seals appended to the bales of cloth that circulated between Western Europe and the present-day territory of Transylvania. These seals are the most palpable archaeological evidence of the textile trade in this part of the Kingdom of Hungary and its adjacent areas. They very explicitly reveal the places of origin of some cloths² that are otherwise unknown to us from the written sources. Archaeology provides thus, once again, the most relevant methodological approach to this far from negligible aspect of the long-distance trade carried out in the south-eastern area of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom.

In 1958, during archaeological excavations carried out in Suceava, in a local craftsman's workshop from the late15th and early16th century, there came to light seven „lead seals in a pit containing numerous crucibles that belonged to him.”³ In 1979, Radu Popa also published a short article on medieval and post-medieval cloth seals identified in the Romanian space. He was followed by the Bătrâna spouses, who

¹ Teacher at „Ion Creangă” Elementary School in Cluj-Napoca, email: hasanmarciana@gmail.com.

² On this topic, see Popa 1979, 275–278; Majewski 2017; Polczynski 2017; Elton 2017; for Hungary, in particular, Mordovin 2014; Mordovin 2013; Mordovin 2017.

³ Vătășianu et alii 1960, 615.

identified a lead cloth seal in Curtea de Argeş, dated around 1426, coming from Tournai.⁴ Next came the publication of excavations conducted in 1981 at Chioar fortress⁵ (a cloth seal from around 1624?) and in Piua Petrii (Cetatea de Floci) (a lead cloth seal from the 16th century).⁶ In 1988 Elena Busuioc discovered, in the shop of a merchant (whom she considered to be from Vâlcea), the premises of which had been destroyed around 1437 (datable thanks to the treasure trove of over 100 bronze *quartings* issued by Sigismund of Luxembourg), a whole cloth seal, among the burning remains in the cellar of that dwelling/shop.⁷

We will briefly analyse them, since, apart from the one identified by the Bătrâna spouses at Curtea de Argeş as belonging to a piece of cloth from Tournai (the famous *dornet* in the documents; see, for analogy, the figures below), dating from around 1426, the archaeologists were unable to make analogies for the rest of those cloth seals at that time. In this article, we shall attempt to provide those analogies:

a) The 7 cloth seals in Suceava come, in our opinion, from Jindhchuv Hradec (Neuhaus) (Bohemia), probably from Arnhem (the Netherlands), and Erfurt in present-day Thuringia, Germany.



Figure no 1. Cloth seal discovered in Suceava (1958) (left) and seal from the Kaposvár collection (right), both datable in 15th–16th centuries, coming from Jindhchuv Hradec.



Figure no 2.
The seal of Arnhem city
in 1281.⁸

Because V. Vătăşianu et alii mentioned the fact that most of the seals discovered in Suceava in 1958 had the imprint of a double-headed eagle, I have associated them with the Dutch city of Arnhem, the only one that fit this heraldic description as early as the 13th century⁹ and that became an important centre of trade during the next period.

⁴ Bătrâna, Bătrâna 1983, 196–211.

⁵ Iosipescu et alii 1983, 483.

⁶ Chişescu et alii 1983, 488.

⁷ Busuioc 1988, 140–141.

⁸ The etymology of the word could come from the Germanic *arends-heim* = House of the Eagle.

⁹ Kunkner 2007, 312–313.

The last model described by the authors of the discoveries from 1958 is that of an eight-spoke wheel, which is associated with Mainz and the archdiocesan centre there. However, on closer research, the only city that obstinately preserved the eight-spoke wheel in its heraldic inventory over time (the archdiocese eventually adopted the six-spoke one) was Erfurt, beginning in the 13th century. In fact, the city was a centre for the production of dyer's woad (from which the blue for dyeing textiles was obtained)¹⁰ and thus it might be the case that the bales of dyed cloth came from here.

