

An Austrian Lloyd Seal from Jaffa

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A rare lead seal of the shipping company Austrian Lloyd was found during salvage excavations at the center of Jaffa. The seal is dated to the turn of the 20th century, a time of fundamental changes in Jaffa affecting a wide range of fields, from city planning, architecture and infrastructure to economy, politics and demography. The seal is a modest yet meaningful testimony to the role of commercial firms in the growing European involvement in Ottoman provinces during that time. It also reflects the contribution of archaeology to the study of relatively recent periods often ignored in traditional research.

Introduction

Systematic Archaeological excavations focusing on the mound of Jaffa began in 1948 and still continue (Bowman et al. 1955, Kaplan 1967, 1972, 1975, Kaplan and Ritter-Kaplan 1993, Herzog 2008, Burke et al. 2014). Contrary to a formerly prevalent view that limited the ancient Jaffa settlement to the mound, salvage excavations since the mid-1990's in selected areas of the modern urban sprawl to the south and east attest to a lower city that thrived alongside the ancient core (Fantalkin 2005, Peilstöcker et al. 2006, Arbel 2008, 2009a,b, 2010, Arbel and Peilstöcker 2009, Re'em 2010, Peilstöcker and Burke 2011). The last phase of urban development that even today has an impact on the character of the modern city took place in the second half of the 19th century during the closing decades of Ottoman rule.

Until recently, this period was considered too recent for archaeological relevance and was therefore largely neglected by archaeologists working in Jaffa. A different approach was adopted in salvage excavations at the Lower City, where Late Ottoman remains were treated similarly to those of earlier strata.¹ Significant new data over the city's recent history, some of it invisible in literary sources, subsequently came to light. Much of that information related to Jaffa's role in the international trade networks of the 19th century, featuring large shipping companies from several European nations (Kark 1990: 220). A rare lead seal of the leading

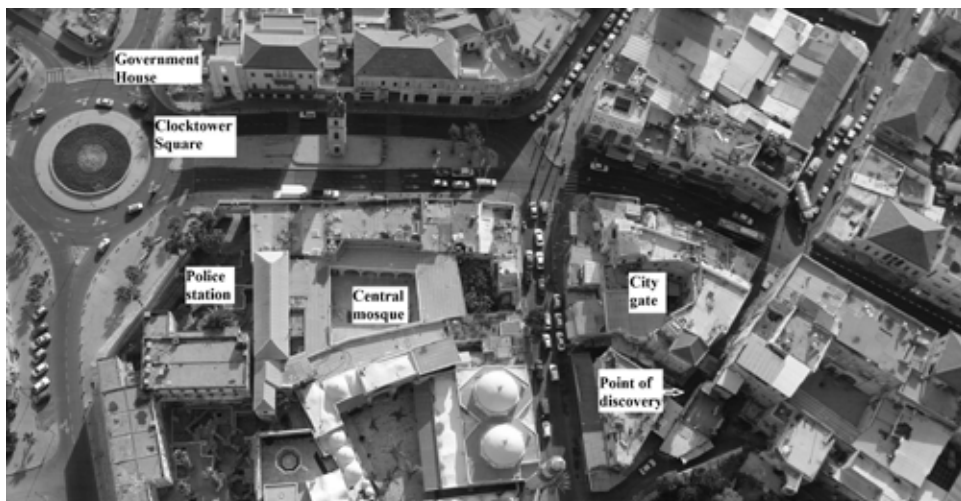


Fig. 1: Central Jaffa and point of discovery of the seal.



Fig. 2a-b: The seal – obverse and reverse.

shipping company of the time, Austrian Lloyd (*Österreichischer Lloyd*, *Lloyd Austriaco*) was discovered during salvage excavations in central Jaffa in 2008.²

The Seal and its Historical Background

The seal was found under the Moneychangers Street Ottoman stone paving (*Rehov HaHalfanim*) in the northeastern outskirts of historical Jaffa. The site is near the Ottoman city gate and the civic center that developed there in the late 19th century (Fig. 1). It was preserved fairly intact, with only a slight fracture at one of its edges

(Figs. 2a and 2b). The circular stamps occupy 1.4 cm in of the artefact's 1.8 cm diameter. The obverse face includes the word *Lloyd* over the word *Austr[ia]co*.³ A six-pointed star flanked by two dots appears at the bottom. The reverse face contains the word *Trieste*. Single six-pointed stars, each flanked by two dots, appear over the word and under it. All words are in capital Latin letters and framed by a ring of dots.

