

Impressions of what is lost

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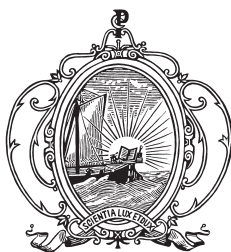
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A TRUE SCRIBE OF ABYDOS

Essays on First Millennium Egypt
in Honour of Anthony Leahy

edited by

CLAUS JURMAN, BETTINA BADER
and DAVID A. ASTON



PEETERS

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IMPRESSIONS OF WHAT IS LOST
A STUDY ON FOUR LATE PERIOD SEAL IMPRESSIONS
IN BIRMINGHAM AND LONDON¹

Claus JURMAN

Though it is still no study on the “Palace of Apries”, this article is meant to pay off some “debts” which were incurred more than ten years ago. I do hope that the following pages will be of interest to Tony, whose teaching and publications have contributed so much to my understanding of Late Period Egypt. As he has repeatedly demonstrated to his students and colleagues, many artefacts that may seem inconspicuous at first reveal their full potential for historical analysis when subjected to a second look.

Introduction

It is therefore an honour to present to Tony an account of four Late Period seal impressions of high officials that merit a closer look. Even though the papyrus documents with which they were originally associated and which provided their initial *raison d'être* have long since disappeared, the preserved seal inscriptions themselves furnish valuable information on prosopography, title repertoires and administrative practices of the Saite and post-Saite periods. While the three specimens in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG)² have so far remained completely unpublished, the piece in London³ saw at least a cursory, if somewhat misleading, publication within Hall's catalogue of British Museum scarabs and other seals.⁴

¹ I am indebted to Chiara Reali and Bettina Bader for their useful comments on the technical properties and the fabrics of the sealings presented here.

² I would like to give thanks to Phil Watson, former curator of antiquities at the BMAG, for his assistance during the examination of the artefacts in 2006, and to Adam Jaffar, the current curator of World Cultures at the BMAG, for his assistance in obtaining additional photos and the kind permission to publish them within this volume.

³ I am equally indebted to Marcel Marée and John Taylor from the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan at the British Museum for giving me access to BM EA 48927, providing additional high-quality images of it, and for the kind permission to re-publish it here.

⁴ HALL 1913: 292, no. 2790. For the full bibliography, see sealing 2 below.

Sealings with (primarily) administrative titles

1) BMAG 1969W4363

Documented provenance/acquisition

The sealing BMAG 1969W4363 was presented to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery by the Trustees of the Wellcome Trust in 1969.⁵

Description (Pls 1–2)

The sealing is a flattened lump of clay of oval shape measuring 3.2 cm in length, 2.8 cm in width, and less than a centimetre in thickness. It features an even sealing surface on its obverse which is surrounded by a slightly raised, bulging margin of irregular outline (Pl. 1). At the bottom of the obverse, the upper part of the margin is partly broken away while to the right it converges with the sealing surface which is accordingly not fully preserved on this side. The seal was thus not carefully positioned during the sealing process, resulting in an incomplete impression on the lump of clay. The sealing surface itself comprises five columns of hieroglyphic text in slightly raised relief encircled by a raised border of about 0.6 mm in thickness. Even though the clay (most likely a Nile clay variety) seems to have been levigated, it contains inclusions of sand grains and the sealing surface appears rather porous.⁶ The hieroglyphic signs are rendered without much detail owing to their small size (the left cartouche, e.g., is only c. 5.8 mm wide). The reverse of the sealing bears the imprints of a papyrus document and of the twined string⁷ to which the sealing was originally attached (Pl. 2). As is common for the Late Period, the impression of the string runs perpendicular to the length of the sealing⁸ and is thus parallel to the text columns present on its obverse. As can be gauged from the direction of the papyrus fibres that left their mark on the sealing's reverse, the sealing must have been placed on the outside (verso) of a folded *high format*

⁵ According to the museum inventory.

⁶ It is not clear, however, if this is merely a product of abrasion and weathering processes.

⁷ Whether made from a piece of papyrus teased out of the papyrus's back or from another type of fibre is difficult to ascertain. For the former practice see DEPAUW 2006: 79; SMITH 1974: 15, pl. VIII, A; MARTIN 1979: 83, no. 318.

⁸ Apart from the examples presented in this article, cf., e.g., the Egyptian sealings found in House D of the North-Syrian city of Karkemish (now BM 116222–116225), which bear cartouches of King Necho II: ZECCHI 2014a: 104–105, figs 5–6; cf. WOOLLEY 1921: 128, pl. 26, c, 1–4; MITCHELL and SEARIGHT 2008: 117, cat. 285. For two further Egyptian sealings from House D without cartouches but with imprints from papyrus on their reverse see ZECCHI 2014b: esp. pl. XXI.

letter/document,⁹ whose main text — written on the recto parallel to the direction of fibres — was hidden within.¹⁰ A sharp straight line at the bottom end of the reverse marks the lower edge of the folded papyrus and indicates that the papyrus document was rather thin.

The blackened surface colour of BMAG 1969W4363 points to a fire incident leading to a partial firing under reduced conditions which — inadvertently — could have hardened the sealing to a degree that significantly increased its chances of preservation. Of course, it is impossible to say whether the exposure to fire destroyed the original papyrus or — as seems to be more likely — affected just the sealing after it had been removed from the letter and thrown away.¹¹

Inscription (Fig. 1)

The inscription conforms to a pattern common for seals of high officials during the reigns of Amasis and of Pedubast-Sehetepib(en)ra, the ephemeral rival king of the early Persian period.¹² This pattern comprises, in vertical columns, a protection-formula featuring the prenomen of the reigning king, the main titles of the respective official which fill up the centre of the sealing surface and may be arranged in sub-columns, and, lastly, the (court) name of the official¹³ which is often of the basilophorous type and can extend over two columns. If a two-column-basilophorous name is present, the first column usually consists of a cartouche which acts as the counterpart of the cartouche of the reigning king on the left side.¹⁴ In such cases each of the cartouches is surmounted by a pair of ostrich feathers flanking a sun disk.

⁹ For this classification of document layout, see DEPAUW 2006: 72–77.

¹⁰ For the different practices of folding and sealing demotic letters, see DEPAUW 2006: 78–80 w. unnumbered figs; cf. also VANDORPE 1996: pl. 45.

¹¹ There exist some examples of sealed demotic letters left unopened in antiquity. See SMITH 1974: pl. 15, pl. VIII, A = MARTIN 1981: 68, no. 887, 71/2-DP145[5831], pl. 36, no. 887; ZAGHLOUL 1985: 10–11, pMallawi 486, A–D, pls 1–2, A–D; VANDORPE 1996: 268, nos. 88–92; KEEL 1995: 117, fig. 224; DEVAUCHELLE 2008: 154–156, cat. 111a–b, w. figs; EBEID 2013: 116–126 w. figs 1–6. These specimens provide evidence that some documents never reached their intended recipients or were greeted with ignorance by them. In such cases a potential fire could have destroyed the papyrus while leaving the sealing attached to it intact.

¹² See YOYOTTE 1972: 219–220.

¹³ For the use of basilophorous “court names” in Saite Egypt, which were likely adopted at the beginning of an official’s term of office, see DE MEULENAERE 1966: 27–31.

¹⁴ Cf. YOYOTTE’s (1972: 219–220) sealings a, b, d, e (with some doubts, see below, n. 37), f, h.



Fig. 1. Inscription on sealing surface of BMAG 1969W4363.

\downarrow * \downarrow $s\dot{s}w^a$ \downarrow $(\underline{H}nm-jb-R^c)$ \downarrow $(j)m(j)-r^3$ $h^c w(.w)$ $nswt^b$ \downarrow $(J^c h-m\dot{s}j(.w))$ \downarrow $s\dot{s}-N.t^c$
 \downarrow May \downarrow $(\underline{K}hnumibra)$ \downarrow protect \downarrow the superintendent of the royal fleet, \downarrow
 $(\underline{A}hmes)$ \downarrow $saneith$.

*) N.B.: Arrows always indicate reading direction, never viewing direction of hieroglyphic signs.

Comments

a) I take \downarrow here to denote the subjunctive $s\dot{s}m=f$ form of the verb $s\dot{s}w$, “to protect”. Alternatively, one may analyse the syntactic structure of this and similar protection formulae as a nominal phrase and translate “The protection ($s\dot{s}$) of $(\underline{\text{Prenomen}})$ is (for) NN”, although I do not know of any examples involving the preposition n .

Considering the strong archaising currents in vogue during the Saite period it is hardly surprising that on seals/seal impressions of that time the hieroglyph depicting a herdsman’s papyrus floater is usually rendered with an undivided bottom end as was the standard model in the Old Kingdom (> Gardiner sign list V18),¹⁵ but also occurred occasionally during the Middle Kingdom.¹⁶

On certain Saite/Late Period seals, the entity invoked in the protection formula is not the king but one or more deities.¹⁷ One could assume that this was the case if the individual held no close ties with the royal court or the “central administration”. However, the inscription on a sealing of the $j\dot{m}j-r^3$ $sh\dot{s}w.w-nswt$ ‘ $b-r$ ’ Psamtek,¹⁸ which invokes the protection of Neith rather than that of the king, calls for caution. Possibly, the use of a seal bearing the prenominal cartouche of the reigning king was a privilege granted only to very few officials. It might also be that a distinction was made between seals used to seal

¹⁵ Cf. GARDINER 1957: 523, V18; FISCHER 1979: 48; 62.

