

GENIUS LOCI

LASZLOVSZKY 60

edited by
Dóra Mérai
and

Ágnes Drosztmér, Kyra Lyublyanovics,
Judith Rasson, Zsuzsanna Papp Reed,
András Vadas, Csilla Zatykó



ARCHAEOLINGUA

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A Collection of Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Cloth Seals from Szolnok

MAXIM MORDOVIN*

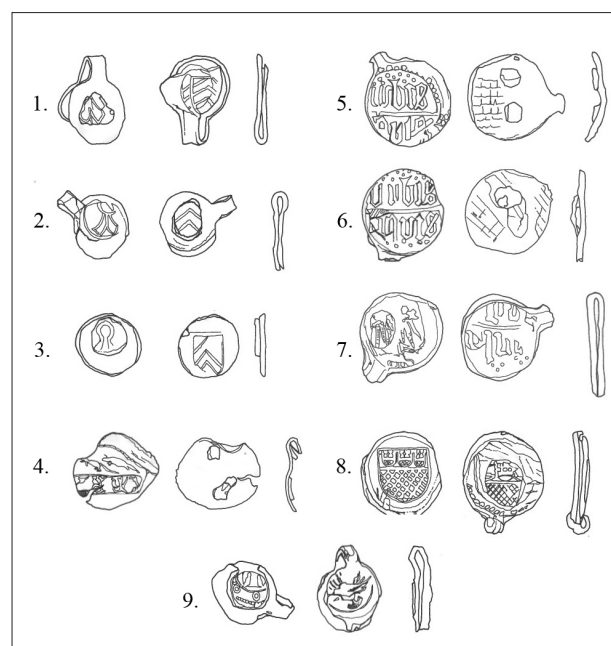
In May 2016 a large collection of leaden cloth seals was donated to the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of Eötvös Loránd University by a private person. Unfortunately, the donor was not the same person who collected these finds and all the accompanying information was second hand and thus could not be confirmed. According to this information, all the finds in the collection were found near Szolnok, although the precise location of the archaeological site or sites cannot be identified for any of the seals. There is likewise no information about whether they were collected at one or more sites, neither can the original size of the collection be reconstructed. It is sure—according to the donor—that some (three or four) large, spectacular items were handled separately and sold earlier. The description of “rose-like decoration” and huge “coats of arms with leopards” makes it possible to identify these missing items as of the English type.¹ Their present location is unknown.

Despite the basic disadvantages like the stray-find character of the collection, it is still significant from several points of view. On one hand, with 111 items, this is still the third largest collection of late medieval and early modern cloth seals from the medieval Kingdom of Hungary. On the other hand, being part of a selected collection, the items are almost exclusively well preserved and thus easier to identify, in some cases unique finds, which has helped identify many damaged and fragmented seals from other locations. Just for comparison, from 178 items found in the market square of Pápa, the provenance of 100 has been clarified (56%), while at Orosháza, this number is 138 out of 256 (53%). The number of identifiable seals in the collection from Szol-

nok is 82, which is 73%! In this paper, I present a selection of identified items from this collection.²

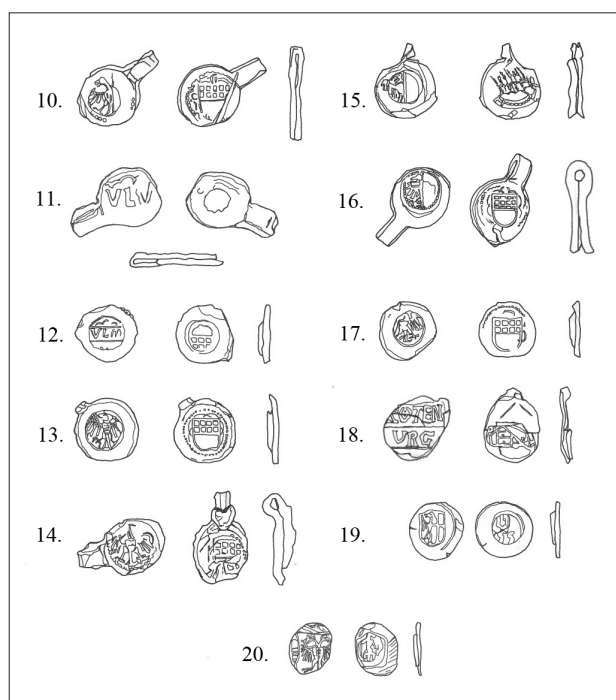
The provenanced seals in the collection can be divided into four groups according to their places of origin. The first group, eight cloth seals, comes from Western Europe (including the Low Countries and western Germany), connectable to such production places as Arras (Fig. 1.4), Lier (Fig. 1.1–3), Kampen, Cologne (Fig. 1.8), and Aachen (Fig. 1.6–7), although the identification of those from Aachen, Kampen, and Lier is still dubious. Analogies are only known for the seals from Arras and Cologne, which helps date these finds to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. The dating of the rest can be presumed, based on the heraldic and iconographic details, likewise to the turn of the fifteenth century.

