

## Imperial Seal Boxes

Hinged boxes used for this purpose have been found in in the whole Roman Empire, where they tend to be date in a very wide historical range and are mostly of enameled bronze . Seal Boxes depicting imperial busts are with a high relief. Most of them have an ovoid shape. An example found in Ostia bearing the portraits of Hadrian and Sabina (p. 464, 151) and seal boxes with portraits of Vespasian and Domitian have been found in London and must have been used by high officials (P. Salway, *A History of Roman Britain* [Oxford 2001], p. 381). This was certainly the case with this piece, especially given its splendid portrait of the Flavius Family, which was surely made by workers in the imperial mint in Rome and then sent out for official use in the provinces.

When the Romans sent important small packages by courier, such as documents or valuables, they were were placed in strong leather or cloth bags, which were sealed with a stout cord, the knot covered in wax and impressed with the sender's signet. To protect the wax seal, it and the knot were encased in a small, ornamental metal box with an hinged lid and three holes in the back for the cord. In addition, the lid could be kept closed by further cords sewn to the package and tied around it.



Titus 79-81 AD. Orichalcum (the golden-colored bronze alloy) seal box cover depicting in high relief a magnificent portrait of the Roman Emperor Titus. Fine golden "Tiber" patina.

Provenance: Acquired from the late Dr. Leo Mildenberg. Jakob Hirsch (1874-1955)

Literature: Published: Nomos, Zurich, Auction 1, 6th May 2009, lot 144

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The oval Victory sealbox - Description:

Seal box oval; on the cover , the top of a folded shape towards the upper side window terrain apparently molded: Victory advancing to the left, holding a crown.

Material: bronze. Suggested chronology: 80 / 150 AD

Occurrences-1: London, silts of the Thames (UK); London, British Museum, inv. PE 95.5-24.1 ;

Notes 2, p. 167 2: Paris\* [75] (FR), Cabinet des Médailles de la BnF, ht. 30mm (Babelon, Blanchet 1895, p. 581, n°1438) (dessin) Bibliography: Babelon, Blanchet 1895: E. Babelon, J.-

A. Blanchet, Catalogue des bronzes antiques de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris 1895.

Télécharger Acheter. Publication Artefacts fr.

#### What were seal boxes?

That question has been raised more in recent years due to the fact that there still remains very little clear evidence as to their exact use. The major theory at this point is that they were used to seal the string of a bound writing tablet. Whereby the stings of the item were fed into the holes and sides eventually tied inside the hollowed area. Wax was then poured onto the knot and then impressed with a seal from a ring. This allowed the item to be secure and safely covered during transport. One seal box has been found with the remnants of the bee's wax seal still inside of it. The reason that that things are not 100% defined is that in many locations very few seal boxes have been found, specifically in Pompeii. It is believed that these seal boxes were in use more on the frontier and constituted part of the military mail system. The frontier obviously had the vast majority of soldiers, specifically the ones stations at the forts on the northern front.

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These are my initial models of Imperial Seal Boxes ready finished on brass. Dimensions by archeology are in a wide range. These are members of the Flavian dynasty 23mm, 25mm, 30 mm, 35mm, 38mm, 40mm. Together with image of Victory. Of course, I can depict many other images of almost all Roman emperors and their wives on the lid of seal box, for me this will be a pleasant task.

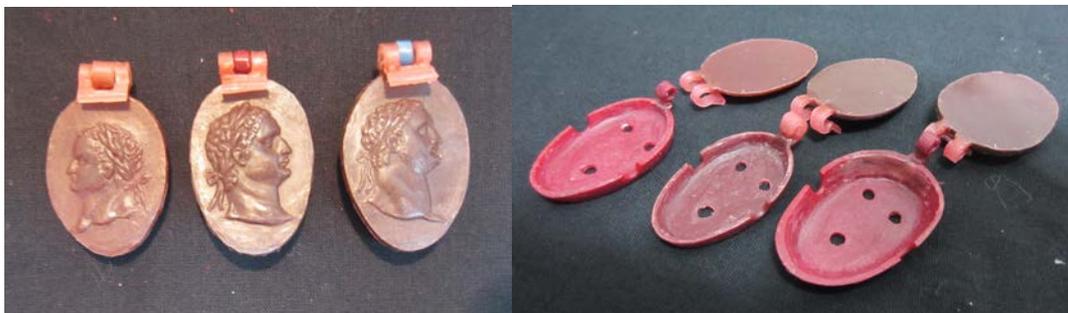


The hinged system of original artifacts has been made unusually complicated. I have complied with this of course. I think now, after making the fittings, I understand why the ancient masters have chosen this complicated suspension method...



The hinge is mounted monolithically only in one part on the lid. The other should be tightened by knocking around the axis. This complicates the production of wax models.

There are prerequisites for complications in the brass metal casting process and subsequently the cleaning and polishing surface.



My implemented Imperial Seal Boxes model together with my favorite image of Victory finished on brass. From this model I have made 3 different models. The three lids I made them with different Victory, very similar but they are still different.