¹⁶ MORGAN 1903: 85, fig. 128.


¹⁷ E.g. on the golden signet ring Louvre E 10699. Cf. BARBOTIN 2005: 65, cat. 32; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 555, no. 57.280.

¹⁸ In a private collection. See CORTEGGIANI 1973: 152, pl. XIII, C; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 543, no. 57.255.

administrative documents of the state and such that were used only for documents of a more private nature.¹⁹

b) The word $h^{\prime}w(.w)$ within the well-known Saite naval title $jmj-r^{\prime} h^{\prime}w(.w) nswt$ ²⁰ is spelled according to “eugraphic” conventions, thus juxtaposing the two tall signs < h > and < w > and placing the horizontal < $^{\prime}$ > below, irrespective of the consonantal structure of the word.²¹ The term $h^{\prime}w$, designating a riverine (freight) vessel,²² seems to have gradually been replaced by the term $h^{\prime}w$ (most probably only a spelling or dialectal variant of the former²³) during the Middle Kingdom and did not rise to renewed popularity until the Saite period.²⁴ The genitival specification $nswt$ graphematically precedes $h^{\prime}w(.w)$, thus conforming to the principles of “honorific transposition”.²⁵

c) While the epithet $s3-N.t$ is an almost compulsory part of the royal nomen cartouche of Amasis in hieroglyphic texts,²⁶ it is not normally included in the cartouche-element of private basilophorous names,²⁷ at least not during the Saite period. Interestingly enough, of the 24 individuals listed in the index of Jansen-Winkel’s catalogue of Saite inscriptions which bear a name comprising the element $J^{\prime}h-m\acute{s}j(.w)$,²⁸ only three are attested with their names being partly or fully enclosed in a cartouche.

The first one is the “superintendent of the ante-chamber” ($jmj-r^{\prime} rw.t$) Ahmes(-saneith), whose name appears opposite the prenominal of King Amasis on a seal impression from Naucratis very similar to BMAG 1969W4363 as  [$J^{\prime}h-m\acute{s}j(.w)$] -[$s3$]- $N.t$.²⁹ On Ahmes-saneith’s

¹⁹ In this respect it is interesting to note that on a monument reused from the tomb of the Saite “superintendent of the ante-chamber” Ahmes-saneith, the Thirtieth Dynasty royal secretary Tjajesenimu had himself depicted with two different kinds of signet rings, one being in the shape of a cartouche surmounted by double plumes (for seal impressions reflecting this seal type, see, e.g., LECLÈRE and SPENCER 2014: 68, BM EA 23791–23796; 182, pl. 24), the other being of a simpler type. See KEEL 1995: 112–113 w. figs 213–214; JANSEN-WINKELN 1997: pl. XX, 1–2.

²⁰ Cf. GOYON 1969: 163–171; PRESSL 1998: 89; 92.

²¹ Cf. EDEL 1955: 39–40, § 92 (referring specifically to $h^{\prime}w$).

²² For the lexeme see especially JONES 1988: 141, no. 50. Cf. also GOYON 1969: 165–167.

²³ It could be that the phonetic tendency towards dissimilating /s/ in the neighbourhood of h (e.g. $h > jh / \phi h$), which already prevailed at the beginning of the First Millennium BC (see PEUST 1999: 103–104), was an additional factor in the archaizing substitution of $h^{\prime}w$ for $h^{\prime}w$. However, one should note that the title $jmj-r^{\prime} h^{\prime}w nswt$ is attested as a quasi-synonymous variant of $jmj-r^{\prime} h^{\prime}w.w nswt$ during the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. Cf. GOYON 1969: 167–169; DARNELL 1992: 82.

²⁴ Cf. DARNELL 1992: 82.






²⁵ PEUST 2007: 100–101, direct genitive, type A [B C] → A C B.




²⁶ Cf. BLÖBAUM 2006: 176–177; 390. In demotic the epithet is usually skipped. Cf. ERICHSEN 1950: 127a; VITTMANN 1998, I: 168: pRylands IX, col. XVI, l. 1.


²⁷ Cf., e.g., VERCOUTTER 1962: 133 (index of personal names); RANKE 1935: 13, 4.

²⁸ Those $J^{\prime}h-m\acute{s}j.w$ ’s attested before the reign of King Amasis owe their names certainly not to loyalist considerations and cannot be classified as sporting “basilophorous names”.

²⁹ PETRIE 1886: pl. XX, 5; HALL 1913: 292, no. 2789 (= BM EA 27574); JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 486, no. 57.181. The attribution of the sealing to the “superintendent of the ante-chamber” Ahmes-saneith rests on the cartouche of King Amasis and the presence of the title $jmj-r^{\prime} rw.t$.

kneeling statue Louvre E 25390 + E 25475 even the variant  occurs (alongside ) which has generated some discussion in relation to the statue's dating.³⁰ As Perdu has recently pointed out, there are good reasons to believe that the adoption of a cartouche name identical with that of the reigning king was already possible during the late Twenty-sixth Dynasty.³¹ On Ahmes (-saneith)'s other monuments, his name is either given only as *J'h-mšj.w* without cartouche (,  and similar)³² or with the royal epithet *s3-N.t* following *J'h-mšj.w* without cartouche ().³³

The second one is the well-known “superintendent of (all) the works of Upper and Lower Egypt” Ahmes-saneith, who left a graffito in the Wadi Hammamat dated to regnal year 44 of King Amasis in which his own name is represented as  , and that of his like-titled father Khnumibra as .³⁴

The third contemporary of King Amasis thought to have enclosed his name *J'h-mšj.w* in a cartouche is again attested on a seal impression of the type described above. On the sealing Petrie Museum UC 17061 the right counterpart of the prenomen cartouche of Amasis on the left appears as .³⁵ However, as the precise reading of the title(s)/epithet(s) in-between is uncertain,³⁶ I would not completely rule out the possibility that the cartouche on the right belongs to a king rather than a non-royal individual as well.³⁷

Date

The presence of the prenomen cartouche leaves hardly any other option than to date the seal of Ahmes-saneith to the reign of Amasis and to assume that the “superintendent of the royal fleet” was serving this king. Of course, this does not preclude the possibility that the sealing itself was stamped at a later date,³⁸

³⁰ According to BOTHMER (1960: 68, cat. 57 A–B, comment), who based his argument on DE MEULENAERE (1966: 33–34), it was unlikely that a Saite official adopted the same name as the reigning king.

³¹ PERDU 2012: 289, n. 1.

³² Cf. JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 505, no. 57.215; 545–547, nos. 57.257–259, 261.

³³ As on the offering basin Louvre D 50. JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 547, no. 57.260.

³⁴ COUYAT and MONTET 1912: 88, no. 137, cols. 5–6, pl. XXXIII; POSENER 1936: 89, doc. 11, cols. 5–6; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 570, no. 57.302, cols. 5–6.

³⁵ PETRIE 1917: lvi, no. 26.5.1, pl. LVIII, bottom, right; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 582, no. 57.322. Cf. The UCL Petrie Collection Online Catalogue, http://petriecat.museums.ucl.ac.uk/object_images/mid/34/UC17061.jpg, last accessed on 10 August 2016.

³⁶ Cf. YOYOTTE 1972: 219, no. e w. n. 12.

³⁷ One may even ponder whether UC 17061 could present the case of a private individual's name being flanked by the prenomen and the nomen of a king. At the right end of the sealing surface, which is now broken away, there might have stood another *s3*-sign similar to the signet ring Louvre E 10699 (see above, n. 17).

³⁸ For the potential reuse of old seals, see most recently REALI 2012–2013: 71.

but in the absence of an archaeological context that would help its dating, such a chronological distinction seems rather academic.

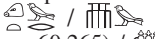



Title and prosopography

BMAG 1969W4363 is hitherto the only source attesting the “superintendent of the royal fleet” Ahmes-saneith and provides a welcome addition to the group of three office holders already known from the Saite period, namely Hekaemsaf (also attested with this title through an oval seal impression very similar to the Birmingham piece³⁹), Psamtek-meryptah and Tjaynahebu.⁴⁰ It should be noted that all four individuals are connected either with the reign of Amasis or with the late Twenty-sixth Dynasty in general. Perhaps this is a reflection of the increased attention which Amasis accorded the Egyptian navy,⁴¹ but it could also be due to the fact that Amasis’ lengthy reign saw the production of significantly more administrative documents and monuments of high officials than the previous reigns. Whether the ships under the command of an *jmj-r’ ḥ’w(.w) nswt* were exclusively of a military type is difficult to decide on the basis of the available sources. As far as one can tell the few other non-religious titles attested for the four “superintendents of the royal fleet” do not exhibit any obvious military connections. For example, both Hekaemsaf and Tjaynahebu seem to have held offices related to the central “civil” administration besides being “superintendents of the royal fleet”. While the former officiated as “superintendent of the treasuries of the residence” (*jmj-r’ pr.wj ḥd nbw n ḥnw*) and “superintendent of the scribes of the great entrance hall” (*jmj-r’ sh3w.w ḥntj wr*),⁴² the latter is designated in his tomb as “superintendent of the scribes of the council” (*jmj-r’ sh3w.w d3d3.t*).⁴³ Psamtek-meryneith bore no other non-religious title at all.⁴⁴ On the other hand, we know that at least the *ḥ’w*-ships

³⁹ No published photograph exists, but see JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 534, no. 57.238 w. ref. The sealing, formerly part of the collection of George Michailidis (YOYOTTE 1972: 219, n. 10), is likely to be now kept in the Ägyptische Museum Berlin (cf. BIERBRIER 2012: 371, s.v. “Michailidis, George Anastase”; KAPLONY 2016: preface w/o page number).