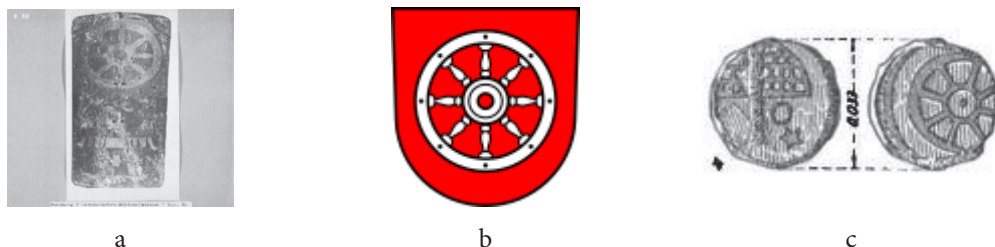


Figure no 3. The seal of Erfurt (a-b)¹¹ and the seal lead discovered in Suceava in 1958.

b) The discovery from 1979 from the point „Bisericuța“ (Little Church), at a distance of 4 km from the village of Voivozi¹² concerned a lead seal,¹³ which was used to „legalize“ the bales of cloth that were shipped to this area. Radu Popa catalogued it, broadly, in a Western or Central European centre. He had dedicated to it, along with two other lead seals, a previous study: it had been identified in the northern part of the complex by Victor Eskenasy.¹⁴



Figure no 4. Cloth seal from the 14th century identified at Voivodes (according to Radu Popa).¹⁵

¹⁰ Hill 2015, 44.

¹¹ <http://previous.bildindex.de/bilder/mi07991e11a.jpg> (15 April 2019). Shield with the heraldic insignia of Erfurt around 1350 found in the collections of the Nuremberg Museum.

¹² Popa et alii 1987, 61–106.

¹³ Popa et alii 1987, 80.

¹⁴ Popa 1979 footnote 4, 276.

¹⁵ Popa 1979, 277.

At that time, the author could not identify where the cloth seal inscribed with a Latin cross and a „W“ came from, due to the lack of thematic catalogues, even in the neighbouring countries (by this time archaeologists in Hungary and Poland had managed to create such databases).¹⁶ Currently, based on analogies, we can state that it was the „Latin cross“ that allowed us to identify the city of origin as Vienna, and what Radu Popa had identified as „W“ was actually a stylized one-headed eagle.¹⁷

The archaeologist's mistake consisted in his erroneous perspective on the cloth seal identified north of the Romanesque hall church, dated in the 13th century.¹⁸ We shall not insist on the considerations the above-mentioned historian made on the complex. However, from our point of view, the architectural layout, specific to the Western environment, as well as the objects discovered there (an expensive, decorated glass tumbler¹⁹ of urban, Germanic origin, dating from the 13th–15th century, according to the archaeologist's own opinions, the aforementioned cloth seal from Vienna, the scissors, even the item of Byzantine luxury ceramics) suggest a Western monastic settlement that will have been decommissioned because of arson around 1437–1438.²⁰

Figure no 5.

Cloth seal of Viennese origin from 15th–16th centuries (according to Maxim Mordovin).

=

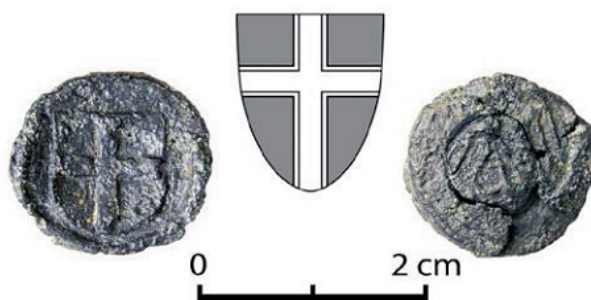


Figure no 6.

Viennese cloth seal from the 16th century discovered in the central square of the city of Pápa (according to Maxim Mordovin; notice the heraldic change, from the one-headed eagle to the shield that is parted per fess by a band).



