

## Erste KIŠIB Konferenz 2026

Bayerische Akademie der  
Wissenschaften  
22. – 24. Juli 2026

**Warum siegeln?**  
Vom gesiegelten Ton zur sozialen  
Interaktion im alten Westasien

## First KIŠIB Conference 2026

Bavarian Academy of Sciences and  
Humanities  
July 22–24, 2026

**Why sealing?**  
From sealed clay to social interaction  
in ancient West Asia

## Programme

| Wednesday July 22, 2026                                                                      |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                        |
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| Time                                                                                         | Speaker(s)                                                                                                          | Title                                                                                                                                  |
| 13:00 – 13:30                                                                                | Markus Schwaiger,<br>Carola Metzner-<br>Nebelsick, Ali Shalgham,<br>Adelheid Otto, Elisa<br>Roßberger               | Opening Session                                                                                                                        |
| 13:30 – 14:00                                                                                | Adelheid Otto                                                                                                       | The Potential of Sealings for Reconstructing Social Interaction, Bureaucratic Systems and Long-Distance Relations                      |
| Sealings and Sealing Practices in the 4 <sup>th</sup> and the 3 <sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                        |
| 14:00 – 14:30                                                                                | Marcella Frangipane                                                                                                 | Sealing Practices as a Mirror of Social and Economic Transactions in Different Political Contexts. From Temple to Palace at Arslantepe |
| 14:30 – 15:00                                                                                | COFFEE BREAK                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        |
| 15:00 – 15:30                                                                                | Roger Matthews                                                                                                      | Why Sealing? What Sealing? Who Sealing? A Bureaucratic Systems Approach to Patterns of Sealing Practice in Early Mesopotamia and Iran  |
| 15:30 – 16:00                                                                                | Clélia Paladre                                                                                                      | Wall Sealings in Proto-Elamite Iran: What if We Locked onto the Wrong Idea                                                             |
| 16:00 – 16:30                                                                                | Holly Pittman<br>(online)                                                                                           | Imagery, Style and Material as Markers of Identity                                                                                     |
| 16:30 – 17:00                                                                                | COFFEE BREAK                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        |
| 17:00 – 17:30                                                                                | Michela Ferracin                                                                                                    | A Waste of Time? Reconstructing an Early Dynastic Administrative Assemblage Using Lumps of Clay and Unsealed Sealings at Fara          |
| 17:30 – 18:00                                                                                | Laure Pantalacci                                                                                                    | Sealing Practices in the Governors' Palace in Balat (Egypt, Dakhla Oasis): the Places and the People.                                  |
| 18:00 – 18:30                                                                                | Heike Dohmann                                                                                                       | Who Held a Seal in Ancient Urkeš / Tall Mozan?                                                                                         |
| 18:30 – 19:00                                                                                | End of day discussion: Sealings and Sealing Practices in the 4 <sup>th</sup> and the 3 <sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE |                                                                                                                                        |

Thursday July 23, 2026

Sealings and Sealing Practices in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE

| Time          | Speaker(s)                                                                                        | Title                                                                                                        |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09:00 – 09:30 | Elisa Roßberger                                                                                   | Whom to Trust—and How? Sealing Practice and Imagery as Technologies of Trust in Early Babylonia              |
| 09:30 – 10:00 | Albert Dietz                                                                                      | Multiple Impressions, Over-Stamping, Counter-Signing. Validation and Control in Administrative Contexts      |
| 10:00 – 10:30 | Christina Tsouparopoulou                                                                          | Sealing Practices on Ur III Documents from the Administrative Centre at Puzriš-Dagān (Drehem)                |
| 10:30 – 11:00 | Nawala Al-Mutawalli & Walther Sallaberger                                                         | Early Old Babylonian Bullae as an Innovative Documentation System: the Umma Corpus in its Historical Context |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | COFFEE BREAK                                                                                      |                                                                                                              |
| 11:30 – 12:00 | Dominique Charpin                                                                                 | Why Sealing? Some Answers Found in the Old Babylonian Archives                                               |
| 12:00 – 12:30 | Dominique Beyer                                                                                   | Why Several Seals for the Same Owner?                                                                        |
| 12:30 – 13:00 | Anne Goddeeris                                                                                    | Why this seal?<br>Some Observations on the Seal Ownership and Seal Use of the Clergy of Dūr-Abiešuḫ          |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | LUNCH BREAK                                                                                       |                                                                                                              |
| 14:00 – 14:30 | Katherine Burge                                                                                   | Visual Bureaucracy in the Early Second Millennium BCE: An Integrative Analysis of Seal Use at Tell Leilan    |
| 14:30 – 15:00 | Brigitte Lion                                                                                     | Social Aspects of Sealing Practices in the Kingdom of Arraphe                                                |
| 15:00 – 15:30 | Diana Stein                                                                                       | Beyond Prosopography and Administration: Seals, Status, and Social Interaction at Nuzi                       |
| 15:30 – 16:30 | COFFEE BREAK & POSTER SESSION                                                                     |                                                                                                              |
| 16:30 – 17:00 | Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum                                                                             | Siegelregime(s) im Kontext palatialer Staatlichkeit im spätbronzezeitlichen Assyrien                         |
| 17:00 – 17:30 | Jon Taylor & Nicole Reifarth                                                                      | Impressing the Hem in Second Millennium Mesopotamia                                                          |
| 17:30 – 18:00 | Agnete Lassen                                                                                     | Sealing Tablets and Envelopes in Mesopotamia in the 2nd Millennium BCE.                                      |
| 18:00 – 18:30 | End of day discussion: Sealing in the late 3 <sup>rd</sup> and the 2 <sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE |                                                                                                              |

