Naukratis: Greeks in Egypt

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http://www.britishmuseum.org/naukratis

Seals and seal impressions

Aurélia Masson
‘Ostensibly a bureaucratic tool, seals and sealing safeguarded the privacy of documents and containers, serving as the guarantor of their user’s authority. Carried or worn by men and women of importance, they embodied their office and projected their function in society.’ (Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 269).

Introduction

Seals and seal impressions1 are officially charged objects that witness the presence (and/or interaction between) tradesmen, administrators, priests and other officials at Naukratis, both Egyptian and foreign. They form a discrete if disparate group of 40 objects. Slightly less than half of these objects have been previously published but they have never all been brought together. We lack illustrations for a few of them (six seals and two seal impressions), but museum registers or excavation journals often provide short descriptions. In addition to this corpus, this chapter will signal a few more related finds, notably though not exclusively amulet and jewellery. However, the hundreds of scarabs and scaraboids found at Naukratis that could also have functioned as seals are discussed in another chapter and will be only occasionally discussed.2 The decisive criterion for inclusion in the present chapter is the stamp function.

The material spans the time from the Middle Bronze Age to the Roman period. From a refined intaglio in chalcedony and cheaper versions in glass to a cylinder seal in ivory or bone and roughly carved limestone seal-stamps, the seals cover a wide variety of shapes, materials and devices. They also present various styles and motifs, showing the major cultures represented at the sites, particularly Egyptian, Greek and Near Eastern. Similarly, seal-impressions can display Egyptian or Greek inscriptions or motifs. Some of the seals were likely imported while others were probably produced locally, as indicated by a couple of unfinished examples. Despite its small number, the Naukratite corpus is so varied that all major functions of a seal, from identification to administrative, decorative or even possibly magical purposes, seem to be represented at the site.

1. Seals

The recessed device on a seal leaves an impression in relief when pressed against plaster or clay. Seals were supposed to ‘identify ownership or establish authority by virtue of devices that are simply inscriptions naming the owners’.3 Although many devices bear an inscription, only one

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1 All images are © Trustees of the British Museum, unless otherwise indicated. I am grateful to Alexandra Villing for her careful reading.
2 On this category of material see chapter on Scarabs, scaraboids and amulets. Stamped amphorae are also touched on only briefly in this chapter, see the chapter on Stamped amphorae for more details.
3 Reyes 2001, 29.
identifies a person by his name, while the others name a deity, bear a motto or are barely legible. All other seals bear a variety of designs with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic motifs dominating the corpus (Chart 1).

Seals usually acted as personal or official signets for commercial, administrative or various archival purposes. However, even though the primary function of these objects was to leave an impression, they could also be used for adornment, an offering or as amulets.

The material of the seals discovered in Naukratis is wide-ranging, with a preference for stone (Chart 2), which is itself most diversified (Chart 3). Seals could be cut from hard (quartz or rather microquartz, which also includes chalcedony, cornelian and jasper) or softer (limestone, steatite) stones. Their identification is often uncertain, since museum registers or other documents can sometimes provide competing information. For example, a glass intaglio listed in an Egypt Exploration list was eventually identified as an engraved intaglio in amethyst in the glass ledger of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The two charts below should therefore be taken with extreme caution.

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4 Excluded from this chapter and accompanying charts is British Museum 1926.0415.59, a glazed composition scarab engraved with Athena Promachos on its underside. This seal, that Boardman attributes to the 'Group of the Leningrad Gorgon' (Boardman 1968, 91, pl. XV no. 245), is most likely not from Naukratis. It was purchased in 1870, 14 years before Petrie discovered and started his excavations at the site.

5 Deaccessioned Boston, Museum of Fine Arts RES.88.27: 'An ellipse with flat underside: the upper surface convex, with an engraved intaglio – much corroded. Apparently an amethyst: superb iridescence of most brilliant hues' (description after the glass ledger). Another object from Naukratis made out of amethyst that could have been used as a seal is the bezel of a ring – Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE26790 – for which we have no illustration.
The seals at Naukratis also belong to various morphological categories. Distinctive shapes of seals can be linked with specific periods, cultures or functions. An overview of these types is provided with the following.

1.1 Cylinder seals

Cylinder seals are particularly associated with the Near East, where they were first developed in the second half of the 4th millennium BC. From around 700 BC, cylinder seals were largely replaced by stamp seals. They were still in use in the 5th century BC, although this was during a brief revival of the shape in the time of the Persian Empire. Cylinder seals imported from the Near East are a rather scarce find in Egypt, which is why it is quite surprising that at least two of them were discovered at Naukratis, one belonging to the high antiquity of the Middle Bronze Age and the other possibly to the Iron Age.

The first cylinder seal carved in hematite seems to represent a religious ceremony and shows much wear (Fig. 1). Two Babylonian king-like characters facing each other flank a pillar topped by a Hathoric head recognisable in her traditional curl wig. A winged sun, which like Hathor is borrowed from the Egyptian iconography, topped the scene. The face of Hathor is repeated above a group of three (?) seated men. This product of the Aleppo workshop dates back to the late 18th – early 17th centuries BC. Seals were easily transportable and often thesaurized objects. The discovery of many scarabs predating the foundation of Naukratis – further attest to such practice at Naukratis. And this practice was not limited to Egypt: for example, antique Bronze Age cylinder seals and conoid stamp seals were re-used as amulets in Cypro-Geometric tombs in Palaepaphos.

Amiet noticed that the Naukratis cylinder seal had had a roughly carved ‘insect’ (a centipede?) added at a later unknown date (Fig. 2); because of this and also its poor state of preservation, he thought that it must have been worn as a pendant by ignorant users. Or maybe, its owner wanted to personalise this ancient seal. Interestingly, it was discovered in a house located in the south of the city alongside material dated to the Persian period, including a seal stamp of traditional Egyptian shape but bearing an
Aramaic inscription (Fig. 10 below). Did both seals have the same owner but different uses?

Petrie discovered a second cylinder seal, which he signalled in his journal as ‘an Assyrian cylinder in bone, a man holding two ibexes by the horns, they [are] dancing vis à vis with a palm tree between them, in perfect condition’. This description matches closely the mention of a cylinder seal ‘of very fine work in ivory’ – said to be discovered in the town – in Petrie’s publication: ‘man holding two winged oryxes by the horns, as they stand rampant on either side of a palm tree, the man being on the opposite side of the cylinder to the tree’. It is likely that this seal corresponds to the cylinder seal JE26787, kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, for which no photograph is available yet. The museum’s register describes this object as a ‘wood cylinder seal decorated with divine tree, winged animal, a standing king with his arms raised as well as a winged goddess’. Since wooden objects have rarely survived in the early excavations, ivory or bone would probably be a better identification for the material. The discrepancy between the two winged animals in Petrie’s notes and the one winged animal and one winged goddess in the museum’s register should be noted. Amiet tentatively attributed this seal to the Neo-Assyrian period and suggested a local origin. An Achaemenid date could also be possible.

1.2 Conoid seals

In addition to the cylinder seals, conoid seals of various shapes have traditionally been assigned a Near-Eastern, Levantine or Cypriot origin. Naukratis has provided a few specimens.

One seal in calcite has an elongated faceted body, tapering to a rounded top (Fig. 3). It is perforated for suspension near the top. A stylized quadruped (maybe a lion with an open mouth?) is roughly incised on the base of this octagonal cone. Faceted pyramidal stamp seals, also described as octagonal conoid seals, are a Late Babylonian shape that remains popular in the Persian period. The regular Babylonian type is, however, often slimmer in proportion in comparison to the later Achaemenid version. The Naukratis seal would therefore better fit the earlier type. The style of its device is also more Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian of the 7th century BC than Persian of the 6th–5th century BC. It is not impossible that it was produced in Egypt rather than imported. The production of such seals in Egypt during the 26th dynasty is attested at Tell Dafana where Petrie discovered four unfinished faceted pyramidal seal-
stones of the more Achaemenid type and carved from pale green quartz or Egyptian calcite (e.g. Fig. 4).25

Another related type of seal, which shares the same general proportions but is round in section, is illustrated by a green jasper example from Naukratis (Fig. 5). It has the shape of a truncated cone, with a hole pierced near the tapering top for suspension. Boardman suggests that these ‘massive conoid stamps’ derive as well ‘from Babylon but their distribution is different to the [faceted] pyramidal and their style always closer to that of most Achaemenid cylinders’.26 The linear device engraved on the circular base of the Naukratis specimen is a stylized four-legged animal with a tail and two drilled dots possibly indicating its ‘eyes’, that is difficult to identify. It could be a scorpion, a popular motif on seals and gems27, but the drawing would be quite inaccurate.28 This seal can be compared to Cypro-Geometric conical-seals with a flat top in limestone with highly stylized human and animal representations.29