The second group is actually a single item, from Venice in Northern Italy (Fig. 1.9). This type is relatively widespread and therefore well dat-



► Fig. 1. Cloth seals from Western Europe and Italy: Lier (1–3); Arras (4); Aachen (5–7); Cologne (8); Venice (9) (created by Katalin Szegleti and Adrienn Hornyik)

* Department of Medieval Archaeology, Institute of Archaeological Sciences, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest



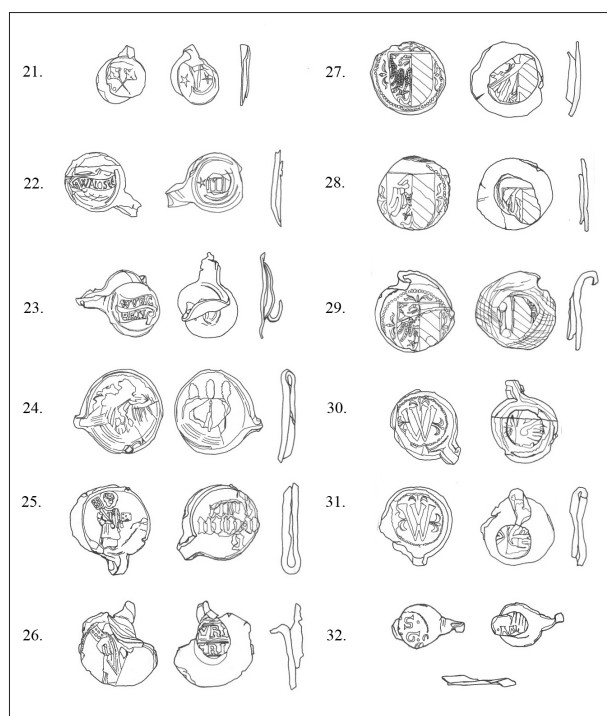
► **Fig. 2.** Cloth seals from Southern German territories: Ulm (10–17); Rothenburg (18); Memmingen (19); Kempten (20) (created by Katalin Szegleti and Adrienn Hornyik)

able to the late fourteenth century.³ This is the earliest item from the whole collection.

