

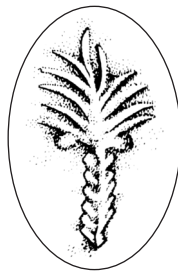
UNIVERSITÀ DI TORINO

MESOPOTAMIA

RIVISTA DI ARCHEOLOGIA, EPIGRAFIA E
STORIA ORIENTALE ANTICA

XLIX

2014



LE LETTERE
FIRENZE

Rivista fondata da Giorgio Gullini.

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Redazione: GIORGIO BUCCELLATI
STEFANO DE MARTINO
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«Mesopotamia» is an International Peer Reviewed Journal.

Proprietà letteraria riservata

Iscritta al Tribunale di Torino n. 1886 del 20/6/67.

Si prega di indirizzare la corrispondenza diretta alla Redazione e i manoscritti a: Carlo Lippolis, Redazione di Mesopotamia, Dipartimento di Studi Storici - Università degli Studi di Torino, Via Sant'Ottavio 20, 10124 Torino.

ISSN: 0076-6615

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PLATES

HENDRIK HAMEEUW*• - SAM VAN OVERMEIRE*
THE SELEUCID BULLAE FROM URUK IN THE ROYAL MUSEUMS
OF ART AND HISTORY, BRUSSELS

1. Introduction

The Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) Near Eastern collections contain six large Seleucid bullae.¹ These originate from the city of Uruk, where German archaeological teams began excavating in 1902, with systematic digging starting in 1912/1913 and lasting until 2002. Seleucid bullae were found in several rooms around the Bit Rēš sanctuary and they are now the property of museums world-wide.² On the RMAH bullae, H. de Genouillac notes in a publication on a Sumerian-Babylonian vocabulary: «*Ce beau “syllabaire” provient d’une trouvaille faite à Ouarka au printemps 1912 et comprenant 17 tablettes de présages et une centaine de contrats de l’époque des Séleucides, Il a été acquis par le Musée de Bruxelles avec divers spécimens de la même découverte.*».³ Among them are most probably eight legal cuneiform documents and the six bullae presented here; as such, they all received successive collection numbers in the RMAH museum register.⁴

The six bullae were bought from H. de Genouillac by the curator of the RMAH, Louis Speleers, shortly after de Genouillac’s return from Mesopotamia in 1912 and were as such included in his catalogue of seals and seal impressions published in 1917.⁵ Unfortunately, the photographs were of poor quality and the descriptions vague and incomplete. In fact, most of the illustrations on the bullae seal impressions published by Speleers were pictures of copies in gypsum, not of the original imprints as was done for some of the seal impressions on the aforementioned legal cuneiform documents. Speleers did not include all imprints of stamps on the bullae in his study. For each bulla he made a selection, seemingly based on importance and/or rarity. Subsequent publications present some of these bullae with virtually unchanged descriptions and photographs or accompanied by only single view pictures of the most prominent impressions.⁶ In 1979, P. Naster reassessed the material and corrected some significant errors, although the photographs used in his publication were of the same quality.⁷ More recently, G. Lindström wrote a PhD thesis on the bullae of Seleucid Uruk, gathering the material held by museums all over the world and focusing on the excavated material in particular. For this purpose, she visited the RMAH in 1999 and examined the Brussels material.⁸ Her publication includes well-researched descriptions, yet the illustrations find themselves within the limits

of conventional photography. Therefore, in this study we will give a general overview of the bullae, provide descriptions of the individual seal impressions and visualize them through a series of high-quality images created with the Portable Light Dome system (see § 4. Images).

The bullae were used to seal official documents written on papyrus and leather scrolls. Unlike clay tablets with cuneiform, these perishable documents and their contents are lost. The genres of the cuneiform texts are conventional, including contracts dealing with sales or gifts of houses, prebends and slaves. All other types of documentary and archival texts were recorded on scrolls sealed off with bullae. Like the majority of the cuneiform tablets, these bullae have been found within the compound of a temple (Bit Rēš). As such, analogous to what is known from the cuneiform texts, the content of the scrolls must have been related to the temple activities and its personnel. However, in contrast to the tablets that almost exclusively bear impressions of ‘private’ seals, bullae and tags display a mixture of ‘private’ and ‘official’ seals. They attest

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¹ The research presented in this article is funded by the following projects: 1. Agora - AG/LL/168: The Glyptic Collections in the Belgian Federal Scientific Institutes (GLYPCOL) & 2. Belgian Science Policy, IAP-Phase VII/14: ‘Greater Mesopotamia, Reconstruction of its Environment and History’. Our gratitude goes to curators Eric Gubel and Bruno Overlaet who gave permission to study and publish this material.

² ROSTOVITZEFF 1932, 5-8; LINDSTRÖM 2003, 2-3, 206-229; CLANCIER 2011, 755. KOSE 2013, 344, Abb. 59.2 shows the locations of the finds.

³ DE GENOUILLAC 1913, 29.

⁴ O.196-O.203 (legal cuneiform documents); O.204-O.209 (bullae). See BOIY 2003 for the eight cuneiform documents.

⁵ SPELEERS 1917, 87 and 234-239, Pl. 204-209. After the death of Henri de Genouillac in 1940, his collection was donated to the Musée Départemental des Antiquités de Seine-Maritime at Rouen. Among these objects are eight Seleucid bullae. The themes on the imprints and other additional marks on these bullae allow attributing their provenance to Uruk. Two of them were published in AMIET 1957, 35 and 71, Pl. XX.114-115, the others were examined by the authors in December 2013, with thanks to Caroline Dorion-Peyronnet, *Directeur - Conservateur du Patrimoine* of the Rouen museum.

⁶ CAPART 1935, 82, fig. 74; BALTJ 1988, 72.

⁷ NASTER 1979, 215-219.

⁸ LINDSTRÖM 2003, ix.

to the interaction between individuals and the Seleucid state apparatus.

The manufacture of bullae consisted of several steps. A papyrus or leather scroll was bound with thin rope. Fine clay – to allow good, clear imprints – was moulded around the document on top of the rope binding and additionally bound with that rope through the interior towards the outside of the bullae. This technique can be inspected by examining broken bullae. Their interiors show rows of holes (channels), with or without remaining strings that were intermediately wrapped around and pressed in the clay when the bullae were formed.⁹ These actions gave the clay bullae the shape of a ring or perforated sphere and firmly attached it to the papyrus scroll through this inventive binding. Rope impressions are still clearly visible on the inside of the bullae and mostly towards one side of the surface (cf. O.205).

Generally, the fragile, organic materials of which scrolls and ropes were made have completely disappeared, whereas the bullae survived. Still, the traces of this practice and the numerous seal imprints give us valuable insights in the history of Hellenistic Warka and its bureaucratic traditions. In fact, the sealings made by private citizens and officials bear witness to the activities of Uruk's mixed autochthonous and Hellenized population.

2. Practice

On four of our six bullae (O.205-208) one side of the surface is dominated by the imprint of an '*Amisiegel*'. These official seals show Hellenistic iconography and were used by Seleucid officials as a statement of their legal authority. Their dimensions, several times larger than those of other seals, render one end of the bullae flat and force all remaining imprints to the other sides. As the predominant feature, the official seal marks the main actor in regard to the sealed document's content. Since such a large official seal reduces all other impressions to a secondary role, it suggests a kind of hierarchy. On O.205, two official seals appear: the largest dominates and flattens one half of the bulla, whereas the second (a tax seal) is impressed on the opposite side with the other imprints dispersed around it.

The larger official seals contrast with the smaller private ones. The identification of their private character is mainly based on their intensive use by actors and witnesses on legal cuneiform documents, in which a connection can be established between the context in which these persons appear in the texts and the type of seal imprint they left behind. From the iconographical point of view, they are both inspired by Greek and Mesopotamian traditions. At first sight, seals of private persons appear dispersed on the bullae's surface. But, when inspected more closely, the imprints may not be

placed randomly. On O.204, for example, the stamp seals have been impressed in two rows, near the upper and lower edges. Another pattern that can be discerned when examining the sealing practice, may provide insights into the social relations within the Hellenistic society of Uruk. It can be observed in the appearance of a cluster of (the) 'Greek' inspired specimens near the seams of the bulla, as present on O.204, O.207 and O.209. The 'Mesopotamian' imprints cover the remaining surface. The reason for this clustering remains unclear, but with the above cases, it undeniably indicates that those who identify themselves by means of seals in a Greek style, differentiate themselves as a group from those using Mesopotamian seals.

On the contemporary cuneiform archival documents the seal imprints on the sides of the tablets are accompanied by a personal name. This determines with whom the signature must be associated. On the Seleucid bullae this identification is absent. As such, the introduction of new scribal techniques resulted in a change of the administrative conventions, or vice versa. A scroll is rolled up, thus concealing its content, and the seals on the bullae are untagged, anonymous. The opposite reality was customary in the cuneiform tradition.

3. Seal shapes

The shapes of the imprints obviously depend on the type of stamp seals that were used. In Seleucid Mesopotamia, metal signet rings had become prevalent and gem stones mounted on a setting became rare.¹⁰ During the Achaemenid and Early Hellenistic periods, when impressed on cuneiform tablets, the type of seal was described in the legend, written by the scribe in cuneiform just above the imprint.¹¹ That legend either started with *na₄.kišib* (the Sumerian logogram for Akkadian *kunukku* = seal) and as seals in Mesopotamia were made in stone, this indicates that a stone seal was used, or the legend mentioned *un-qu / un-qa*, Akkadian for 'ring seal', a term used for seals made of metal (iron, copper, bronze and gold). Even at Uruk, with its strong Mesopotamian traditions and located far in the south, legends no longer mention stone seals by 17 SE and eventually the tradition to register it was lost. Also, the excavations revealed virtually no stone seals for the Hellenistic period, suggesting they went out of fashion.¹²

⁹ See e.g. ROSTOVITZ 1932, Plate I, 1 and LINDSTRÖM 2003, 7-9; 2013, 318.

¹⁰ Excavations at Uruk revealed a number of these metal rings with stamp seals, see VAN ESS, PEDDE 1992, Tafel 46-47 and PEDDE, HEINZ, MÜLLER-NEUHOF 2000, Tafel 39-40; for a metal mount for a gem, see rings 742 and 744.

¹¹ WALLENFELS 1996, 117.

¹² WALLENFELS 1994, 3; LINDSTRÖM 2003, 17.

Signet rings have very stereotype shapes, from flat almond-shaped to broad convex or elongated ellipsoidal.¹³ For this study, each impression is attributed to a shape type, describing the contours of the imprint (ellipse, rectangular or other) in combination to the orientation of the composition (portrait or landscape). One of the main shapes are the landscape ellipsoids (also called almond or (*spitz*)*ovaler*), with a small differentiation as one group has rounded extremities and the other pointed. Some imprint shapes deviate from these, with some examples in the shape of a chopped-off conical gem (below, 6. to the right). Lindström defines them as “*konvexes Siegel mit gerader oberer Kante*”; Wallenfels describes this type as a “rectangular gem”.¹⁴ We are inclined to consider this type as a convex imprint made by a conical stamp seal with a rounded end at one side and a flat surface at the

other. The imprint ‘6. to the left’ might be a variation to this type.

The orientation and the genre of the seals’ iconographical representation hint at the cultural tradition from which it stems. Most portrayals of gods and human figures on the Uruk bullae can be linked to the ‘Greek’ sphere. Furthermore, all these ‘Greek’ images have the shape of a portrait ellipse/circle. These themes (gods, humans) favour such a shape and the inspiration is drawn from Hellenistic coinage, a shape close to the portrait ellipses. The representations of real and mythological animals, on the other hand, find their inspiration in the indigenous culture and these imprints are most often represented in the more suitable landscape ellipse.

Below are the different shape types discerned on the Brussels bullae; the contours are highlighted:

1. portrait
broad ellipse:



2. portrait
rounded ellipse:



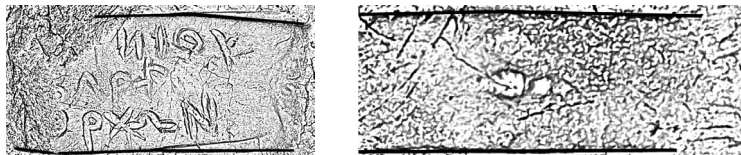
3. landscape
pointed ellipse:



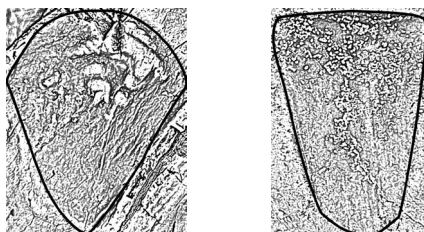
4. landscape
rounded ellipse:



5. rectangle:



6. others:



¹³ LINDSTRÖM 2003, 15-17.

¹⁴ WALLENFELS 1994; LINDSTRÖM 2003.