While tall conoids and bevelled conoids are some of the most common shapes in the Late Iron Age,30 conoid seals with a rather squat shape and an oval base are generally given an earlier date. Two of them were retrieved at Naukratis. This shape of seal appears in the Levant and in Cyprus during the Late Bronze Age31 – around 1300–1200 BC – and remains popular during the Iron Age. It has been suggested that this shape originates from Cyprus rather than the Levant32 although similar conoid seals are particularly common in Palestine for the whole period.33 The first conoid seal, carved in a black soft stone, has its base engraved with crude designs centred around the figure of a horse and has a rather large hole (Fig. 6). The device is typical of the so-called ‘Horse group’, where a horse is commonly surrounded by filling motifs such as birds, scorpions and floral devices.34 This motif is not exclusively found on conoids, but on all sorts of seals. Although the design is roughly engraved on the Naukratis example, comparative analysis allows us to identify a bird on the back the horse, and in front of it perhaps a scorpion. Keel sees an evocation of Astarte in the ‘horse’ series, since horses, scorpions and birds are animals traditionally associated with that goddess.35 Such motifs are attested on conoids, scarab and scaraboids between the late 12th and 8th century BC. The earliest examples of this series can be found in Enkomi in Cyprus, around

25 ‘Four plain seal-stones unengraved, one broken in drilling [...], three of pale green translucent calcite [...] of Syrian type’ (Petrie 1888, 74 § 70, and 111, pl. XLI no. 74). See also Leclère and Spencer 2014, 67, EA 18482 (with three other unfinished examples from Tell Dafana: Bolton Museum 1886.28.24.c; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 87.710 and 87.711). See also seal stamp of a relatively similar shape from Tell Dafana, but made in glazed composition: Leclère and Spencer 2014, 67, pl. 24, EA 18469.

26 Boardman 1970, 19. For various Neo-Assyrian and Neo/Late Babylonian examples of tall conoids, bevelled or not, see also Nunn 1999, 144–53, nos 372–99.


28 It could also be a personal emblem, one of the linear devices (script characters and monograms), that are especially found on pyramidal Persian seals, discussed in Boardman 1970, 22–6, figs 3–5. However, this specific linear device is not listed by Boardman.


30 Nunn 1999, 6, fig 1,16.

31 See for example various Cypriot conoid seals with oval bases of the Late Bronze Age in Vollenweider 1983, 109–12, nos 149–54.

32 Reyes 2001, 10–11.

33 Numerous examples are published in Keel 1995; 1997; 2010.


35 Keel 1980, 272.
the late 12th–11th century BC, but they are mostly common in Syro-
Palestine from Iron I onwards with some isolated examples in Anatolia. A
Phoenician or Cypriot origin for our seal looks highly probable. The stone
used could be picrolite, a stone locally available on the island of Cyprus,
although serpentine or steatite are also a possibility. The second conoid of
that type, also carved in a dark stone, is undecorated (Fig. 7). Could it be
an unfinished conoid seal, and therefore a local product trying to copy an
earlier model? One terracotta conoid seal from Tell el-Herr with a
quadrupe roughly incised on the underside has been interpreted as a
local production. It is unlikely that the device would have been totally
erased since the underside looks so smooth.

Finally, two cone-shaped seals made of glazed composition could be
Phoenician imports or Phoenician-inspired local products (Fig. 8). They
belong to Keel conoid type V and Gorton type XVB. The name of Amun
can be read on both specimens. Glazed composition Phoenician conoids
bearing Egyptian motifs or hieroglyphic inscriptions are attested at the
earliest in Keel conoid type V, with early examples found in Near-Eastern
contexts dated between the second half of the 10th and 7th century BC.
Gorton, who provides various parallels from Punic sites such as Carthage,
suggests that the type chiefly dates to the 7th–6th centuries BC.

1.3 Cubical seal

One seal-stamp of the cubical type was discovered in Naukratis (Fig. 9). It is possibly made of glazed steatite, with a well-preserved yellow glaze. Its pierced globular knob on the top indicates that it could be suspended. Each side bears different motifs, often Egyptian or Egyptianizing including the hieroglyphic signs nfr, ‘nb and k3. Each side could have been used for stamping.

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37 Reyes 2001, 42.
38 Marchi 2014, 109, fig. 148c.
39 On this type, see also chapter on Scarabs, scaraboids and amulets.
40 Keel 1995, 103–4, type V.
41 Gorton 1996, 43–8, see especially fig. 8 nos. 23–4.
42 Variants of this inscription appear on many other conoid seals of this type, see for example Giveon 1985, 182–3, no. 17.
43 Keel 1995, 103, § 255, fig. 177.
44 Gorton 1996, 43, 48, type XVB.
45 Gardner 1888, pl. XVII, no. 5.
46 Both the bull and the extended arms featured on the base read k3, but the first means ‘bull’ and the second ‘soul’.

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Seal-stamps of this type discovered in Egypt are usually regarded as late objects with an amuletic or magical function. Auenmüller recently suggested that stamps of this type could have played a role in magical acts and that the substances stamped with them could have been used in rituals as well. Cubical seal-stamps, however, have a history also beyond Egypt. They are regularly found in Cyprus and to a lesser degree on the Levantine coast, where they are mainly attributed to the 6th century BC; the shape, with designs on two or more sides, is related to pyramidal and tabloid seals in conception. The Cypriot examples are all said to be made of serpentine, though one steatite example, dated between the late 7th and early 6th century BC, is said to come from Cyprus. The motifs on the Naukratis example are also typical of the Phoenician repertoire. The two men facing each other, holding a branch (palm, fern?), recall in a more linear way one scene depicting two priests grasping branches of a sacred tree, on a Syro-Phoenician cubical seal in black jasper. Scenes with single animals and a branch can be seen on other examples of cubical seals and scarabs of the Pyrga-style that flourished in Cyprus in the last quarter of the 6th century BC. A Cypriot origin for the Naukratis seal is therefore possible.

1.4 Plumed stamps

Stamp seals in the shape of a cartouche topped by two ostrich feathers framing a sun-disk are sometimes inscribed with the name of a pharaoh. Such seals appear already in the New Kingdom, but are particularly well

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47 Pinch 1994, 58, fig. 28 (dated to the Roman Period); Auenmüller 2014, 278–9, no. I.61 (described as a red stone or ceramic seal-stamp without known provenance and dated between the Late and Roman periods). See also various 3rd to 6th century AD cuboid ‘magical gems’ found in Egypt and the Levant: Michel 2001, 337–44.
48 Auenmüller 2014, 279.
51 Buchanan and Moorey 1988, 83, pl. XVIII, no. 569 (rectangular block with perforated knob on top, with Egyptianizing devices on all sides). See also a group of late Hellenistic/Ptolemaic limestone stamp seals from Geronisos Island, on the western coast of Cyprus (Connelly and Plantzos 2006): they are all made out of limestone, pyramidal, conical or rectangular in shape, and most have a roughly incised motif on several faces besides the sealing surface. They seem to be a later development of the cubical stamp seal.
52 Culican 1977, 163–4, pl. XVII A; Reyes, 168, fig. 438.
53 Culican 1977, 166 and note 46. See also various examples of cubical seals and scarabs of the Pyrga-style in Reyes 2001, 57–65.
54 See for example the seal in the shape of a plumed cartouche, made in fired clay and bearing Hatshepsut’s name, from the New Kingdom levels in the so-called Aramaean residential quarter in Elephantine: Delange 2012, 145, 483, pl. 303, no. 976 (Louvre E 12877).
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attested during the 26th dynasty and persist until at least the end of the Late Period. They are usually found and made in Egypt, although it has been suggested that the bronze plumed stamp seal inscribed with the prenomen of Psamtik I, which was discovered in the Outer Town at Carchemish, was a crude local copy. Inscriptions other than royal names often occur, too, in that category and this type of stamp seal persisted long after the Late Period. For example, an Egyptian bronze stamp in the shape of a feathered cartouche with a depiction of Harpokrates seated on a lotus has been attributed to the late Ptolemaic-early Roman period. Two plumed and disked stamp seals were discovered in Naukratis. After their presentation, I will discuss their possible use in relation with stamping container sealings.

The first example has a loop-handle attached to the back (Fig. 10). Its composition was recently analysed as well as the lead used in its production. It is a low-tin bronze with a rather high proportion of lead (9%). The origin of the lead was identified as the Lavrion mines in Attica. The inscription of this stamp gives the name of an official in Aramaic. Although plumed and disked stamps usually contain hieroglyphic inscriptions, including debased hieroglyphic inscriptions, at times a cursive script is chosen. The use of a foreign script, however, remains exceptional. The seal was discovered in a house located outside the Great Temenos, alongside the Middle Bronze Age cylinder seal originating from the Kingdom of Aleppo discussed previously (Fig. 1 above). The bronze stamp seal should probably be dated to the period of Persian rule of Egypt when Naukratis was thriving despite probable changes in trade networks and customs arrangements. The name of Darius I (522–486 BC) appears on a similar type of stamp seal discovered in Kharga Oasis, where the Persian rulers had devoted some resources.