⁴⁰ GOYON 1969: 164–165; PRESSL 1998: 89. Not counting titles featuring the term *ḥ’w*.

⁴¹ Cf. VAN ’T DACK and HAUBEN 1978: 65.

⁴² PRESSL 1998: 275–277, no. F 25.1–4. Unlike PRESSL (1998: 45–46), I do not see a close connection between the *ḥnr.t* “labour camp” of the Middle Kingdom and the Late Period attestations of the title *jmj-r’ sh3w.w*  (> Wedjahor/Psamtek-sasekhmet, cf. JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, II: 885–886, no. 60.265) /  (> Hekaemsaf, cf. JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 532, no. 57.237, sarcophagus, col. 10) /  (> Pairkap, cf. DARESSY 1908: 140) /  (> Wedjahorresnet, cf. POSENER 1936: 6, doc. 1, col. 8, see also BAREŠ 1999: 38), which seems to be related rather to administrative tasks at the royal palace. Cf. QUIRKE 1988: 102, n. 63.

⁴³ PRESSL 1998: 317, no. S 91.1–3. For this title and its relation to the central administration, see PERDU 1998: 175–194, particularly p. 178 for Tjaynahebu; PRESSL 1998: 44–45.

⁴⁴ PRESSL 1998: 267–268, no. F.17.1–3.

were clearly associated with military operations during the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (judging from the qualification in the title *jmj-r' ḥ'w nswt n ḥ3 m W3d-wr*, borne by Hor/Psamtek, a contemporary of King Psamtek II⁴⁵). Considering that a major part of the army King Amasis could call upon consisted of soldiers from the Eastern Mediterranean,⁴⁶ chances are high that the Egyptians made even more use of foreign know-how and manpower for their naval forces.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, there is admittedly no definite proof that the Saite “superintendents of the royal fleet” held command over seagoing warships, and the office of *jmj-r' ḥ3stj.w Ḥ3w-nb.wt* may have involved the command over just such ships manned by foreign crews.⁴⁸

As to Ahmes-saneith himself, it may seem a strange coincidence that at least three officials of that name are known to have held high offices under King Amasis, and one might feel inclined to merge at least two of the prosopographic dossiers. In the absence of other sources attesting a “superintendent of the royal fleet” (short: s.r.f.) named Ahmes or similarly one cannot rule out the possibility that Ahmes-saneith^{s.r.f.} was appointed to the office of “superintendent of the ante-chamber” (short: s.a.c.) at a certain stage in his career and passed his former duties on to one of his peers such as Hekaemsaf or Psamtek-meryptah. However, this scenario would be hard to reconcile with the total lack of any allusion made to the post of s.r.f. within the preserved funerary assemblages and the other monuments associated with Ahmes(-saneith)^{s.a.c.}⁴⁹ As members of the Egyptian élite were usually keen to include all of their major professional lifetime achievements in their self-presentations on temple statues and funerary monuments, this absence appears to be significant. Equating Ahmes-saneith^{s.r.f.} with the like-named “superintendent of (all) the works of Upper and Lower Egypt” is even less convincing, since the latter had obviously been born into a family of “construction inspectors”, with his son still active in this function in the reign of King Darius I.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ PRESSL 1998: 228, no. D 14; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 334, no. 55.103. For the title see DARNELL 1992: 82.

⁴⁶ Cf. AGUT-LABORDÈRE 2012: 303.

⁴⁷ LLOYD 2000: 87–89. According to AGUT-LABORDÈRE (2013: 992–993), the majority of the foreign troops serving the Egyptian king were sailors and naval combatants. Cf. also the explicit mention of Apries' *kbn.wt*-vessels filled with *Ḥ3w-nb.wt* on the Triumphal Stela of Amasis from Elephantine, Cairo TR 13/6/24/1. JANSEN-WINKELN 2014b: 135; 137, n. 5.

⁴⁸ Cf. PRESSL 1998: 90–91; AGUT-LABORDÈRE 2013: 992.

⁴⁹ Cf. PRESSL 1998: 239–243, nos. F 3.1–9; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 486, no. 57.181; 545–549, nos. 257–264.

⁵⁰ Cf. POSENER 1936: 12–13, doc. 12 (graffito in the Wadi Hammamat dated to year 26 of Darius I); 98–105, doc. 14 (graffito in the Wadi Hammamat with comprehensive, but not completely trustworthy genealogy). At least with this family, *jmj-r' k3.wt n Šm'w Mḥw* seems to have designated a permanent office rather than a temporary assignment to supervise specific construction projects, as PRESSL (1998: 49–50) assumed for the other Saite “superintendents of all works”.

General remarks

The specific type of oval seal, of which the impression BMAG 1969W4363 provides an excellent example, was apparently introduced under Amasis,⁵¹ perhaps as one of many measures to increase his legitimacy among the administrative élite and ensure the loyalty of his highest officials. One may imagine a ceremony at the official's appointment involving the handing-over of the signet ring (most likely made of precious metal⁵²) by the king himself or the vizier.⁵³ When worn, such a large signet ring featuring the ostentatious prenomens cartouche signalled authority not only generated by the dignitary's office, but by the royal house itself (see also the conclusions).

2) BM EA 48927 (Registration number: 1909,0508.277)*Bibliography*

- HALL 1913: 292, no. 2790: primary publication featuring a rendering of the inscription in hieroglyphic typescript
- EL-SAYED 1975: 271, § 71, c: only mentioned
- EL-SAYED 1982, II: 445, doc. 572 c: only mentioned, provenance given as “Şaft el-Hennah”
- JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 581, no. 57.318: rendering of inscription in hieroglyphic typescript after HALL 1913

Documented provenance/acquisition

According to the records of the British Museum the sealing was purchased from the well-known antiquities dealer Maurice Nahman in 1909,⁵⁴ thus quite early in Nahman's career as a dealer.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, it is impossible to arrive at further conclusions regarding the original find spot of the artefact. El-Sayed's claim that BM EA 48927 had come from Saft el-Henna was certainly provoked

⁵¹ At least no specimens datable to an earlier reign are known.

⁵² Cf. some examples of golden Late Period signet rings: WILLIAMS 1924: 98–105, no. 34, pl. IX, 34a–c; XII–XIII; ZIVIE-COCHE 1991: 157–159 (Brooklyn Museum, inv.-no. 37.734E); ANONYMOUS 1975: 39–40, nos. 163–165; BOURRIAU 1979: 153, pl. XXVI, 3 (BM EA 68868); BARBOTIN 2005: 64–65, cat. 31–33 (Louvre E 10698, E 10699, E 10844). A silver signet ring naming a certain Khnumemhat was found in a late Seventh Century BC hoard at Tel Migne/Ekron. See GITIN and GOLANI 2001: 34, fig. 2.8; 42, fig. 2.12, no. 4.

⁵³ Cf. the depiction of a similar ceremony in the tomb of Huy, viceroy of Kush under King Tutankhamen. DAVIES and GARDINER 1926: 11, pl. VI; KEEL 1995: 112–113 w. fig. 212.

⁵⁴ British Museum Collection online, <http://collection.britishmuseum.org/id/object/YCA20420>, last accessed on 10 August 2016.

⁵⁵ For Nahman see BIERBRIER 2012: 397, s.v. “Nahman, Maurice”.

by Hall's erroneous decipherment of the signs on the left side of the sealing surface. Hall reconstructed the toponym "White Wall of Sopt" which he took to stand for "Pisopt, the modern Şaft el-Hennah".⁵⁶ In reality, the inscription on BM EA 48927 does not provide a geographical label at all, and its find spot remains completely unknown.

Description (Pls 3–4)

The sealing BM EA 48927 is a very flat (average thickness c. 0.4 cm) lump of clay of roughly oval shape, but has a less regular outline than BMAG 1969W4363. The maximum length is 2.45 cm, the maximum width 2.2 cm. Its surface texture and its brownish colour suggest that it has not been subjected to firing, although a careful analysis of the clay might reveal that some kind of exposure to fire has taken place.⁵⁷ Its obverse shows the almost complete impression of an oval seal with a slightly rounded edge (Pl. 3), most probably stemming from the bezel of a signet ring,⁵⁸ whose dimensions can be reconstructed as c. 2.3×1.7 cm.⁵⁹ They are thus only marginally smaller than those of the bezel of the golden signet ring Brooklyn Museum inv.-no. 37.734E which measures 2.6×1.8 cm.⁶⁰ Unlike BMAG 1969W4363, there is no raised borderline surrounding the inscription.