4. Images

The six bullae have been imaged from all sides and each is presented into a compilation, envisaged with their original colour (see plates 8-13). For each bulla the exact position of all seal imprints is given with their respective number labelled on an additional copy on which the colour was extracted to maximise their visibility. The seal imprints themselves have been scanned separately in more detail (see 5. The bullae).

Imaging the shallow relief remnants of relatively small stamp impressions proves challenging. The number of publications with hard to consult pictures or with poor and minimalistic drawings of these imprints is abundant. Therefore it was decided to scan each imprint separately with the Portable Light Dome system.¹⁵ This multi-light source dome shaped acquisition device imaged the imprints with the help of 260 differently illuminated pictures of one and the same surface. Based on the principles of Photometric Stereo this approach can reconstruct a surface virtual with full knowledge of all surface characteristics, i.e. relief and colour, objective and accurate up to each pixel in the image. It allows to visualize the result in several manners. Below in the catalogue, in general four altered images of each imprint have been presented, as such, all based on one and the same scan: respectively with colour filter (see plates 5-7); without colour filter; image based on a 3D model with radiance scaling filter; and with sketch filter. The latter accentuates in black/white-contrast all features which are not flat (or technically, where neighboring pixels do not have the same orientation). In cases where the colour version visualized practically no aspects of the imprint, it was omitted.

O.204

This bulla has the shape of a large sphere with its top and bottom flattened. It has a large cylinder-shaped hole in the middle, where the scroll originally was. The bulla has a total of fifteen imprints. Louis Speleers noted only fourteen and mentioned the remains of black rope, at present no longer visible. Only twelve of the fifteen stamp imprints were published by him.¹⁶ One of the imprints, 204 N, is badly damaged. Four of the fifteen imprints have Hellenistic motifs, the others are Mesopotamian. The four 'Hellenistic' impressions are all located near the joint of the bulla's seam at both sides. One 'Mesopotamian' imprint, 204 C, is part of this cluster whereas the other 'Mesopotamian' imprints are nicely spread over the bulla's surface in two rows close to the upper and lower edge, leaving a central strip blank.

General measurements of bulla O.204: 59 x 63 x 54 mm.

Unfortunately, several imprints on the bullae have faded or have been severely damaged in modern times. The objects entered the museum some months after they were unearthed at Uruk. Since then, the surface of these unbaked clay objects started disintegrating. For some of the bullae this process had little consequences, but for others a lot of information was lost. The degradation was halted more or less in 1970-71, when these objects were sent to the British Museum and baked, making them structurally more robust and resistant against humidity. In the case of O.206, the damage took place shortly after its arrival at the RMAH and a note in the museum catalogue mentions: "*tombé en poussière*, 23.3.17". The choice made by Speleers to publish all the bullae seal impressions through their gypsum copies, probably manufactured shortly after their arrival at the museum, allowed him to publish even the impressions that had degraded by then. Today, the RMAH still preserves these gypsum copies. As the current condition of the stamp imprints on the bulla is in some places poor, the PLD-images were not always useful. Therefore, for certain impressions scans of images from the 1917 Speleers publication were included as well.

5. The bullae

Most of the Seleucid stamp seals are rather small. Since reproducing them in their actual size limits the ability to study the details, the illustrations of the stamp impressions below are rendered on a scale of 2:1. More images, such as 3D models, can be consulted via www.carmentis.be, the online catalogue of the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels.

¹⁵ For technical description see WILLEMS et al 2005, for use of the technique in glyptics and cuneiform studies see HAMEEUW, WILLEMS 2011.

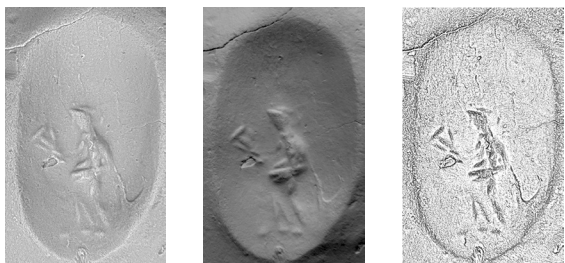
¹⁶ SPELEERS 1917, 234 and 236.

204 A

standing female figure; with attribute in hand

The female figure, looking to the left and leaning backwards, is depicted in the lower part of the seal's surface, leaving a vacant space in the upper part. The elbow of the left arm hints to be resting on a stand. With her right arm, she lifts an object that is hard to identify, most likely a twig or a branch. This type of design is especially well known from Seleucia on the Tigris; Bollati and Messina list some 178 of such stamp impressions, labelled as "*attributo vegetale*".¹⁷

portrait rounded ellipse
measurements: 10 x 17 mm



204 B

human face, three-quarter view, turned to the right

The fine and voluminously carved human head is framed by a thin rim. Such facing / three-quarter view depictions are relatively rare in the Uruk repertoire (for this cf. 205 B). In general, they are known for several gods and mythological figures. Remarkable is the wavy hair with a larger curl at the end, though it is not as chaotic as the hair style known from Medusa. He can possibly be identified as the sun god Helios, well-known from classic coinage from Rhodes.¹⁸ If profane, the portrait might be that of Alexander. At Seleucia on the Tigris some resembling images have been identified as such; for Uruk a parallel featuring in AUWE 20 might be a candidate.¹⁹

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 12 x 14 mm



204 C

leaping winged bull; crescent moon in front; triangle to the back; and unidentified motif

The leaping quadruped facing to the right is rather elegant and resembles best that of a winged bull with horn.²⁰

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 20 x 8 mm



¹⁷ SIS III, Pl. 26-33.

¹⁸ WESTERMARK, ASHTON 1994, 449 ff.

¹⁹ SIS I, AL 1-6; AUWE 20, 214-2.

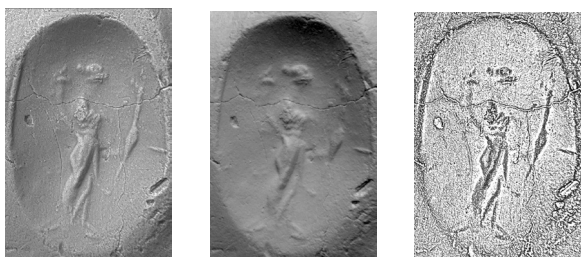
²⁰ AUWE 19, 873-878; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 684h, 688j-m and others.

204 D

standing Tyche; with cornucopia; and sceptre

A standing female figure to be identified as the goddess Tyche has her head turned to the right and seems to wear a *chiton*. Her hair is at the back bound together into a bun. At shoulder height she holds a slender horn of plenty (*cornucopia*) and with her left hand she holds out a sceptre. The “standing Tyche type” became popular in the Hellenistic period, though the seated type is the more famous one.²¹ Numerous identifications exist²², with similar compositions in which Tyche holds a staff, stick or torch in front of her. Wallenfels speaks of a rudder, Lindström labels the item as a sceptre, as does McDowell with a piece from Seleucia on the Tigris.²³ At the latter site, over 300 depictions of Tyche are known. Those displaying the goddess holding a short sceptre resemble more closely the 204 D imprint.²⁴

portrait rounded ellipse
measurements: 11 x 16 mm



204 E

crab; with crescent moon; and star

The crab is depicted horizontally and orientated to the right, the star is nine-pointed.²⁵

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 19 x 8 mm



204 F

walking winged sphinx; star in front

This marching/standing quadruped facing right is most probably a sphinx with cap; a seven-pointed star in front of it.²⁶

landscape rounded ellipse
measurements: 16 x 8 mm



²¹ HERBERT 2003, 77.

²² See e.g. AUWE 19: 157-158 and HENIG 1994, 52, Fig. 85.

²³ WALLENFELS 1998, 14; AUWE 20, 2-3 and 524-1; MCDOWELL 1935, 85-86, Pl. III, 41.

²⁴ SIS II, Pl. 53-69 and Tk 30-86.

²⁵ For nearly identical parallels at Uruk see SPELEERS 1917, 234 (i.e. O.203, imprint I, see also BOUY 2003, 295); AUWE 19, 995; AUWE 20, 341-5; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 736g.

²⁶ AUWE 19, 312-326; AUWE 20, 228-3.4, 228-10; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 676g-i.

204 G

standing winged sphinx; leafed branch in front; in connection with baseline

The sphinx facing to the right stands on a curved baseline²⁷, its head is damaged. In the extension of the baseline a leafed branch is depicted in front of the sphinx.²⁸

landscape rounded ellipse
measurements: 15 x 9 mm



204 H

leaping winged bull; triangle below; squid? in front

The seal is impressed twice, with the second impression approximately on top of the first. The engraving is well executed, especially the wing has been cut with great detail and care. The feature in front of the winged bull facing to the right has been identified as a squid. AUWE 20: 226-7 is an imprint of the same seal, see also 200-6. It appears on a bulla from the Bit Rēš (room 29d). Lindström labels the squid as “*ein knospenförmiges Symbol*”.²⁹

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 19 x 10 mm



204 I

walking bull

The bull facing to the right is almost identical to AUWE 19: 854 and 848.³⁰

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 18 x 8 mm



204 J

leaping winged horse; crab below

The legs of the winged horse facing to the right are fully spread.³¹ Below the leaping horse, although partly damaged, a crab can be discerned. Note that the distinction between a winged bull and a winged horse is in some cases difficult; even a griffin belongs to the options. The feet of the quadruped in 204 J look like horseshoes³² and the shape of the head and the lack of the single horn indicate that the animal in 204 J represents a horse.

²⁷ AUWE 20, 261-3.4 and *26-5; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 523d, 769c, 772b.

²⁸ CM 12, 33; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 697i & 705h.

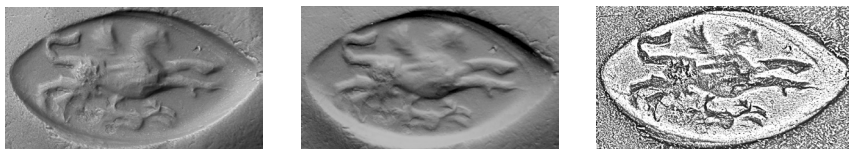
²⁹ See also AUWE 19, 543-546, 548 and BiMES 24, 46 U.E. for close parallels.

³⁰ See also AUWE 20, *58-2 and MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 665d and 710e.

³¹ MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 649f, 668c & 695i.

³² AUWE 19, 463-470.

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 17 x 9 mm



204 K

recumbent feline (or canine?)

The quadruped on the imprint resembles a recumbent lion.³³

landscape rounded ellipse
measurements: 17 x 10 mm



204 L

leaping winged bull; crescent moon above; star in front

This composition is very common in Seleucid Mesopotamia: a leaping winged bull facing to the right surrounded by astral symbols. In the case of 204 L, the bull is accompanied by a crescent moon and the six-pointed star. Some parallels are as good as identical.³⁴

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 17 x 10 mm

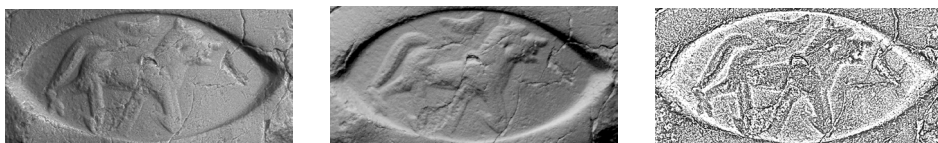


204 M

walking lion; crescent moon above

A lion marching to the right with its tail pointed downwards. Above its back is a crescent moon.³⁵

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 19 x 8 mm



³³ BiMes 24, 26 U.E.; AUWE 19, 716-720, 724-725; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 665c.

³⁴ AUWE 19, 535; AUWE 20, *26-1; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 684h (from Babylon).

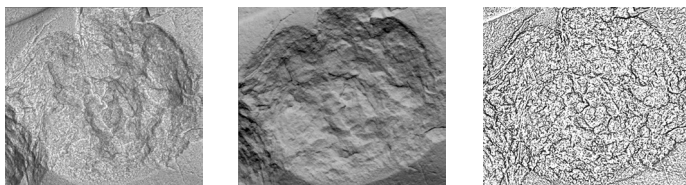
³⁵ For parallels from Uruk, compare BiMes 24: 27 Le.E.; AUWE 19, 736, 746, 749; AUWE 20, *5-1, *7-7, *8-3, *14-4, *59-2 and OECT IX, 12, 37.

204 N

unidentified (worn) imprint

circle?

measurements: 12 x 12 mm



204 O

standing figure; holding smaller figure in the hand

A standing dressed figure faces left, the right arm next to the body and the left arm holding out an object that seems to be a squatting figure with one hand raised. The general appearance of the figure, especially the headdress, suggest it is female. If so, the scene might represent Aphrodite holding Nike/Eros.³⁶ For Athena on Hellenistic stamp seals, see Herbert (2003)³⁷, although these are different because Nike/Eros is standing and has wings.

portrait rounded ellipse

measurements: 12 x 15 mm

**O.205**

The bulla is ring-shaped, flat on one side – owing to the impression of ‘*Amtssiegel*’ 205 A – with a slightly flattened cylinder-shaped document hole in the middle. It has a total of six imprints, four of them were published by Speleers.³⁸ Four of the imprints are Hellenistic, the other Mesopotamian in tradition. The *Amtssiegel* is known from other bullae³⁹ and the bulla can be dated to the reign of Seleucus IV (187-175 BC) thanks to the dated imprint 205 E. Two imprints (205 G & H) were made by the same seal. They occur next to each other on one side of the joint of the bulla’s seam, whereas the *Amtssiegel* is positioned on the other side.