The second specimen is carved from limestone (Fig. 11). It has a bundled pierced handle for suspension at the back, a common feature for cartouche or oblong-shaped stamp seals. The rather squat plumed cartouche is incised with the hieroglyphic inscription \(\text{Xo-}$\text{Xpr-Ro} \text{, meaning} \text{'Appearing is the Manifestation of Ra'}. Khakheperra is the prenomen of Senusret II (1897–1878 BC), a pharaoh of the 12th dynasty. Although we have seen that very early seals and scarabs were discovered in Naukratis, this seal

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55 Good parallels with name of Amasis, one from Tell Dafana (Petrie 1888, 77 and 111, pl. XLII n. 76; Leclère and Spencer 2014, 66, pl. 24, British Museum EA23903) and another example possibly from the Nile Delta (Hall 1913, 284, no. 2743, British Museum EA43033).
56 For example, stamp seal with the name of 30th dynasty Nectanebo: Hall 1913, 284, no. 2744; Posener 1936, 159–60, no. 115 (British Museum EA48929).
57 It was discovered in House D along with many other Egyptian or Egyptianizing objects (British Museum ME 116187).
58 Woolley 1921, 126, pl.XXVI, no. 8; Giveon 1985, 160, no. 3. Considering that the seal was discovered among many Egyptian and Egyptianizing finds, it could well be a genuine Egyptian object.
59 Henig 1994, 275, no. 587 (1st century BC to 2nd century AD).
60 Petrie 1886, 41, pl. XX, no. 17; Villing 2013, 75, fig. 1; Masson forthcoming c.
61 Masson-Berghoff et al. forthcoming.
62 Villing 2013, 75.
63 A bronze plumed and disked stamp contains a Demotic inscription (British Museum EA38331).
64 The identification of the script and reading was not straightforward. Petrie Journal 1884–5, p. 184: ‘A very curious object is a stamp or seal of bronze, a cartouche with feathers on the top & a line of demotic, or perhaps Phoenician, in it […] I thought it Phoenician, but Griffith persists that it is demotic’.
65 Hall 1913, 284, no. 2744; Posener 1936, 159–60, no. 115 (BM EA007).
67 Hornung and Staehelin 1976, no. 588.

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does not suit such an early date. Hall has suggested that the inscription attempts to imitate a royal name.68 Many plumed and disked stamp seals, often crudely executed in limestone, bear no royal inscription, but just one or more hieroglyphs without real meaning.69 It is however also possible that Khakheperra was perceived as a motto, like Menkheperra – the name of the 18th dynasty pharaoh Thutmose III (1479–1425 BC) – which became a much used motto on scarabs long after his reign.70 The presence of mottos is documented on this type of stamp seal.71

Plumed and disked seals were usually used to stamp mud or plaster amphora sealings. Several plaster amphora sealings, as well as a seal in bronze featuring the plumed and disked cartouche of pharaohs of the 26th dynasty, were discovered in Tell Dafana (Fig. 12).72 The stamp could also have been applied on the amphorae themselves before firing. Even if this practice is less well-attested in the Late Period, one handle of an Egyptian copy of a Greek amphora discovered at Naukratis is stamped with a plumed and disked cartouche (Fig. 13).73 The cartouche includes the title of ‘son of Ra’, but the nomen is not preserved. On the basis of better preserved parallels, it could be Necho II (610–595 BC). The title ‘Son of Ra’ is included within the plumed cartouche of Necho II stamped on a plaster sealing74 and an amphora-handle75 found at Tell Dafana (Figs 12 above and 14), as well as on a foundation plaque in glazed composition from Egypt76 and several seal impressions of papyrus documents from Carchemish77. Later pharaohs should not be discarded, however.

Wine, oil and other commodities transported and/or stored in closed vessels were handled by an Egyptian controlling system using sealings. This practice of stamping container sealings, on stoppers, is attested from the earliest dynasties78 and persists in later periods.79 Jar or amphora

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68 Hall 1913, 284, no. 2741.
69 See for example British Museum EA54017 to EA54026.
70 Jaeger 1982.
71 See for example a bronze seal stamp inscribed with a motto (unknown provenance and dated to the first half of the 1st millennium BC): Loeben 2014, 329–30, no. III.12.
72 Leclère and Spencer 2014, 66, 68–9, pls 24–5 and 64, nos 22356, 23791–8, 23903 (names of Psamtik I, Nekau II, Psamtik II and Amasis).
73 See chapter on Stamped amphorae.
74 British Museum EA 23793.
75 Leclère and Spencer 2014, 66, pl. 65, no. 23790.
76 Hall 1913, 294, no. 2804 (British Museum EA24266).
77 Giveon 1985, 162, no. 7 (British Museum, 116113, 116222, 116224 and 116225).
78 For example, more than a thousand sealings for wine-jars are known for the reign of 1st dynasty pharaoh Den (ca. 3000–2960 BC): Müller 2012, 18.
Sealings of the Pharaonic period often mention the producing institution alongside the product, providing a useful insight into administration and trade. Vandorpe and Van Beek have also discussed Roman sealings that used the name of the trader who ordered the transport of the containers they once sealed. No institution name appears on the stamp seals or sealings of Naukratis. However, among several Ptolemaic and Roman amphora-stamped stoppers and limestone or terracotta stopper stamping-devices of circular shape, some record the name of a wine trader or estate owner (Fig. 15). This material suggests that wine amphorae were sealed at Naukratis itself (and maybe produced near the town?) during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods and it is possible that the plumed seal-stamps played a similar function during the Late Period.

1.5 ‘Cartouche-shaped’ stamp seals

Three of the stamp seals have a cartouche-shaped base, or a more oblong shape with rounded ends, which is crudely incised with a hieroglyphic inscription arranged vertically. They seem closely related to the plumed and disked stamps in terms of function.

The back of the first example has a ridged-handle pierced for suspension (Fig. 16). This shape is already attested in the New Kingdom. The inscription can be read as ‘Wadjet, mistress of Lower Egypt’. Wadjet, the cobra-goddess tutelary of Lower Egypt as recalled by the epithet on this seal, had a major cult centre at Tell el-Fara’in / Buto. Her name possibly appears on an unprovenanced bronze stamp seal of the plumed and disked cartouche type. C. Loeben has recently proposed that, if the reading of Wadjet name is correct, then the seal could have marked objects related to her temple in Buto. It is not impossible that this was the case also for the specimen uncovered in Naukratis, but Wadjet was a goddess popular in the whole Delta and our stamp could have as well marked goods produced or traded at Naukratis. Its context of discovery is unclear, as Petrie wrote in his journal that he bought it from the sebbakhin.

The second seal probably had a similar means of suspension at the back as the first, but it is broken off (Fig. 17). For its inscription, I propose to read ‘ofi nbw ḫḏ ‘much gold and silver!’ The word silver (ẖḏ), which is

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Footnotes:
79 Vandorpe and Van Beek 2012, 88–90.
80 Haring 1977, 360–1.
81 Vandorpe and Van Beek 2012, 90.
82 On the Ptolemaic amphora stopper stamping-devices, often misidentified as cake or bread stamps: Ptolemaic, Roman and Byzantine amphorae and stoppers.
83 Petrie 1886, pl. XVIII, no. 4.
84 See for example a limestone stamp seal from Amarna with part of the name of the Aten (British Museum EA38313) and a New Kingdom wooden seal from Elephantine (Delange 2012, 504, pl. 303, no. 978).
85 Johnson 1990.
86 Loeben 2014, 329–30, no. III.12. The inscription reads ‘The perfect cobra [possibly Wadjet], numerous in lives’. On the Naukratis stamp seal, there is no doubt that we can read Wadjet because her usual epithet, ‘Mistress of Lower Egypt’, follows.
87 Loeben 2014, 330.
88 Petrie Journal 1884–5, p. 60: ‘Another thing I bought today is a limestone stamp of “Uate” lord of the north (?)’.
partially damaged, is written with a mace and a cobra 𓊥. Mottos are sometimes inscribed on this type of stamp seal.89

The third stamp seal is a much cruder version with an unpierced rod-like handle at the back and with a debased hieroglyphic inscription incised on the underside (Fig. 18). Bar the neb-basket sign at the bottom, which could either mean ‘lord’ or be a simple filler, it is not possible to identify the other three ‘hieroglyphs’. What looks like an unfinished version of this stamp seal was also discovered at Naukratis (Fig. 19). The oval-shaped base was left undecorated or uninscribed, which might indicate the local production of such stamps at the site. Production in Egypt for these four seals is most likely.

