

THE FIRST BYZANTINE SEAL (6th – 7th C.) FOUND AT IBIDA (SLAVA RUSĂ, TULCEA COUNTY)

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Ibida (Libida or Libidina) is the name of the largest fortified town from the Late Roman and Early Byzantine times in the province Scythia (Minor). It lies on about 24 ha in surface in the central-northern region of the Romanian Dobruja, near the present village Slava Rusă, Tulcea county, between the Danube and the Black Sea (**Fig. 1**). The fortification was built in the epoch of Dominate (4th c. AD) for strategical purposes.¹

The lead seal, here presented, was found in 1991, by chance, in the area of the town of Ibida and belongs now to the collection of Mr. Ionel Matei from Bucharest.²

The piece is of the Type B, in the classification of John W. Nesbitt.³ This Type B contains monogrammatic seals in two variants : box-shaped (compact) and cruciform. The specimen from Ibida has a compact monogram both on the obverse and on the reverse. This means that the name and title of the owner are presented by the help of the few letters integrated with a main central letter such as: Π, Ε, Η, Μ, Ν, etc.⁴

¹ For the historical, archaeological and epigraphical sources regarding Ibida (Libida or Libidina), today Slava Rusă, see: T.I.R., *L 35, Romula-Durostorum-Tomis*, Bucharest, 1969, p. 67; A. S. Ștefan, *Cetatea romana de la Slava Rusă (Ibida?)*. *Cercetările aerofotografice și apărarea patrimoniului arheologic*, RMM-MIA, 46, 1977, 1, p. 3–22; E. Doruțiu-Boilă, *Despre localizarea orașului Libidina (Theophylactos Symmoccattas, Istoriei, I.8)*, StCl, 18, 1979, p. 145–149; M. Zahariade, *Moesia Secunda, Scythia și Notitia Dignitatum*, București, 1988, p. 148; A. Opaiț, *O săpătură de salvare în orașul antic Ibida*, SCIVA, 42, 1991, 1–2, p.21–56; Al. Suceveanu, Al. Barnea, *La Dobrudja romaine*, Bucarest, 1991, p. 20, 52, 53, 55, 60, 71, 82, 86,91, 95, 100, 111, 123, 127, 135, 179, 204, 254, 278; Em. Popescu, *IGLR*, București, 1976, p. 245–246; A. Aricescu, *Armata în Dobrogea romană*, București, 1977, p. 38, 39, 133, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 157, 158, 172, 176,178, 192, 194; Al. Madgearu, *Few Notes on Two Placenames of Getic Origin in Procopius "De Aedificiis"*, Thraco-Dacica, XX, 1999, 1–2, p. 310–312; *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2004*, București, 2005, p. 350–355; V. Velkov, *Cities in Thrace and Dacia in Late Antiquity*, Amsterdam, 1977, p. 111–214.

² We are indebted to Mr. Ionel Matei for his approval in publishing the piece.

³ J. W. Nesbitt, *Double Names on the Early Byzantine Lead Seals*, DOP, 31, 1977, p. 111–113. See also J.-Cl. Cheynet, *Byzantine Seals*, in the volume *7000 Years of Seals (D. Collon ed.)*, London, 1997, p. 108.

⁴ J. W. Nesbitt, *op. cit.*, DOP, 31, 1977, p. 113.