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My Seal Box with the Imperial Eagle. This model is recreated through my creative look. I was inspired by a publication of „SEAL BOXES FROM THE VIMINACIUM SITE”. Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade In his beak the Eagle holds a wreath.



My creative wax work on this Roman Eagle Seal



I became acquainted in detail with the publication from „SEAL BOXES FROM THE VIMINACIUM SITE” Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade. I recreate the seal box with (Ivdaea Capta ) or Judea Captured motif. Dedicated to the victorious war of Vespasianus against the Jews in the 66–73 A.D. In the serbian publication this seal box is well described even without pictures or drawings.



A Roman general (later emperor) named Titus (son of Vespasianus) squashed a Jewish revolt and Jerusalem laid in ruins. It was a crushing defeat for the Jews, but a tremendous triumph for the Romans. This seal box, IVDAEA CAPTA model, commemorates the Roman victory, above the Jews has reached the distant province Moesia Inferior city of Viminacium.



This seal box displays :

Judaea appears under the figure of a woman, clothed in a tunic, with short sleeves: she sits, in the attitude of extreme sorrow, at the foot of a palm, which tree is peculiarly the growth of Palestine: behind her stands the emperor habited in military vestments, holding a spear in his right hand and the parazonium in his left hand. This seal box presents the emblem of Judaea, whose inhabitants, not easily ruled over, were compelled at length to crouch under the Roman yoke, in consequence of the wise and skilful measures taken by Vespasian, and especially after the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, in A.D. 70.

Definitely these commemorative Seal Boxes were issued in a very large number (69AD to 79AD) and (79AD to 81AD) during transporting Imperial correspondence. But unfortunately due to their small size and due to their brittleness and weariness to our day we know only one copy from the Roman city VIMINACIUM (modern Serbia).

My creative wax work.



The next Seal Box in my list, again inspiration from publication of „SEAL BOXES FROM THE VIMINACIUM SITE”. Depicting the Roman goddess. Most likely this is LIBERTAS. But the possibilities are many!



Description from the publication “... a representation of a

standing female figure in face-to-right profile, holding in her right hand an object which she is offering to the flaming altar. In the hand of her raised left arm, which is bent at the elbow, she is holding a sceptre. The woman is wearing a long dress with a cut at the side revealing her left leg. The female figure can be compared to an image of a goddess. “



Here in the images can be seen that the 3 Seal Boxes goddesses are different as iconography, these are 3 of my different creative decisions on the issue.



My creative wax work From here, it is better to see the 3 different goddesses images as a iconography on the Seal Boxes. This is my creative solution on the issue.



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The sides and the bottom have the typical slots and holes that are commonly associated with seal boxes.



The whole process is manual work on wax carving and twisting. Several photos of my creative wax work.



What were seal boxes used for?

It is important to establish that currently, no ancient evidence has been found which tells us how these objects were used, the only clues lie in the objects themselves and their archaeological context, and none have as yet been found in secure association with a wooden writing tablet. A seal box does appear to be designed to protect a wax seal, and this theory is supported by an example excavated at Wroxeter with a beeswax residue still inside. The wax in this example also bears an impression of string on its under surface [Bushe-Fox 1916 p27-20].

We know from remains found at Pompeii and Herculaneum that legal documents were sealed in a different way, with a tryptich being used and the seals of witnesses and their signatures occupying the middle tablet [Derks & Roymans 2002 p90]. Communications on papyrus or similar materials such as slivers of wood do not seem to lend themselves to their use either. So we seem to be dealing only with two leafed wooden writing tablets (dyptich), hinged at the centre. But these writing tablets would have been used for a great variety of correspondence and cannot always have required a seal box.

In fact, the ancient literature shows clearly that wax seals did not routinely need protecting: In all of Pliny's letters there is only one reference to sealing (10,74) and it's not a letter being sealed but a 'small nugget of gold' which Pliny is sending to Trajan along with the escaped slave to whom it belonged. Pliny writes 'I have sealed it with my signet ring, the chariot-and-four'. It's noteworthy that Pliny felt it necessary to describe his seal, which suggests perhaps that he did not usually seal his correspondence with Trajan, at least not with his personal signet ring, but did feel it appropriate to seal this piece of gold; either because of its intrinsic value or status as potential evidence.

It might be worth considering the possibility that these artefacts had a range of uses. They may well have been used to seal writing tablets though it must be accepted that there is no evidence, either archaeological or literary which supports this idea. They may equally have had some role in trade, sealing packages etc or even in ritual as described above.

My wax plates tied with linen twine and sealed with wax from a silver ring.