1.6 Other stone stamp seals with handle or knob

Besides the cartouche-shaped seals – plumed or not – discussed above, a few more stamp seals carved out of soft stones were brought to light at Naukratis.90

One stamp seal has an oval base with a substantial pierced stud-handle at the back that is partially broken off (Fig. 20). A floral motif, possibly a branch, is incised on the underside. The smoothly polished and fine-grained stone is of a greyish cream colour. While I could not find exact parallels for that object, palm branches and other comparable floral motifs are well documented on seal-stamps and seal impressions in Egypt.91 A seal in sandstone with a related plant design was tentatively dated to the New Kingdom by Delange, but since it was discovered on the same day as a fragment of a Ptolemy III trilingual decree in a residential quarter (so-called Aramaean quarter) in Elephantine, it could be later in date.92 At the other end of the chronological spectrum, a terracotta stamp seal with a similarly elongated oval base decorated with a palm branch from Medinet Habu was attributed to the 6th–8th century AD.93 E. Teeter reckoned that

89 E.g. a limestone stamp seal from the Fayum bears the following inscription: ‘Sealing for all good things that are on earth’ (British Museum EA38323).
90 One of them (Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE36253) is of an unknown shape, but according to the museum’s register, it bears a hieroglyph inscription.
91 The motif of a simple branch on the base of a seal is not restricted to Egypt: for such a motif on an Iron Age conoid seal from Tell el-‘Agul, see Keel 1995, 95, fig. 161.
92 Delange 2012, 143, 483, pl. 305, no. 986.
93 Teeter 2003, 197, pl. 106a, no. 320.

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these types of seals were ‘designed more to guard against tampering with the contents of jars than for the purposes of identification, the seal being rocked back and forth over the mud stopper of a jar to create repeated patterns’ and she offered several Roman and Late Roman examples of seal impressions featuring palm branches to support her dating. Although the material visually looks like Cypriot limestone, the specific shape of the seal as well as the choice of material would be unusual for a Cypriot seal.

The rectangular base of another stamp seal is roughly and deeply engraved with a Tanit sign framed in a rectangle (Fig. 21). It is carved out of whitish stone, either limestone or steatite, and some remains of green glaze are still visible. The back presents a chunky pierced loop-handle. The general shape of the seal is attested in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, while the Tanit sign is documented on seals and seal impressions of the first millennium BC. For example, a conoid seal from Achzib (Israel) engraved with a Tanit sign is dated to the 8th–6th century BC. Among more recent parallels, seal-impressions with the Tanit sign from Phoenicia belong to the 3rd–2nd century BC, and the shoulder of a 3rd century BC jug from Akko (or Acre, in the bay of Haifa) is stamped with a round seal containing the Tanit symbol. A variant of the Tanit sign appears on another object found at Naukratis, a model of a horned altar.

The motif of a second stamp seal with a rectangular(? ) base is harder to determine. The fragmentary stamp seal bears perhaps an inscription framed by an incised border on its underside (Fig. 22). Remains of a handle are still visible on the back, but not enough is preserved to describe its shape. This plaque of limestone, of which only a corner survives, recalls similarly shaped stamp seals of the Ptolemaic period, inscribed with the name of Ptolemaic kings and queens. However, the Naukratite example certainly does not show the same quality of execution and it is uncertain whether the device consists of debased hieroglyphic signs. Earlier stamp seals from the Levant have a similar shape such as the one discovered in a house in En-Gedi (or Tell Goren), in a context dated between 630 and 587 BC; the device includes various motifs such as the floor plan of a house and an altar, and it is also inscribed with the name of the seal’s owner.

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94 Teeter 2003, 197.
95 A type of stone that is commonly used for Cypriot statuettes discovered in Naukratis: see chapter on Cypriot figures. Scientific analyses might allow the identification of the stone and its possible origin.
96 Reyes 2001, 41–4, 218, diagram B.
97 Nunn 1999, 6, no. 19.
99 Gubel 1993, 114–5, fig. 27.
100 Keel 1997, 534–5, no. 13.
101 British Museum 1909,1201.5, discussed in chapter on Altars, sundials, minor architectural objects and models.
102 See for example stamp seals of the Late Ptolemaic period, one carved in limestone (British Museum EA 24249 with the names of Ptolemy VI Philometor and Cleopatra II; published in Hall 1913, 285, no. 2747) and the other in dark stone (British Museum EA23304 with the names of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II).
103 Keel 2010, 560–1, no. 3.
1.7 Signet rings

Naukratis yielded several gems made out of semi-precious stones or glass, which were usually mounted in a signet ring. For a few of the gems, we were unable to obtain images. Their base is oval-shaped and, whenever a photography of their back is available, it is slightly convex. Decorated or inscribed finger rings cast from silver or copper alloy could also have been used as signet rings and will be briefly presented below.

1.7.1 Gems in semi-precious stones

The first gem is carved in a dark hard stone that could possibly be identified as a variety of microquartz, such as agate or sardonyx (Fig. 23). Microquartzes were dyed black in antiquity, already since the second half of the 2nd millennium BC in Mesopotamia, and this could have been the case also for our gem. Its underside is engraved with a little detailed, winged and draped figure running to the left. This type of iconography is shared by various cultures in the Middle East. For example, a kneeling winged heroic figure shown with his torso to the front is depicted on a Neo-Elamite II cylinder seal (c. 770–646 BC), but he is represented holding up a winged disc with his hands. Such figures are even more popular in Assyrian art and glyptic. However, the style of the Naukratis gem is more in keeping with Persian glyptic, either a simplistic version of the ‘Court Style’, or more likely a Greco-Persian style. The soft cap on the head of the winged figure is commonly worn by Persians. The shape of the scaraboid itself – with its rather straight walls and shallow convex back – is typical of the 5th and especially 4th century BC. Persian coinage, around 500 BC, regularly depicts a half-kneeling ‘king’ (but without wings and holding weapons). Designs comparable to the Naukratis gem can be found on some of the seal impressions discovered in the so-called Palace of Apries in Memphis, in the debris from a collapsed upper floor office. In addition to hieroglyphic inscriptions, a dozen different motifs found on the sealings there are of Achaemenid style: for example, a date-palm flanked by facing ‘bird-headed gryphons’ or an Achaemenid king fighting a winged demon. Tell el Dabā‘ and Tell el-Herr, both located in the Eastern Delta, have also recently yielded Persian seal impressions, though they do not strictly match the Naukratis

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104 They include a gem decorated with two figures, said to be in hematite according to the museum’s register and found during Petrie’s second season (Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE27207); an amethyst bezel (Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE26790) decorated with a bound bundle (described as ‘faisceau lié’ in the museum’s register); a supposedly deaccessioned engraved intaglio in amethyst (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts RES.88.27).
105 Gardner 1888, pl. XIX, no. 9.
106 Sax 2005, 144–5 (and 147 for commonly artificially dyed sardonyx).
107 Merrilées 2005, 72–3, 106–7, fig. 10j, no. 69 (British Museum 89404).
108 Merrilées 2005, 122, fig. 14j.
109 Boardman 2001, 305–9. The winged heroic figure is treated in too stylized a fashion on the Naukratis example to find close parallels Court Style glyptic.
111 Boardman 1975, 97, no. 87 (gem of the late 5th century BC).
112 Boardman 2001, 192, fig. 200 (scaraboid of type B).
114 Petrie 1909, pl. XV; Petrie 1910, pl. XXXVI, nos 22-39.
115 Collon and Lehmann 2011.
116 Seal impression with Persian king facing a standing lion (Marchi 2014, 109, fig. 148d).
These seals and seal impressions indicate a close contact with Persian culture and maybe administration. Officials representing the Achaemenid administration might have been working on all these sites, including Naukratis. D. Collon and M. Lehmann suggest that Persian seals recovered in Egypt could have been made ‘in Egypt, for officials working in Egypt for the Achaemenid administration’, a hypothesis that could maybe fit with this seal, and most certainly with the bronze plumed stamp discussed previously (Fig. 10 above).

Likely belonging to the Persian period as well is a gem cut in semi-precious stone, said to be pink cornelian (Fig. 24). Its underside features a hunting scene consisting of two hounds running after a gazelle or antelope. The shape of the back is unknown. The shallow straight grooves composing the limbs of the animals are cut by a rotating disk (wheel-cut technique). The general rendering of the animals is stiff and stylized, with a succinct treatment of their paws and a lack of some major articulation. The theme and style of the device – such as the peculiar treatment of the limbs of the animals – recall Greco-Persian glyptic of the 5th–4th century BC. The ‘flying gallop’ featured on the gem is also common in the Greco-Persian style. Alternatively, though far less likely, it could be compared to Italic work of later date, such as the Campanian-Roman style. Petrie mentions this gem in his Journal among other finds he bought from the sebbakhin in Naukratis: ‘At last I have bought […] an intaglio in carnelian, burnt, with two dogs chasing a stag […]’.