The reverse (Pl. 4), on which have been inscribed in black ink the modern inventory number "48927" and the acquisition note "1909 5 – 8 277",⁶¹ shows the imprint of a papyrus document with the principal fibres running parallel to the sealing's longitudinal axis. Perpendicular to this pattern, the impression of a string, probably made of papyrus fibres, cuts through the even surface. At the bottom of the reverse the surface exhibits a slight concave curvature which indicates that the sealing served to seal a papyrus roll of considerable thickness.

Inscription (Fig. 2)

The inscription of BM EA 48927 is arranged in five columns, although the parts flanking the cartouche could also be described as complex mixtures of broad-columns and sub-columns. The individual hieroglyphic signs show no

⁵⁶ HALL 1913: 292, no. 2790.

⁵⁷ During my examination of the sealing in 2006 I was unfortunately not able to assess the characteristics of the clay.

⁵⁸ For comparison see the silver signet rings from Tell Dafana: LECLÈRE and SPENCER 2014: 67, BM EA 23852–23857; 182, pl. 24.

⁵⁹ The original dimensions of the actual (metal) seal should have been slightly larger, taking into account the shrinkage of the clay while drying.

⁶⁰ ZIVIE-COCHE 1991: 158. See also above, n. 52.

⁶¹ Thus, purchased on 8 May (?) 1909 as piece 277?

inner detailing and are rather clumsily shaped. However, the clay’s matrix was probably not suited to reproduce the potentially very fine details present in the carving of the original signet ring.

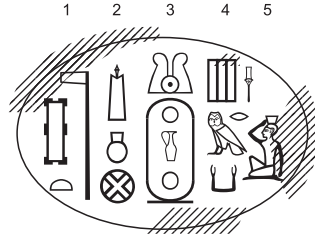


Fig. 2. Inscription on sealing surface of BM EA 48927.

$\text{⤴} \begin{matrix} 1 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} (j)t(j)\text{-ntr}^a \text{Jnb}(-h\bar{d})^b \begin{matrix} 2 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} (jtj)\text{-ntr} \text{Jwnw}^c \begin{matrix} 4 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} h\bar{r}p \text{h}w.wt^d (j)m(j)\text{-r}^3 \\
\begin{matrix} 4-5 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} k3.(w)t^e \begin{matrix} 3 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} (\underline{H}nm\text{-}j\bar{b}^g\text{-}R^e) \\
\begin{matrix} 1 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} \text{The god's father of Ineb(-hedj)}^2 \begin{matrix} 2 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} \text{(and the god's father of) Heliopolis,} \begin{matrix} 4 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} \text{the} \\
\text{controller of the estates (of Neith/the Red Crown), the superintendent} \begin{matrix} 4-5 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} \text{of} \\
\text{the work(s),} \begin{matrix} 3 \\ \text{⤴} \end{matrix} \text{(Khnumibra)}^3.$

Comments

a) While Hall correctly recognised the presence of the partly damaged *ntr*-sign,⁶² he seems to have been unable to make sense of its proportions and consequently interpolated a *hḏ*-sign beneath < *ntr* >⁶³ although no interruption of or significant break in the *ntr*-post is visible on the sealing today. He took the < *hḏ* > as the welcome completion of the toponym **Jnb.t-hḏ(.t)-n-Ṣpdw* which he deduced from the other, clearly identifiable, signs in columns 1–2.

From the viewpoint of graphematic structure, the writing ⤴ has nothing special to it, but the dimension of the group itself and the arrangement of the genitival modifiers associated with it deserve notice. However, one can adduce further examples of private seal inscriptions in which certain signs or groups of signs are disproportionately enlarged in respect to the remainder of the text for aesthetical and/or symbolic reasons.⁶⁴

b) The interpretation of the sign Gardiner O36 (⤴) positioned at the far left of the sealing surface is not self-evident. Hall took it for the first element of

⁶² HALL 1913: 292, no. 2790.

⁶³ Followed by JANSEN-WINKELN (2014a, I: 581, no. 57.318) who had no alternative to trusting Hall in this matter.

⁶⁴ Cf., e.g., the bronze stamp Petrie Museum UC 16442 from Hermopolis. PETRIE 1917: pl. LVIII, no. BD = The UCL Petrie Collection Online Catalogue, http://petriecat.museums.ucl.ac.uk/object_images/full/32/UC16442.jpg, last accessed on 10 August 2016.

the unattested toponym **Jnb.t-ḥd(.t)-n-špdw*, but in the absence of both the *ḥd*-sign (see comment a) above) and the spike Gardiner M44 (Δ) (see comment c) below) a different solution must be sought. The association with *Jwnw*/Heliopolis and the overall context of the titulary leave hardly any other option than to see in 𓏏 the abbreviated writing of the Memphite toponym *Jnb(.w)*, itself a short alternative to the age-honoured designation of the Egyptian metropolis, *Jnb(.w)-ḥd(.w)*.⁶⁵ Support for this interpretation comes from the sarcophagus Cairo JE 57478 which was found in a Saite tomb near Matariya/Heliopolis. On the foot end of the sarcophagus, the string of sacerdotal titles of a certain Ahmes⁶⁶ is introduced by the sequence $\text{𓏏} \text{𓏏} \text{𓏏}$.⁶⁷ These two offices are also found among the sacerdotal titles associated with the Persian period “superintendent of all works of Upper and Lower Egypt” Khnumbira (see section on prosopography below). While the second one appears in the defective writing 𓏏 as the principal title of Khnumbira’s maternal grandfather Psamtek-men (Wadi Hammamat graffito no. 91),⁶⁸ it is represented as $\text{𓏏} \text{𓏏} \text{𓏏}$ in another graffito mentioning Psametek-men (Wadi Hammamat graffito no. 14).⁶⁹ Elaborate writings of both titles in the form $\text{𓏏} \text{𓏏} \text{𓏏} \text{𓏏}$ are found within Khnumbira’s own titulary in graffito no. 93⁷⁰ and on the offering table Cairo JE 48439.⁷¹ These sources leave no doubt that the toponym represented by 𓏏 is synonymous with *Jnb(.w)-ḥd(.w)*/Memphis.⁷²

c) In his copy of the sealing’s inscription Hall misrepresented the first sign of the second column as Δ and was accordingly forced to propose the reading *špd* / *špdw*, respectively. A close look at the actual hieroglyph reveals, however, that it should rather be identified with Gardiner O28 (𓏏). In combination with the following *nw*-pot and the settlement classifier the sign denotes the toponym *Jwnw*.

In accordance with the parallels cited in comment b) above, the compound *jtj-ntr*, “god’s father”, relates to both toponyms and has to be read twice.⁷³

⁶⁵ Cf. SETHE 1905: 131; GOEDICKE 1971–1972; GRANDET 1999: 259.

⁶⁶ It is probable but not absolutely certain that this Ahmes is identical with the actual owner of the sarcophagus, the royal official Nesnaisut (interestingly, there is no overlap in the strings of titles associated with the two names). Cf. BICKEL and TALLET 1997: 82, no. 13.

⁶⁷ JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, II: 867, no. 60.230, foot end of sarcophagus, l. 1.

⁶⁸ COUYAT and MONTET 1912: 67, no. 91, l. 6, pl. XXII, bottom right; POSENER 1936: 105, doc. 15, l. 6; 106, app. crit. e.

⁶⁹ COUYAT and MONTET 1912: 39, no. 14, l. 8, pl. III; POSENER 1936: 110, doc. 18, l. 8.

⁷⁰ COUYAT and MONTET 1912: 68–69, no. 93, l. 1, pl. XXII, top left; POSENER 1936: 100, cat. 14, l. 1.

⁷¹ POSENER 1936: 94, cat. 13, l. 6, pl. XVII, top left.

⁷² See also POSENER 1936: 95, doc. 13, n. b; 110, doc. 18, l. 8.

⁷³ An analogous representation of this double title as $\text{𓏏} \text{𓏏}$ is found on the back pillar fragment of the Saite anophorous statue Cairo JE 97196 from Mendes. Cf. SELIM 2004: 376, n. e, pl. 24, left.

d) While the title *hrp hwt* occurs frequently on monuments of the Saite and Persian periods,⁷⁴ the positioning of the *nomen regens* *hrp* after the *nomen rectum* *hwt* is uncommon. Three potential reasons for this come to mind. First, the graphematic metathesis is a simple mistake. However, the probability of such an explanation would be much higher if the inscription carved on the signet ring ran from left to right and not in the standard direction from right to left (for the orientation of inscriptions on seals and their respective impressions, see the remark in the conclusions). Second, the decision was made for aesthetical reasons, since the curved outline of the bezel edge would have required a considerable shortening of the “triple-estate”, had the standard sequence of signs been maintained. Choosing this solution was perhaps made easier through consideration three: As the *hwt* of the title in question was, at least in the First Millennium BC, considered an abbreviated form of *hwt N.t*, “estates of Neith”,⁷⁵ the element clearly represented a strong religious symbolism and could thereby have qualified for honorific transposition. The few parallels one could cite in favour of such an interpretation are arguably not very reliable, however.⁷⁶

Though being closely related to the cults of Neith, the title *hrp hwt* became widespread among dignitaries throughout Lower Egypt already in the Saite period and does not indicate that the individual bearing the title was a permanent resident of Sais or of the Saite nome.⁷⁷

e) No loaf of bread is visible on the preserved surface of the sealing and it is unlikely that it was ever present.

f) Although one should expect the name of the official to be placed to the right of his titles, the engraver of the seal chose or, rather, was told to choose as its position the centre axis of the sealing surface as if it were a simple royal cartouche used in an apotropaic function. This being said, it is not improbable that Khnumibra’s personal name written inside a cartouche was meant to function on the seal in exactly this way besides identifying the owner.

g) The hieroglyph denoting *jb* appears as a slightly elongated circle.