If the dating of this seal stands (horizon of the 14th century), then it represents the earliest seal of Viennese origin about which we have data, in the entire Transylvanian area. Moreover, it represents the first information from outside the documentary sphere that certifies the trade of Viennese cloth in the monarchy's territories east of the Tisa.

¹⁶ Popa 1979, 276.

¹⁷ Mordovin 2014, Exhibition catalogue, position 66, 222.

¹⁸ Popa et alii 1987, 79.

¹⁹ Popa et alii 1987, p. 85.

²⁰ For the dating of the fire, related perhaps to the Bobálna uprising of 1437–38, see Popa et alii 1987, 100.

The identification of this small artefact on the northern side of the complex indicates two aspects: 1. there certainly was a tailoring workshop operating in that place and 2. The entire bale of cloth ended up in the hands of a specialized tailor, a monk, who had to make some garments for himself or execute an order for a brother or a superior. The cloth and other textile products that were created in medieval workshops or in manufactories were not transported in big bales from which the required quantity could be cut, but were sold in so-called *vigs* (pieces) corresponding to the size of a particular type of clothing.²¹

Given that in 1406 the settlement, called *Almazeg* (was part of those *possessionibus Valachalibus*; trans. = Promontory / Hill / Land with Apple Trees), was part of the possessions of the fortress of Solyomkő²² (Piatra Șoimilor/Șoimi, Bihor County) and was donated to Voivode Iacob, son of Nicolae, son of Lack de Santău, and his brother, David, in exchange for the Nekche fortification (Baranya County), it must have existed before the 14th century.²³



Map 1. Viennese cloth: start and destination in the 14th century.

²¹ Popa 1979, 275.

²² MOL DL 87746.

²³ See also the comments of Radu Popa from the study cited above.

Up until 1405–1406 the fortress had various owners. Between 1306 and 1318 it belonged to palatine Kopaszof the Borsa family, then it was a royal fortress (1318–1387) and a castellany pertaining to the comitatensis *honor* of Bihar county.²⁴ Among its castellans were the comites of Bihar: Dionysie Futaki (1322), Nicolae Perenyi (1342) and Egidiu Tornai (1367),²⁵ so three members of the court aristocracy from the Angevin period.

If we can correlate the Viennese cloth seal with the resumption of intense trade between the Austrians and the first Angevin after 1324, then we could further narrow its chronological time frame to the moment when Dionysie Futaki was comes of Bihar and castellan in Piatra Șoimilor (after 1322). The one for whom the *vig* of Viennese cloth, whose seal was discovered in Voivozi in 1976 must have been made, was probably one of the leaders of the monastic settlement, given that it was a medium-quality cloth, affordable for this ecclesiastical category.

c) As regards the cloth discovered by the Bătrâna spouses at Curtea de Argeș and dated by them to around 1426 on the basis of the town's seal changes,²⁶ we would date it in the wider range of 14th–15th centuries on the basis of analogies (no. 1, 4–5 and especially 6 from the catalogue compiled by Maxim Mordovin).²⁷



Figure no 7. Tournai cloth seal discovered at Curtea de Argeș (left) and the same type, the Lászlo Konineks collection (right; Mordovin, no. 6) dated in the 14th–15th centuries.

d) As for the seal of cloth that Elena Busuioc identified in the town house in Vâlcea and attributed, on the basis of the quatrefoil in which it was inscribed, to a Czech area²⁸ (it cannot be a distinctive sign, see Tournai, for example), I cannot, for the time being, associate it with any renowned cloth production centre based on its description (an arrow firmly pointing to the right).

One final point should be made here: the presence, in the burned hoard of Vâlcea, which melted partially in the fire from the year of Sigismund's death (after 1437 – perhaps linked to the military campaigns of 1442–1443, 1447), only of the emperor's copper *quartings* (issued in 1427–37),²⁹ possibly of a silver denarius issued by the same emperor,

²⁴ Engel 1996, 414.