Friday July 24, 2026

| Time          | Speaker(s)                               | Title                                                                                                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09:00 – 09:30 | Hartmut Kühne<br>( <i>not streamed</i> ) | Seal Images and Social Affiliation in Middle Assyrian Dür-Katlimmu                                                       |
| 09:30 – 10:00 | Nicolò Marchetti<br>( <i>online</i> )    | The LB IIB Seal-House at Karkemish: Officials of the Royal Court and their Activities in the Administration of the State |

Sealings and Sealing Practices in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE

|               |                                     |                                                                                                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10:00 – 10:30 | Heather D. Baker                    | Sealing Practices in First Millennium BC Babylonia: A Review of the Evidence                                  |
| 10:30 – 11:00 | COFFEE BREAK                        |                                                                                                               |
| 11:00 – 12:00 | Mark Garrison &<br>Wouter Henkelman | Seals and Sealing at Persepolis: a Synthesis                                                                  |
| 12:00 – 13:00 | LUNCH BREAK                         |                                                                                                               |
| 13:00 – 13:20 | Saman Sajedi                        | Exploration within KIŠIB – A PhD Case Study: Horns of the Gods. A Diachronic Analysis of the Horned Headdress |
| 13:20 – 13:35 | Enrique Jiménez                     | Cooperations between the Academy Projects CAIC and KIŠIB                                                      |
| 13:35 – 14:30 | Closing Discussion                  |                                                                                                               |

## Speakers and Abstracts:

### Wednesday July 22, 2026:

#### **Adelheid Otto (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München): 13:30 – 14:00**

##### *The Potential of Sealings for Reconstructing Social Interaction, Bureaucratic Systems and Long-Distance Relations*

This lecture introduces the conference's objective by highlighting the enormous, still underestimated potential of sealings and seal impressions for reconstructing ancient communication strategies in the interpersonal and institutional contexts as well as in long-distance relationships. This is demonstrated using selected examples from Early and Middle Bronze Age houses, palaces and administrative buildings in Shuruppak, Ur and Tuttul.

#### **Marcella Frangipane (La Sapienza – Università di Roma): 14:00 – 14:30**

##### *Sealing Practices as a Mirror of Social and Economic Transactions in Different Political Contexts. From Temple to Palace at Arslantepe*

The paper will analyse the sealing practices and related system of administrative control recognisable from a substantial assemblage of approximately 600 cretulae found in situ at Arslantepe in two “temple-like” buildings dating to the middle of the 4th millennium BCE (Period VII). The results will be compared with the administrative practices already deeply investigated and reconstructed from the thousands of cretulae found in the palace complex of the end of the 4th millennium BCE (Period VIA, 3400-3200 BCE). Similarities, continuities and differences will be observed between the earlier phase during which an emergent leadership centralised food resources and redistributed them in a ritual / religious environment and the following period when new political institutions exercised their authority and systematic economic control in a multifunctional palace-like institutional setting.