Date

In the absence of a royal cartouche other than the one representing Khnumibra’s own name, the sealing is not precisely datable. Bearing in mind, however,

⁷⁴ See JELÍNKOVÁ 1958; EL-SAYED 1976.

⁷⁵ Cf. JELÍNKOVÁ 1958: 79–89; EL-SAYED 1976: 99–100.

⁷⁶ In the case of one of the naos inscriptions on the naophorous statue Cairo CG 1278, for example, the inversion is probably a mistake due to the non-standard right facing of the text column. Cf. GUERMEUR 2005: 185, B, pl. Xa; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, II: 809, no. 60.123: “dto., zur Linken des Gottes”.

⁷⁷ Cf. EL-SAYED 1976: 106–107.

that most of the sources attesting Khnumibra's *floruit* (for the identification of the owner see the comment below) date to the reign of Darius I, chances are high that the seal, of which BM EA 48927 is merely an index, was produced during the reigns of Cambyses or Darius I in the early Twenty-seventh Dynasty.

Title and prosopography

Considering the owner's name Khnumibra enclosed in a cartouche, his main administrative title *jmj-r' k3.t* and his two sacerdotal titles *jtj-ntr Jnb(-hd)* and *jtj-ntr Jwnw*, it is safe to assume that the person commemorated on BM EA 48927 is identical with the well-known "superintendent of all works of Upper and Lower Egypt" Khnumibra. He is first attested together with his father on a graffito from regnal year 44 of King Amasis,⁷⁸ but the majority of his records (9 graffiti in the Wadi Hammamat, a stela in Berlin and an offering table in Cairo) date from the latter half of Darius I's reign.⁷⁹ While the title *jmj-r' k3.t* adorns all of his known monuments, the two offices of god's father only appear on the offering table Cairo JE 48439⁸⁰ and on Wadi Hammamat graffito no. 93.⁸¹ As a "superintendent of all the king's works in Upper and Lower Egypt" Khnumibra must have been held in high esteem by the Persian ruler and/or his representatives in Egypt, which makes it all the more surprising that the Persians did not mind Khnumibra writing his name in a cartouche as if to invoke the presence of an old opponent. Or was the practice of adopting private names which were indistinguishable from those of the former Saite kings rather regarded as an act of de-legitimation? In this case, however, the standards of value must have changed considerably, for the very practice had obviously already begun in the reign of Amasis, when Ahmes-saneith named his son Khnumibra and placed his name inside a cartouche (> Wadi Hammamat graffito no. 137).⁸²

General remarks

It is a pity that no records relating to the provenance of BM EA 48927 exist. Perhaps, its original find place would have reflected a specific building project which Khnumibra was commissioned to oversee. Should the sealing indeed consist of unfired clay (cf. description above), its very existence and the fact

⁷⁸ See above, n. 34.

⁷⁹ POSENER 1936: 88–116.

⁸⁰ POSENER 1936: 94, cat. 13, l. 6, pl. XVII, top left.

⁸¹ COUYAT and MONTET 1912: 68–69, no. 93, l. 1, pl. XXII, top left; POSENER 1936: 100, cat. 14, l. 1.

⁸² See p. 244.

that it has survived nearly intact would suggest at least that it was not recovered from the damp soil of a typical Delta site.⁸³

Sealings with exclusively sacerdotal titles

3) BMAG 1969W481

Documented provenance/acquisition

As was the case with sealings 1 and 4, BMAG 1969W481 was presented to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery by the Trustees of the Wellcome Trust in 1969. Since it is known that Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome obtained his collection of Egyptian antiquities from a great variety of sources,⁸⁴ it is extremely difficult to trace individual artefacts back to their previous owners, let alone their original find spots. In the case of BMAG 1969W481 with its intense reddish surface colour that makes the sealing stand out from most of the other known Late Period specimens we might fare slightly better, however. In the catalogue of Egyptian antiquities from the collection of Hilton Price which was sold at Sotheby's, London, 12–21 July 1911⁸⁵ — Henry Solomon Wellcome being among the buyers⁸⁶ — we find the following entry: “[No.] **1879. Impression of a Seal**, bearing a cartouche, with impression of the cord and linen upon the back. Dia. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Red clay. [highlighting in the original]”⁸⁷ This description suits BMAG 1969W481 almost perfectly (just replacing “linen” with “papyrus”), and it is probably not stretching things too far to propose the identity of the aforementioned Hilton Price-sealing and the sealing in Birmingham.

Description (Pls 5–6)

BMAG 1969W481 is a small and flat lump of fired Nile clay with an almost circular outline whose obverse preserves the impression of a horizontally oriented oval seal bezel comprising four columns of text (Pl. 5). The maximum diameter of the sealing is 1.8 cm and shows an average thickness of about 0.4 cm. The length of the original seal bezel producing the impression measured slightly over 1.5 cm, but its left edge (corresponding to the right side of the sealing) was not completely impressed upon the lump of clay. Similar to

⁸³ The majority of the seal impressions found at Tell el-Dab'a show more or less strong indications of (non-intentional) firing. See REALI 2012–2013.

⁸⁴ See BIERBRIER 2012: 571–572, s.v. “Wellcome, (Sir) Henry Solomon”.

⁸⁵ BIERBRIER 2012: 444, s.v. “Price, (Frederick George) Hilton”.

⁸⁶ BIERBRIER 2012: 572, s.v. “Wellcome, (Sir) Henry Solomon”.

⁸⁷ PRICE 1897: 199, cat. 1879.

the sealings presented above, the reverse of BMAG 1969W481 (Pl. 6) shows the impressions of a sheet of papyrus⁸⁸ (from a roll or a single-sheeted letter) and of the cord used to tie the document together. The direction of the fibres is again parallel to the cord (cf. description of sealing 1, above).

Remarkable about BMAG 1969W481 is its intense reddish surface colour which clearly derives from (inadvertent) firing under oxidising conditions.

Inscription (Fig. 3)

The small size of the hieroglyphic signs (the cartouche of column 3 is only about 3 mm wide) and the partial abrasion of the sealing surface towards the right pose some challenges to the correct deciphering of the inscription.



Fig. 3. Inscription on sealing surface of BMAG 1969W481.

𓂏 𓂏 (j)t(j)-ntr(?)^a ḥm-ntr 𓂏¹⁻² Nfr-tm(?)^b 𓂏 dšr-ḥ'w^c 𓂏 (W3ḥ-ib-R)^d 𓂏⁴ mn(.w)-
<m>-Mḥw^e

𓂏 The god's father(?) and prophet of 𓂏¹⁻² Nefertem(?), 𓂏 sanctifier of the
(divine) body, 𓂏³ (Wahibra) 𓂏⁴ -menmehu.

Comments

a) While the reading of the group 𓂏 does not provide difficulties, the bread loaf positioned to the right of the ntr-sign is problematic. If belonging to column 1, it should most probably be taken as abbreviated writing of the word *jtj* within the compound *jtj-ntr*, the *ntr*-sign serving both *jtj* and *ḥm* as notation of the direct genitive. However, the conventional sequence of signs representing these titles is 𓂏, not 𓂏.⁸⁹ The only reason one could think of for choosing the inverted sequence is avoiding the awkward look which the standard writing would produce in combination with the following sign Gardiner D45 (> *𓂏). Should the bread loaf already be a part of column 2, its most likely function would be to serve as a phonetic complement to <tm> within the divine name *Nfr-tm* (see the following comment).

⁸⁸ As Chiara Reali kindly informed me, the pattern visible on the back of the sealing is unlikely to derive from cloth.