²⁵ Engel 1996, 414.

²⁶ Bătrâna, Bătrâna 1983, 202.

²⁷ Mordovin 2014, Exhibition catalogue, position 1, 4–6, 206–207.

²⁸ Busuioc 1988, 140.

²⁹ Busuioc 1988, 141.

between 1430 and 1937,³⁰ and probably of a severely destroyed silver denarius issued by Charles Robert³¹ (datable, in our opinion, to a coinage from after 1325) leads us to believe that this was the residence of a foreign merchant or even a craftsman (Czech, German, Hungarian) who had moved south of the Carpathians. The absence, in the hoard, of any coins issued by rulers from south of the Carpathians, the preference for „Hungarian currency“ (as the author said), the valorization by storage of the denarius type of coins of the Angevin kings, the presence of the cloth, probably of Central European origin, and of the seal or devotional ring made of silver, all these lead us to this objective conclusion.



Figure no 7.1. Silver denarius from Carol Robert, issued after 1325.

e) The cloth seal from Piuia Petrii, according to the description made by archaeologists, who mention the image of a viaduct, of a building in the background, and the presence of the same image with a golden eagle on the reverse side, entitled us to consider that it came from Chojnow (Haynau), in Bohemia, being dated to the 16th century with the help of the coin issued by Ferdinand I which came from the burned area.

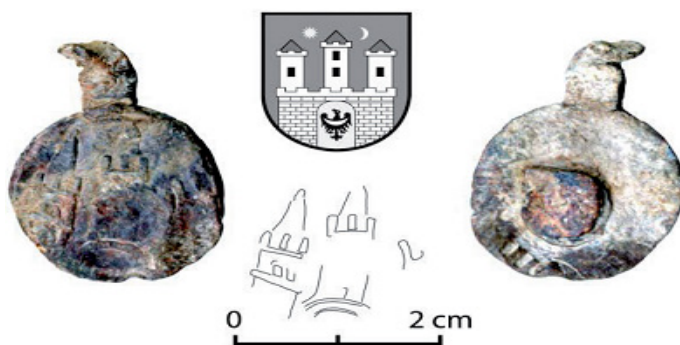


Figure no 8. Cloth seal from Chojnow (Mordovin catalogue: no. 35, p. 214; 16th century)

From the other studies dedicated to the area examined here it is clear that cloth trade was well developed, not least if we consider the cloths attested in the documents from the 15th–16th centuries, mentioned in charters from area outside the monarchy, towards the Danube and the Black Sea. All this, one way or another, also indicates the presence of tailoring workshops or of tailors in the area.

We can thus fill in some information about the „route of the cloth.“ For the western part of the monarchy of St. Stephen, there are three „transmission belts“: Pécs, Kaposvár, Pápa, and Turkevelies on the transportation route to the heart of the kingdom. These seals also indicate how the *vigs* of Viennese cloth travelled to the monastic complex (perhaps Benedictine?) from Voivozi and to other locations: through Pápa – Turkeve – Buda – Oradea, stopping after 460 kilometres on the estate in Voivozi. The others probably

³⁰ Busuioc 1988, 141.

³¹ Busuioc 1988, 141.

travelled through Cluj to Braşov and, from there, for a further 400 kilometres. The one in Vâlcea may have got there via Sibiu.



Map 2. The provenance of the cloths whose seals are found in the collections of the National Museum of Hungary (cf. Maxim Mordovin).³² The seals are from the 15th–16th centuries and were identified at: Pápa, Kaposvár, Pécs and Turkeve. From west to east, the cities of origin are: London, Krommenie, Leiden, Tournai, Mechelen, Troyes, Cologne, Nuremberg, Mansfeld, Venice, Linz, Jindřichuv Hradec, Chojnów, Wschowa, Opava, Nový Jičín, Tulln, and Vienna.