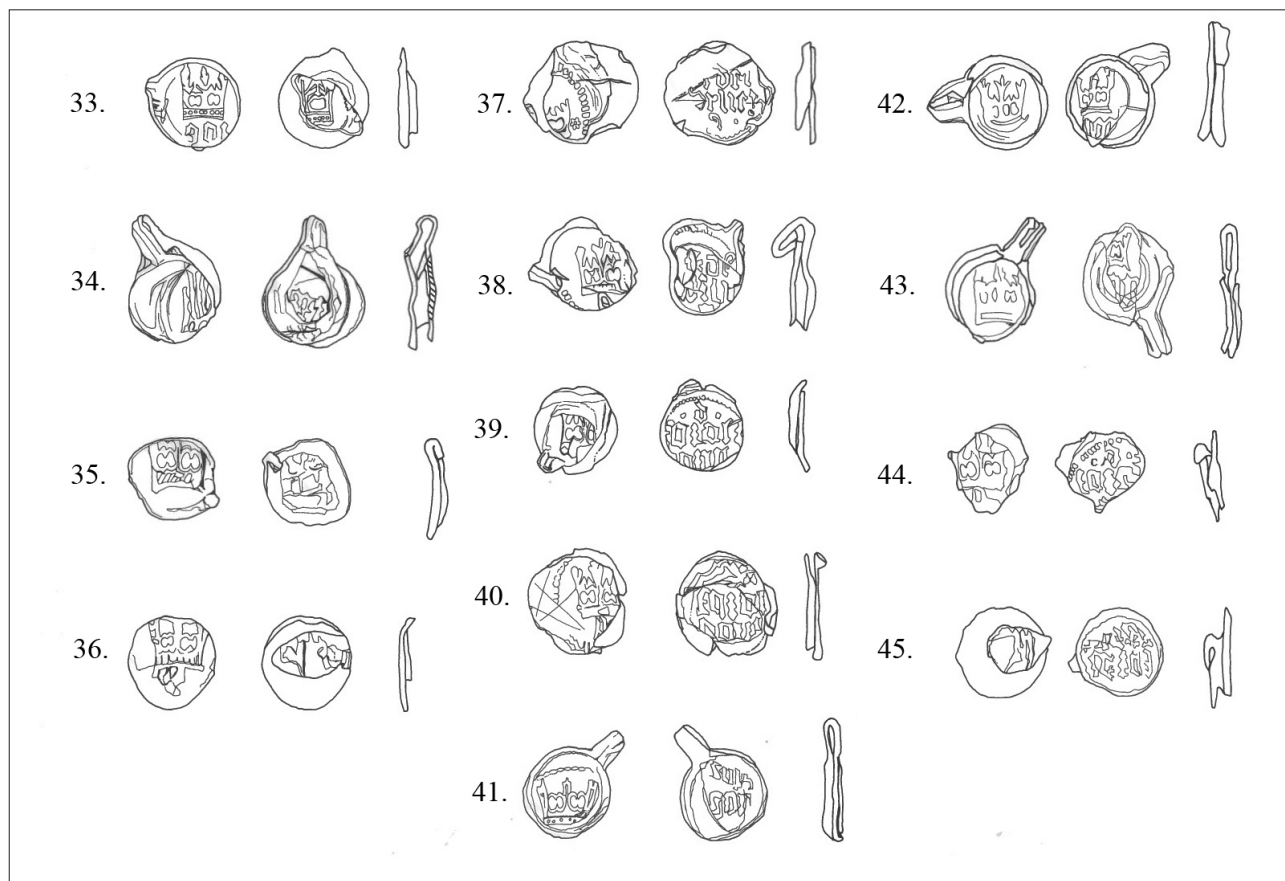
The third group is the most diverse, with 28 cloth seals from 13 production centres. These towns and boroughs lie mostly in southern Bavaria, with the exception of one each from Switzerland and Saxony. This variability undoubtedly implies what region played the most dominant role in late medieval Hungarian cloth imports. The largest number of seals—corresponding to the archival data—can be connected with Nuremberg, representing different periods and qualities. The Szolnok Collection contains at least three types of Nuremberg seals, two datable to the late fifteenth century (Fig. 3.25–26) and the third to the mid-sixteenth century (Fig. 3.27–29). It is interesting that there are no known analogies for the late medieval ones outside Hungary. Nuremberg and Wöhrd (a medieval suburb of the Imperial City) were the main suppliers of high-quality cloth to Hungary from the late fifteenth up to the end of the sixteenth century (Fig. 3.30–31). The second largest set of cloth seals came from Ulm (Fig. 2.10–17), probably not on common cloth but rather on fustian or linen. Fustian was also the main fabric of other sites represented in the collection such as Memmingen (Fig. 2.19),

Kaufbeuren (Fig. 3.21), Kempten (Fig. 2.20), and Dinkelsbühl (Fig. 3.24). Some of the seals can be connected to towns that do not appear in Hungarian written sources, namely, Rothenburg ob der Tauber (Fig. 2.18), Bad Waldsee (Fig. 3.22), Wurzen (Fig. 3.23), Munich, and Regensburg. Only a single item seems to have originated from Sankt Gallen (Fig. 3.32), once famous for its high-quality bleached linen. None of the Southern German cloth seals can be dated prior to the late fifteenth century; in comparison, the dating shifts to the mid- or late sixteenth century for sites with well-stratified analogous finds, Pápa⁴ or Bajcsa,⁵ for example.