#### **Roger Matthews (University of Reading): 15 :00 – 15 :30**

##### *Why Sealing? What Sealing? Who Sealing? A Bureaucratic Systems Approach to Patterns of Sealing Practice in Early Mesopotamia and Iran*

The practice of using seals within increasingly complex bureaucratic systems is a key characteristic of the early urbanising and state-level societies of Mesopotamia and Iran. In this paper I will explore the diverse ways in which seals were used across the period c. 3500-2700 BCE. Drawing on current anthropological theory on bureaucratic systems, and an increasing range of scientific evidence, I will situate Mesopotamian and Iranian sealing practices within the context of a range of critical factors. Key issues will be modes of bureaucratic behaviour within institutional and domestic settings, the inherent conservatism that characterises complex

bureaucratic systems, the physical and architectural settings of bureaucratic activity, and the geographical and chronological variability in sealing practices across the study region.

**Clélia Paladre (Musée du Louvre, Paris): 15:30 – 16:00**

*Wall Sealings in Proto-Elamite Iran: What if we Locked onto the Wrong Idea*

Wall locks represent one of the most distinctive features of the proto-Elamite world. Extensively mobilized in the historiography of early Iran — including in my own doctoral research — they have long served as the cornerstone for far-reaching hypotheses on long-term storage practices. Yet scholars working in entirely different regions and periods would likely arrive at very different interpretations, and might be genuinely surprised by the explanatory weight we place on these objects.

A recent (and overdue) reading of Adelheid Otto's 1999 article has led me to reassess some assumptions that once seemed remarkably solid. This talk offers an opportunity to review what we actually know, to highlight the issues produced by disciplinary compartmentalization, and to reconsider the proto-Elamite phenomenon through a broader comparative lens.

**Holly Pittman (Penn University, Philadelphia): 16:00 – 16:30 (online)**

*Imagery, Style and Material as Markers of Identity*

How to interpret differences among seals used within the same administrative context has long been a focus within glyptic studies. In some corporae differences between seals are minute, while in others differences are great crossing imagery, style and material. To what degree do these differences encode patterns of social interaction? To what degree are they intentional, transcending idiosyncrasies of production? What is salient and Why? This paper examines the rich and varied corpus of glyptic art from Bronze Age Kerman with attention to such differences and explores possible meaning within the immediate administrative context of the moment. It will conclude by proposing radically different functions of this glyptic imagery from those familiar in contemporary Mesopotamian contexts.

**Michela Ferracin (Ca' Foscari University of Venice): 17:00 – 17:30*****A Waste of Time? Reconstructing an Early Dynastic Administrative Assemblage Using Lumps of Clay and Unsealed Sealings at Fara***

Sealings play an essential role in reconstructing and understanding administrative systems in the Ancient Near East. Along with the hundreds of sealings bearing seal impressions excavated at Near Eastern sites, large quantities of sealings that do not bear any seal impression and lumps of clay are generally found, but rarely recorded or studied systematically.

This paper shifts the focus from sealed sealings to their unsealed counterparts, exploring how unsealed fragments and lumps of clay can be useful in better understanding sealing practices and the chaîne opératoire of sealing procedures. A group of unsealed sealings, clay objects and lumps of clay retrieved in the so-called Seal Pit – a large waste pit – at Fara is used to reconstruct the different sealing types in use at the site during the Early Dynastic period and allows a closer look to the behind-the-scenes of sealing practices.

**Laure Pantalacci (Université Lumière-Lyon 2/HiSoMA UMR 5189, Lyon): 17:30 – 18:00*****Sealing Practices in the Governors' Palace in Balat (Egypt, Dakhla Oasis): the Places and the People.***

The collections of clay sealings retrieved from the governors' palace of Balat-Ayn Asil are particularly informative, as they were found in situ all across the building - and not, as is often the case in Egypt, collected and discarded in dumps outside the architectural structures to which they belong. A first in-depth study was carried out on a large collection found in a storerooms complex, resulting in the publication of a database (<https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/scbalat/scl/> ) and an article in BIFAO 122 (<https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bifao/122/> ). Building on these results, comparison of this corpus with the material from other areas of the palace (other storerooms, domestic units) will help us identify the most active and influential officials, and those whose responsibility was limited to a specific area. The joint use of royal, hieroglyphic cylinder seals and figurative or abstract cylinder or stamp seals provides other clues to the administrative hierarchy. Despite the paucity of administrative titles and total lack of personal names, professional and domestic networks at play can be detected.

**Heike Dohmann (Berlin): 18:00 – 18:30***Who Held a Seal in Ancient Urkeš / Tall Mozan?*

Seal imagery is understood as a medium of communication within social hierarchies and administrative systems. The corpus of sealings from the central Upper City of Tall Mozan—Areas C2 and B6—offers, not least because of its size, a wide range of new interpretative approaches for Mesopotamia. It provides insights into supra-regional as well as regional administrative units and their organizational structures.