⁸⁹ Cf., e.g., VITTMANN 1978: 168.

b) Taking $\underline{d}sr-h'w$ as another priestly title rather than the hypostasis of a divine epithet (see comment c) below), the titles $hm-ntr$ and $jtj-ntr$ (if accepting the reading proposed in comment a) of column 1 seem to be lacking a qualification in the form of the name of a deity. Therefore, one should seek the missing complement in column 2. The tall nfr -sign in this column provides the logical starting point, since it gives the impression of having been positioned in the vertical axis of the sealing surface primarily for aesthetic and/or symbolic reasons.⁹⁰ It goes without saying that such considerations are prone to overriding any rules governing the normal arrangement of signs within left-facing columns. Taking $\langle nfr \rangle$ as the first part of a divine name, its second component is easily identified with the sign $\langle tm \rangle$ (Gardiner U15) at the bottom end of column 1, which would not have fitted the small width of column 2.⁹¹ The resulting blank space in the lower half of column 2 was filled with the owl $\langle m \rangle$ acting as the phonetic complement of tm . Accordingly, the god's name associated with the titles "god's father" and "prophet" should be read $Nfr-tm$.⁹² If the identification of the hieroglyphic signs of columns 1 and 2 and the interpretation of their graphematic interrelations be correct, the result of this attempt at doing justice to two completely different attitudes towards writing is a strange reading pattern that involves repeated shifts between the horizontal and vertical sequences.

c) $\underline{D}sr-h'w$ ⁹³ is a sacerdotal title associated with the fourteenth Upper Egyptian nome in the Great Nome List of the Temple of Edfu and related sources.⁹⁴ As Klotz has recently shown, it is also attested on several monuments of Late Period officials originating from or associated with northern Middle Egypt.⁹⁵ Variants of the title include the divine name Hr , which — owing to the possibility of honorific transposition — might be read either before or after the other two elements, resulting in two possible translations: "Horus, who sanctifies the (divine) body (of Osiris)", and "he who sanctifies the divine body

⁹⁰ Cf. the many seals on which single large hieroglyphs figure as symbols of power, well-being, health, etc. KEEL 1995: 166–175, §§ 441–468, esp. 172, § 459 ($\langle nfr \rangle$).

⁹¹ As pointed out in comment c) below, there is a slight chance that the hieroglyph in question actually represents the canal sign Gardiner N36 which would have been distorted during the process of stamping.

⁹² Until now, not many priestly offices related to Nefertem are known. Among the few relevant sources are shabtis of the army officer and "prophet of Nefertem" Wahibra, now dispersed over several collections. Cf. CHEVEREAU 1985: 160–161, doc. 234; Brooklyn Museum open collection, inv.-no. 08.480.9, <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/19082>, last accessed on 10 August 2016. Other attestations of "prophet of Nefertem" are associated with the Memphite priests of the Ptolemaic period. Cf. OTTO 1956: 113.

⁹³ For writing $h'w$ with three pieces of meat, see ERMAN and GRAPOW 1957, III: 37, s.v. h' ; WILSON 1997: 621, s.v. $h'w$.

⁹⁴ LEITZ 2014: 110–111, pls 29–30.

⁹⁵ KLOTZ 2014: 770–771.

of Horus”.⁹⁶ In view of the associated mythological background⁹⁷ the first variant is probably to be favoured.

Bearing in mind that the most common spelling variants of the title feature the Horus falcon preceding the *dśr-h'w*-group,⁹⁸ one may feel inclined to look for a representation of Horus on BMAG 1969W481 as well. The only possible candidate would be the bird below the *nfr*-sign, although it resembles rather an owl than a falcon — at least in its present state of preservation (cf. the previous comment). Playing the devil’s advocate, one could of course propose a completely different reading of columns 1–2 in which the falcon Gardiner G5 would have been placed behind the epithet it should actually precede for lack of space. In a similar way, the sign at the bottom of column 1 could be re-interpreted as a slightly distorted rendering of the canal sign Gardiner N36 (𓏏) which would furnish a classifier for *h'w* in the sense of “divine body of water/Nile flood”.⁹⁹ One would thus arrive at the reading $\overset{1}{\text{𓏏}}(j)t(j)\text{-ntr } \overset{2}{\text{𓏏}}\text{hm-ntr } \overset{2}{\text{𓏏}}\text{Hr-} \overset{1}{\text{𓏏}}\text{dśr-h'w } \overset{2}{\text{𓏏}}\text{nfr}$, “the god’s father and prophet (of?) Horus, who sanctifies the (divine) body, $\overset{2}{\text{𓏏}}$ good (be done to him *or similar*).” While I do not favour this particular interpretation of the text it should not be dismissed out of hand. Be this as it may, there is no question that the title *dśr-h'w* could be employed on Late Period monuments without making reference to the god Horus.¹⁰⁰

d) Although the signs inside the cartouche are abraded, the identification of *w3h* (𓏏) is certain.

e) The name conforms to the pattern *Royal nomen/prenomem* + pseudo-participle *mn(.w)* + preposition *m* + *toponym* which is well attested from the Twenty-sixth Dynasty until the Ptolemaic period.¹⁰¹ The same holds true for the (graphematic) elision of the preposition *m*.¹⁰² In the case of BMAG 1969W481, however, the notation of the toponym itself provides some difficulty, as $\overset{3}{\text{𓏏}}$ does not count among the common spellings of known political/religious centres of the Saite period.¹⁰³ While the writing $\overset{3}{\text{𓏏}}$ may represent the

⁹⁶ Cf. GOYON 1999: 3; KLOTZ 2014: 771. For divine epithets becoming priestly titles in the course of the First Millennium BC, see OTTO 1956: 116; LANCIERS 1991: 144, n. h.

⁹⁷ GOYON 1999: 15; LEITZ 2014: 110–111.

⁹⁸ KLOTZ 2014: 770.



⁹⁹ Cf. $\overset{1}{\text{𓏏}}$: WILSON 1997: 621, s.v. *h'w-ntr*.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. $\overset{3}{\text{𓏏}}$ on a Late Period canopic jar from Middle Egypt in the Cairo Museum (w/o number, DARESSY 1917: 31); $\overset{3}{\text{𓏏}}$ on the early Saite block statue of a priest from Middle Egypt in the Karnak Cachette (Cairo CG 48632, AZZAM 2002: 73, pl. II, D, col. 1; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 207, no. 53.342, back pillar, col. 1).

¹⁰¹ DE MEULENAERE 1966: *passim*; JURMAN 2007: 183; VITTMANN 2009: 96–97.

¹⁰² Cf., e.g., the Persian period Serapeum stela Louvre IM 4213: *J'h-mšj(.w)-mn(.w)-(m)-Jnb-ḥd* and $\text{[Nfr-jb-R']-mn-(m)-Jnb-ḥd}$. LIEBLEIN 1892: 930, no. 2515. I am indebted to Didier Devauchelle for providing me with a photograph of the stela.

¹⁰³ It is here assumed that the concrete name pattern originated in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, irrespective of the possibility that the individual referred to in BMAG 1969W481 could have been born well after the demise of Saite rule in Egypt.

goddess Neith,¹⁰⁴ I do not know of any text in which  demonstrably serves as a representation of the city of Sais or the (northern) Saite nome.¹⁰⁵ However,  and variants are attested Late Period writings of *Mḥw*, “Lower Egypt”.¹⁰⁶ Even though this toponym does not seem to have been part of the standard repertoire of geographical terms incorporated into Late Period basilophorous names, no other solution suggests itself.

Date

The *terminus ante quem non* of the seal used to stamp BMAG 1969W481 is defined by the royal cartouche which may refer either to the prenomen of King Psamtek I or to the nomen of Apries. Individuals named *W3ḥ-jb-Rʿ* already occur during the reign of Psamtek I,¹⁰⁷ but the adoption of a cartouche name by non-royal individuals is not regularly attested before the reign of Amasis (see, however, the comments on the date of sealing 4 below).¹⁰⁸ The most likely upper chronological margin of BMAG 1969W481 should probably be set at the start of Apries’ reign in 589 BC. As non-royal names incorporating cartouches of Saite rulers are attested well beyond the end of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, a Persian period date for sealing 3 is equally possible.¹⁰⁹

Title and prosopography

Given the lack of complementary sources and the uncertainties surrounding the titulary of Wahibra-menemmehu, it is very difficult to arrive at definite conclusions regarding his chronological position (see remarks above) and geographic affiliations. While the title *dśr-ḥʿw* points towards relations with northern Middle Egypt (see comment c) above), the sacerdotal prebend associated with the god Nefertem (see comment b) and the toponym incorporated into his basilophorous name both point to a Lower Egyptian background.¹¹⁰ Perhaps, further research will reveal that there were *dśr-ḥʿw*-priests officiating in the Delta as well.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Cf. JELÍNKOVÁ 1957: 81–83.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. MONTET 1957: 80–86; LEITZ 2014: 221.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. GAUTHIER 1926: 56, s.v. meḥou; KURTH 2007: 346, no. 109.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, II: 1210 (index of non-royal personal names).

¹⁰⁸ See above, sealing 1, comment c).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. VITTMANN 2009: 96–97.

¹¹⁰ I do not know of any Upper Egyptian priesthood clearly associated with Nefertem.

¹¹¹ For an example of the opposite, namely the establishment of a typically “Lower Egyptian” priesthood in Upper Egypt, see DE MEULENAERE 1964: 166 w. n. 1; TRAUNECKER 1998: 1216–1222.

General remarks

BMAG 1969W481 deserves notice for providing evidence of the previously unattested Late Period basilephorous name (*W3ḥ-jb-Rʿ*)-*mn-(m)-Mḥw*. The sacerdotal titles attributed to Wahibra-menemmehu are also quite rare. In contrast, the type of seal represented by BMAG 1969W481 was frequently adopted by priests of the higher echelons during the First Millennium BC.¹¹²

4) BMAG 1969W304*Documented provenance/acquisition*

Apart from the information that sealing 4, like sealings 1 and 3, was presented to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery by the Wellcome Trust in 1969, nothing about its provenance is known.