The finds in Pápa are finally worth discussing because of the 140 lead seals discovered here, making this the first archaeological site of such size.³³ Buda, Győr and Eger were the largest cloth distribution centres in the kingdom, being followed, from an archaeological standpoint, by Visegrád, Szombathely, Pécs, Nové Zámky (Slovakia), Csábrág (Čabrad, Slovakia), Sempete (Šintava, Slovakia), Strečno (Strečno, Slovakia), Pér-Mindszentpuszta, Nagykanizsa, Bóly, Palotabozsok, Tamási, Szécsény, Illés (Ilava, Slovakia), which completes the picture in Pápa.³⁴ These distribution centres allow us to see how Transylvania was connected to the thriving cloth trade of the 14th–16th centuries and how the fabrics or perhaps even some of the local, Transylvanian cloths, were distributed, together with other goods (including textiles) in the markets of Central and Western Hungary, via the same centres, such as Eger, Győr, Buda or Pápa. We are making this claim because this trade cannot have been just one-directional, from west to east, but must have had this reverse component, from Transylvania to the West.

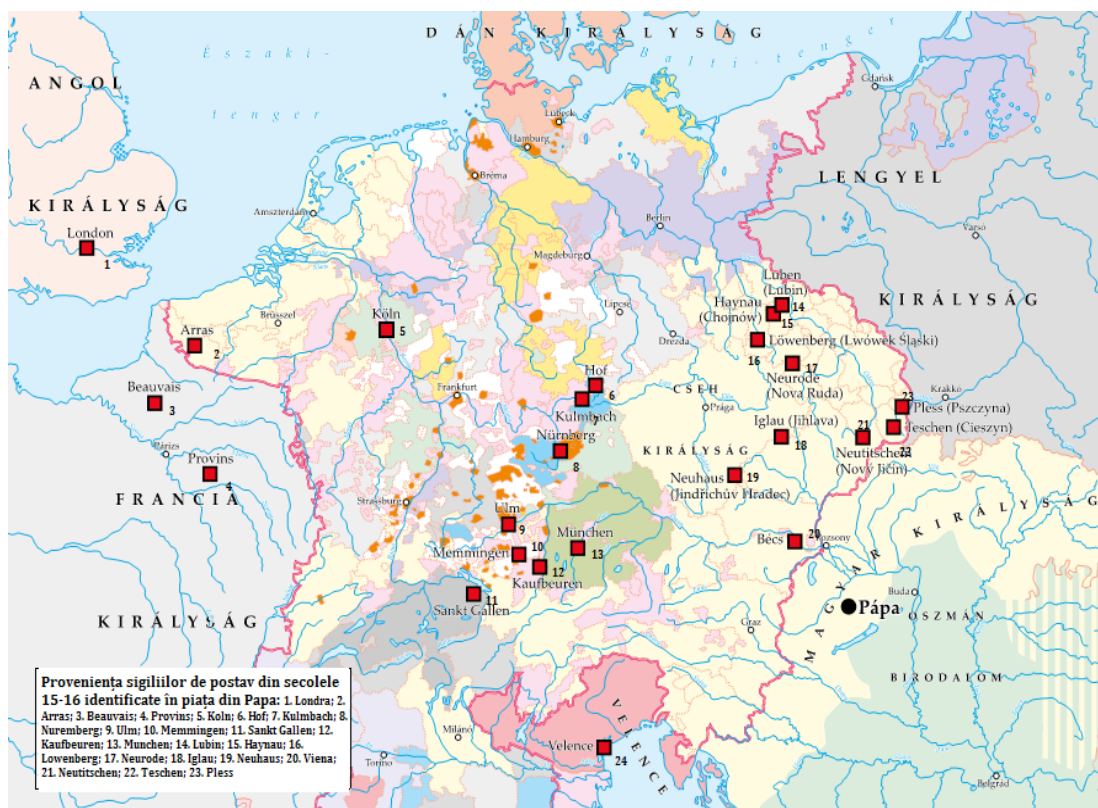
The cloth of Tournai (in Latin documents: *dornet*) and its seals were not identified in Pápa for the 14th century, as this type was the most commonly found in sites, but for the 14th century it was identified in Buda, Zolyom, Visegrád, Mezőfalva, and Palotabozsok.³⁵

³² Mordovin 2014, Figure no. 2, 199.