This paper focuses on seal images depicting activities related to production, craftsmanship, and agricultural cultivation. The motifs are carefully designed and reflect the administrative units in which the seal holders had specific duties. These duties were carried out through the use of their seals to secure rooms and goods in an administrative context.

**Thursday July 23, 2026:****Elisa Roßberger (Freie Universität Berlin): 09:00 – 09:30***Whom to Trust—and How? Sealing Practice and Imagery as Technologies of Trust in Early Babylonia*

Trust is a prerequisite for stable social interaction in economic, legal, and political spheres. But how do regimes of trust form and persist, shift, or perish? Whom is trust placed in—and how is it generated? Which agents and actions instil trust, and what makes interpersonal relationships and mutual agreements resilient beyond the immediate moment of interaction?

This paper examines the interplay between sealing practices and seal imagery in Babylonia during the late third and early second millennium BCE. It conceives sealing as a material and visual technology of trust, situated at the intersection of image, action, and social relations. Drawing on the KIŠIB corpus, it seeks to advance our understanding of horizontal dynamics of trust within institutions and between internal and external actors.

**Albert Dietz (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München / BAaW): 09:30 – 10:00***Multiple Impressions, Over-Stamping, Counter-Signing: Validation and Control in Administrative Contexts*

The sealing of goods and rooms constituted a fundamental element of control, accountability, and distribution within the administrative systems of the growing settlements of the ancient Near East. In modern and pre-modern practices of authorization, validation typically requires the involvement of more than one individual, ensuring that goods, transactions, or actions have been properly delivered or executed. Were such mechanisms of validation implemented within the highly bureaucratized administrations of ancient Western Asia?

Drawing on archaeological and textual evidence for administrative procedures, this paper examines case studies in which two-tier or multi-person sealing practices, such as multiple impressions, over stamping, or counter-signing, were employed. The analysis seeks to reconstruct the administrative contexts and circumstances that necessitated the involvement of more than one seal holder and to assess what these sealing practices reveal about control mechanisms, responsibility, and trust within ancient sealing systems.

**Christina Tsouparopoulou (Durham University/ UKSW Warsaw): 10:00 – 10:30***Sealing Practices on Ur III Documents from the Administrative Centre at Puzriš-Dagān (Drehem)*

This paper will reassess the sealing practices on Ur III documents from the administrative centre at Puzriš-Dagān (Drehem) on the basis of a large corpus in which approximately one-fifth bear seal impressions. The study offers a quantitative and qualitative account of sealing at Drehem and situates the practice within the broader shift toward the mainstream use of document sealing in the late third millennium BCE. It will demonstrate that impressing a seal on Drehem tablets fulfilled multiple functions: as a letterhead identifying the writer of the document; as a means of preventing tampering with the written text; as confirmation of the receipt of goods in transactions involving external parties; and as an indicator of the official under whose responsibility a transaction occurred. Attention is given to when seals were applied (before or after writing), how they were rolled, and the frequency and placement of impressions. By integrating the physical application of seals with the content and format of the documents, the paper argues that sealing at Puzriš-Dagān constituted a formalized mechanism of internal administrative control rather than just a practice limited to external transactions or archival closure.



**Nawala Al-Mutawalli (جامعة الموصل University of Mosul) & Walther Sallaberger (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München): 10:30 – 11:00**

*Early Old Babylonian Bullae as an Innovative Documentation System: the Umma Corpus in its Historical Context*

The Iraqi expedition to Umma (1999 to 2002) discovered two substantial collections of bullae, one in the Shara Temple and one in the Administrative Complex on the Main Tell. These bullae date to the same period (ca. 1895-1875 BCE), are formed, inscribed and sealed in a similar way, but refer to different administrative procedures: receipts and control of expenditures, respectively. Such kinds of administrative procedures were written on standard tablets, often sealed, in the preceding Ur III period, but after the fall of Ur, bullae appear in their stead in various sites, besides Umma in Irisağrig, Larsa, Lagaš, Ur, or Nippur. The paper concentrates on the development from the Ur III to the Early Old Babylonian formats.

**Dominique Charpin (Collège de France, Paris): 11:30 – 12:00**

*Why Sealing? Some Answers Found in the Old Babylonian Archives*

The use of seals is often mentioned in writings from the Old Babylonian period. In this contribution, we would like to show how the ARCHIBAB database can provide answers to the question posed for this conference. We will show how seal impressions and, above all, their legends are treated in the database, but we will also take advantage of the lemmatization of the texts to identify those that offer particularly interesting information.

