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Seals from the Amorium excavations

The city of Amorium occupies a special place in the history of the Byzantine State as the capital of the Anatolikon *theme*, one of the largest and most important administrative divisions of the Empire, as the cradle of emperor Michael II (820-829), founder of the short-lived Amorian dynasty, and above all, as the scene of one of the most grievous military disasters for the Byzantines, the sack of the city by the Arab caliph al-Muʿtaṣim in August 838.

The location of Amorium in the area of the modern village of Hisarköy (less than 200 km SW of Ankara) was first identified by the British traveler William Hamilton in 1836. Archaeological research on the site started, however, only in 1987 under the direction of Martin Harrison (Oxford University) and, after the latter's untimely death in 1992, it continued by an international research team led by Dr. Chris Lightfoot (Metropolitan Museum of New York).

Excavation and field research within and outside the city's walls during more than twenty-two excavation seasons has brought to light an abundance of movable finds, as well as important vestiges of the city's town-planning, including parts of its circuit walls and remains of private and public architecture (religious buildings, baths, manufacturing installations, houses). The movable finds include a small group of sixteen lead disks (ten seals, three tokens and three blanks), all kept today at the Archaeological Museum of Afyon. Despite their small number and diverse state of preservation, these small objects gain in importance because of their secure provenance. The present communication focuses on the legends appearing on the lead seals and tokens by highlighting their contribution in the city's political and ecclesiastical history; at the same time, however, it approaches the neglected evidence offered by the three blanks and investigates how this may enhance the picture of Amorium as one of the most significant provincial capitals of the Empire.