A chalcedony intaglio finely engraved with the figure of a youth testing the straightness of his arrow was published as coming from Naukratis (Fig. 25). It does not seem to have been discovered during Petrie’s, Gardiner’s or Hogarth’s excavations. James, 9th Earl of Southesk, purchased the gem from W.T. Ready who ‘informed [him] that it was said to have been found at Naukratis’. The gem has been compared with another gem found in the Nile Delta, and also often assumed to be from Naukratis. The latter – depicting a naked youth holding a restless horse – is inscribed with the name Epimenes, which led J. D. Beazley to attribute also the supposed Naukratis gem to the same artist, an opinion followed by J. Boardman and E. Walter-Karydi among others. Epimenes was probably an artist from a Greek island who worked around 500 BC. Bowmen, often in kneeling pose, appear frequently in glyptic and other seals. The specific stance of the youth on the Naukratis gem recalls a classical Phoenician scarab found

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References:

117 Collon and Lehmann 2011.
119 Boardman 2001, 312.
122 Boardman 2001, 312.
123 Richter 1968, 54, no. 115; Walter-Karydi 1975, fig. 4; Boardman 2001, 184, pl. 357.
124 Carnegie 1908, 27–8, pl. II, no. BB.
125 Beazley 1920, 21, pl. A, no. 10; Boardman 1968, 93; Walter-Karydi 1975, 11, fig. 5.
127 Boardman 2003, 92–3, pls 28–9, nos 28/78-105 (classical Phoenician scarabs depicting bowman with club).
in Ibiza, depicting a kneeling youth with an adze trimming a pole. Another close parallel worthy of mention however is a scarab in cornelian discovered in Perachora, engraved with a naked, kneeling, bearded archer about to fit an arrow to his bow (Fig. 26). T. J. Dunbabin attributed it to East Greek craftsmanship of the last quarter of the 6th century BC, and loosely compared it with another scarab from Aigina. The stance of the archer is slightly different on the Perachora scarab, but it has the same ‘combination of delicate, detailed workmanship with a certain monumental quality’ that Dunbabin lauded in the Perachora scarab.

1.7.2 Classical or locally produced Roman glass gems?

A first glass gem, already published, has been attributed to a Classical date (Fig. 27). The gem, with a flat base and slightly convex top, is made of a pale olive and darker blue glass. The motif engraved on its underside consists of a plunging or jumping powerful mammal, either a bull or a lion. This type of glass gem, usually cast in stone moulds, is often dated to the late 5th–4th centuries BC. The Naukratite example was more specifically attributed to the 4th century BC by Walters, and identified as Phoenician by Petrie. A glass gem from the Fitzwilliam Museum, depicting a cow turning her head back to a calf she is suckling, offers a good match for the Naukratis specimen; Henig also dated it to the 5th century BC.

However, doubt on this early dating is cast by recent scientific analyses conducted by Andrew Meek on a group of glass gems, including our Naukratis piece, which demonstrates that its composition could fit well within a group of Roman glass gems. Glass gems, indeed, experienced

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128 Boardman 2003, 92–3, pl. 31, no. 29/17.
130 Dunbabin 1962, 455.
131 Furtwängler 1900, 38, pl. 8 no. 17.
132 Dunbabin 1962, 455.
133 Petrie 1886, 43, pl. XX, no. 13; Walters 1926, no. 581.
134 On Classical Greek and Greco-Persian glass gems: Wagner and Boardman 2003, 10, nos 42–9, esp. no. 47.
135 Walters 1926, no. 581.
136 Petrie 1886, 43, pl. XX, no. 13.
137 Henig 1994, 35–6, no. 56.
138 Internal report by Andrew Meek (AR2017–23), publication forthcoming.
a revival in the early Roman period. The Naukratite gem finds close parallels with glass gems found in Pompeii produced in the 1st century BC and early 1st century AD\textsuperscript{139} and with others from Bologna produced in the first half of the 1st century AD.\textsuperscript{140} Several of them depict a single animal figure. Roman glass gems of this kind were also produced as far east as Iran.\textsuperscript{141} The new, Roman, date proposed for this gem is further supported by the presence at Naukratis of glass beads and other elements of jewellery imitating semi-precious stones, some of which were unfinished (e.g. Fig. 28). It suggests that a workshop producing glass jewellery was active at the site in the early Roman period, possibly in the first half of the 1st century AD.\textsuperscript{142}

This gem can moreover be compared with an unpublished glass gem from Naukratis that might have also been produced locally during the early Roman period. It is made of pale olive, almost colourless glass, and is decorated with a device difficult to identify since the surface is badly pitted (Fig. 29). In as far as it is possible to judge from a photograph, I would suggest identifying the motif as a male youth riding what looks like a large waterfowl. Eros is often associated with a goose, sometimes riding the bird, with or without his mother Aphrodite,\textsuperscript{143} including on gems.\textsuperscript{144} A child god, identified as Harpokrates, can also be seen riding a goose on a late Ptolemaic–early Roman votive stone \textit{patera} found in Egypt.\textsuperscript{145} More of these glass gems might have been discovered at Naukratis. Petrie declared in his Journal: ‘I also got today a glass seal with a hippopotamus on it’.\textsuperscript{146} No object corresponding to this description has been identified so far.

1.7.3 Cast signet rings

Most of the finger rings discovered in Naukratis bear no decoration (or none is preserved), but those that do could have been used as signet rings. One copper alloy ring of poor quality is hastily incised, possibly with debased hieroglyphic signs.\textsuperscript{147} With its irregularly shaped hammered bezel, it was probably not used as a signet ring.

Four ‘S’ volutes decorate the bezel of a silver ring (Fig. 30). They are cast in relief which would have left a sunken impression, an unusual but attested feature in seal impressions. Although this type of design is usually related to earlier pharaonic periods in Egypt, especially between the Middle and the New Kingdom, spiral motifs persist on Late Period seals as demonstrated by several examples of seal impressions from the late 26th–27th dynasty contexts in Karnak (e.g. Fig. 31).\textsuperscript{148} The Egyptian origin of this ring is, nonetheless, debated, with the ring itself – its shape,
manufacture and material – comparable to examples discovered in Cypriot tombs dated to the 6th and 5th century BC.\footnote{On this point see chapter on Jewellery and mirrors.}

The last possible signet ring is a gilded copper alloy ring, the bezel of which is engraved with a figure of Eros playing with an iynx-wheel (Fig. 32).\footnote{Gardner 1888, 28, pl. XVII, no. 7; Boardman 2001, 298, no. 723.} Depictions of Greek deities are regularly found on seal impressions of the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods in the Mediterranean world.\footnote{This is the case for many of the 11,334 papyrus sealings discovered in Paphos, some of which are illustrated in Michaelidou-Nikolaou 1993. Seal impressions depicting Eros found in Delos: Stampolidis 1997.} Eros appears on some Ptolemaic and Roman sealings discovered in Egypt (Fig. 33).\footnote{Bailey 2008, 164, pls 115 and 147, no. 3638. For Eros firing the bow on a papyrus seal impression in Elephantine, dated to 311/310 BC: Vandorpe 1996, 258.} This ring of the second half of the 4th century BC, found in the cemetery of Naukratis, likely belonged to a Greek, since only from the 2nd century onwards do we have evidence for Hellenized Egyptians starting to use rings with Greek motifs (though it might have been different at Naukratis).\footnote{Vandorpe 1996, 248.} Because of the theme displayed on the ring,\footnote{Known on other rings: e.g. Boardman 1975, 96, no. 80 (bronze ring of the 4th century BC); Boardman 2001, 222 (the Iunx Group, type VI).} a votive or amuletic nature of this object should not be discounted.\footnote{Bohr 1997, 116–20. ‘Iynx-wheels were used as magic charms to attract lovers and call back faithless lovers, and iynx-wheels and representations of them were given as votive gifts before marriage or as a lover’s gift during courtship’: Thomas and Acosta in chapter on Jewellery and mirrors (p. 5).}

1.8 Terracotta stamps for decorating ceramics?

Two terracotta stamps that are unlikely to have been amphora stopper stamps may have been used in decorating vases before firing. They both bear a floral device, the first one an incised anthemion (Fig. 34) and the second a lotus in relief (Fig. 35).\footnote{Petrie 1886, pl. XXIX.} They were hand-modelled out of micaceous hard fired Nile clay, red-orange in colour.
These finds can be compared to stamps used in the mass-production of Egyptian Red Slip A Ware in Aswan which was sometimes decorated with stamped Christian motifs and inscriptions (Bailey 2008, 160, nos 3596–9). A Ptolemaic date, however, would fit the Naukratis stamps better. Naukratis has yielded numerous fragments of Ptolemaic black-slipped table ware made out of alluvial clay and bearing stamped decoration consisting of palmette or anthemion (e.g. Fig. 36).\(^{157}\) These ceramics were possibly made locally and the discovery of these stamps could form valuable evidence. The stamped motifs figuring on the bowls and plates so far uncovered at Naukratis are, however, of smaller scale. The motif of the first stamp measures 4.2cm in diameter, while the stamped palmettes on pottery are usually no larger than c. 1–1.5cm. As for the second, it measures 8.50cm in length which definitely seems too large to have been used on pottery.