The seal is dated between the last decade of the 19th century and the First World War. The use of the name *Trieste* points to a pre-WWI date, as after the war it was replaced with *Triestino*. Although the title *Lloyd Austriaco* was also in use in the earliest phases of the company's existence, historical and archaeological evidence favors a much later *terminus post quem* date for the seal.

The Jaffa municipality was established in 1871, with the paving of central streets as one of its main objectives. Corresponding stone pavements were exposed under the modern asphalt of several streets near the Clock Tower square and the civic center surrounding it. Rich assemblages of local and imported pottery, stamped pseudo-porcelain plates, glass shards, metal objects and coins, all dating to the closing decades of the 19th century were sealed under the flagstones of all of these streets, including Moneychangers Street, where the seal was discovered. Based on this stratigraphic context, the seal should post-date 1891, when the *Lloyd Austriaco* title was re-adopted.⁴

Fast development in Jaffa during that period is directly related to broader political and economic processes. The steady decline of the Ottoman empire and the increasing involvement of European powers (Lewis 1988, Heacock 1995) led the Ottoman government to implement reforms (*tanzimat*), which resulted in broader exposure to European cultural trends and material commodities. As a harbor town, Jaffa was particularly susceptible to such changes.

Jaffa had begun the 19th century recovering from the destruction and bloodshed caused during Napoleon's brief conquest and the aftermath of his withdrawal (Gichon 1998). British assistance notwithstanding, reconstruction followed traditional Ottoman lines (Kark 1990: 53, Kana'an 2001a,b). Yet by the end of that century Jaffa evolved into a bustling cosmopolitan town. Modern motors replaced animal power in drawing water from wells for the local orchards (Kark 1990: 245–246, Kark 1998: 534–535). New hotels and inns were established in Jaffa – as in Jerusalem – to provide for the sharp rise in the numbers of tourists and pilgrims (Kark 1990: 285–286, Gibson and Chapman 1995).⁵ Technological improvements and larger investments bolstered and diversified the local economy, simultaneously profiting from major developments such as the opening of the Suez Canal and the increasing employment of steamships. As a consequence, by the close of the 19th century Jaffa was a standard Eastern Mediterranean port of call for major European shipping companies, including Austrian Lloyd.



Fig. 4: Lloyd Austriaco offices at Jaffa harbor (postcard from 1910?).

Austrian Lloyd in the Holy Land

In 1835 the insurance organization *Lloyd Austriaco* established a steamship company based in Trieste. Shortly afterwards, a contract was signed between the new company and the Austrian government for the transportation of mail and passengers to ports in the eastern Mediterranean (Abulafia 2011: 556). Austrian Lloyd soon grew to be a leading shipping company in the region, with regular steamship services to Greece, the Balkans, Turkey, Syria, Egypt and the Holy Land (Fig. 4).

Austrian Lloyd vessels first anchored at the shores of the Holy Land in the early 1850's (Ben-Arieh 2007: 191). In usual circumstances, poorly situated Jaffa would never be chosen as one of its ports of call; a chain of shallow reefs opposite the city turned its harbor into a historically notorious scene of disasters (Fig. 5).⁶ Unable to navigate through the hazardous rocks, large ships were compelled to anchor a mile away, trusting transportation of passengers and goods to local boatmen. Yet Jaffa remained by far the closest harbor to Jerusalem, thus no major shipping company could afford to avoid it. Regular visits by Austrian Lloyd steamships were part of a pattern that was soon to make that harbor, despite its disadvantages, one of the busiest in the Eastern Mediterranean (Kark 2011: 135).