The fourth and the last group is the largest (44 finds), despite the fact that these seals originated from only seven towns or locations in Central Europe. The largest number of this group was brought to the Kingdom of Hungary on cloth from Görlitz in historical Lausitz (Fig. 4.33–45). Another Lusatian town, Lauban (present-day Lubań in Poland; Fig. 5.54) is represented by one seal. The medieval Duchy of Moravia, part of the Kingdom of Bohemia, appears on seals from Ig-lau (Jihlava; Fig. 5.46–49) and on one item on which only the owner of the production site can



► **Fig. 3.** Cloth seals from Southern German territories: Kaufbeuren (21); Bad Waldsee (22); Wurzen (23); Dinkelsbühl (24); early seals from Nuremberg (25–26); later seals from Nuremberg (28–29); Wöhrd (30–31); Sankt Gallen (32) (created by Katalin Szegleti and Adrienn Hornyik)



► Fig. 4. Cloth seals from Central Europe: Görlitz (33–45) (created by Katalin Szegeleti and Adrienn Hornyik)

be identified, the Kunovice-family (Fig. 5.55), but the place remains unknown. One type of finds can probably be connected with a Bohemian site, Neuhaus (Jindřichův Hradec, Fig. 5.50–53). And the last single find from Tulln represents Austria (Fig. 5.57).

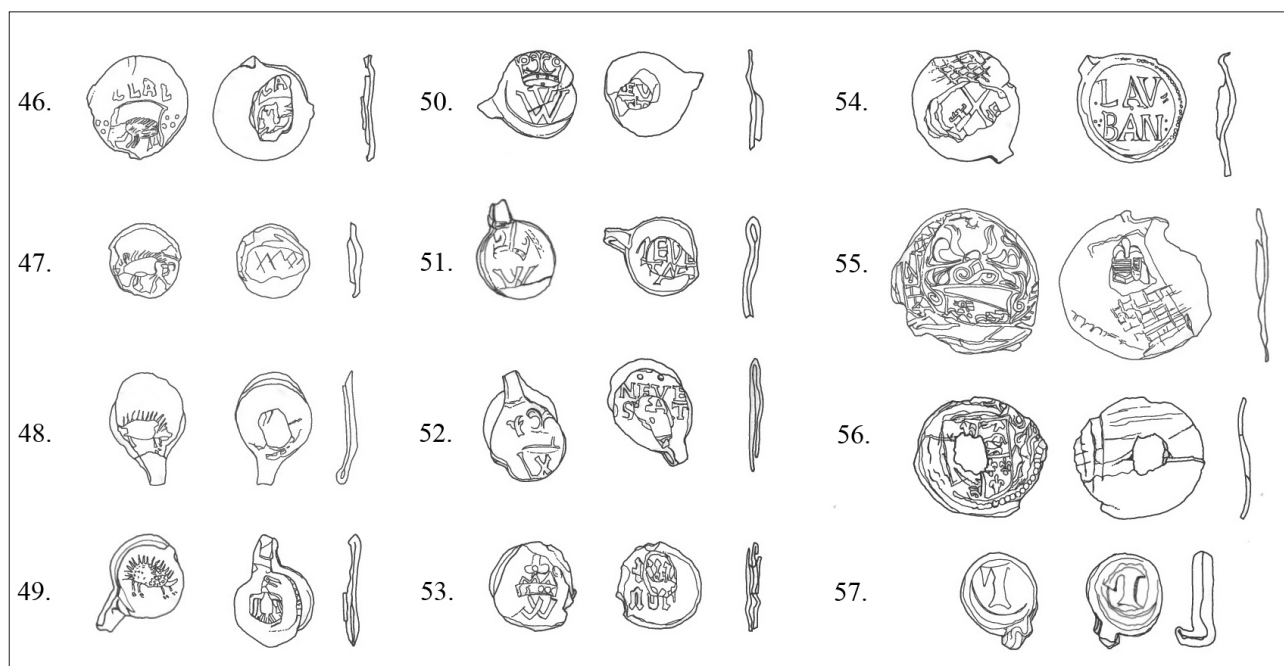
The largest series of the whole collection consists of seals from Görlitz, altogether 34 items (Fig. 4.33–45). According to contemporary customs accounts, this large number is not surprising, because the cloth from Görlitz was relatively cheap and very popular in Hungary by the end of the Middle Ages.

Most of the Central European seals were attached to low- or medium-quality cloth. The earliest ones were the Görlitz seals, datable from the late fifteenth century up to the mid-sixteenth century, while the rest, including the seals from Lauban, Iglau, Neuhaus, Kunovice, and Tulln can be dated within the sixteenth century, probably the second third of the century.