2. Seal impressions

The practice of sealing is one of the most characteristic marking systems used in the ancient world. The motifs of the seal impressions applied on lumps of clay can tell us much about the contexts in which they are found. Studies of large corpora of seal impressions from Egyptian sites such as Balat in the Oasis of Dakhla\(^{158}\) or in Abydos\(^{159}\) have demonstrated how the distribution of a device across a site can be valuable, for example in understanding an administrative system. Such a study requires an analysis not only of the motifs but also of the precise contexts of their discovery, as well as an examination of the back of the sealing, since the object it was applied to is also of interest. In the case of Naukratis, our analysis is constrained by the limited number of sealings collected during the early excavations and the lack of information regarding their find-spots, but can be supported by contemporary comparative material found in Egypt and beyond in the Mediterranean world.

\(^{157}\) For example: Alexandria, Greco-Roman Museum 16900, 17305 and 17306; British Museum 1910,0222.221 and 1910,0222.231; Brussels, Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire A.1620; Paris, Louvre Museum AM1416. See also numerous examples illustrated in Berlin 2001, figs 2.14 and 2.15.

\(^{158}\) Pantalacci 2001.

\(^{159}\) Wegner 2001.
Thousands of clay sealings – most of them once applied to papyrus documents and mainly dated to the Hellenistic period – have been uncovered in the Eastern Mediterranean world, including Egypt. Portraits of Ptolemaic rulers appear regularly in such assemblages. For example, 11,334 sealings for papyri (mainly contracts and wills) were discovered in a cache at Paphos in Cyprus dated around the second half of the 2nd and the end of the 1st century BC. The majority portray the Ptolemies who were ruling the island at the time, as well as Greek and Egyptian deities. In Egypt, a major hoard of several hundred papyrus seal impressions was reportedly discovered in a pot in Edfu: they mainly depict late rulers of the Ptolemaic dynasty, Egyptian or Greek deities and religious symbols; a few bear hieroglyphic inscriptions. They were once sealing the correspondence between Philae and the administration in Alexandria between the reign of Ptolemy Epiphanes and after the death of Cleopatra VII. For the Roman period, the sites of Karanis in the Fayum and Thmuis in the Delta have yielded interesting assemblages of sealings. The sealings from Karanis are particularly related to the storage, delivery and receipt of grain. The devices are almost all mythological in nature with anthropomorphic or zoomorphic representation of Greco-Egyptian and Egyptian deities, but also Greek deities and mythical figures, while human figures including portraits are much rarer and do not include representations of Roman emperors. The group of sealings found in Thmuis is even more markedly mythological in character, only comprising figures of a deity or a sacred animal or attribute (some Greek, but mainly Egyptian or Greco-Egyptian).

Naukratis yielded a small corpus of 11 seal impressions on mud/clay, a small number that can be explained by the difficulty to spot them during excavation conducted without sieving. Also considered here are two stampedloom-weights, a category of object that can bear several impressions not necessarily from the same seal. Most of the seal impressions depict a human or divine figure. Inscriptions are usually in hieroglyphic script. One Greek inscription was found on a loom-weight and two Greek letters accompany a male youth on a sealing. Although no precise matches exist between the seals and sealings that have been discovered at Naukratis, one sealing was impressed with a common Naukratite scarab or scaraboid.

The study of a sealing’s back can prove very informative, as objects to which sealings were applied often leave distinctive marks. At least four sealings had been applied to papyrus documents (Chart 5) with clear imprints of papyrus fibres on their back (e.g. Fig. 37). Three bear solely

160 Summary of relevant bibliography provided in Smith 1988, 14; Spier 1992, 167.
161 Kyrieleis 1975, 64–75; Stanwick 2002, 57–9; Plantzos 1999, 44–7.
162 Hoard only partially published, see especially Michaelidou-Nicolaou 1993; Kyrieleis 1996.
163 For a list of these Egyptian seal impressions, see Vandorpe 1996.
164 On these partially published seal impressions, see especially: Murray 1907–1908; Milne 1916; Plantzos 1996; Connelly and Plantzos 2006; Plantzos 2011. D. Plantzos is working on the full publication of the hoard.
165 Milne 1906. In 1930, more than 300 sealings bearing multiple impressions and dated to the 2nd–3rd century AD were found in a large granary: Gates 2003.
166 Edgar 1907.
167 Stamped amphora handles are treated separately in the chapter on Stamped amphorae.
168 On the types of marks and reconstruction of sealed objects: Foster 2001; Wegner 2001, 81–4, fig. 2.
169 On papyrus seals in Egypt and the evolution of this practice between the Ptolemaic and Byzantine periods: Vandorpe 1996.

Figure 37 Back of a sealing with papyrus imprint. British Museum 1886,0401.1702
imprint of cords, which may indicate that the seal was either applied to a tied roll of papyrus or placed over a cord tie on a box or a door\textsuperscript{170} (e.g. Fig. 38). No ‘peg sealing’ – sealing with the imprint of a door or box’s peg around which a cord was tied – was identified.\textsuperscript{171} Two sealings had no visible traces on their back and two others for which we do not possess any image were applied to unknown objects.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c c}
\textbf{Chart 4} & \textbf{Chart 5} \\
\begin{tabular}{c c c}
inscribed & human/demi & animal \hline
6 & 7 & 0 \hline
human/semi & animal & other motif \hline
2 & 2 & 2 \hline
animal & other motif & unknown \hline
0 & 0 & 0
\end{tabular} & \\
\begin{tabular}{c c c}
0 & 4 & 2 \hline
4 & 0 & 3 \hline
2 & 2 & 0 \hline
1 & 0 & 1 \hline
unknown & papyrus & strings
\end{tabular}
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

2.1 Seal impressions inscribed with the seal owner’s name

‘Inscribed seals suggest the common use of safeguarding property or authenticating particular transactions’.\textsuperscript{172} Four sealings at Naukratis bear a hieroglyphic inscription. Not much can be said of the inscription of two of them. The registers from Munich, Bavarian State Collection of Antiques mention a now seemingly lost sealing impressed with a pharaonic cartouche without further description. The second sealing has only a quite eroded partial impression depicting a seated man with one arm in front of his head and a \textit{nb}-basket sign underneath.\textsuperscript{173} The other two sealings are of greater interest as they provide the name and title of the seal’s owner. One bears testimony to the relationship between Naukratis and high officials at the Royal Court of Sais, something that is also evidenced by an inscribed scarab found at the site. The other belongs to an Egyptian priest probably living at Naukratis during the Late Period.

The first sealing is impressed with the signet ring of Ahmes-sa-Neith (Fig. 39).\textsuperscript{174} It was mentioned and drawn by Petrie in his Journal.\textsuperscript{175} The inscription reads as follows:

\begin{center}
\textit{s}/(\textit{	extit{h}}nm-ib-r-\textit{f}) jn\textit{y}-\textit{r}-rw\textit{j} \textit{t} (\textit{Fh}-msjd)-(s3)-\textit{Nt}
\end{center}

‘Protection of Khnem-ib-Ra for the Overseer of the Ruit, Ahmes-sa-Neith’.

\begin{flushright}
170 On sealings applied to doors and boxes: Boochs 1982, 30–41; Vandorpe and Van Beek 2012, 92.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
171 Foster 2001, 132–43, pl. 11; Wegner 2001, fig. 2.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
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\begin{flushright}
173 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum E.58,1887.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
174 Petrie 1886, pl. XX, no. 5; Hall 1913, no 2789; de Meulenaere 1964, 29; de Meulenaere 1991, 249, n. 28; Yoyotte 1993–4, 680.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
175 Petrie Journal 1884–5, p. 153. ‘A clay impression of an interesting seal has turned up, having evidently come from a burnt papyrus. So far as I can understand it, it is the official seal of the chief of the funeral house, or custodian of the tomb, of Ahmes, who was also priest of Neit. […] Mr. Griffith dissents from this reading, so I give it up’.
\end{flushright}
This high official at the royal court of Amasis is well documented from a variety of objects, notably from Memphis and Sais. The ‘Overseer of the Ruit’ was an important position first attested in the Old Kingdom and revived during the 26th dynasty, and Ahmes-sa-Neith is the latest known individual to hold this title. Ruit in this title is often translated as the ‘antechamber’, a room in which officials wait before entering the palace; however, it can also refer to a building dealing with administrative or juridical matters. It is therefore difficult to understand what exactly such a position entails, perhaps an office of the central administration with juridical competence.