³³ Mordovin 2016, 48.

³⁴ Mordovin 2016, 48.

³⁵ Mordovin 2016, 48.



Map 3. The origin of the cloth seals from the 15th–16th centuries identified during archaeological excavations in the central square of the town of Pápa (according to M. Mordovin).³⁶ From there, some of the cloths were transported to Transylvania and then on to Wallachia, Moldova and even further.

No lead seals from Poperinge, Mechelen, Krommenie, Troyes or Leiden³⁷ have been identified in Pápa yet, but from the 15th century there are those from Southern Germany, from Nuremberg,³⁸ for example, which influenced even the heraldic coat of arms of Szeged.³⁹

In Cluj, for example, there were two types of textiles from Nuremberg. After 1540 Nuremberg offered 73.67% of the most expensive quality cloths, only 4% of average quality cloths and in no case inferior cloths.⁴⁰ Nuremberg had become so dependent on trade with Hungary by the early 16th century that the collapse of Hungary caused it serious financial problems.⁴¹

³⁶ Mordovin 2016, 43.

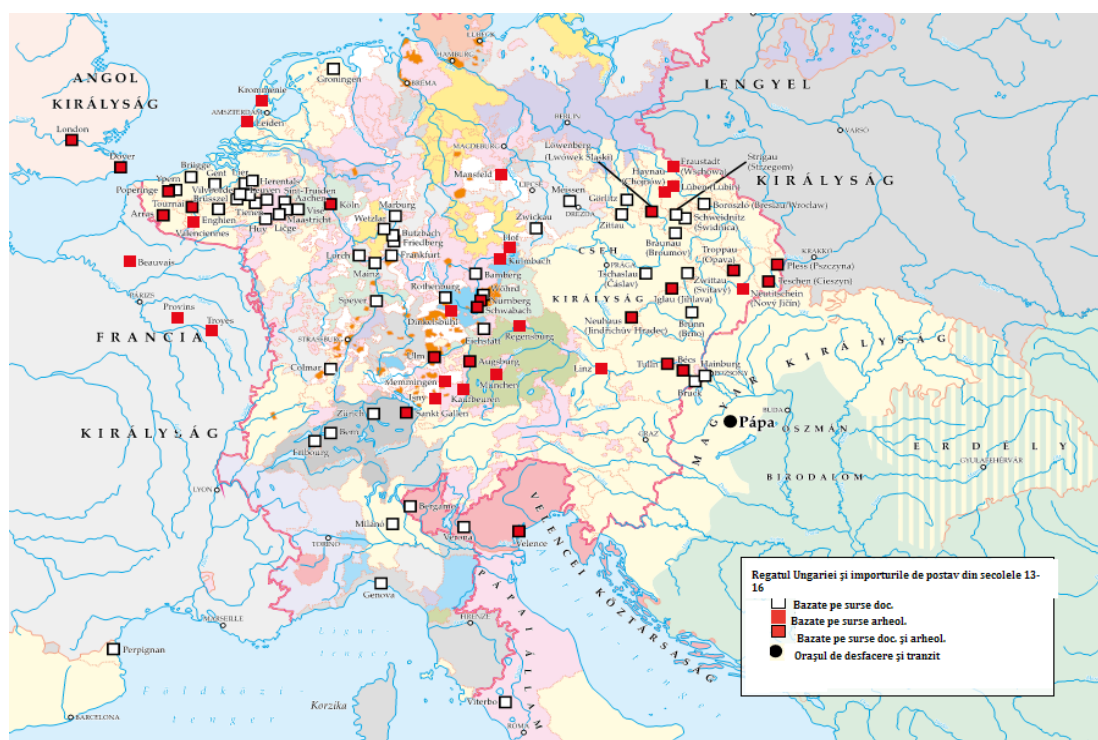
³⁷ Mordovin 2016, 49.