General measurements of bulla O.205: 49 x 48 x 33 mm

205 A

standing human figure; holding arrow in his hand; tripod; inscription

An *Amtssiegel* depicting a delicately engraved standing Apollo, holding an arrow in his right hand and resting with the left elbow on his tripod. This depiction, already known from coins minted by Antiochus III, was common on the Seleucid coinage of Seleucus IV and Antiochus VI.⁴⁰ The inscription to the left and right of the figure reads ΧΡΕΟΦΥΛΑΚΙΚΟΣ ΟΡΧΩΝ (*chreophulakikos orchôn*), “guardian [of the public debt registry] of the

³⁶ SIS II, Af 5-7.³⁷ HERBERT 2003, fig. 6.³⁸ SPELEERS 1917, 236-237.³⁹ LINDSTRÖM 2003, 42.⁴⁰ NASTER 1979, 218.

people of Orchoe [literally: of the Orchoeians]”, Orchoe being the Greek name for Uruk.⁴¹ In addition, there is a barely visible and largely erased inscription on the left side, i.e. next to the word OPXΩN. The remains of five, maybe six letters can be discerned and two can be identified with relative certainty as ‘.PX ..’, reconstructed as OPXΩN. These letters are in all probability remnants of an almost completely erased older inscription.⁴²

This seal is well-known and appears on several bullae from Uruk. Its main period of use dates from the reign of Seleucus IV. There are several parallels from Seleucia on the Tigris and the title *chreophulakikos* appears on official seals from that city as well.⁴³

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 28 x 26 mm

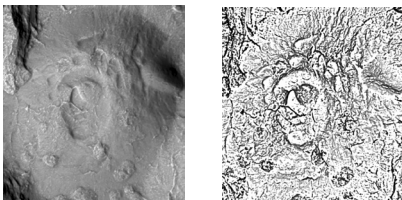


205 B

human face, three-quarter view, turned to the left

The impression is only vaguely and partly preserved, but the identification of a Medusa-head might be suggested. The head resembles those seen on some imprints of Messina and Mollo (2004) entitled “*a capo scoperto*” A and B; it is undoubtedly Hellenistic in tradition.⁴⁴ In addition to Medusa, an identification as Alexander can be considered as well.⁴⁵ See 204 B for a resemblance with the iconography of Helios.

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 12 x 12 mm



205 C

walking sphinx; crescent moon; globe; and star in front; fish above

A sphinx is walking to the right, towards a group of astral motifs: a crescent moon, a circle or globe and a

⁴¹ LINDSTRÖM 2003, 42, 56 and 61, Fig. 46, Pl. 6, 2-1; WALLENFELS 1996, 115 and 119, 2 and 5. The function of the *chreophulakikos* was already discussed by MCDOWELL 1935, 131-138.

⁴² BOSCHLOOS et al. 2014.

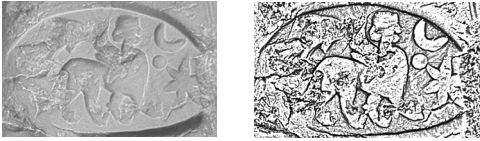
⁴³ LINDSTRÖM 2003, 42; SIS II, Ap 159-183; SIS I, 25-26 and 36.

⁴⁴ SIS I, TF 1-13, especially TF 7; see also AUWE 20, 47-1.

⁴⁵ SIS II, AL 1-6 and AUWE 20, 214-2.

six-pointed star. Above the creature's back, although partly damaged, a fish/dolphin can be discerned. A sphinx in combination with astral symbols is common.⁴⁶

landscape rounded ellipse
measurements: 15 x 8 mm

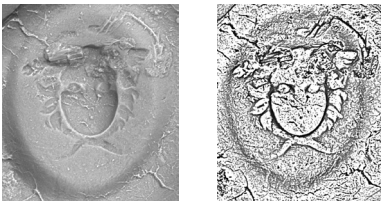


205 D

Gorgon head

Stylized, symmetric head in frontal view. This Hellenistic motif is rare for Uruk and is better known for Seleucia on the Tigris.⁴⁷ It represents a *gorgoneion*, the head of a Gorgon. Two wings emerge from the hair at both sides and two snakes appear next to the cheeks, crossing each other below the chin.

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 11 x 13 mm



205 E

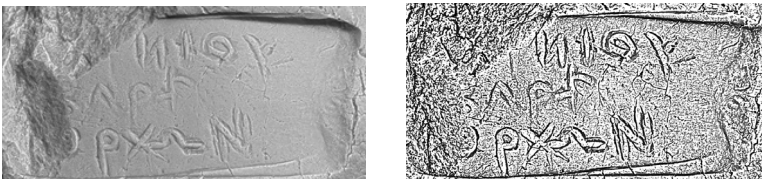
tax seal, inscription

An imprint related to the levying of sales taxes, partly damaged with a faded three-line inscription. The impression was made twice, indicated by two slightly differently orientated impressions on the lower side of the seal. The inscription reads:

[EΠ]Ω'NIOY	epôniou
Β'ΛΡ Γ	132
Ο'ΡΧΩΝ	orchôn

This reconstruction, based on parallels, is certain. On the second line, the Seleucid Era year number – BAP or 132 SE (2 + 30 + 100) – is followed by a half anchor symbol, a royal Seleucid insignia. The presence of this emblem on this stamp seal illustrates its association with the state administration. The *epônion orchôn* was a tax on transactions of goods cashed by the city of Uruk.⁴⁸

rectangle
measurements: 24 x 11 mm



⁴⁶ AUWE 19, 318-326; for the combination with a fish/dolphin, see AUWE 19, 403-409; AUWE 20, *24-2 & *24-3; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 745c.

⁴⁷ SIS III, GrT 8

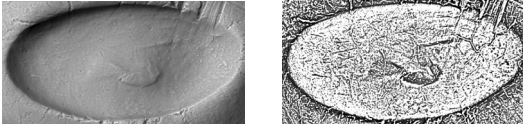
⁴⁸ LINDSTRÖM 2003, 54-56.

205 F

*unidentifiable (worn) imprint*The contours of the motif in this vague impression suggest the back of a quadruped leaping to the right.⁴⁹

rounded ellipse (orientation unclear)

measurements: 16 x 8 mm

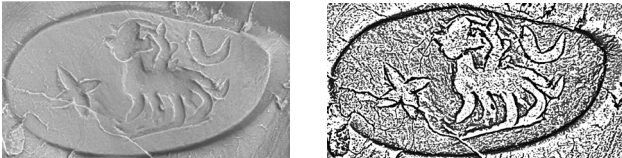


205 G

*standing/walking sphinx; star in front; and crescent moon above the back*The same imprint can be seen on 205 H. The sphinx faces to the left, standing/walking on a base line, surrounded by two astral symbols: a crescent moon and a four-pointed star.⁵⁰

landscape rounded ellipse

measurements: 19 x 9 mm



205 H

standing/walking sphinx; star in front; and crescent moon above the back

Same imprint as 205 G.

landscape rounded ellipse

measurements: 16 x 9 mm

**O.206**

The bulla is ring-shaped, flattened at one side by a large imprint of an *Amtssiegel*. Its hole through the middle has the shape of an ellipse. There are eight imprints, but Speleers published only six of them.⁵¹ Five are Hellenistic, three Mesopotamian. This is one of the severely damaged bullae, so several images of the original surface and of gypsum copies have been added to the illustrations below made (see § 4. Images).

General measurements of bulla O.206: 36 x 36 x 31 mm

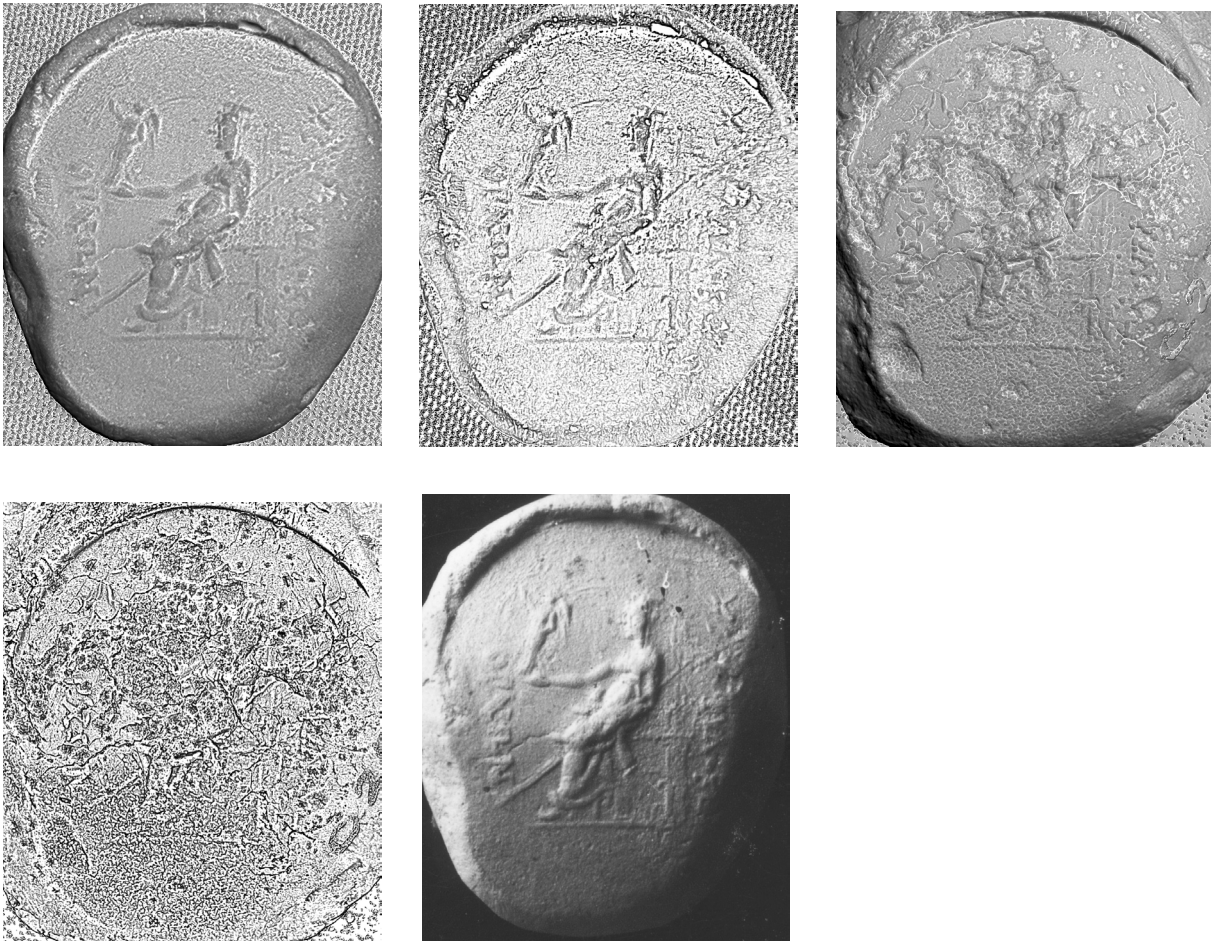
206 A

*seated goddess on throne, holding sceptre in the left hand, winged standing figure in the right; inscription*On this *Amtssiegel* a seated female figure, representing a Greek goddess, faces left and raises in her right hand a small figure, identified as a small Nike. In her left hand and on the side of her body lies a spear. The inscrip-⁴⁹ See MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 692j.⁵⁰ AUWE 20, 60-3, 225-4, 228-10, *21-2, *29-8 & 9, *33-1; AUWE 19, 292-326, MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 733c-d & 735a.⁵¹ SPELEERS 1917, 237-238.

tion on either side of the figure reads ΧΡΕΟΦΥΛΑΚΙΚΟΣ ΟΡΧΩΝ, “guardian of the people of Orchoe” (see also 205 A and 207 A). The imprint has almost completely vanished since it was photographed for the catalogue of Speleers (see below ‘note on images’ and § 4. Images). He identified the large figure as the Olympian Zeus. While there are certainly similarities to depictions of Zeus with Nike, this figure is clearly female. Rostovtzeff, therefore, believed it was a representation of the Tyche of Babylon, yet the presence of a Nike and absence of a cornucopia make this unlikely. Naster thought it showed Athena or was at least inspired by depictions of that goddess. Yet, if this is a depiction of Athena, her shield, which is almost invariably placed near her throne on Greek coinage, and her helmet are absent.⁵² We concur with Lindström who refutes the previous identifications and is satisfied with categorising the figure as a “*Thronende Göttin*”. This same seal was impressed on other bullae and one of them can be securely dated to 141 SE under Antiochus IV (215 -164 BC) thanks to a tax seal impression.⁵³

Note on images: The first two illustration below and on Pl. 2: 206 A are images based on the PLD recordings of the original seal imprint 206 A as it appears on the bulla in 2014. The remaining three images are those of the gypsum copy published in SPELEERS 1917, 238. Of these, the second and third last are based on a recent PLD scan of that gypsum copy, the last is a copy from Speleers’ publication.

portrait rounded ellipse
measurements: 25 x 29 mm



⁵² SIS II, At 1-5, for some seal impressions depicting seated Athena’s.