The protection of the pharaoh Amasis is called upon for Ahmes-sa-Neith on the sealing, following a formulation attested on other Late Period signet rings and sealings. This so-called Saite-Persian formula appears for example on the seal impression belonging to Psamtik-mery-Neith (Fig. 40), vizier during the reign of Amasis and contemporary to Ahmes-sa-Neith. On both examples, the royal names – prenomen of Amasis as well as the nomen of Amasis and of Psamtik which are part of the ‘beautiful names’ of the officials – are placed in plumed cartouches.

The back of the seal bears an imprint of a cord. This may indicate that the seal was applied to a tied roll of papyrus, but it could alternatively have been placed over a cord tie on a box or even a door. The sealing is witness to the connexion between Naukratis and the Court. It can be related to a stone scarab found in the town of Naukratis, unfortunately not yet located but published by Petrie. This scarab is inscribed with the name and titles of Ptahnefer, ‘wise of mouth, messenger of the king and governor of governors’. He was a 26th dynasty regional prefect directing several governors of the provinces of the ‘Kingdom of the West’ depending on Sais. This Ptahnefer could be the same person as the one mentioned on stelai from the Serapeum in Memphis. Maybe this scarab was mounted as a signet ring. In any case, this kind of material is crucial in revealing relations between Naukratis and Egyptian high officials of the 26th dynasty.

The second sealing, which can probably be dated to the late 7th–5th century BC, presents only a partial impression (Fig. 41). One possible reading for the hieroglyphic inscription is:

\[ \text{ḥm-nfr (n) [...] Hr sỉ Wn[...]} \]

‘Prophet of [...] Hor son of Un[...]’.

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177 Perraud 2007, 1499, note 8. The title is particularly well attested under the reign of Psamtik I and II: De Meulenaere 1991, 251–2, note 37.
181 Masson 2007b.
183 Petrie 1886, pl. XXXVIII, no. 188.
186 Already published in Petrie 1886, pl. XX, no. 4.
'Hor' is a common name throughout the Pharaonic and Ptolemaic periods, while numerous names starting with 'Un' are attested in ancient Egypt. Another possible reading would be to see the hieroglyphic sign instead of . This would render the name 'Hor-un', or a name starting with , such as 'Hor-un-nefer', both popular names during the Late Period. The title of prophet ranked high in the sacerdotal hierarchy in Ancient Egypt. The name of the deity this priest was devoted to is not preserved on the sealing.

Sealings impressed with priest's signet rings are well-documented in Egypt (e.g. Fig. 42). Signets pertaining to priests were often manufactured in precious metals, gold or silver. In the Priests' Quarter of Karnak, where 132 sealings impressed with priests' seals were discovered, they were on the whole applied to doors or boxes. It is unclear whether that was the case also for the Naukratis sealing, since no negative of a door or box's peg is visible on the back, only negatives of strings (Fig. 38 above).

2.2 Sealing stamped with a Naukratite scarab

Naukratis has yielded hundreds of scarabs and scaraboids that were locally produced in the 'Scarab Factory'. Although many of them were intended for the wide Mediterranean market, I have demonstrated elsewhere that they were also locally used as amulets and even deposited as votive objects. They could also on occasion function as seals as evidenced by a seal impression discovered in Naukratis (Fig. 43a). The motif impressed is that of a walking lion with a sun-disc above its back, a distinctive design on the bases of Naukratite scarabs and scaraboids (e.g. Fig. 44). The size of the impression itself, 1.30 by 0.8cm, falls well within the average size of scarabs produced in Naukratis. The imprints of strings and of a flat surface on the back indicate that it was likely applied to a door or a box (Fig. 43b).

One more seal impression with a representation of an animal – a 'jumping ape' – does not correspond to the usual repertoire of animal motifs found on Naukratis scarabs.

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189 Ranke 1935, 246, 15 and 17.
190 De Meulenaere 1982; Gee 2004.
191 For examples of seal impressions bearing sacerdotal title(s) followed by name(s), and, dated to the first millennium BC see: Bietak and Reiser-Haslauer 1982, 189–90, no. 559; Coulon and Masson 2010, 138–41, fig. 6 nos 1–3; Masson 2007, 615–6; Masson forthcoming d.
193 Saite examples of three silver signet rings with the titles of prophet of Amun and of servant of Neith from Tell Dafana: Leclère and Spencer 2014, 67, pl. 24 nos 23852-23854.
194 Masson forthcoming d.
195 See chapter on Scarabs, scaraboids and amulets.
197 The scarabs produced with most scarab moulds discovered at the site measures between 1 to 1.30cm in height and between 0.70 and 1.00cm in width: Chapter on Scarabs, scaraboids and amulets.
198 Scarab not yet seen: Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE26763.
199 As a possible parallel see sealing illustrated in Spier 1992, 168, no. 462.
2.3 Sealings impressed with a divine or human figure

The remaining sealings for which illustrations are available are impressed with divine or human figures in relief; they can be dated to the Classical, Ptolemaic or early Roman periods. Bodies and faces are rather well detailed and in relief, suggesting that these impressions come from rings set with engraved gems.

2.3.1 Classical period sealing

One fired sealing featuring the impression in relief of a naked human figure in a slouching half-crouching pose, perhaps a wrestler, has been attributed to the 5th century BC (Fig. 45).\(^{200}\) According to D. Bailey the presence of a breast seems to indicate a woman.\(^{201}\) However, male chest is often shown on gems like this, under the armpit.\(^{202}\) The Greek letters upsilon and lambda ‘ ΥΛ’ appear in his/her back, possibly to be read retrograde.\(^{203}\) The flat surface of the sealing’s reverse does not give any indication of the type of object it was applied to, although its almost circular shape recalls many papyrus bullae.\(^{204}\)

2.3.2 Ptolemaic sealing

One papyrus sealing from Naukratis is impressed with the portrait of a woman wearing a disc earring (Fig. 46).\(^{205}\) Her hair, finely detailed in horizontal plaits in a so-called ‘melon coiffure’, is tied at the back in a chignon. Ptolemaic queens are commonly seen with such a hairstyle, as are female members of the Ptolemaic court.\(^{206}\) The Naukratis device finds good parallels with Hellenistic gems and relief rings dated to the 3rd–2nd century BC.\(^{207}\) Some of them have been identified as portraits of either

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\(^{200}\) Griffith in Gardner 1888, 87, pl. XIX, no. 13; Bailey 2008, 164, pls 113 and 146, no. 3628.

\(^{201}\) Bailey 2008, 164.

\(^{202}\) I would like to thank Prof. Boardman for this observation.

\(^{203}\) See forthcoming chapter on Greek and Latin inscriptions on other objects.

\(^{204}\) See for example, bullae applied on the ‘Samaria Papyri’ from Wadi ed-Dalijie: Keel 2010, 340–7.

\(^{205}\) Published previously in: Gardner 1888, 87, pl. XIX, no. 12; Bailey 2008, 162, pls 112 and 146, no. 3617.

\(^{206}\) Walker and Higgs 2001, 63.

\(^{207}\) Plantzos 1999, 47–52, pls 88–90, especially pl. 89 no. 3. See also gems depicting women with similar ‘melon coiffure’: Richter 1968, 161, nos 641–3 (mainly 3rd century BC).
Arsinoe II (278–270 BC) or Berenike II (246–222 BC), and many could be posthumous portraits.\textsuperscript{208} J. Spier suggests that they were ‘made for officials throughout the Ptolemaic territories’.\textsuperscript{209} P. Higgs argues that the presence of a diadem can determine the royal nature of the person depicted.\textsuperscript{210} However, it is a crown, and not a diadem, that is partially visible on the head of the female portrait on the Naukratis sealing. This attribute led D. Bailey to propose an identification as Isis.\textsuperscript{211} Numerous examples of Ptolemaic rings, gems and seal impressions depict a woman’s head topped with a minute version of the Hathoric crown – a sun-disc framed by cow-horns – to which ears of grain are sometimes added.\textsuperscript{212} Scholars tend to recognize Ptolemaic queens in these portraits, or else the Egyptian goddess Isis with whom some Ptolemaic queens have been associated.\textsuperscript{213} The hairstyle sported by the crowned figure, however, is different, usually curly, with corkscrew locks, or the figure is depicted wearing a vulture headdress.\textsuperscript{214} I would therefore propose to see in this crowned woman with a melon coiffure the portrait of a Ptolemaic queen assimilated to Isis, perhaps a posthumous portrait of Arsinoe II.