³⁸ Mordovin 2017, 48–50. Mordovin calls it the most famous textile material of Hungary from the 15th–16th centuries, detectable as far as Braşov and Sibiu.

³⁹ Mordovin 2017, 48–50.

⁴⁰ Mordovin 2017, 85.

⁴¹ Mordovin 2017, 85.

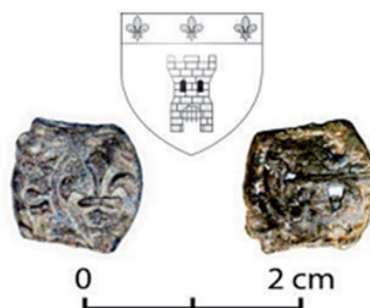


Map 4. The origin of the cloth seals from the 13th–16th centuries identified in the town of Pápa (according to M. Mordovin).⁴² From here, via Buda or Eger, they reached Transylvania. The connection of Transylvania to the cloth market via these centres in Western Hungary is obvious.

Figure no 9.

Lead seal of the Tournai cloth: on the obverse there is a lily in a circle, accompanied by a very fragmented text: „[DE TOUR]NA[I]”⁴³

The reverse depicts the town’s heraldic shield: a tower with *fleurs-du-lis* in a pearled circle. It comes from Baranya County and is broadly dated in the 14th–15th centuries.⁴⁴



Transylvanian archaeology is yet to identify the lead seals of average-priced and inexpensive cloths. These must have arrived here if some, from this area, have also been identified in Moldova (see below). Not incidentally, classifications for the quality of cloths from Silesia: Haynau (Chojnów), Teschen (Cieszyn), Lwów/Lowenberg (Lwówek Śląski, Poland), and from Bohemia: Iglau (Jihlava), Neutitscheini (Nový Jičín), or for the cheaper ones coming from Neuhaus (Jindřichuv Hradec) have already been made.⁴⁵

⁴² Mordovin 2016, 43.

⁴³ This is probably where the Latin term *dornet* derives from (D..O..R..N...).

⁴⁴ Mordovin 2014, 207.

⁴⁵ Mordovin 2017, 50.

Slightly more expensive, of an average quality were the cloths of Vienna, Linz and Tulln, while the most expensive ones found in Pápa were made in the Serenissima's territories, which are also found elsewhere in the kingdom.⁴⁶ The Munich cloth, whose production exploded at this time in the 15th century, was found in very small quantities in Hungary, as was the Augsburg cloth, only two seals of which have been found here.⁴⁷ Hungarian archaeologists are still looking for explanations for this state of affairs, and the answers are not satisfactory yet. The cloth seals from Memmingen, Dinkelsbühl and Schwabach are well represented in the archaeological finds, unlike the „Hungarian“ local production: we know that in the 16th century there were centres in Kosice (Kassa/Kasovia), Bardejov, Presov, Cluj and Debrecen, which were connected to Braşov, Sibiu, and Sopron.⁴⁸

We know that from the post-medieval period in Braşov we have only one seal identified in Hălmeag (Arad County),⁴⁹ datable to the 16th century or the beginning of the 17th:

These seals are still waiting for their discoverers to complete, hopefully, the map of medieval cloth trade in Hungary and Transylvania in the 13th–16th centuries.

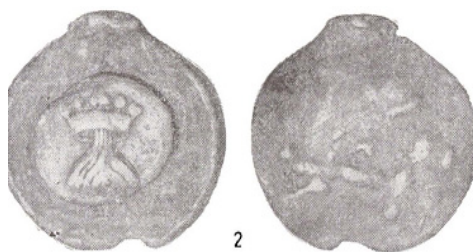


Figure no 10.
Lead seal of the Braşov cloth.