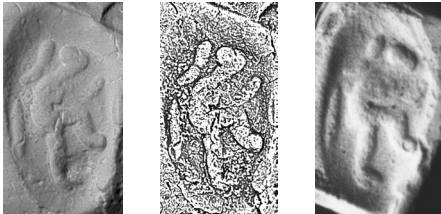
⁵³ SPELEERS 1917; ROSTOVITZEFF 1932, 39, n° 50; NASTER 1979, 218; LINDSTRÖM 2003, 46-47 and 61, Fig. 60.

206 B

winged human figure

The figure is most probably Eros, but seems to be represented unconventionally with double wings. See comments under 206 D.

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 7 x 14 mm

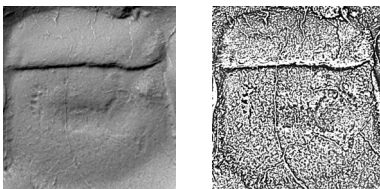


206 C

goat-fish

The imprint, even its shape, is vague. The contours of the depiction seem to represent a goat-fish facing to the right, other features cannot be identified. See comments under 209 E.

circle?
measurements: 12 x 11 mm

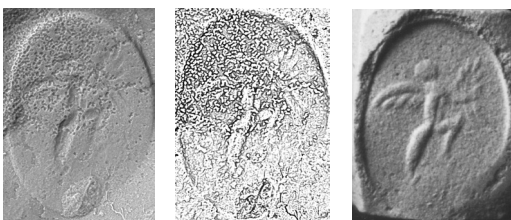


206 D

winged standing or flying Nike/Eros, holding wreath in the hands

This scene represents a flying Nike (Eros could be suggested as well), though the figure might also be standing, with one leg on the ground and the other lifted, as if resting on an elevated object, thus suggesting a certain dynamic of movement.⁵⁴ The god(dess) lifts a palm wreath in front of him (her).⁵⁵

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 10 x 14 mm



206 E

standing human figure

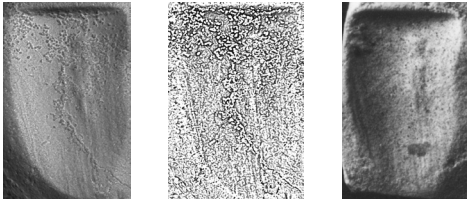
The figure, facing to the left, seems to be female, the hair at the back is gathered in a bun. A similar figure, identified as Tyche, appears on a sealing of the same type.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ AUWE 19, 163 represents an almost identical composition.

⁵⁵ Further close parallels from Uruk are found at AUWE 20, 91-7, 314-6. For Seleucia on the Tigris a large number of similar images have all been catalogued as Eros (SIS II, Er).

⁵⁶ See AUWE 20, 2-3. See also SIS III, If 139.

portrait, convex imprint from conical stamp seal with a rounded end and a flat end
 measurements: 9 x 13 mm



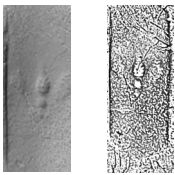
206 F

insect

Although the legs are barely visible, three segments of the body of an insect, seen from above, and two wings directed backwards can be discerned. The abdomen is round and it decreases in thickness towards the end. The insect may be identified as a fly or bee.⁵⁷

convex rectangular with straight edges

measurements: 4 x 11 mm



206 G

walking lion; above the back crescent moon; triangle in front
 The lion walks to the right. There are some close parallels.⁵⁸

landscape pointed ellipse

measurements: 17 x 8 mm



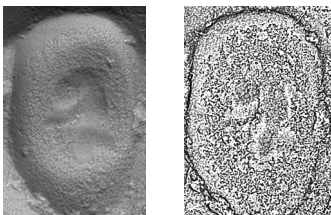
206 H

female bust, hair in a bun

A head facing to the right, based on the headdress, a female. Somewhat comparable busts have been found at Uruk and many female heads, with the hair in a bun, are also known from Seleucia on the Tigris.⁵⁹ These busts are iconic for the Hellenization of Mesopotamia.

portrait rounded ellipse

measurements: 9 x 14 mm



⁵⁷ For parallels see AUWE 20, 499 (wood beetle[?]); AUWE 19, 1018 (ant[?]) & 1019 (fly[?]); MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008: 795b (from Babylon, fly or bee), 669f (fly[?]); McDOWELL 1935, 94 & 105 (from Seleucia on the Tigris, fly or bee) and SIS III, AR 337-346 (from Seleucia on the Tigris, flies and bees).

⁵⁸ AUWE 20, 226-4, 8, 228-12 and AUWE 19, 744.

⁵⁹ AUWE 20, 48-1 and AUWE 19, 22, 25-26; SIS III, Pl. 45-49.

O.207

This bulla has an elliptical shape with a similarly-shaped hole through the middle. There are eight imprints, six of them were published by Speleers.⁶⁰ On one side an *Amtssiegel* has been impressed. Five – one (207 F) remains questionable – of the impressions are Hellenistic, three are Mesopotamian in tradition. Three of the Hellenistic imprints (207 F, G & H) have been impressed close to each other at the opposite side of the joint of the bulla's seam.

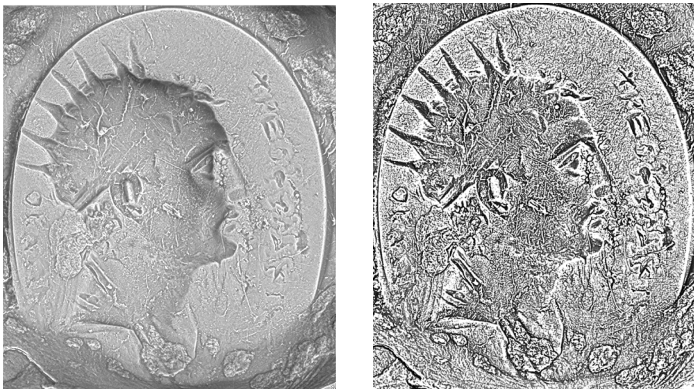
General measurements of bulla O.207: 40 x 36 x 29 mm

207 A

portrait of Antiochus IV, with radiant crown; and inscription

A standard representation of Antiochus IV (215 -164 BC), the first Seleucid king depicted with a radiant crown, facing to the right. This *Amtssiegel* is found on multiple bullae from Uruk.⁶¹ A similar sealing was found in Seleucia on the Tigris.⁶² The inscription, to the left and right of the portrait, reads: ΧΡΕΟΦΥΛΑΚΙΚΟΣ ΟΡΧΩΝ, “guardian of the people of Orchoe” (see also 205 A and 206 A).

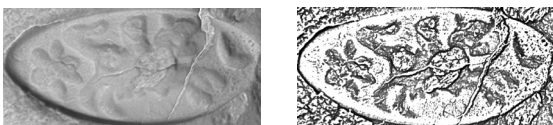
portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 22 x 25 mm

**207 B**

leaping winged bull; with crescent moon; and star

A winged bull, leaping to the right, with a six-pointed star to the left and a crescent moon to the right. Some close parallels from Uruk.⁶³

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 15 x 7 mm

**207 C**

standing figure

No good parallel can be cited here. The scene seems to represent a standing woman, facing to the right and wearing a long garment. If the curved item to the left can be identified as a horn of plenty (*cornucopia*) and she

⁶⁰ The image in SPELEERS 1917, 238 has eight pictures of gypsum copies of the imprints. The one right of the large Antiochus IV imprint, our 207 A, and described as “un sphinx ailé en face d’une étoile à six rayons” is not an imprint which belongs to O.207. This sphinx best resembles our O.205 C. In addition, our 207 C was published twice in that same composite image with gypsum copies (compare below far left with below second from the right).

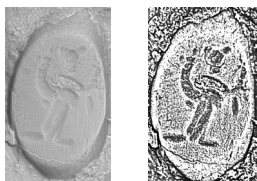
⁶¹ ROSTOVITZEFF 1932, 28 and Pl. V.1-2; FLEISCHER 1996, 322, Pl. 63, 4; LINDSTRÖM 2003, 33; SIS I, 26 and note 10.

⁶² McDOWELL 1935, 9.

⁶³ AUWE 19, 533, 537, 542; AUWE 20, 21-1; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 738h.

holds in front of her a 'sceptre', the figure could represent the goddess Tyche.⁶⁴ The 'sceptre' might even be an Athena statue.⁶⁵

portrait rounded ellipse
measurements: 11 x 7 mm

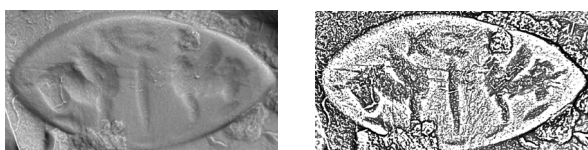


207 D

two seated sphinxes, facing each other; column in between

To the left a bearded sphinx confronted to the right by a non-bearded sphinx. They are seated on either side of a column, its base rendered by one horizontal line, its capital by two. At least one seal from Uruk is very similar to 207 D.⁶⁶

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 18 x 9 mm



207 E

crab; fish; crescent moon; and star

The combination of a crab, a fish, a crescent moon and a (six-)pointed star is a known scene on glyptic evidence from Uruk.⁶⁷

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 20 x 9 mm

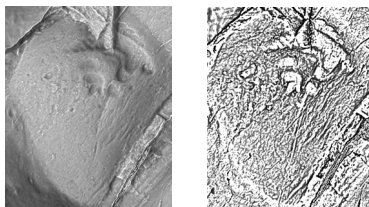


207 F

unidentified imprint

The orientation of the design is based on the imprints occurring next to 207 F. The motif is difficult to identify, but the upper part of a head might be suggested.

irregularly shaped
measurements: 11 x 13 mm



⁶⁴ E.g. AUWE 20, 297-1.2, 329-3.4, for the position of the feet 224-4.

⁶⁵ SIS II, Tk 314.

⁶⁶ AUWE 20, 86-1, 337-1, 339-1&2, *8-4; also BiMES 24, 13 Le.E., 20 Lo.E., 28 U.E.; AUWE 19, 271-283.

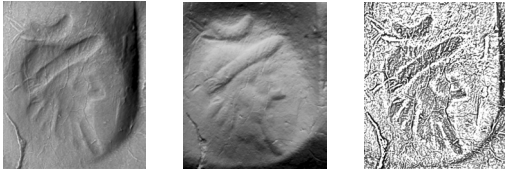
⁶⁷ See BiMES 24, 22 U.E., 23 Le.E.; AUWE 19, 1002-1003, 1006-1007; AUWE 20, 417-7, *8-1, MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 739j.

207 G

bearded head; crescent moon above

A head in profile, looking to the right, has a distinct headdress and beard. A crescent moon is positioned above.⁶⁸ A few busts in profile have a crescent above the head.⁶⁹ The headdress is a cap or helmet. In combination with a bearded head, the portrait resembles a soldier with Boeotian helmet known from representations at Seleucia on the Tigris.⁷⁰

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 8 x 11 mm



207 H

kneeling Eros

A common Hellenistic motif of Eros, with one knee squatting and hands bound at his back, in this case positioned on a bottom line. Eros looks to the left, a wing is visible just above the shoulder.⁷¹

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 6 x 8 mm

**O.208**

The bulla has an elliptical shape with a similarly-shaped hole through the middle. Ten imprints can be observed; Speleers mentioned “multiple imprints” and published seven of them.⁷² The largest is a well-known *Amtssiegel* depicting a standing Nike and its use can be dated to the reign of Antiochus III (223-187 BC). As is the case for some of the other bullae (see remarks under O.206 and § 4. Images), a number of stamp imprints have been partly or even completely destroyed since their discovery and therefore, if available, additional images of the imprints are provided below. In case the new scans of the imprints on the bulla could not be associated with the pictures published by Speleers, they are discussed at the end of the general descriptions.

