

► On the back side of the first lead seal the inscription writes «ΑΓΙΑ ΣΟΦΙΑ ΥΠΕΡΑΓΙΑ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΕ ΒΟΗΘΕΙ ΤΟΙΣ ΘΕΟΣΕΒΕΣΤΑΤΟΙΣ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΙΣ (ΚΑΙ) ΕΚΚΛΗΣΕΚΔΙΚΟΙΣ», meaning «Saint Sophia Most Holy Mother of God, please help us god-fearing presbyters and ekklesiiodikois». Try reading it.

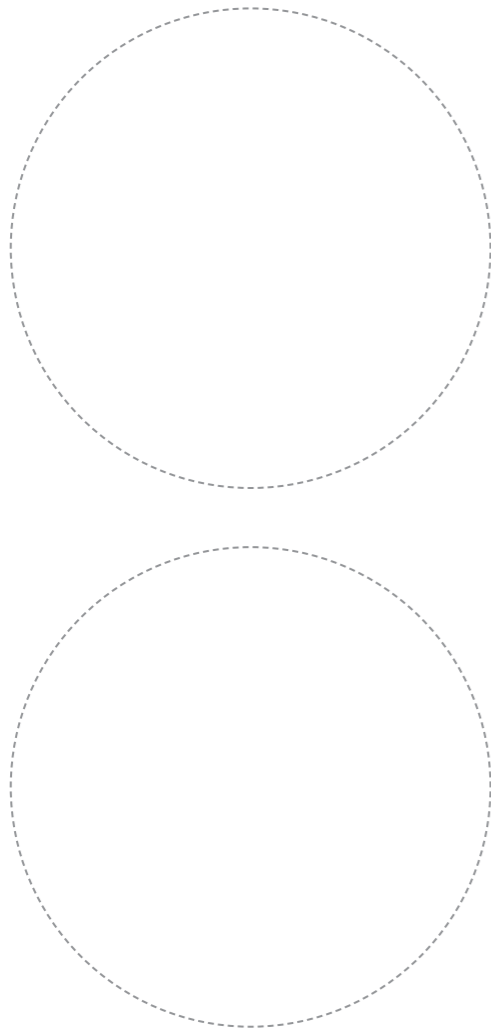
► What do you believe would have been the content of the letter that this specific seal sealed? (Read the text about the ekklesiiodikoi)

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► Draw your own lead seal



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# Learning about byzantine seals

*from boullae to IPs*

WORKSHEET 3



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Gallery 4

“From Iconoclasm to the splendor of the Macedonian and Komnenian dynasties”

What were the seals?

Lead seals (or lead bullae in Greek) were personal seals used for sealing documents in the Byzantine Empire. Byzantines in this way ensured a) the confidentiality and security of correspondence b) the authenticity of the signature of the sender c) a document's validity. From lead seals information regarding the owners can be obtained (e.g. name and title).

► Nowadays, in which ways do we ensure the confidentiality and validity of documents?

(mark all the correct answers)

- stamp
- seal
- signature
- digital signature
- envelope
- sealing wax

Did you know?

The *ekdikoi* or *ekklesekdikoi* were the council of officials at the church of Hagia Sophia. They were headed by the *Protekdikos*. Their role was judicial. They defended the poor and defenseless. They assisted with church administration and took care of the proper functioning of the church.



Folded document with a lead seal ensuring its authenticity. Vlatades Monastery Collection.

► Find in the display the two similar seals of the Ekdikoi of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople



(11th century)



Side A (front side)

Side B (back side)

Did you know?

Emperor Justinian I (527-565) was particularly educated and recaptured lost lands of the Roman Empire. He remains known in history for the riot in the hippodrome of Constantinople, in 532, the Nika riots, and for the church of Hagia Sophia which was built during his reign. He developed trade routes with the East and imported the cultivation of silk. His greatest achievement was the codification of Roman law, the Justinian Codex.

► Observe the depictions on the front side. Which faces are depicted on the lead seals?

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► On the icon the emperor offers a church to the Virgin Mary. Which church do you believe it is? (read carefully the text above)

Did you know?

The emperor's vestments consist of the *chlamys* (long purple cloak) and the *loros* (an oblong piece of fabric decorated with precious stones). Alternatively, the emperor could wear a military uniform (helmet with a cross, cuirass and a shield with a horse rider on it). The emperor's symbols depicted on the seals are the crown (the royal symbol of the emperor, usually with a cross and prependicularia, the decorative chains hanging on the sides of the face), the sphere (symbolizing the world), the scepter and the *lavaros* (silver cross).

► What does Justinian wear? Look closely at the first seal.

- chlamys
- crown with prependicularia
- scepter
- military uniform
- loros
- sphere
- labarum

Did you know?

In 532 the construction of Hagia Sophia started on top of an earlier church built by Constantine I (the Great), which was ruined during the Nika riots. It was constructed in five years by the engineers Anthemios from Tralleis and Isidoros from Milos. It was the church seat of the Ecumenical Patriarch throughout the whole of the Byzantine Empire.