**Dominique Beyer (Université de Strasbourg): 12:00 – 12:30**

*Why Several Seals for the Same Owner?*

Some people, but especially those belonging to the social elite, sovereigns, or high officials, tended to possess and use several seals. Why? Is it a desire to show their power and wealth? To bear witness to the progression of their careers? Adapt their use to this or that function? Sensitivity to the quality of the object, material and/or imagery or inscription? Most of the time, the answers are not simple, due to a lack of sufficient or explicit documentation. We will try, with the help of seal impressions from Emar, Mari or Ebla essentially, to suggest some answers.

### Anne Goddeeris (Universiteit Gent): 12:30 – 13:00

#### *Why this seal? Some Observations on the Seal Ownership and Seal Use of the Clergy of Dūr-Abiešuḫ*

The seal impressions on the documentary texts from Dūr-Abiešuḫ display some specific characteristics: they often contain a line with the title lu<sub>2</sub> šud<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> lugal, they often list a number of cultic professions on a single seal, and, taking into account the small sample, many individuals use more than one seal in the course of their career. In the dossier centered around Enlil-manšum, a *nešakkum* priest of Enlil, I have been able to attribute some seals without legend to individuals mentioned in the documents. As such, this file offers an excellent case to address some of the questions raised in the conference.

The sealing practice of Dūr-Abiešuḫ pretty much fits the Old Babylonian conventions. Therefore, in this talk, we will address the question “Why sealing with this particular seal?”. In other words, who is using which type of seal? Iconographic aspects as well as elements in the legend will be taken into account.

As I have recently established, the title lu<sub>2</sub> šud<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> lugal only appears on Old Babylonian seal impressions from the reign of Samsuiluna onwards and can be associated with royal support of temple institutions. The single attestation of the title lu<sub>2</sub> šud<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> lugal in Nippur appears on a seal with granulated golden caps, which illustrates the official character of this title. In Dūr-Abiešuḫ, the title appears on 14 seals, a sign that the temple actually completely depends on royal support. The accumulation of cultic titles on the seals also reflects the makeshift character of the cult in Dūr-Abiešuḫ. Some individuals chose a prayer for their legend. But when the seal contains no legend at all, patterns can be recognized.

### Katherine Burge (University of Michigan): 14:00 – 14:30

#### *Visual Bureaucracy in the Early Second Millennium BCE: An Integrative Analysis of Seal Use at Tell Leilan*

This paper presents an integrated analysis of the seals and sealings from the Eastern Lower Town Palace at Tell Leilan, examining their imagery, inscriptions, archaeological contexts, and associated administrative texts. By situating seal use within specific spheres of administrative practice, it explores how visual and textual elements were deployed to articulate socio-administrative hierarchies and institutional authority. It further examines the social semiotics and processes of identity construction embedded in sealing practices. Although the corpus is dominated by variations of a motif associated with Šamši-Adad’s officialdom, the relatively high incidence of reuse and recurving – both inscriptional and figural – suggests that opportunities for individual expression and self-promotion persisted within an otherwise highly standardized and ideologically charged visual system.

**Brigitte Lion (Université Paris 1, UMR 7041 ArScAn): 14:30 – 15:00***Social Aspects of Sealing Practices in the Kingdom of Arraphe*

Seals and their use in the kingdom of Arraphe have been extensively studied by Edith Porada, Diana Stein, and, in the administrative sphere, by Nicholas Postgate. This paper aims to address the social aspects of sealing practices. On the one hand, it will examine which segments of society used seals in the administrative hierarchy and in private use: in the latter case, for example, it was not always the wealthiest people who used seals, but those in debt or those who were alienating their property. On the other hand, the gender perspective will be taken into consideration, with particular attention to women, again as administrators and in transactions between private individuals.

**Diana Stein (Birkbeck College, London): 15:00 – 15:30***Beyond Prosopography and Administration: Seals, Status, and Social Interaction at Nuzi*

Seal impressions are now widely acknowledged as a useful analytical tool. Within an archival framework, they assist in identifying individuals and restoring missing names, as well as in the establishment of intertextual connections and relative chronologies. But beyond their role in text analysis, seal impressions offer a fascinating glimpse into life behind the scenes. Drawing on select examples from the corpus of sealed tablets from Nuzi in northeastern Iraq, this paper explores personal and professional relationships, tablet handling and sealing, and the connection between a seal, its image and its owner, among other issues, some of which are relevant to the digital indexing and analysis of ancient Near Eastern glyptic.

**Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum (Freie Universität Berlin): 16:30 – 17:00***Siegelregime(s) im Kontext palatialer Staatlichkeit im spätbronzezeitlichen Assyrien*

Mit der Formierung des mittelassyrischen Reiches werden neue staatliche Strukturen errichtet, unter anderem eine hochnormierte, mehrgliedrige Verwaltungsstruktur. Der Beitrag nimmt die Rolle von Siegel und Siegelungspraxis in diesem System in den Blick. Im Zentrum steht die Frage, wie dieses Siegelregime administrativ und rechtlich konfiguriert wurde und welche Rolle die lokalen Schreiber in der Praxis spielten.

**Jon Taylor (British Museum, London) & Nicole Reifarth (Technische Hochschule Köln): 17:00 – 17:30**

*Impressing the Hem in Second Millennium Mesopotamia*

This paper addresses the second millennium practice of impressing the “hem”. When and where was it done, and how was the action carried out? Who sealed in this way and why? As with other types of sealing, this technique played a role in legal contexts, with the hem symbolising the sealer’s identity. The paper tackles the question of what the “hem” actually was. And through microscopic examination, it reveals the nature of the textiles impressed into clay. Which fibres were used and what technologies can be seen via the impressions?

**Agnete Lassen (Yale University): 17:30 – 18:00**

*Sealing Tablets and Envelopes in Mesopotamia in the 2nd Millennium BCE.*

This paper will explore sealing practices across Greater Mesopotamia during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, focusing on how seals were applied to cuneiform tablets and envelopes. A review of directionality and rolling length reveal distinct practices between Babylonia and Assyria/Northern Mesopotamia. These differences could just be expressions of different traditions or, potentially, be expressive of differing legal attitudes to sealing of documents.

**Friday July 24, 2026:**

**Hartmut Kühne (Freie Universität Berlin): 09:00 – 09:30 (not streamed)**

*Seal Images and Social Affiliation in Middle Assyrian Dūr-Katlimmu*

In the 13th century BC, the Assyrian Empire was one of the four members of “the Club of the Great Powers” (van de Mieroop 2004). Even if territorial control was not exercised state wide (Liverani 1988) the socio-economic administration of regions under Assyrian control was well organized as reflected by cuneiform tablets from the capital Assur, Kar Tukulti-Ninurta and a number of provincial sites. Based on them, Machinist 1982, Jakob 2003, Postgate 2013, and other authors have mapped out the structure of the Assyrian society. Hence it may be expected that the motives and styles of the seal images impressed on these tablets may render a visual insight into the Middle Assyrian society. However, due to the lacking publications of excavated seal corpora, this cannot be investigated holistically but rather site wise and hence fragmentarily for the time being.

Based on my current work on the seal impressions excavated at the Middle Assyrian city of Dūr-Katlimmu, expected to be published as volume 15 of the BATSH-series, I will present some preliminary insights into the relation of seal images and the social status of the seal owners. Due to the exceptional function of Dūr-Katlimmu as major administrative center of the western Empire the material at hand is unique in that it mirrors the structure of the Middle Assyrian society from the ‘dependent workers’ (*šiluḫlu*) to the king.

**Nicolò Marchetti (Università di Bologna): 09:30 – 10:00 (online)**

*The LB IIB Seal-House at Karkemish: Officials of the Royal Court and their Activities in the Administration of the State*

Between the 2017 and 2023 excavation campaigns, the Turco-Italian Archaeological Expedition at Karkemish discovered around 700 clay sealings dating from the middle of the 13th century BCE in the core public district of this capital city. Of them, 547 sealings and a cylinder seal were retrieved from the deposit below the floors of a building in the eastern sector of area C (phase A). A total of 153 sealings were instead found in the fills above the floors of that building (phase B). The sealings pertain to the management of the local “Seal-house” (a name attested in one of those sealings), or treasury, managed by the top officials of the Karkemish royal court: it was a pivotal node in a network of institutions that were at the core of the political economy of the Hittite state.