General measurements of bulla O.208: 26 x 35 x 29 mm

208 A

Standing Nike, holding object; inscription

Winged Nike facing to the left, wearing a *chiton*, with a palm wreath in the right hand held in front of her (barely visible on this imprint) and an eagle below on the base line. This *Amtssiegel* is well known from several imprints at Uruk.⁷³ Though common on the coinage of the Seleucids, the goddess is not traditionally associated with an eagle, the symbol of Zeus.⁷⁴ To the right is a partly eroded and damaged inscription: ΧΡΕΟΦΥΛΑΚΙΚΟΣ,

⁶⁸ For comparable depictions at Uruk see AUWE 20, 73-1, 216-1.2, 227-8 (the headdress), *57-2; CM 12, 1 and MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 733a.

⁶⁹ See AUWE 19, 15 and 17.

⁷⁰ SIS III, GuT 1-2, see also SIS I, Se 6.

⁷¹ For Uruk see AUWE 20, 49-4, 96-1, 228-8, 330-1 and *20.4.

⁷² SPELEERS 1917, 238-239.

⁷³ LINDSTRÖM 2003, 42-43.

⁷⁴ ROSTOVITZEFF 1932, 35 and Pl. VII.3.

and below: OPXΩN (upside down); *chreophulakikos orchôn*: “guardian [of the public debt registry] of the people of Orchoe (Uruk)”.

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 20 x 25 mm

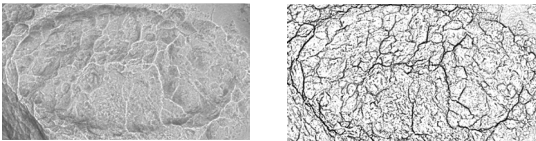


208 B

unidentifiable (worn) imprint

This is probably one of the quadrupeds mentioned by Speleers; the orientation of the image is uncertain.⁷⁵

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 16 x 9 mm

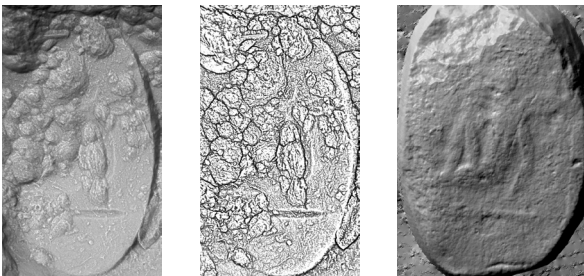


208 C

kneeling Eros

A common Hellenistic motive of Eros with one knee on the ground, the other squatting. The hands are bound on the back and the contours of a wing can be discerned. The figure is positioned on a baseline.⁷⁶ The additional image to the right is a PLD scan of a gypsum copy of the imprint, made before it was damaged but not published by Speleers.

rounded portrait ellipse
measurements: 18 x 10 mm



⁷⁵ SPELEERS 1917, 238-239, Pl. 208.

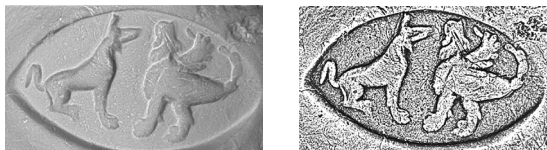
⁷⁶ For parallels from Uruk see AUWE 20, 49-4, 96-1, 228-8, 330-1 and *20.4.

208 D

winged human-headed scorpion monster; facing seated dog

Archetypal Mesopotamian iconographic scene from the Seleucid period. Wallenfels describes the dog as “mastiff-like”, a well-known breed in ancient Mesopotamia.⁷⁷

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 17 x 9 mm

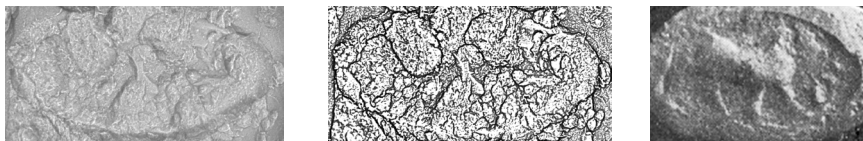


208 E

uncertain (standing/walking bull)

The shape of the imprint corresponds to one of the illustrations in the publication of Speleers (see the additional illustration just below to the right).⁷⁸ That imprint represents a standing or walking bull to the right, with what seems an extra feature in front.⁷⁹

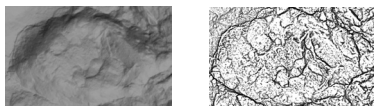
landscape rounded ellipse
measurements: 16 x 9 mm



208 F

unidentifiable (worn) imprint

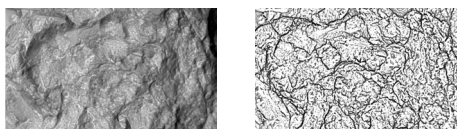
rounded ellipse
measurements: 11 x 6 mm



208 G

unidentifiable (worn) imprint

unclear shape, perhaps a landscape rounded ellipse
measurements: 14 x 8 mm



⁷⁷ WALLENFELS 1994, 239-247; for other examples from Uruk see B1MES 24, 1 U.E.; AUWE 20, *35-1; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 524b (Babylon), 651a, 669a, 673c (Babylon), 708q, 709d, 773c, e.

⁷⁸ SPELEERS 1917, 239: 208, first image bottom left.

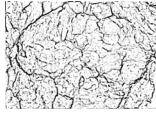
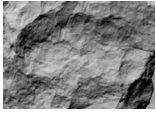
⁷⁹ AUWE 19, 842-872.

208 H

unidentifiable (worn) imprint

unclear shape

measurements: 10 x 6 mm



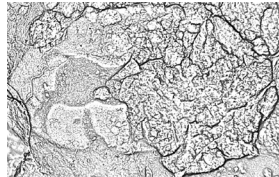
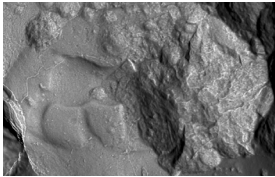
208 I

standing quadruped (standing/walking bull?)

The rear part of a standing quadruped is seen. The right side of the imprint has chipped off since the initial publication. The imprint resembles one of the illustrations in the publication of Speleers (see the additional illustration just below to the right).⁸⁰ The rear part certainly hints at an identification as a bull.⁸¹

landscape rounded ellipse

measurements: 18 x 11 mm

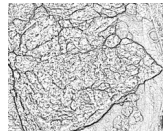
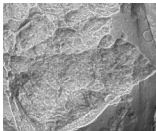


208 J

unidentifiable (worn) imprint

pointed ellipse

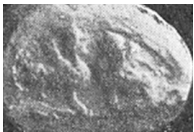
measurements: 15 x 8 mm



Seal imprints published by Speleers⁸² that could not be linked to the damaged imprints on O.208 as presented above:

*leaping winged quadruped*

A quadruped leaps to the right. The identification of the head is difficult: horse, griffin and bull are all plausible.⁸³

*facing seated sphinxes*

Two seated sphinxes face each other; the details of the one to the right are difficult to distinguish.⁸⁴

*standing/walking lion*

A lion walks to the right, no additional features are seen.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ SPELEERS 1917, 239: 208, top right.

⁸¹ See AUWE 19, 854.

⁸² SPELEERS 1917, 239: 208.

⁸³ See 204 J and AUWE 19, 463-470, 487-616.

⁸⁴ AUWE 19, 260-270.

⁸⁵ AUWE 19, 723-730.

O.209

Spherical shape with a relatively small rectangular hole through the middle. There are twenty-one imprints; Speleers counted eighteen, but published only 5 of them.⁸⁶ Only two imprints are Hellenistic in tradition (209 A and 209 T). The largest of them is impressed precisely on the joint of the bulla's seam. Based on duplicates of sealings on cuneiform tablets elsewhere (209 B & F) the bulla can be dated to the end of the reign of Antiochus I (281–261 BC) or the beginning of Antiochus II (261–246 BC).

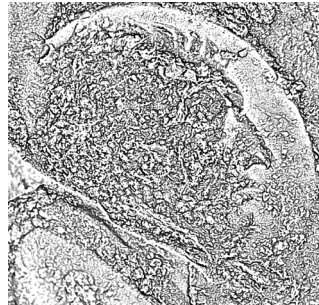
General measurements of bulla O.209: 46 x 39 x 41 mm

209 A

male bust

A seemingly beardless head in Hellenistic tradition in profile to the right. Probably a depiction of a private citizen. Many similar portraits, but no exact parallels, are known. They are especially common at Seleucia on the Tigris.⁸⁷

portrait broad ellipse (maybe a circle)
measurements: 20 x 20 mm

**209 B**

leaping winged bull; dolphin below

Similar compositions, displaying a bull leaping to the right, its tail raised upwards and horn aimed forward, in combination with a dolphin, are well known.⁸⁸ The genitals are rendered prominently. At the bottom, largely damaged, a dotted base line can still be seen near the hind legs. As such, this imprint comes from the same seal as AUWE 19: 570; an imprint occurring on two tablets dated to 15,XI,51 and 28.I,52 SE, i.e. the end of the reign of Antiochus I (281–261 BC) and the beginning of Antiochus II (261–246 BC).

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 16 x 11 mm

**209 C**

uncertain (worn); leaping quadruped?

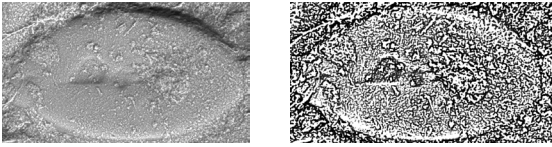
The orientation is uncertain. The contours of the rear of a quadruped leaping to the right can still be discerned.

⁸⁶ SPELEERS 1917, 239.

⁸⁷ SIS I, Pl. 21-44; for Uruk a good parallel is AUWE 19, 14.

⁸⁸ See AUWE 19, 570, 577, 579, 580, 582-584; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 662b (Babylon).

portrait rounded ellipse
measurements: 18 x 9 mm

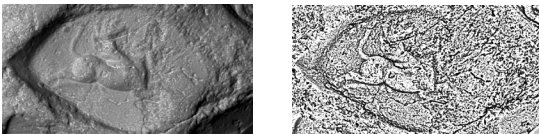


209 D

leaping human-headed winged bull

The right side of the scene is damaged, but the contours of a human-headed bull with beard and feathered crown can be recognized. The winged bull leaps to the right with its tail curled upwards. There are some close parallels from Uruk.⁸⁹

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 9 x 15 mm

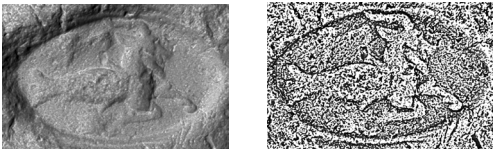


209 E

goat-fish

The fish body, facing to the right, is decorated with a pattern of scales. Above the goat-fish is a motif of which the contours suggest an 'upside down triangle'.⁹⁰

landscape rounded ellipse
measurements: 15 x 9 mm

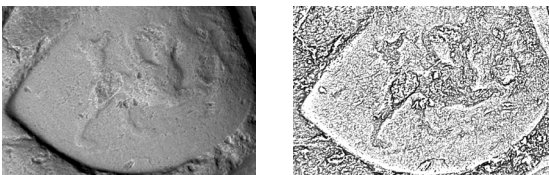


209 F

jumping lion-dragon; bull head

The lion-like legs and the elegant posture support an identification as a winged lion-dragon jumping to the right. The two front legs are raised, the rear ones stand on a base line, thus suggesting a jumping position. Above its back is a *bucranion* in front view. A duplicate imprint of the seal is found on a cuneiform tablet dated to 14,...,47 SE, the reign of Antiochus I (281–261 BC).⁹¹

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 17 x 11 mm



⁸⁹ AUWE 19, 381 and MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 680c.

⁹⁰ For this common Mesopotamian motive see AUWE 19, 661-696, in particular 679 with a triangle. Compare also the unidentified feature on AUWE 20, *32-8, *33-4 and the triangle on *32-9, *33-5, and on OECT IX, 23-24, 26.

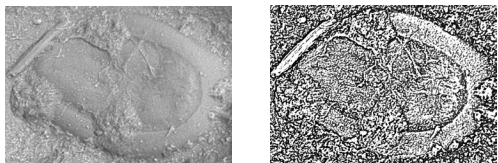
⁹¹ AUWE 19, 477.