One more seal can be counted as Central European despite its Western appearance. This is a

so-called English-type seal that shows the royal coat of arms of England (Fig. 5.56). The question arises why an English seal is present among the Central European items. According to the latest evaluation of the more than one hundred similar seals found almost exclusively in the Carpathian Basin, this type of cloth seal with coat of arms of England but no inscription around it might have been made in Ottoman Hungary in the vicinity of Gyula and Békéscsaba in 1580–1590s to mark locally produced cloth fabrics as good quality English broadcloth. The other seals in this group can be dated to different periods.⁶

The whole complex—despite the clear problems—seems to be a more-or-less compact assemblage. Since cloth seals were mostly attached to the inner edge of a cloth roll, their removal and disposal usually took place when the last ell was sold or used. Such a situation was characteristic for marketplaces or settlements with significant cloth-making industries (and a relatively high number of tailors). Chronologically the only seal out of place is the Venetian one,



► **Fig. 5.** Cloth seals from Central Europe: Iglau / Jihlava (46–49); Neuhaus / Jindřichův Hradec (50–53); Lauban/Lubaň (54); Lodes of Kunovice (55); English from Ottoman Hungary (56); Tulln (57) (created by Katalin Szegeti and Adrienn Hornyik)

with its fourteenth-century dating. The rest of the seals, including the missing three or four English-type finds, fit well into the whole sixteenth century, starting with the earliest items from the Low Countries and Görlitz and ending with the only English seal. Trying to reconstruct the place where the collection was found, the lack of the early types, which otherwise are widespread in Hungary, namely, from Tournai and Florence, may refer to a location that was only used for a short time, a market or a river crossing for example. With no information to localise the archaeological site or sites, little more can be concluded from this collection. This collection of cloth seals from the vicinity of Szolnok, even in its present form, however, provides two important pieces of information. On one hand, it significantly expands our knowledge of the existing cloth seals transported on different fabrics to the Kingdom of Hungary. On the other, this collection introduces a number of new towns, previously not documented in any type of source, that exported cloth to Hungary. Hopefully, further archaeological investigations in and around Szolnok will shed light on the cloth industry of Szolnok itself.

Notes

- ¹ Maxim Mordovin, “Egy négy évszázados bűntény nyomában” [Tracing a four century-old crime story], *Belügyi Szemle: A Belügyminisztérium Szakmai Tudományos Folyóirata* 64, no. 5 (2016): 107–114.
- ² For the details: Mordovin Maxim, *Textilvégek védjegyei: A textilkereskedelem régészeti emlékei a Magyar Királyság területén* [Trademarks on Cloth Ends: The Archaeological Heritage of Textile Trade in the Hungarian Kingdom] (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2018).
- ³ Bárdi Bogáta, “14. századi városi leletanyag Visegrádról. Visegrád Duna-parti út 1. lelőhely kerámiaanyagának feldolgozása” [Fourteenth-century urban finds from Visegrád. Ceramics from Site 1 at Visegrád, Duna-parti Road], MA Thesis (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 2014), 124; Ján Hunka, “Nálezy olovených plómb na zaistovanie prepravovaných tovarov (14.–17. stor.) zo Slovenska” [The finds of leaden seals used for securing the traded goods (fourteenth to seventeenth century) in Slovakia], *Študijné zvesti Archeologického Ústavu SAV* 33, (1999): 295–309.
- ⁴ Maxim Mordovin, *Posztó Pápa piacán: Vándorkiállítás 2016, Katalógus* [Cloth on the market of Pápa. Travelling exhibition 2016, Catalog] (Budapest–Pápa–Veszprém: Gróf Esterházy Károly Múzeum–A Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Veszprém Megyei Levéltára–MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézete, 2016).
- ⁵ Gyöngyi Kovács, ed., *Weitschawar – Bajcsa-vár. Egy stájer erődítmény Magyarországon a 16. század második felében* [The Castle of Bajcsa. A Styrian fortification in Hungary in the second half of the sixteenth century] (Zalaegerszeg: Zala Megyei Múzeumok Igazgatósága, 2002), 77, 206–208.
- ⁶ Mordovin, *Textilvégek védjegyei*, 231–242.