Description (Pls 7–8)

BMAG 1969W304 resembles BMAG 1969W4363 (sealing 1) in many respects. Its sealing surface equally shows a slightly raised oval borderline surrounding the sealing inscription (Pl. 7). However, unlike sealing 1 the sealing surface is incomplete. Its left and right edges have suffered from severe abrasion which has resulted in the loss of some hieroglyphic signs as well as in a ragged outline on these sides. Accordingly, the maximum diameter of 2.4 cm does neither reflect the original size of the sealing nor the length of the seal (> bezel of the signet ring). The surface colour of BMAG 1969W304 ranges from dark grey to almost black and indicates that the sealing (most probably of carefully levigated Nile clay) was subject to firing under reduced conditions. The obverse (Pl. 8) is again characterised by the imprint of a papyrus document and the cord¹¹³ the sealing was attached to. Contrary to sealings 1–3, the papyrus fibres of the original document run perpendicular to the cord rather than parallel to it. This could mean that BMAG 1969W304 was originally attached to a letter which was folded with the “recto” facing outwards.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Cf. ns. 17 and 52 above.

¹¹³ The traces left by the cord strongly suggest that it was made of papyrus fibres. Cf. n. 7.

¹¹⁴ The horizontal fibres of the “recto” are often visible on sealed demotic letters of the *broad format*. See DEPAUW 2006: 79–80; ZAGHLOUL 1985: pls 1–2, C–D.

Inscription (Fig. 4)



As has been stated above, the inscription on BMAG 1969W304 is not fully preserved. Although not much of the text has actually been lost, the resulting difficulties for its understanding are considerable. Unlike sealings 1–3, sealing 4 shows the titulary of the seal owner arranged in lines instead of columns. Only the owner’s name (Psamtek) (originally completed by a now lost column to the right?) is represented in a column.




Fig. 4. Inscription on sealing surface of BMAG 1969W304.

→ ¹ | 'hrp' ^a ḥw.wt ḥm ^b Hr wr w3d.tj ^c | ² [#] nb.(t) (?) [#] ^d ḥw.t P ^e ḥm-ntr
 Ḥw.t-sr ^f
¹ | ³ | (Psamtk) [⁴ | ...(?)] ^g
¹ | The 'controller' of the estates (of Neith/the Red Crown), the servant of
 Horus, the Great One of the Two Diadems, ² | [...] of Pe, the prophet of(?) the
 Estate of the Prince, ³ | (Psamtek) [⁴ | ...(?)].



Comments

a) On the basis of the size and the proportions of the sealing surface I assume that the partially preserved sign preceding the triple-ḥw.t marks the start of the inscription and that no hieroglyphs to the left have completely been lost. Although the vertical sign in question is difficult to identify by itself, owing to the loss of more than two thirds of its original height, its proximity to  leaves little doubt that it represents Gardiner S42 (). The whole group should therefore be read hrp ḥw.wt (for this title see sealing 2, comment d).

b) The hieroglyph preceding the Horus falcon resembles a reed-sign with reversed orientation. However, its position and the overall context strongly suggest that it should be taken for Gardiner U36 () denoting ḥm, “servant (of a deity)”. Whether the sign’s shape is due to a mistake by the cutter of the seal, or whether it was the result of a scratch in the seal’s surface is difficult to ascertain. Since the contour of the sign is quite sharp it seems unlikely that its particular appearance results simply from excess of clay not having fallen off the sealing surface.

c) The sacerdotal title *ḥm Ḥr wr w3d.tj* (“servant of Horus, Great One of the Two Diadems”) is known from numerous monuments dating from the Saite to the Ptolemaic periods, and is particularly linked to the cult of Horus at Buto.¹¹⁵ In the titularies of many officials/priests of Lower Egypt, *ḥm Ḥr wr w3d.tj* is closely associated with the “Saite” title *ḥrp ḥw.wt (N.t)* which usually precedes it.¹¹⁶

d) The second line poses a number of reading problems which are partly due to the damage of the initial sign group. The hieroglyph in the middle of this group possesses a convex lower edge and most probably represents either $\langle nb \rangle$ or $\langle k \rangle$, but the identity of the horizontally oriented signs above and below eludes me.¹¹⁷ From a syntactic point of view the first group of line 2 should comprise another sacerdotal title and/or the name of a deity. If no title was mentioned, the *ḥm-ntr* towards the end of the line should be regarded as the corresponding title which would have been placed at the end of the title string because of honorific transposition. In such a case, however, the *ḥw.t-śr* concluding the line would be left without associated title or epithet.

e) With its slightly protruding lower corners, the actual shape of the hieroglyph above the settlement-classifier is reminiscent of the granary sign Gardiner O51B () . However, attestations of Gardiner O51(B) on Late Period sealings always show tapering sides,¹¹⁸ which are completely absent from the rectangular glyph of BMAG 1969W304. It is therefore more than likely that  stands for the toponym Pe, a common name for the Delta city of Buto. Not knowing any geographical entity or temple designation comprising the elements *ḥw.t* and *P* in immediate succession, I am unable to propose a definite reading for the title in question. There is the theoretical possibility that parts of the inscription are to be read as columns, involving partial haplography. One could thus arrive at the following string of titles: $\overset{1}{\downarrow}$ *ḥm Ḥr wr w3d.tj (m)* $\overset{2}{\uparrow}$ *ḥw.t-śr* $\overset{1}{\downarrow}$ *ḥm-ntr* (transposed) $\overset{1}{\downarrow}$ *Ḥr* (haplography) $\overset{2}{\uparrow}$ *P* (“servant of Horus, the Great One of the Two Diadems (in) the Estate of the Prince, the prophet of Horus of Pe”), but this is mere speculation. The only argument that could be brought forward in favour of this hypothesis is the attestation of the title *ḥm-ntr*

¹¹⁵ DE MEULENAERE 1964: 166 w. n. 2; TRAUNECKER 1998: 1215–1216.

¹¹⁶ Cf., e.g., DE MEULENAERE 1964: 151–154; GAMER-WALLERT 1973–1974: 198–199; EL-SAYED 1975: 110, doc. 8; 112–113, n. g.

¹¹⁷ Considering the following *ḥw.t*, one could propose the reading *Nb.t-Ḥw.t*, “Nephthys”, but the horizontal sign below “ $\langle nb \rangle$ ” is too wide for a loaf of bread.

¹¹⁸ Cf. PETRIE 1917: lviii, no. AD, pl. LVIII, AD (= Petrie Museum, UC 33943, The UCL Petrie Collection Online Catalogue, http://petriecat.museums.ucl.ac.uk/object_images/full/67/UC33943.jpg, last accessed on 10 August 2016); YOYOTTE 1972: 217, fig. 3, below; 219, no. b (Michailidis Collection, now perhaps in the Ägyptische Museum, Berlin, cf. n. 39 above).

Hr P (often in honorific transposition: ¹¹⁹) on other Late Period monuments whose owners/ancestry had relations with Tell el-Fara'in/Buto.¹²⁰

f) While the reading *ḥw.t-šr* is practically certain, it is by no means clear whether the preceding title *ḥm-ntr* belongs to this sanctuary designation. Unless *ḥw.t-šr* served to qualify the divine epithet *wr w3d.tj* (> unattested “Great One of the Two Diadems (of) the Estate of the Prince”) it would be completely isolated, however.

The *ḥw.t-šr* is the designation of a sanctuary originally located at Heliopolis, but by the First Millennium BC it had also become associated with cult places of Osiris at sites such as Sais, Iseum/Behbeit el-Hagar, Bubastis and Memphis.¹²¹ The only source known to me which points to a relation between the *ḥw.t-šr* and Buto is a caption referring to a protective deity on the Ptolemaic period sarcophagus of Panehemisis at the Kunsthistorische Museum, Vienna (ÄOS 4). In the speech of the protective lion-headed deity labelled *Jmj-P*, “He who is in Buto”,¹²² the *ba* of the deceased is promised to reach Pe and Dep while the offering bread will be presented to him in the Estate of the Prince (*dj=tw n=k p3w.t m ḥw.t-šr*).¹²³

g) The right edge of the sealing surface is broken away and anything that might have been impressed to the right of the cartouche is lost. As the still visible curvature of the borderline in the upper right corner of the sealing suggests, some space must have been available that would have allowed one to add a further column of slim hieroglyphs.¹²⁴ Consequently, it is impossible to decide whether the name of the seal owner read just (Psamtek), or (Psamtek)-seneb, (Psamtek)-nefer or the like.¹²⁵

Date

As research in the last decades has made clear, compound names comprising the cartouche of a Saite king are already attested in the reign of Psamtek I, the best-known example being the governor of Sais (Psamtek)-seneb whose term in office included the king’s regnal year 21.¹²⁶ The seal with which BMAG

¹¹⁹ E.g., on the well-known Abydene statue Louvre A 93 of Pefitjauemawyneith. JELÍNKOVÁ 1956–1957: 276, col. 1; JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 557, no. 57.287, col. 1.

¹²⁰ Cf. JANSEN-WINKELN 2014a, I: 68, no. 53.125 (statue of Harsomtusemhat, Cairo CG 888); 396, no. 56.125, back pillar, col. 3 (Heliopolitan statue of Pefitjauemawyneith, BM EA 83); PERNIGOTTI 1983: 57, col. 2; 65, n. *al*, pl. XI (sarcophagus of Horiraa II, BM EA 1729).