209 G

unidentifiable (worn) imprint

rounded ellipse

measurements: 15 x 10 mm



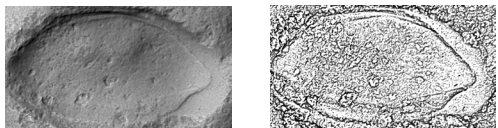
209 H

unidentifiable (worn) imprint

The vague contours of an animal facing to the right can be discerned.

landscape pointed ellipse

measurements: 15 x 10 mm

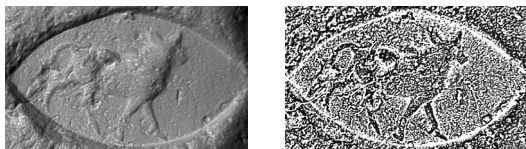


209 I

*walking bull*A bull walks to the right, no additional motifs.⁹²

landscape pointed ellipse

measurements: 16 x 9 mm



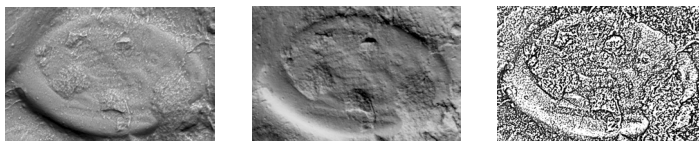
209 J

unidentifiable (worn) imprint

Most of the imprint is damaged. Some features are distinguishable, such as a base line. A recumbent human-headed winged sphinx in profile to the right might be suggested.

landscape pointed ellipse

measurements: 13 x 9 mm



209 K

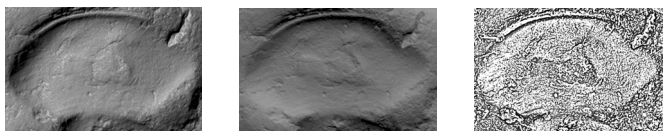
Uncertain (leaping quadruped)?

The contours of an animal, leaping to the right with its tail pointed upwards, are visible.

⁹² For a close parallel from Uruk see AUWE 20, *58-3 and B1MES 24, 19 R.E, 48 R.E.

⁹³ For parallels from Uruk see, in general, AUWE 19, 344-365.

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 13 x 7 mm

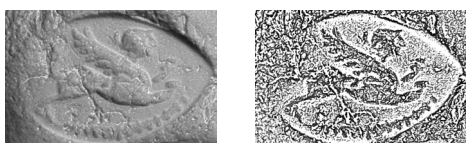


209 L

jumping sphinx; decorated base line

The sphinx jumps to the right and wears a rounded cap or helmet.⁹⁵ The hind legs stand on a curved base line composed of a series of incisions.

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 14 x 9 mm



209 M

leaping griffin; filling motif

The pointed snout and thin neck of the winged creature hint at an identification of the creature as a griffin leaping to the right, its tail raised.⁹⁴ In front of the creature the vague contours of a motif are visible, maybe a star or lotus/lily flower.⁹⁵ In addition, a much smaller round impression with a hole in the middle is seen on the lower right part of 209 M. Whether there is any connection between both remains uncertain.

landscape rounded ellipse
measurements: 14 x 8 mm

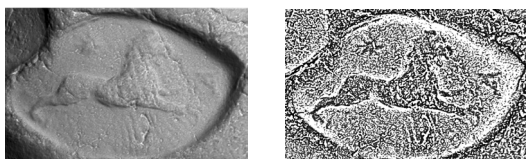


209 N

leaping lion; star above; and bull head in front

A lion leaps to the right, in the field an eight-pointed star above its back and a *bucranion* in front.⁹⁶

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 16 x 10 mm



209 O

leaping winged centaur; with bow

Hybrid creature composed of the body of a winged horse and that of a human. The centaur leaps to the right,

⁹⁴ AUWE 19, 463-469, AUWE 20, 226-17, 409-1.

⁹⁵ AUWE 19, 460-462.

⁹⁶ See AUWE 19, 815 and 820.

⁹⁷ See AUWE 19, 195-205 in general and 196 in particular; AUWE 20, *4-4; OECT IX, 22.4.

wears a feathered crown and handles a bow. The creature is positioned above a curved base line. Its tail seems to curl upwards; a second tail might be present as well. In front a hollow or framed triangle is depicted.⁹⁷

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 14 x 10 mm



209 P

leaping winged quadruped (bull?)

The remnants of the impression are vague, but a horn directed frontwards can be discerned, thus supporting the identification of the quadruped leaping to the right as a winged bull. The S-shaped tail curls upwards.⁹⁸

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 15 x 10 mm

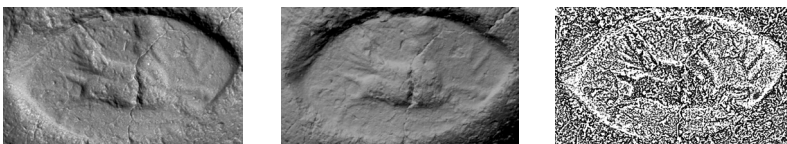


209 Q

leaping human headed winged bull; Aramaic letter

The human-headed bearded creature wears a round cap which is peaked at the back, see AUWE 19: 380 & 391; its tail curls upwards. In front the Aramaic letter ψ is engraved.⁹⁹ These enigmatic inscriptions consisting of only one character are rare compared to the total number of known stamp imprints. This ψ can be mistaken for a twig.¹⁰⁰ In the case of Mitchell and Searight, the identification is more doubtful; their “stylised plant [Spica?]” might as well be a similar ψ as on 209 Q where no stem is observed.¹⁰¹ An argument against a ψ -identification might be – with the exceptions of AUWE 19: 988 and 209 Q – that the ψ 's at Uruk are mostly represented in reverse.

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 15 x 9 mm



209 R

walking winged quadruped

The stamp was superficially impressed between four more deeply impressed seals. As such, part of the sealing plane did not touch the bulla's clay surface, leaving an incomplete impression. The contours of an elegant winged quadruped, walking to the right, are visible, its tail raised upwards.

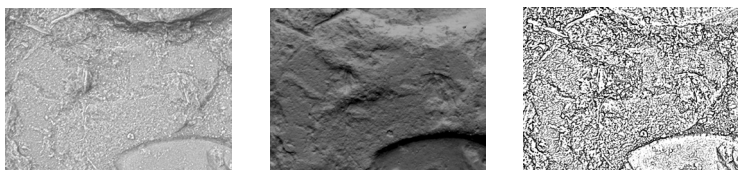
⁹⁸ AUWE 109, 493 and 502.

⁹⁹ See for a parallel of this sign at Uruk AUWE 19, 215 & 988; MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 675e, 686c & 725j.

¹⁰⁰ On AUWE 19, 338; AUWE 20, 307-5 & *56-8, MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 711d such a twig is identified with certainty.

¹⁰¹ MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 688l.

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 15 x 9 mm

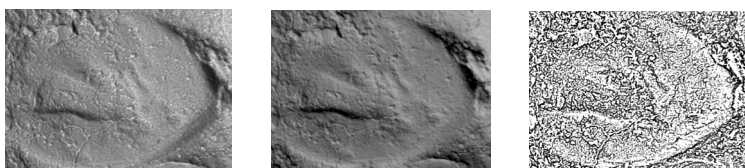


209 S

winged quadruped or fish-goat

The rear of the main body is vague, to the right the forelegs can be observed, one folded below the body, the other extended forward. Just behind the head is a dorsal fin or a wing.

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 15 x 10 mm



209 T

standing female? figure

On this – for Uruk rare – scene, the figure wears a long garment (*chiton*), clearly Hellenistic in style. At the back of the head the hair seems gathered in a bun, identifying the figure as female. The posture follows a typical line; the feet and legs beside each other with the main body bent backwards and the face in profile looking to the left. One arm is positioned at the back (hanging down), the other reaches out to a vertical object standing in front. This feature might be a *thymiaterion* (incense burner)¹⁰², or an altar. The lack of attributes and symbols impedes an identification as a goddess. As such, the figure represents a female worshipper. Similar depictions can be found at Seleucia on the Tigris.¹⁰³

portrait broad ellipse
measurements: 13 x 15 mm



209 U

galloping winged human headed bull

A bearded and winged human-headed bull gallops to the right. Its tail is long and ends in a bulge. Representations of galloping quadrupeds are rare.¹⁰⁴

landscape pointed ellipse
measurements: 15 x 9 mm



¹⁰² HENIG 1994, 559.

¹⁰³ SIS III, SC 1-9.

6. Concluding remarks

The Hellenistic bullae from the RMAH show a great variety of subjects, with iconography drawn from both indigenous and Greek/Hellenistic culture. A first group of subjects consists of Greek deities: Apollo (205 A), a seated goddess (206 A, probably inspired by depictions of Athena), one to three Tyches (204 D, 206 E?, 207 C), two or three Nike's (206 D, 208 A, detail on 206 A), two to four Erotes (206 B, 206 D, 207 H, 208 C, detail on 206 A) and a possible depiction of Helios (204 B). All these gods were common during the Hellenistic Age. Apollo was closely linked to the Seleucid dynasty and Nike often figured in the propaganda of Greeks monarchs; Tyche and Eros both became popular figures in this period. Apart from these gods, one of the imprints on the bulla depicts a supernatural human being: a Gorgon (205 D). Relatively few known human figures appear: we have one monarch (207 A, Antiochus IV) and two possible portraits of Alexander (204 B, 205 B). There are also four female figures (204 A, 204 O, 206 E?, 209 T), two male (207 G, 209 A) and one female bust (206 H). As noted, inspiration for these portrayals comes from Greek iconography (i.e. Seleucid or Hellenistic Babylonian) and the imprints are all in the shape of a portrait ellipse. One of the imprints is a tax seal bearing only a Greek inscription (205 E).

A second group encompasses animals and draws its inspiration from the indigenous Mesopotamian culture. Among the mythological animals are nine winged bulls (204 C, 204 H, 204 L, 207 B, 209 B, 209 P, three of them with human heads, 209 D, 209 Q, 209 U), ten sphinxes (204 F, 204 G, 205 C, 205 G-H, 207 D (2x), 208 XX (2x), 209 L), a winged horse (204 J), two goat-fishes (206 C, 209 E), a lion-dragon (209 F), a griffin (209 M), a winged human-headed scorpion monster (208 D) and a winged centaur (209 O). Three winged quadrupeds (208 XX, 209 R, 209 S) could not be identified. Among the real animals we have four bulls (204 I, 208 E, 208 I, 209 I), four or five lions (204 K?, 204 M, 206 G, 208 XX, 209 N), one or two dogs (204 K?, 208 D), two crabs (204 E, 207 E) and an insect (206 F). As common for Southern Mesopotamia, the main filling motifs are astral symbols (crescent moons, stars and globe), triangles (204 C, 204 H 206 G), a dolphin (209 B), a fish (205 C, 207 E), a crab (204 J), a squid (204 H) and a bull head (209 N). In one occasion an Aramaic letter ψ was identified (209 Q).

The Brussels material reflects how Hellenistic Mesopotamia experienced a diverse cultural and ethnical amalgamation, with significant differences between its major urban centres. If one agrees that seals provide insights into the identity of their owners/users, the sealing ensembles from Warka/Uruk and those found

in Seleucia on the Tigris – the two main centres in central and southern Mesopotamia at the time – demonstrate most clearly these regional differences. In the latter city, seals with Greek subjects constitute the vast majority. The Greek gods are strongly represented, only a minority shows Babylonian motifs.¹⁰⁵ At Uruk, on the other hand, some of the glyptic material is 'Greek', but a majority continues representing traditional Babylonian themes.¹⁰⁶ Yet, as demonstrated by the larger 'official' seals, the documents at Uruk did originate in a Hellenized state administered context, substantiated by individuals with a distinct and traditional Mesopotamian identity. The city of Seleucia on the Tigris, founded by Antiochus I, presents itself as the foremost Hellenized centre of Mesopotamia, whereas at Uruk urban life flourishes spectacularly without renouncing its millennia old roots.¹⁰⁷

Our six bullae bear witness to these regional developments. The official seals are 'Greek', with some of the smaller seals showing Greek themes as well; they represent the more Hellenized individuals in the Seleucid Uruk society. Most, however, display a more traditional iconographic repertoire: sphinxes, winged human-headed bulls, etc. It is likely that the dissimilarity between Seleucia and Warka was due to local political and cultural factors. Whilst the newly founded city of Seleucia became the most important city of the eastern Seleucid empire (only surpassed by Syrian Antioch, in the western half) with a substantial Greek population, Warka/Uruk was inhabited by a long standing indigenous population. Together with the evidence from the sealed cuneiform documents, Uruk appears as a city ruled by an "old urban notability" (old referring to the original Babylonian inhabitants) with the Hellenistic kings controlling the city through this local elite. Because they stayed in power, this notability succeeded in maintaining their own pre-Hellenistic culture for a long period of time.¹⁰⁸ Cuneiform continued to be used and many men and women still preferred a traditional iconography for their seals, with a history dating back thousands of years.

¹⁰⁴ MITCHELL, SEARIGHT 2008, 678b (from Babylon).

¹⁰⁵ HERBERT 2003, 70; MESSINA and MOLLO 2004, 3; COLLON 2007, 121.

¹⁰⁶ WALLÉN-FELS 1994; LINDSTRÖM 2003; also COLLON 2007, 121 and LINDSTRÖM 2013, 318.

¹⁰⁷ MESSINA 2011 and KOSE 2013.

¹⁰⁸ CLANCIER 2011, 756-758.