2.3.3 Early Roman sealings

A group of three fired clay sealings\textsuperscript{215} were found together according to Petrie.\textsuperscript{216} They bear a pencil note on their back, giving the number ‘1’, which could relate to a specific archaeological context. Each is stamped with one to three impressions. Petrie dated them – or perhaps the context in which they were discovered – to the 2nd century AD,\textsuperscript{217} but some of the devices could come from 1st century AD gems.

The first sealing is impressed with a male bust in rather high relief, his head depicted in a three-quarter view and his bust frontal (\textbf{Fig. 47}).\textsuperscript{218} The short-haired and beardless man is perhaps the portrayal of a Julio-Claudian emperor (27 BC – 68 AD).\textsuperscript{219} He wears a brooch on his left shoulder, likely in the shape of a Medusa head.

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\textsuperscript{208} The relevant bibliography on this type of rings and gems is listed in Spier 1992, 48.
\textsuperscript{209} Spier 1992, 48. This assertion echoes that of J.G. Milne, who suggested that the royal portraits were used as the signets of government officials and that the Edfu papyri were mainly documents written by or on behalf of the government, thus explaining the hellenizing style and theme of the majority (in Milne 1916).
\textsuperscript{210} Finger rings in bone and bronze with a female portrait in profile, featuring the ‘melon coiffure’: Walker and Higgs 2001, 62–3, nos 31–4. Those wearing a diadem are identified as Ptolemaic queens, Arsinoe II or Berenike II, and those without a diadem could represent a private person.
\textsuperscript{211} ‘Part of a crown with a floral element survives on top of the head (Isis?)’: Bailey 2008, 132. Rather than a floral element, I would see a cow-horn belonging to a Hathoric crown.
\textsuperscript{212} Plantzos 2011, 398.
\textsuperscript{213} For example, S.-A. Ashton recognized a portrait of Cleopatra VII in one such sealing (in Walker and Higgs 2001, 176, no. 174). However, D. Plantzos identifies these figures as Isis (Plantzos 2011).
\textsuperscript{214} See for example the numerous seal impressions from the Edfu hoard depicting Isis busts with corkscrew locks and minute Hathoric crown: Plantzos 2011, fig. 1.
\textsuperscript{215} British Museum 1886,0401.1700, 1701 and 702.
\textsuperscript{216} Petrie 1886, 100, pl. XX nos 20–2.
\textsuperscript{217} Petrie 1886, 100.
\textsuperscript{218} Bailey 2008, 163, pls 113 and 146, no. 3620.
The second sealing was impressed with two intaglio gems (Fig. 48). One device features a human male beardless head viewed in profile, wearing what might be a badly executed wreath (another Julio-Claudian emperor?). The other device depicts a facing bust wearing a broad collar and an Atef crown that Bailey identified as Osiris.\(^{220}\) It can be compared to a Roman seal impression from Karanis described as a ‘bust of Osiris, facing, wearing [an] atef (?) crown, scourge over each shoulder’.\(^{221}\) A papyrus sealing found during the excavation of J. Lauffray in a Ptolemaic settlement at Karnak was impressed with a similar motif that C. Grataloup identified as a decorated Apis bull wearing an Atef crown (Fig. 49).\(^{222}\)

The last sealing also bears impressions left by two different gems (Fig. 50).\(^ {223}\) One, which was stamped twice, represents a human foot and an unidentified partially impressed object. The footprint is mainly a Greek-inspired motif, although it also appears elsewhere, as on Punic sites.\(^{224}\) The other impression features an Osiris-Canopus jar, also known as Osiris-hydreios, a Roman form of Osiris that was of particular significance in Egyptian religion between the 1st and 3rd century AD.\(^ {225}\) Osiris-Canopus appears on many gems of the Roman period, but is usually represented in...
Frontal depictions of Osiris-Canopus jars are attested on a few gems, such as lapis lazuli and jasper gems dated to the 2nd century AD. The backs of the three sealings present clear papyrus imprints indicating that they were all applied to papyri (see for example Fig. 37 above). Of course, each one could have been applied to different documents. It is, however, not uncommon that the same document was sealed several times with different seals, and since these three sealings were discovered together, this is a reasonable hypothesis. Contracts with several sealings are well attested from the Hellenistic period onwards in the Mediterranean world, including Egypt. For example, one of the Ptolemaic double contracts from Elephantine, dated to 285–284 BC, is sealed with three sealings, each of them bearing three or four impressions. Although sealing practices had greatly evolved by the Roman period, contracts written on papyrus, signed and sealed by several witnesses (usually seven) still existed.

2.4 Stamped loom-weights

Besides the distinctive Egyptian loom-weights of disk shape, Naukratis yielded a few Greek and East Greek specimens, imported and/or copied locally. Such finds imply the presence of Greek women residing at Naukratis. Two of them bear stamped impressions, a tradition well documented in the Greek world. Stamped loom-weights are attested as early as the 7th century BC, though it is not before the second half of the 5th century BC that they become commonplace. The first loom-weight is of pyramidal shape, with a hole pierced pre-firing near a truncated top (Fig. 51). The decoration stamped on the side comes from an oval bezel depicting two naked male figures, facing each other. Although Bailey proposed local Ptolemaic production based on un stamped loom-weights of similar shape from Alexandria, Karnak and Edfu, pyramidal loom-weights can also be found in Archaic and Classical Greece and East-Greece. The fine fabric in which the Naukratis loom-weight is made is not Egyptian but looks more East Greek. Furthermore, its size – 5.3cm high – is fairly standard for loom-weights from Archaic Miletus, where a size of 5–6cm is typical. Stamping loom-weights with gems or ring bezels is a practice attested from the mid-5th century BC to

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226 See for example a 1st century AD ring stone: Henig 1994, 153, no. 316 (and further literature on the type).
228 For example, see the bullae applied on the ‘Samaria Papyri’ from Wadi ed-Dali‘e: Keel 2010, 340–7.
229 On Ptolemaic six-witness contracts from Elephantine see Vandorpe 1996, 232–5, 258–60, pl. 45, fig. 1 (with relevant literature mentioned).
231 Loom-weights are discussed in Tools and weapons.
232 It is, however, not a systematic practice. For example, only 90 loom-weights from Cassope out of 700 bear a mark (seal impressions, incised inscriptions of motifs): Tzouvara-Souli 1996.
234 Bailey 2008, 172, pls 125 and 147, no. 3699.
236 For example: Pruvot et al. 2010, 243, no. 229 (7th–6th centuries BC pyramidal loom-weights from Eretria); Davidson 1952, 161–3 (archaic and classical specimens from Corinth).
237 I would like to thank Margaretta Gleba for this information.
the Hellenistic period, and a pyramidal loom-weight dated to c. 450–350 BC from Atalante in Thessaly bears a similarly shaped gem impression.

Depictions of two standing naked men are, however, not common on Greek gems.

The second loom-weight is stamped twice with difference devices (Fig. 52). It is a biconical loom-weight, a shape particularly in favour for Corinthian loom-weights, and its fine yellowish clay is also characteristic of Corinth. According to G. Davidson’s typology, the fragment with its rather high bevel belongs to the type X or XI. The first impression – oval in shape and located above the bevel – depicts a loom-weight symbol that essentially mimics the shape of the loom-weight it was stamped on, except that it was stamped upside down. This motif appears on Corinthian loom-weights around 400 BC and persists into the first quarter or first half of the 3rd century BC. It is often associated with a second ‘letter-stamp’, as is the case for the Naukratis specimen. The second impression was left below the bevel by a rectangular seal with the name of the manufacturer ΜΕΛΙΣ, which is the most common Corinthian loom-weight stamp and is almost always associated with the stamp of the loom-weight. A deposit dated to the second half of the 4th century BC in the Potters’ Quarter at Corinth yielded a number of such pieces.

239 Raselli-Nydegger 1996, pl. 48, no. 48.
240 Parallels of different styles: Brandt et al. 1972, 49, pl. 215, no. 2393 (seen as two athletes shaking hands before competition); Boardman and Scarisbrick 1977, 34, no. 26 (Italic gem of 1st century BC).
241 The stamps were drawn in Petrie’s diary: Petrie Journal 1884–5, p. 101a.
242 Davidson 1952, 148–61
243 Davidson 1952, 149, 153–5, fig. 23.
244 Anderson-Stojanović 1993, 269, n. 86; .
245 Davidson 1952, 154–60.
246 For example: Dumont 1872, 408 (from Aradus in Asia Minor); Perdrizet 1908, 199, no. 621 (from Delphi); Weinberg 1948, 238, pl. 87 F2 (from Corinth); Davidson 1952, 158, 169, nos 1163–5, fig. 27 (from Corinth, all belonging to type X); Dunbabin 1962, 402, pl. 131, no. 171 (from Perachora).
247 Davidson 1952, 158.