¹²¹ See KAPLONY 1977: 351; 355, ns. 35–38; ZECCHI 1996: 79–81; FAVARD-MEEKS 1997: 108.

¹²² Cf. LEITZ 2002: 235b–c.

¹²³ LEITZ 2011: 71, § 6, 9.

¹²⁴ Cf. the positioning of signs on the bezel of the signet ring Brooklyn Museum, inv.-no. 37.734 E. WILLIAMS 1924: pl. IX, 34c; ZIVIE-COCHE 1991: 158 w. fig.

¹²⁵ For the repertoire of personal names built upon the element “Psamtek”, see DE MEULENAERE 1966: 35–38.

¹²⁶ See most recently, PERDU 2006: 165–172.

1969W304 was stamped could thus date from anytime between the beginning of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty and the end of the first Persian period or even later.¹²⁷ However, its close resemblance to seals/sealings securely dated to the Saite period suggest that BMAG 1969W304 and its “matrix” were produced during the Seventh/Sixth Centuries BC.

Title and prosopography

The title *ḥm Hr wr w3d.tj* and the mention of the city Pe provide the only hints helping to identify the geographic affiliations of (Psamtek)[...(?)]. Unfortunately, the current state of research on Late Period prosopography does not allow to identify an individual originating from or associated with Buto who bore a name comprising the element “Psamtek”. Of course, the seal owner’s potential affiliations with Butic cults have no bearing on the identification of BMAG 1969W304’s original provenance.

General remarks

As the monuments offering a glimpse on the lesser known sacerdotal offices related to Buto are far from numerous, BMAG 1969W304 provides a welcome addition to the corpus. The mention of the *ḥw.t-śr* outside the context of liturgies and similar religious texts deserves special notice.¹²⁸

Conclusions

Though being of different sizes (see Pl. 9) and representing a variety of types, the four sealings presented above share some characteristics:

1) As can be deduced from the impressions on their obverses, all four sealings were originally attached to papyrus documents. Whether these were letters, contracts or papyrus rolls containing lengthier manuscripts is difficult to tell, however. In the case of sealing 2 at least, the marked concave curvature of the obverse points to a papyrus roll of some thickness, but this feature does, of course, not speak against the document having been a letter. In this context it has to be stressed that all Late Period sealings which were found attached to intact papyrus documents were associated with private or administrative letters.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Cf. the comments on the date of sealing 3, above.

¹²⁸ For some regular titles of the New Kingdom referring to the Heliopolitan *ḥw.t-śr*, see RAUE 1999: 157; 197.

¹²⁹ Cf. n. 11. The sealing of the seal bearer Psamtek attached to pAshmolean 1984.87, one of three demotic letters (Oxford, pAshmolean 1984.87–89) which were found by Petrie close to the pyramid of Meydum, deserves further mention. PETRIE, MACKAY and WAINWRIGHT 1910: 43,

2) All four sealings were stamped with oblong/oval seals whose inscriptions were oriented perpendicular to the seal's longitudinal axis. This is the most common way of placing hieroglyphic texts on Late Period seals,¹³⁰ which stands in marked contrast to the preference of vertically oriented inscriptions on seals from the New Kingdom.¹³¹ While short columns are the predominant way of arranging the inscriptions on Late Period seals which feature one or more royal cartouches, sealing 4 shows a diverging arrangement involving the combination of two lines comprising the seal owner's titles and one (or two) column(s) comprising his name encircled by a cartouche. Seals not bearing a cartouche are more often inscribed with lines than columns, but it could be that this difference is primarily of chronological significance.¹³² In any case, a dichotomous distinction between the two modes was not made.¹³³ As sealings 2 and 3 conveniently demonstrate, the strong spatial limitations characteristic for seal inscription as well as their important aesthetic and symbolic dimensions always fostered a creative and playful attitude towards writing conventions.

3) Irrespective of the particular arrangements of the texts, the hieroglyphic signs present on the four sealing surfaces are all oriented towards the left. The texts have therefore to be read from left to right, contrary to the standard reading direction of ancient Egyptian scripts. This feature is characteristic of almost all known seal impressions of the First Millennium BC¹³⁴ and deserves a comment. Contrary to sealing practices known from the European Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era¹³⁵ or to the minting of coins,¹³⁶ the designs of ancient

no. 43, pl. XXXVII, 43; YOYOTTE 1972: 217, no. 3 w. n. 3, fig. 2; CRUZ-URIBE 2004; VITTMANN 2015: 434–443.

¹³⁰ There are only very few exceptions to this scheme, e.g., the signet ring Louvre E 10698. Cf. BARBOTIN 2005: 64, cat. 31 w. fig. The horizontal orientation of the sealing surface already gained popularity during Dynasties Twenty-one to Twenty-five. Cf. the scarabs featuring cartouches of Tanite/Bubastite/Kushite kings and God's Wives placed side by side perpendicular to the scarab's longitudinal axis. HALL 1913: 240, nos. 2398, 2400; 241, nos. 2401–2402; 248, no. 2480; PETRIE 1917: pl. XLIX, no. 22.1.11; ANDREWS 1990: 164, fig. 146d; JURMAN 2014: 101, figs. 1–2.

¹³¹ Cf. HALL 1913: 274–282, nos. 2658, 2660, 2669, 2681–2683, 2688–2702, 2705–2733; PETRIE 1917: pls XXXIX–XLVI.

¹³² The main problem lies, of course, in the fact that seals/sealings not including a cartouche are extremely difficult to date. On the other hand, it is remarkable that hardly any non-royal sealings featuring a contemporaneous royal cartouche are known from the Twenty-seventh till the Thirtieth Dynasties.

¹³³ A very interesting mixture of columns and lines is found on the almost circular bezel of the silver signet ring BM EA 17444 which features the vertically oriented cartouches of a King Shoshenq and a King Psamtek surrounded by priestly titles. See ANDREWS 1990: 165, fig. 148a; British Museum Collection online, http://www.britishmuseum.org/collectionimages/AN00416/AN00416481_001_1.jpg, last accessed on 10 August 2016.

¹³⁴ For the same phenomenon (with certain qualifications) on Ptolemaic Period sealings from Elephantine cf. MURRAY 1907: pl. 4.

¹³⁵ Cf. SPIEGEL 2002: 1848–1850; NEW 2010: esp. 111; 120–121.

¹³⁶ As the coin dies used in minting had no value in themselves, all the alphabetical inscriptions and almost all depictions of human faces they contained were oriented towards the left, thus

Egyptian seal inscriptions focussed on the seal, not on the sealing. Obviously, Egyptian seals were in themselves an important and prestigious medium of display for members of the élite and — quite literally — signalled authority stemming from titles, royal names and the mere use of hieroglyphic script. Bearing in mind that many seals of high officials were part of signet rings carefully crafted from gold or other precious metals, it is easy to understand that their significance transcended pure functionality.¹³⁷ Yet, these ostentatious signals of authority were also put to concrete use as can be seen, for example, on the signet ring Brooklyn Museum inv.-no. 37.734E with its slightly abraded surface towards the left and right edges.¹³⁸

The many interesting details observable on the four sealings and the information they contribute to our knowledge of Late Period sacerdotal titles and prosopography may serve as a compensation for the loss of primary sources, to which they bear immediate witness. Even though scholars studying the Late Period would love to have before their eyes the letter with which the army general Amasis declared his formal defection from King Apries, analysing the “gun’s smoke” may in certain cases be almost as informative as analysing the “smoking gun” itself. In this sense it is hoped that the near future will see increased efforts to study First Millennium sealings, seals and signet rings in all of their immaterial as well as material contexts.

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
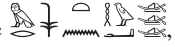
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producing the “correct” inverted orientation found on minted coins. On Egyptian sealings following the Hellenistic tradition the orientation of human heads is interestingly the same as on coins. Cf. MILNE 1916: pls IV–V.

¹³⁷ For the use of seals and related Egyptian terminology see KAPLONY 1984: 933–934.

¹³⁸ See WILLIAMS 1924: pl. IX, 34c; Brooklyn Museum open collection, inv.-no. 37.734E, <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/4094>, last accessed on 10 August 2016.

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Pl. 1. Obverse of sealing BMAG 1969W4363, author's photo, courtesy of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



Pl. 2. Reverse of sealing BMAG 1969W4363, author's photo, courtesy of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



Pl. 3. Obverse of sealing
BM EA 48927,
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Pl. 4. Reverse of sealing
BM EA 48927,
© courtesy of the Trustees
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Pl. 5. Obverse of sealing
BMAG 1969W481, author's photo,
courtesy of Birmingham Museum
and Art Gallery.



Pl. 6. Reverse of sealing
BMAG 1969W481, author's photo,
courtesy of Birmingham Museum
and Art Gallery.



Pl. 7. Obverse of sealing
BMAG 1969W304, author's photo,
courtesy of Birmingham Museum
and Art Gallery.



Pl. 8. Reverse of sealing
BMAG 1969W304, author's photo,
courtesy of Birmingham Museum
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Pl. 9. Comparison of dimensions of all four sealings.