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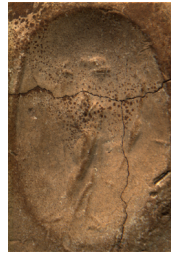
204 A



204 B



204 C



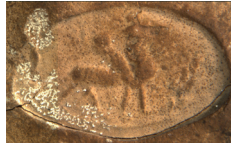
204 D



204 E



204 F



204 G



204 H



204 I



204 J



204 K



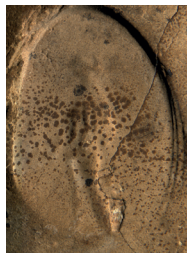
204 L



204 M



204 N



204 O



205 A



205 B



205 C



205 D



205 E



205 F



205 G



206 A



206 B



206 C



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206 H



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207 B



207 C



207 D



207 E



207 F



208 A



208 B



208 C



208 D



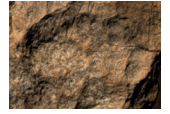
208 E



208 F



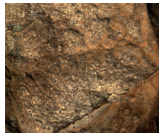
208 G



208 H



208 I



208 J



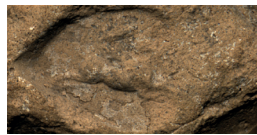
209 A



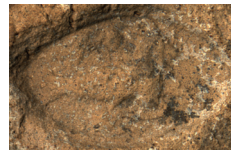
209 B



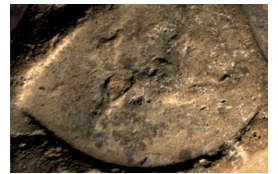
209 C



209 D



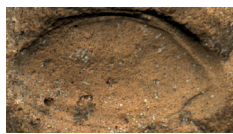
209 E



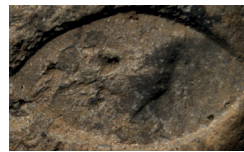
209 F



209 G



209 H



209 I



209 L



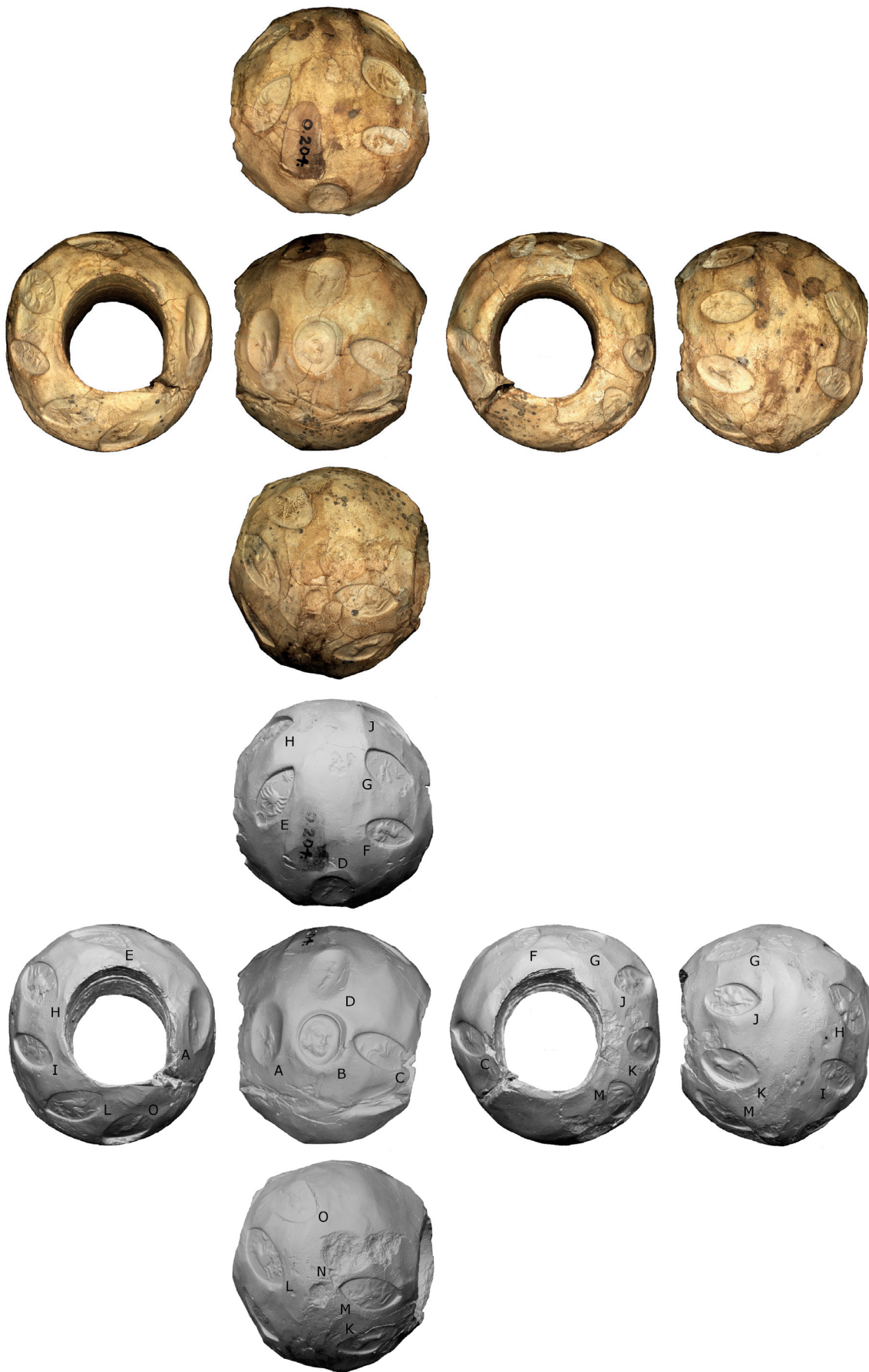
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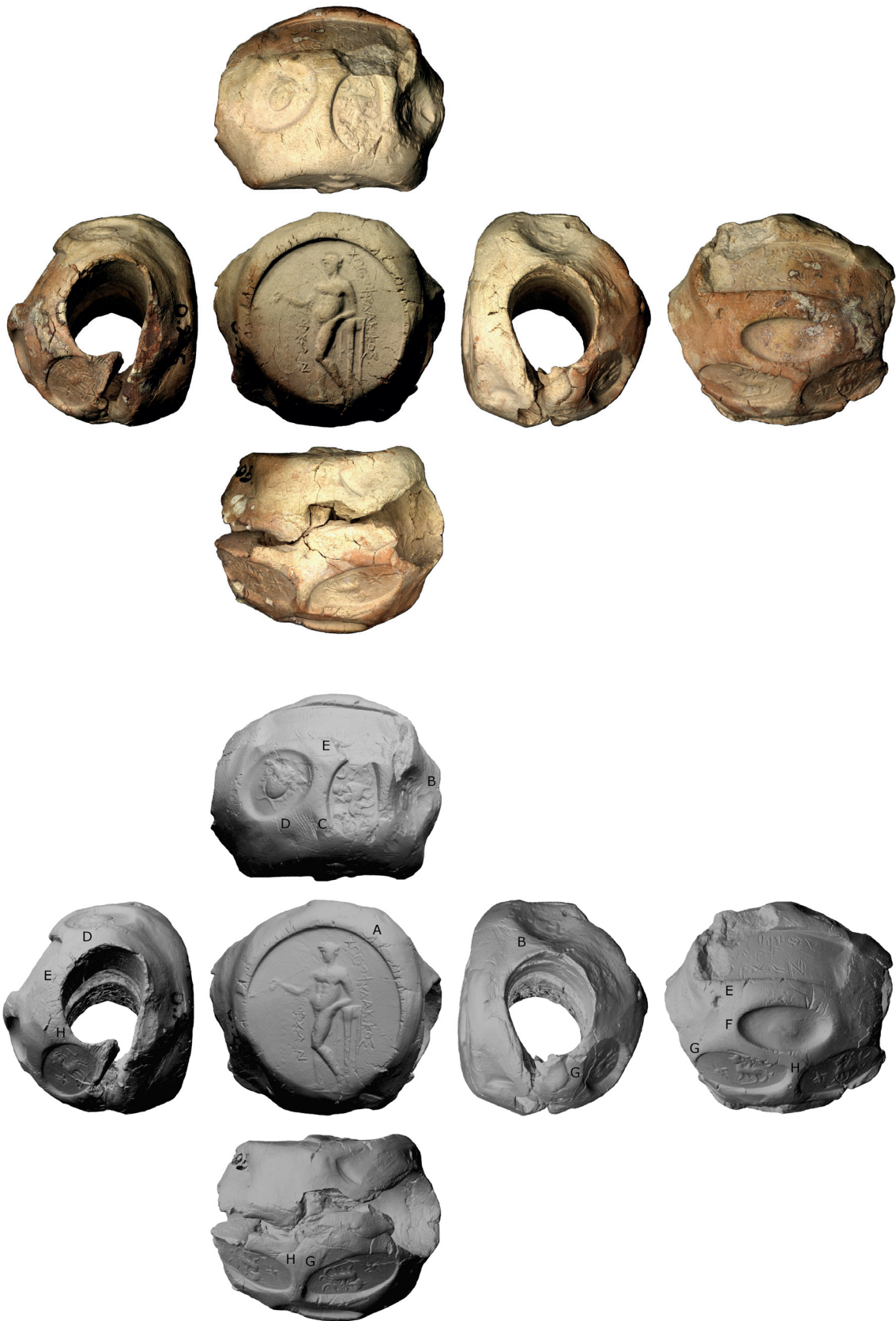
209 R