Bibliography

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bătrâna, Bătrâna 1983 | Lia Bătrâna, Adrian Bătrâna, <i>Cu privire la un sigiliu de comerț din secolul al XV-lea descoperit la Curtea de Argeș</i> , <i>Cercetări Numismatice</i> , 5, 1983. |
| Busuioc 1988 | Elena Busuioc, <i>O casă de orășean și documente materiale din secolele XIV–XV la Râmnicu Vâlcea</i> , <i>Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche</i> , 39, 1988. |
| Chițescu et alii 1983 | Lucian Chițescu, Anca Păunescu, Venera Rădulescu, Petre Vlădilă, Tudor Papisima, <i>Cercetările arheologice de la Piuva Petrii (Orașul de Floci)</i> , <i>Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice</i> , 15, 1983. |
| Elton 2017 | S. Elton, <i>Cloth Seals: An Illustrated Reference Guide to the Identification of Lead Seals Attached to Cloth</i> , 2017. |
| Engel 1996 | Pál Engel, <i>Magyarország világi archon tölgiája 1301–1457</i> , vol. 1, Budapest, 1996. |
| Hill 2015 | Kat Hill, <i>Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief in Reformation Germany: Anabaptism and Lutheranism: 1525–1585</i> , Oxford 2015. |
| Iosipescu et alii 1983 | Sergiu Iosipescu, Viorica Ursu, Traian Ursu, <i>Cercetările arheologice la Cetatea de Piatră (Chioar)</i> , <i>Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice</i> , 15, 1983. |

⁴⁶ Mordovin 2017, 50.

⁴⁷ Mordovin 2017, 50.

⁴⁸ Mordovin 2017, 50.

⁴⁹ Popa 1979, 276.

- Kunker 2007 *Kunkner Auktion 121. 13 Marz 2007 in Osnabruck. The de Wit Collection of Medieval Coins.*
- Majewski 2017 Marcin Majewski, *Plombyołowiane*, Archeologia Stargardu, vol. III, 2017.
- Mordovin 2013 Maxim Mordovin, *A 15–17. Századi távolsági Textilkereskedelem régészeti emlékei Pápán.* In: *Fiatal Középkoros Régészek IV. Konferenciájának Tanulmánykötete*, Kaposvár, 2013.
- Mordovin 2014 Maxim Mordovin, *Late Medieval and Early Modern Cloth Seals in the Collection of the Hungarian National Museum*, Archaeologiai Értesítő, 139, 2014.
- Mordovin 2016 Maxim Mordovin, *Posztó Pápa Piacán. Vándorkiállítás 2016. Katalógus*, MTA BK, Történettudományi Intézete, 2016.
- Mordovin 2017 Maxim Mordovin, *Bavarian Cloth Seals in Hungary*, Hungarian Historical Review 6, Budapest, 2017.
- Polczynski 2017 L. Polczynski, *Ołowianoplombytowarowe z Gdańska, Długich Ogródów, stanowisko 86*, Gdańskie Studia Archologiczne, 6, 2017.
- Popa 1979 Radu Popa, *Plumburi de postav medieval*, Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis, 14, 1979.
- Popa et alii 1987 Radu Popa, Dan Căpățână, Antal Lukács, *Cercetările arheologice de la Voivozi. Contribuții la istoria Bihorului în secolele XII–XV*, Crisia, 17, 1987.
- Vătășianu et alii 1960 V. Vătășianu, M. D. Matei, M. Nicorescu, T. Martinovici, N. Constantinescu, *Șantierul arheologic Suceava*, Materiale Și Cercetări Arheologice, 7, 1960.

<http://previous.bildindex.de/bilder/mi07991e11a.jpg> (15 April 2019).