The process was never limited to the commercial arena. Like all other European powers, Austria played active roles in the political struggles for influence in the

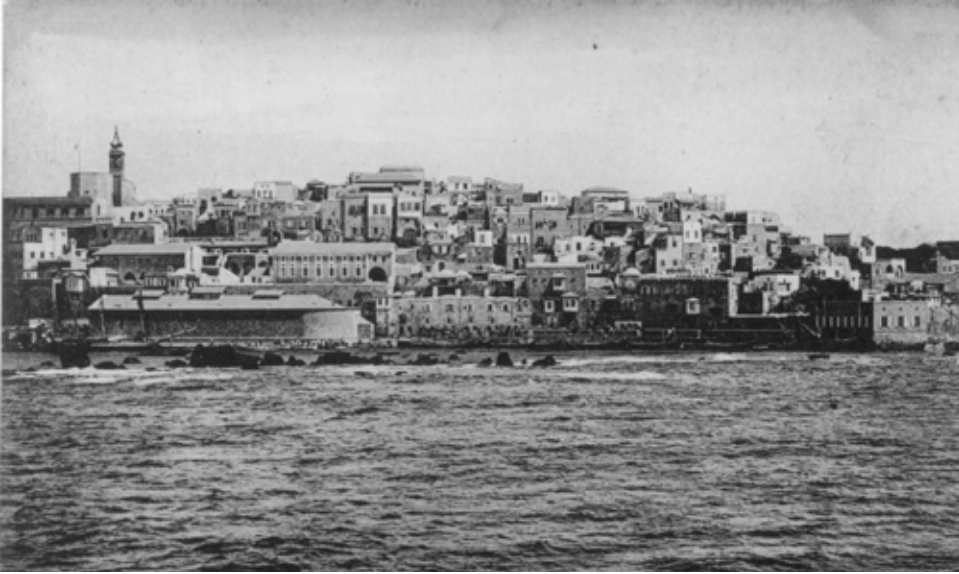


Fig. 5: Jaffa harbor at the turn of the 20th century.

domains of the declining Ottoman empire. Albeit a private company, Austrian Lloyd was considered by Vienna an invaluable asset to the state, serving vital Austrian interests in the southern Ottoman coasts. This perspective is vividly reflected in the correspondence between the Austrian consulate in Jerusalem and the Austrian ambassador in Constantinople.⁷ In a letter from the end of 1880 or early 1881, Consul Bernhard Graf Caboga-Cerva bitterly criticizes Austrian commerce in the Holy Land compared with that of other European countries, stating that ‘if Lloyd had not existed...[Austria] probably would not be selling here more than Portugal or Denmark, and that when commerce is the source of the position of power of the nations’.⁸

It should therefore come as no surprise that the lines separating Austrian Lloyd from the Austrian diplomatic representation in the Holy Land were sometimes blurred. The presence of the company in Jaffa was a central reason for the upgrading of the official Austrian consular level there from a consular agency to a vice-consulate and employment with Austrian Lloyd granted temporary Austrian diplomatic sanction (Eliav 1985: 32, 115).

The role of Austrian Lloyd in mail transportation was prominent, as the Austrian post service was considered more effective and reliable than several European counterparts operating between Jaffa and Jerusalem (Eliav 1985:244, Kark 1990: 217–219, Kark 1998: 536). Mail arrived once a week on Lloyd ships to Jaffa

and traveled by guarded coaches to Jerusalem. The Ottomans, whose own mail services were notorious for their slowness and inefficiency, attempted to upgrade them by transporting mail through the new rail line inaugurated in 1892. Clients in Jerusalem, however, especially of the Jewish community for which mail links with Europe were an economic lifeline, remained faithful to the Austrian service.⁹ The Austrians were no strangers to local Jewish affairs (Blumberg 2007: 169–170) and with the steep growth of the Jewish population in Jerusalem during the 19th century, maintaining a constructive position among the Jews was within their political and commercial interest.¹⁰ Among their efforts were vigorous diplomatic measures to protect Jewish passengers on Lloyd ships from harassment by the local authorities.¹¹ Austrian Lloyd's Jewish link, incidentally, reaches back to the company's genesis. Jews were among its founders and the Rothschild of Vienna and London were some of the company's most significant initial financiers (Abulafia 2011: 560, 556).

The intimate connections between Austrian Lloyd and the Vienna government also had its downsides. The Austrian annexation of Bosnia Herzegovina during the Young Turks revolution in 1908 sparked anti-Austrian outbursts in various locations in the Ottoman Empire (Frierson 2004: 118–119). A boycott of Lloyd ships in Jaffa lasted over four months, at considerable financial damage to the company. As an example, in a letter dated October 13 1908 addressed to the Ottoman governor of Jaffa, Austrian vice-consul M. Wenko protests against Jaffa's boatmen violently preventing the transportation of Ministry of Health officials to the Lloyd ship *Enterpré*. The rogue boatmen also blocked the transfer of mail to the shore (Eliav 1985: 350).