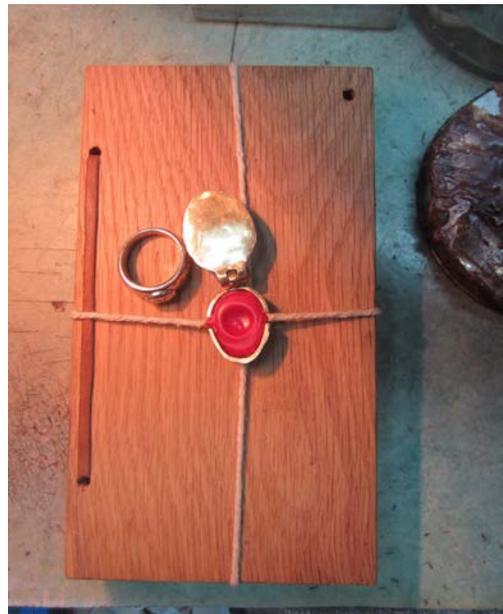
Here I used 1 of my seal boxes with image of Victory.



I have 3 different models of Victory images for this seal box option.



Seals rings can be in the different kind and variation. Bronze, silver, gold or precious stones with cameo or gem.



The same goes and for the images on them.

[http://legio-iiii-scythica.com/images/roman\\_pdf/roman\\_rings.pdf](http://legio-iiii-scythica.com/images/roman_pdf/roman_rings.pdf)

Publication and used sources :

<http://www.forumancientcoins.com/catalog/roman-and-greek-coins.asp?vpar=1625&pos=0&sold=1>

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/354799276865970190/>

<http://artefacts.mom.fr/en/result.php?id=BTS-4160&find=Siegel&pagenum=2&affmode=vign#>

<http://www.ukdfd.co.uk/pages/roman-seal-boxes.html>

<http://www.roman-artifacts.com/Military%20Accessories/Enameled%20Seal%20Box/Enameled%20Seal%20Box.htm>

<http://www.roman-artifacts.com/Military%20Accessories/Enameled%20Seal%20Box/Enameled%20Seal%20Box.htm>

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Проекта ми Кутийки за Императорски пломби предназначен за нуждите на качествените историческите реконструкции. Това са пособия които ще ни позволят да представим пред публика начина на живот по римският лимес. Както се вижда при нас всичко е ново и без патина. Същите тези гравьори които са работили в имперските работилници Officina са гравирани и тези образи по капачетата на кутийките за пломби/печати. Наблюдават се императорски образи на ляво и на дясно характерни за монетите от даденият период също така има образи с Viktori или Aponon. Но това са нищожна част стигнала до тези кутийки стигнали до нас чрез научни публикации или от аукциони. Много по-голямата част са безвъзвратно загубени във времето.

Използваните за тази цел кутии с панти се откриват в цялата Римска империя, където те се срещат в голяма разнообразие и в широк исторически период. Те са предимно от емайлиран бронз. Кутийките за печати, изобразяващи императорски бюстове, са много редки и са с висок релеф. Повечето от тях имат овоидна форма. Налице е пример от Остия находка с портретите на Адриан и Сабина и кутийки с портрети на Веспасиан и Домитиан в Лондон и най-вероятно са били използвани от високопоставени служители.

Няма съмнение ,че тези образи са гравирани в Имперските работилници Officina на монети.

Целта на тези кутийки за пломби е те да съпътстват изпратените важни малки пратки и пакети пренасяни от куриерите, като например документи или ценности поставени в здрави опаковки кожени или платнени торби. Най-вероятно са били завързвани с канап преминаващ в сложни възли така, че след като се постави императорският печат върху восъка да не може да се отвори без да се наруши цялостта на восъчния печат. Бронзовите кутийки с капаче отгоре са били част от цялата тази процедура на запазване автентичността на пратката така, че получателя да е сигурен, че ще получи неотваряна пратка.

За какво се използват кутийките за пломби?Има предположение ,че восъчните табелки които са носили важни послания също са били обвързани с канапчета и възли и с помощта на кутийките са били превръщани в носител на конфиденциална информация.

Важно е да се упомене, че понастоящем не са открити древни доказателства, които ни разкриват как точно са били използвани тези предмети, единствените улики се крият в самите обекти и в техния археологически контекст .

От проучванията в Помпей и Херкуланеум е известно ,че са открити правни документи които са били запечатани по различен начин [Derks & Roymans 2002 p90], но подобни кутийки не са открити. Комуникациите върху папируса или подобни материали също не носят следи от подобно запечатване. Затова се предполага, че тези кутийки са използвани предимно за кореспонденция по лимесите и периферията на Римската Империя.

Навлизайки в информацията предоставяна ни от античните хроникьори виждаме, че във всички писма на Плиний има само едно позоваване на запечатването (10, 74). Плиний пише: "Запечатал съм го с пръстена си, колесницата и четиримата". Трябва да се отбележи, че Плиний е смятал за необходимо да опише своя печат, което вероятно предполага, че той обикновено не запечатва кореспонденцията си с Траян, поне не с личния си пръстен.

Може би си струва да се обмисли възможността тези артефакти да имат редица приложения. Освен, че може би са били използвани за запечатване на восъчни табелки, въпреки че трябва да се приеме, че няма преки доказателства, археологически или писмени, които подкрепят тази идея, същите тези кутии за пломби може да са имали някаква роля в търговията, запечатването на документи съпровождащи пратките.