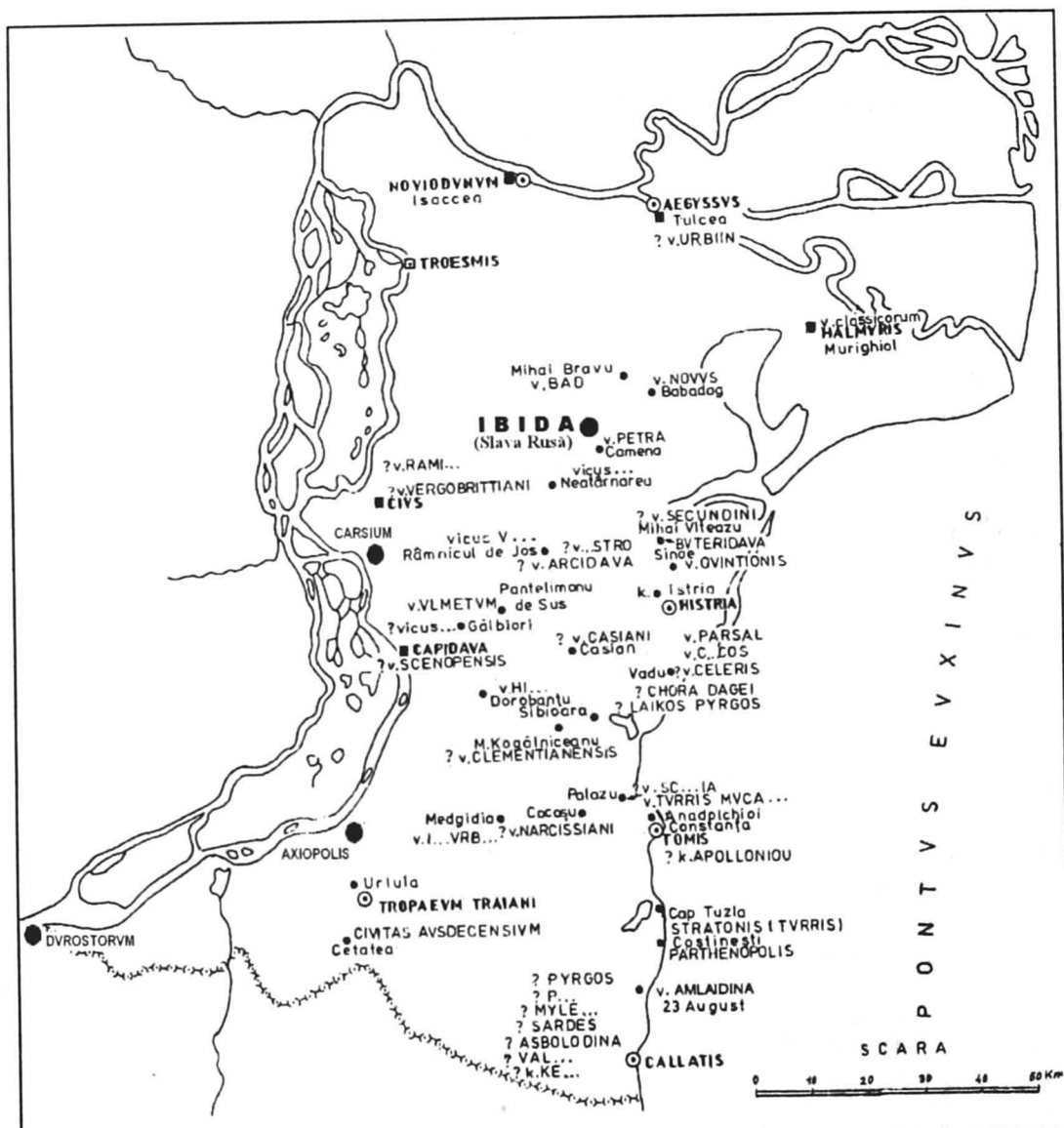


Fig. 1 – The map of Romanian Dobruja (1st – 4th c. AD)

The description of the seal

Diameter 22 mm. Weight 6.9 g. The piece has a good condition although the ends of the sealing channel are broken.

Obverse (Fig. 2 A)

Within a border of dots is a central large Π . The smaller letters Φ (left), Λ (down), K and I (right), O and Y (above) are integrated with the main central Π . The monogram reads the name $\Phi \text{ I } \Lambda \text{ I } \Pi \text{ I } \text{ I } \text{ K } \text{ O } \text{ Y} = \Phi \text{ I } \lambda \text{ i } \pi \text{ i } \kappa \text{ o } \upsilon$, in the genitive case.



2 A, Obverse



2 B, Reverse

Fig. 2 – (A and B). The lead seal of Philippicos, patrikios, from Ibida (Slava Rusă, Tulcea county, Romania)

Consequently the name of the owner was **Philippicos**, in the sense of: “The seal of Philippicos”.

Reverse (Fig. 2 B)

Within a border of dots is a central, large Π. The smaller letters A (down), P (left), T, K and I (right), O and Y (inverted above). The lecture is, in my opinion, the title of the owner as Π A T P I K I O Y = Πατρικίου, also in genitive case. This means that Philippicos was a Patrician (πατρίκιος, patricius). The general sense of the lecture is : “Φιλίππικου, Πατρικίου” = “This seal belongs to Philippicos, the Patrician”.

We have no other information regarding the life and activity of the Patrician Philippicos in connection with the town or fortress Ibida, from Scythia. This title was created by Constantine the Great ; in the time of Justinian I it was accessible for the category of *illustres* and it was maintained untill the beginning of the 12th c. The Patrician (πατρίκιος, patricius) was considered as a superior dignity.⁵

As a conclusion, the seal of Philippicos dated from the 6th–7th c. attests the relations between the town of Ibida from Scythia (Minor) and, maybe, other provinces in the last two centuries of the early Byzantine life in the Danubian province.⁶ Anyway, this seal is the first discovered at Ibida.

⁵ N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséances byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles*, Paris, 1972, p. 293–295.

⁶ For the history of Scythia (Minor) in the 4th–7th centuries, in the early Byzantine time see: Al. Barnea in: Al. Suceveanu, Al. Barnea, *op. cit.*, Bucarest, 1991, p. 154–317. See also, Al. Madgearu, *The End of Town – Life in Scythia Minor*, Oxford Journal of Archaeology, 20, 2, 2001, p. 207–217.

ABBREVIATIONS

DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Washington
IGLR	Em. Popescu, <i>Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV–XIII descoperite în România</i> , București, 1976
RMM-MIA	Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor, seria Monumente Istorice și de Artă București
SCI VA	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie, București
StCl	Studii Clasice, București
Thraco-Dacica	Thraco-Dacica, București
TIR	<i>Tabula Imperii Romani</i>