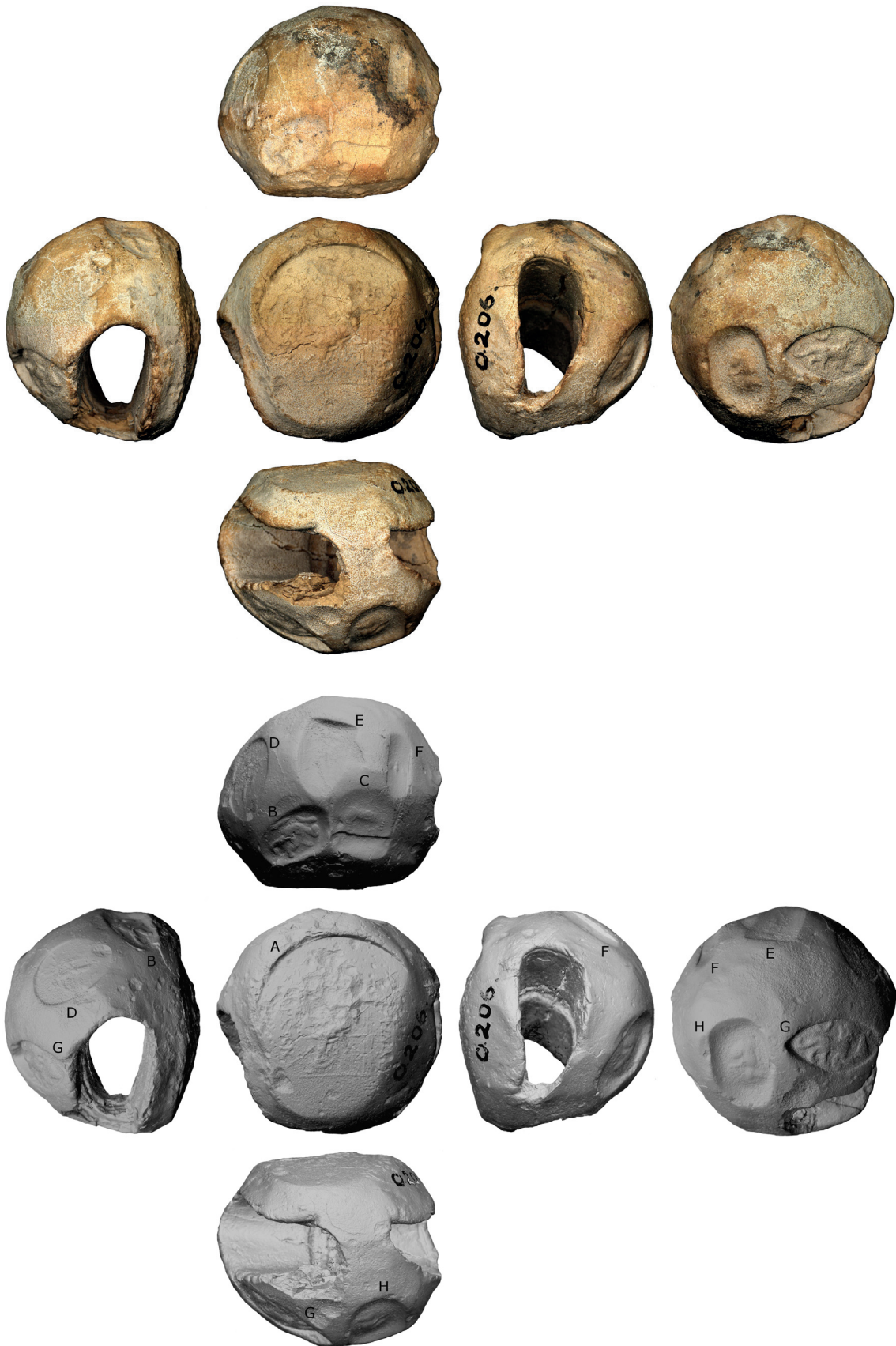
209 U



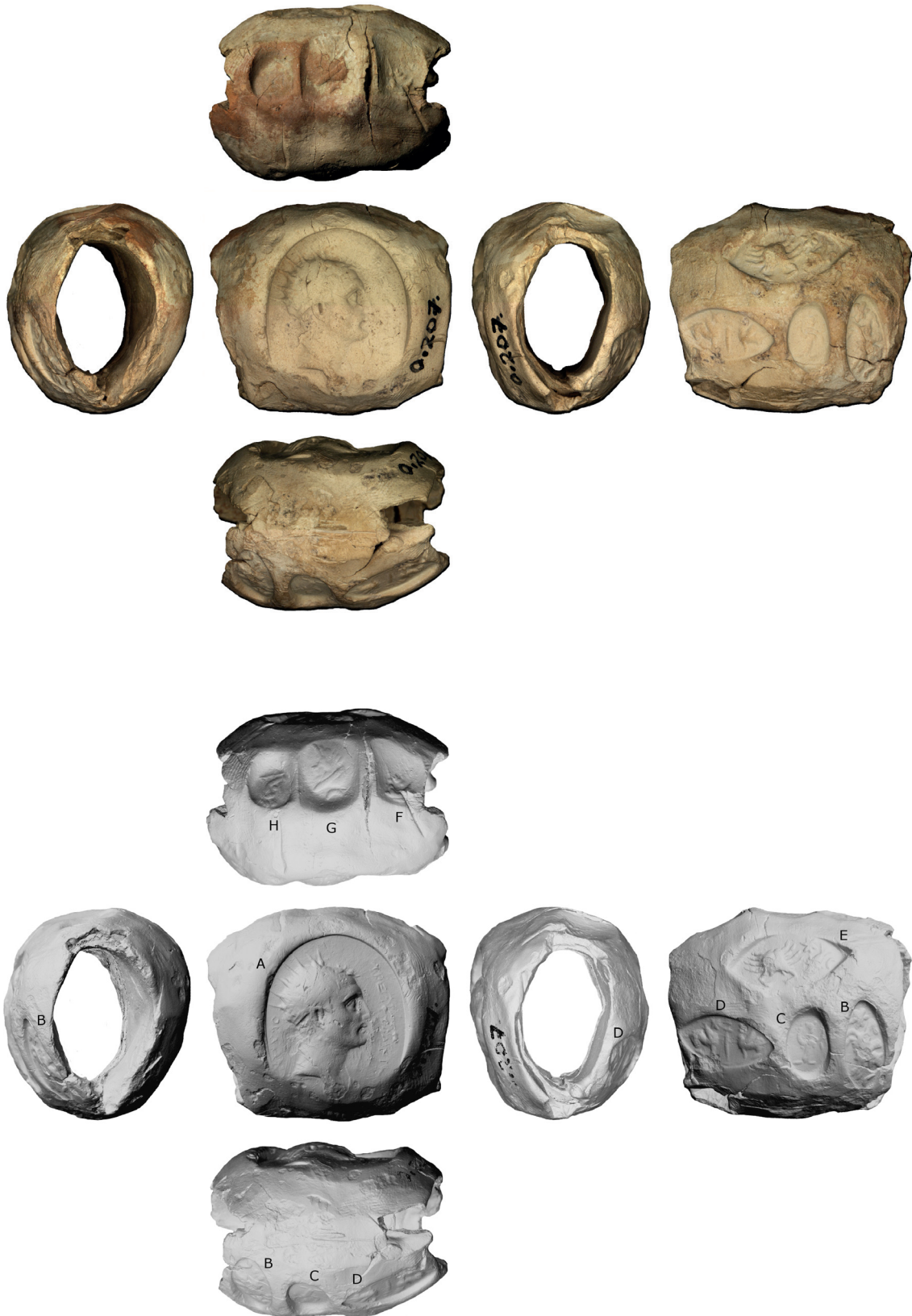
O.204 - photorealistic composition of all sides, based on the recordings made with the PLD system: above with color (texture); below without color + position of the seal impressions (shaded).



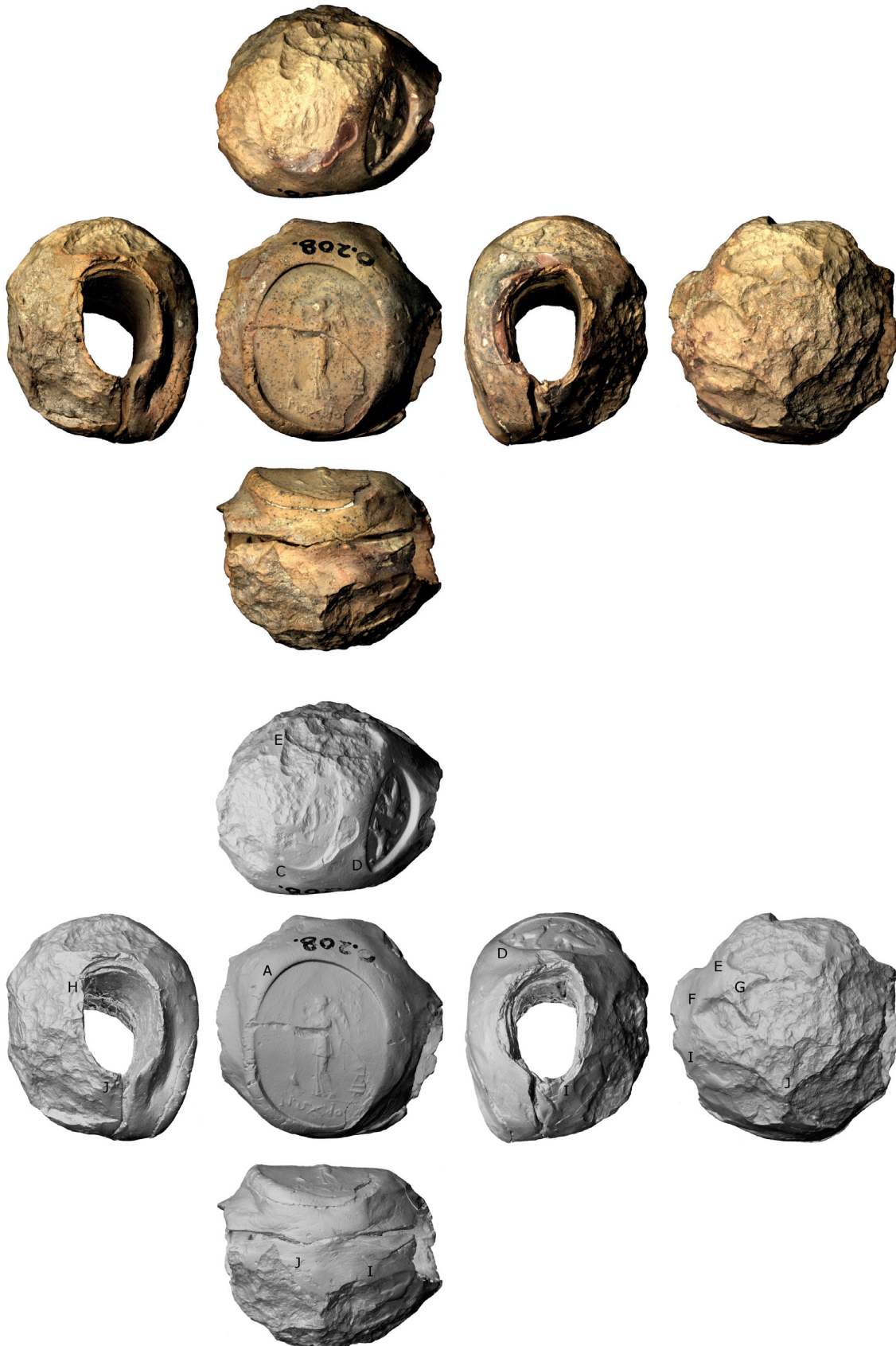
O.205 - photorealistic composition of all sides, based on the recordings made with the PLD system: above with color (texture); below without color + position of the seal impressions (shaded).



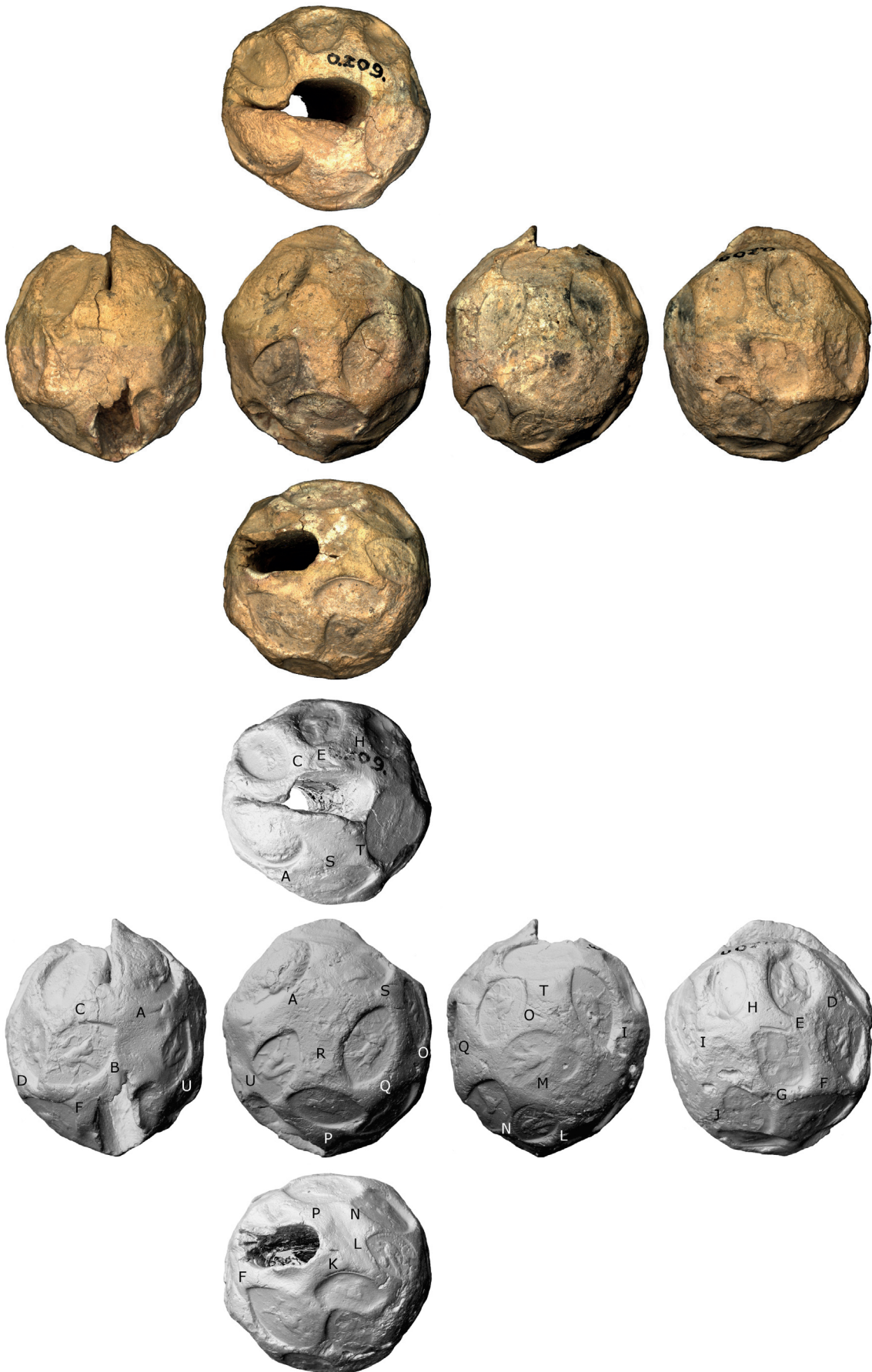
O.206 - photorealistic composition of all sides, based on the recordings made with the PLD system: above with color (texture); below without color + position of the seal impressions (shaded).



O.207 - photorealistic composition of all sides, based on the recordings made with the PLD system: above with color (texture); below without color + position of the seal impressions (shaded).



O.208 - photorealistic composition of all sides, based on the recordings made with the PLD system: above with color (texture); below without color + position of the seal impressions (shaded).



O.209 - photorealistic composition of all sides, based on the recordings made with the PLD system: above with color (texture); below without color + position of the seal impressions (shaded).

Impaginazione a cura di Stefano Rolle

FINITO DI STAMPARE
NEL MESE DI MARZO 2015
PER CONTO DELLA
CASA EDITRICE LE LETTERE
DALLA TIPOGRAFIA ABC
SESTO FIORENTINO - FIRENZE