Yet there were no long-term repercussions, and the importation of Austrian goods soon recovered and even increased, 'mostly and as usual in Lloyd ships from Trieste or Fiume,' as states a document from November 1911.¹²

The Austrian Lloyd shipping company dissolved in 1918 in the aftermath of the First World War, after over eighty years of activity as a chief sea carrier in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹³ The discovery of one of its lead seals under a late nineteenth century street in Jaffa provides a tangible testimony to important aspects of international commercial activities in that town, during the time when Ottoman grasp over the Holy Land was gradually waning and foreign powers competed over the domains that were soon to be relinquished.

Notes

- 1 The first detailed description of Late Ottoman remains in an excavation in Jaffa appears in Kletter's report of his 1999 excavations at Roslan Street, near the central police station (Kletter 2004).
- 2 The excavations (IAA permit No. A-5378, A-5577) were conducted in 2008–2009 by the Israel Antiquities Authority and directed by the author (Arbel 2010). The seal was found in Area D, supervised by Orit Segal. Ottoman remains included building foundations, paved streets, an extensive drain system and stone-built cesspits. Building remains from the Crusader period were also found, as were Hellenistic pottery, coins and other artefacts. Four other lead seals were discovered, all in Late Ottoman contexts, but none were decipherable. I wish to thank Amir Gorzalczany for the photographs of the seal and useful comments on an early draft of this paper. I am also indebted to Dr. Dalia Levy Eliahu and to Tzvi Shaham for permission to use historical photographs from their collections.
- 3 The completion of the inscription and additional historical details were kindly provided by Captain Eberhard Koch, Chairman and Managing Partner, Österreichischer Lloyd (Cyprus).
- 4 <http://www.imperatrix.co.uk/line.htm> (accessed April 23, 2014).
- 5 British artist and traveler W.H. Bartlett praised the new hotels he witnessed in Jerusalem in 1853, which apparently invested considerable efforts in meeting refined European tastes in accommodations, food and beverages at affordable prices (cited in Gibson and Chapman 1995: 93). In this aspect, as in many others, Jaffa mirrored Jerusalem. Useful information about Jaffa could also be found in the leading printed guides of the time, such as Baedeker (Kark 2001) and Thomas Cook (Mendelson 1985: 391–396).
- 6 Many travelers describe the reefs in colorful prose. Mary Eliza Rogers (1865: 19), who traveled extensively in the land during the 1850's, left the following impression of her first landing in Jaffa: 'We were at anchor just outside a semicircular belt of rocks, some of which rose dark and high out of the water, while others had sunk beneath its surface, and were only indicated by the dashing of the surf over them. This rocky belt stands like a barrier in front of the town and forms a natural harbor of about fifty feet in width, but [...] offers no protection in bad weather.' The reefs are a dominant feature in almost all maps of Jaffa from the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century (Shaham 2011, Figs. 13.2–5, 7–8, 12–13, 15, 17–20). Similar depictions emerge from late medieval illustrations (Ze'evi 1985: 11, 51–52, 54–55, 72, 136–137).
- 7 The Austrian documents were published by M. Eliav (1985).
- 8 File Jer, II/61. Cited in Eliav 1985:179.
- 9 A letter dated July 17 1849 illustrates the salience of the Austrian mail for Jewish daily life in Jerusalem. In this letter, local Jews ask the Austrian consul, Josef Graf von Pizzamano, to send a regular envoy to meet the monthly Lloyd ship in Beirut, in order to speed up mail transport and delivery and ensure its safety. File N. 145, Jer, II/31. Cited in Eliav 1985: 64.
- 10 A Jewish population of 2,000 at the start of the century grew to 35,000 out of 55,000 inhabitants at its conclusion (Ben-Arieh 1975).
- 11 In a letter dated September 8, 1893 to the ambassador in Constantinople, Consul Anton Ritter von Strautz writes of Turkish mistreatment of Jewish passengers 'almost every time

that the Austrian Lloyd ship arrives in Jaffa.' Von Strautz adds that habitual harassment and extortion prevents many Jews from landing and that Lloyd captains were complaining of constant disruptions of sailing schedule. File No. 1178, BK\B105. Cited in Eliav 1985: 252.

12File 19, VC Jaffa. Cited in Eliav 1985: 378.

13The company was re-incepted in 1951. Official website: <http://www.oelsm.com/>

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