**Heather D. Baker (University of Toronto): 10:00 – 10:30**

*Sealing Practices in First Millennium BC Babylonia: A Review of the Evidence*

This paper reviews the evidence for sealing practices in first millennium BC Babylonia. It draws on a variety of data to examine who did the sealing, how they did it, and in what circumstances. This involves evaluating the identity and role of the sealer, the kind of seal used and its placement on the tablet, as well as the kind of transaction represented by the sealed tablet and its archival context. By combining prosopographical and archival studies with the evidence of the sealed tablets, the paper aims to present a synthesis of Neo- and Late Babylonian sealing practices.

**Mark Garrison (Trinity University, Texas) & Wouter Henkelman (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris): 11:00 – 12:00**

*Seals and Sealing at Persepolis: a Synthesis*

The Persepolis Fortification archive (PFA), dating to the reign of Darius I, is a large corpus of clay tablets deposited in spaces in the Fortification wall of the Persepolis terrace. The edited sample comprises as much as some 7000 Elamite and 836 Aramaic texts, most of which are sealed. There are also some 3500 uninscribed tablets which bear only seal impressions. To date about 4700 discrete and legible seal images have been recorded. While such numbers are by themselves clear indicators for the importance of PFA for the study of sealing practices, its probably most significant aspect is that the texts and seal impressions have always been jointly studied. Richard Hallock, the first editor (since 1937) of the Elamite PFA texts chartered and numbered hundreds of seals and recognised the most common sealing protocols, while also stating confusion about their complexity. Today we are in better position to study the use of seals at Persepolis, having digital tools and a far larger corpus at our disposal, but we have certainly not dispelled all of the confusion. The dual lecture will address various protocols (including single vs. counter sealing) and their exceptions, the use of district and regional seals, some aspect of styles as markers of social and administrative status, the issue of copy and replacement seals and various other aspects. We will try to give integrated seal- and text-based perspectives in order to illustrate what the joint study of texts and seal impressions has thus far produced.

**Saman Sajedi (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München): 13:00 – 13:20**

*Exploration within KIŠIB – A PhD Case Study: Horns of the Gods. A Diachronic Analysis of the Horned Headdress*

Throughout much of Ancient West Asian history, the images of divinities were primarily conceptualised in anthropomorphic form, distinguished from mortal beings by an article of clothing: a Horned Headdress. Following its introduction into the image traditions of Mesopotamia during the Early Dynastic period, its role as an identifier of divinities became consolidated during the Akkadian period. Although largely reserved for depictions of deities, certain hybrid beings of supernatural nature could also be depicted wearing the Horned Headdress.

Although the Horned Headdress' significance has not gone unnoticed, its meanings and functions have not been adequately explored. In particular, the origins of the headdress which may lay outside Mesopotamia, and the conditions governing its use require further in-depth study: who is permitted to wear a Horned Headdress, are the number of horns noteworthy and why?

This PhD study seeks to address these questions through a diachronic study of the Horned Headdress in the 3rd millennium BCE, mainly on cylinder seals alongside other forms of visual media.

**Enrique Jiménez (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München): 13:20 – 13 :35**

*Cooperations between the Academy Projects CAIC and KIŠIB*

## List of Posters

### **Eléonore Desbazeille (University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)**

*Analysing two cylinder seals from Umm al-Quwain (UAE): expressions of local or foreign influences?*

Ever since D. T. Potts' work at Tell Abraq during the 90's (Potts 2000), seals that can be linked with the areas of Mesopotamia and Elam have been known from the Emirate of Umm alQuwain, as recently confirmed by new discoveries (Degli Esposti and Majchrzak 2022). During the 2024 and 2025 excavation seasons of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Umm al-Quwain, directed by Dr. Michele Degli Esposti, several complete and fragmentary seals were found at the funerary site of Abraq 2, which is surely connected with the occupation at Tell Abraq. This poster focuses on two relatively well-preserved cylinder seals that feature highly developed iconography. The analysis of their intricate carvings, raw materials, and specific archaeological contexts can offer some insight about the beliefs and possible external influences of the people buried in the tombs associated with them. One seal, which seems to be made of fritte, might be linked to the glyptic tradition of the second part of the second millennium B.C. in Elam, Mitanni and Babylonia, whereas the other one, possibly made in burned steatite, seems to reflect a more local taste. This poster explores these distinct iconographic motifs to find out what cultural influences are expressed in these works and to prove the reliability of these initial observations.

### **Marian Feldman (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore) and Tiffany Earley-Spadoni (University of Central Florida, Orlando)**

*A Middle Bronze Age Sealing Assemblage from the Destroyed Lower Town East Palace at Kurd Qaburstan*

The 2024 and 2025 field seasons at Kurd Qaburstan in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq uncovered a collection of clay sealings from a Middle Bronze Age palatial structure, the Lower Town East palace. Over thirty of these preserve cylinder impressions that fit broadly within the corpus of early second millennium seals known from northern Mesopotamia. Several of them also include inscriptions. The sealings were recovered from two successive destruction sub-phases in the southern administrative sector of the palace, alongside other administrative artifacts including twenty air-dried cuneiform tablets. The assemblage includes both door and container sealings, consistent with active administrative use of the palace at the time of its destructions. Stratigraphically distinct contexts allow the impressions to be associated with specific moments in the palace's occupation sequence in the eighteenth century BCE. This talk presents an overview of the sealings, their impressions, and their archaeological context.



**Alvise Matessi (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Michaela Schauer (Naturhistorisches Museum Vienna), Gubaz Kibaroglu (University of Tübingen) and Michele R. Massa (Bilkent University)**

*A new project on Hittite sealing practices: Trust and Accountability in Hittite Bureaucratic Networks (TrAccHit)*

This poster aims to briefly present the aims, scope and methods of the TrAccHit project, which is scheduled to begin in October 2026 and will be funded by the Czech Science Foundation and the Austrian Science Fund. Aiming to investigate trust and accountability systems in early complex societies, TrAccHit proposes a novel approach to sealing practices with a case study on the Hittite kingdom and empire (1650-1190 BCE). The goal will be to explore the procedures employed by the Hittite administration for monitoring economic transactions and secure their integrity, the type of transactions commanded by central and peripheral institutions, the personnel entrusted with the transactions, their roles, their mutual interactions and their range of action within the Hittite territorial domain. Current research on Hittite sealings practices has mostly addressed individual aspects of this topic in traditional perspectives, especially focusing on textual and iconographic sources. This project proposes an innovative interdisciplinary framework that integrates for the first time the systematic study of historical and archaeological records with cutting-edge geochemical provenance study of ancient artifacts, with a focus on non-destructive portable X-Ray Fluorescence analysis.

**Saman Sajedi (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München)**

*Horns of the Gods. A Diachronic Analysis of the Horned Headdress in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BCE*

The subject of my doctoral research is the Horned Headdress, the most common marker of divinity in ancient West Asia. Focusing primarily on evidence from cylinder seals, this project traces the development of the headdress as a divine attribute across the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE.

In this poster, I demonstrate the gradual development of the Horned Headdress, beginning with possible antecedents in the Ubaid period, including figures combining caprid and human features. I then examine the Proto-Elamite period, during which some of the earliest renditions of the Horned Headdress may have emerged, alongside a broader visual trend depicting animals — particularly horned animals — in anthropomorphic postures and roles. This is followed by the appearance of the first horned figures in Mesopotamia during the Early Dynastic period and the subsequent establishment of the Horned Headdress during the Akkadian period as a defining marker of divinity. Particular attention is given to the differing styles and forms of the Horned

Headdress across these periods, especially in Early Dynastic and Akkadian visual traditions.

Through this diachronic approach, the poster explores how the Horned Headdress developed into one of the principal markers of divinity in Mesopotamian image traditions.

### **Eva Stöckert (Archaeological State Collection Munich)**

#### *Stamped & Sealed. The Use of Stamp-cylinder-seals Through the Ages*

We usually assume Near Eastern sealing practices to progress a certain way. This starts with the use of stamp seals, gradually evolving to cylinder seals and finally going back to the stamp seal. The only outlier in this case are the regions that stick to stamp seals throughout the ages. However, there is a third type of seal often overlooked, which combines a stamp and a cylinder seal in one object. These stamp-cylinder-seals and their accompanying sealings can be traced back to 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium contexts and are found through to the end of the Neo-Assyrian period. Most of these objects originate in modern Iraq, Syria and Turkey, with examples coming from as far as Iran, Egypt and the Aegean. Although stamp-cylinder-seals have been mentioned in many scientific works, a detailed examination of this particular type of seal has been lacking so far.

This poster analyses stamp-cylinder-seals first with regards to their regional and chronological distribution. Then, new questions are asked of our data. Do their iconography and their raw materials overlap with other types of seals? Differences between the surfaces sealed with stamp-seals and cylinder-seals are also taken into consideration. The results from these analyses lead to us better understand how handled these seals.

This poster aims to show the preliminary state of research of an ongoing PhD-Thesis concerning the use of stamp-cylinder-Seals and invites participants to discuss this special type of seal.