

Centre for Eastern Mediterranean History and Culture (GKM)

The Centre for Eastern Mediterranean History and Culture (GKM) is a research and study network of all departments and institutes focussing on antiquity at the University of Münster. It offers a platform to initiate as well as interconnect research on history, archaeology, languages, religion and culture in the ancient Mediterranean and beyond. Interdisciplinarity and internationality are key aspects of our centre, which initiates and supports research projects and networks both nationwide and internationally.

The GKM is one of the nuclei of the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics", as well as the backbone of the network "Archäologie diagonal", which unites all disciplines and colleagues working with archaeological methods in the University of Münster.

Through the interdisciplinary Master's programme "Ancient Cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean (AKOEM)" and the doctoral school "Münster School of Ancient Cultures (MSAC)", the network is also actively involved in teaching and doctoral training.

As part of the Europe-wide Ulysseus University, we are currently working with the Universities of Genoa, Seville, Bordeaux Montaigne, Côte d'Azur and Montenegro to develop the international Master's programme "Conservation and Restoration Sciences", which is expected to be accredited in 2026/27.



Centrum für
Geschichte und
Kultur des östlichen Mittelmeerraums

Cluster of Excellence 'Religion and Politics'

Established in 2007, the Cluster of Excellence 'Religion and Politics' will continue to study the complex relationship between religion and politics across epochs and cultures until 2027. The approximately 150 researchers from 20 disciplines in the humanities and social Sciences focus on Europe and the Mediterranean region, and their interconnections with the Middle East, Africa, North America and Latin America. The Cluster is the largest of its kind in Germany and the only Cluster of Excellence to focus on religion. Since its inception the Cluster addresses a wide range of historical and contemporary issues.

Organization

Cluster of Excellence 'Religion and Politics'

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Centre for Eastern Mediterranean History and Culture (GKM)

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Location

Hörsaalgebäude des Exzellenzclusters
Room JO 101
Johannisstraße 1-4, 48143 Münster

Keynote Lecture

Monday, 18.15
Fürstenberghaus, Room F2
Domplatz 20-22, 48143 Münster



International Workshop of the Cluster of Excellence
'Religion and Politics' and the Centre for Eastern
Mediterranean History and Culture (GKM)

Cultural Practice of Sealing and Functions of Seal Impressions

26 – 27th October 2026

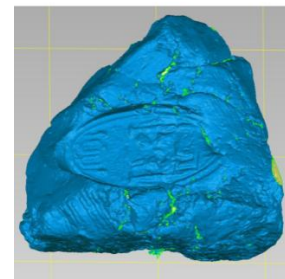
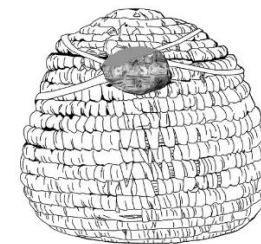
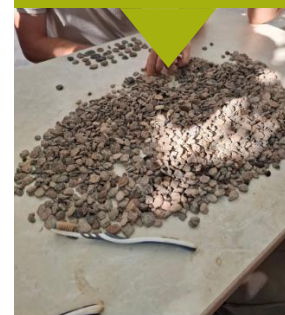


Image: Seals, GKM

Cultural Practice of Sealing and Functions of Seal Impressions

Seals were widespread across the cultures of antiquity and constitute a particularly rich group of artefacts. Through their materiality, their role as a medium, and their symbolic dimension, seals possess a form of agency of their own: they both reflect human action and simultaneously shape the practices in which they are embedded. Seals are not merely material objects but active elements of cultural practice that help stabilize and make visible social, political, and religious orders. As part of complex constellations of action and function, they link object, practice, and meaning. It is precisely this hybridity that makes seals a particularly fruitful object of study, the diversity and historical variability of which have so far only been partially explored.

The workshop brings together interdisciplinary perspectives on the cultural practice of sealing and the functions of seal impressions. It aims to explore the material and its interpretative potential, and to identify both regional particularities and wider commonalities.

The first section of the workshop, “AGENCY: Sealer – Institution – Authority”, concentrates on the owner of the seal, the individual, and their institutional or social authority. Names and images on the seal as well as traces of fingerprints let us glimpse the individual behind the masses of objects.

The second section, “FUNCTION: Archives – Economy – Religion and Magic”, shifts the focus to seal impressions as carriers of signs, images, and inscriptions at the centre of attention. It examines the roles of sealings and seal impressions in archival practice, their function in regulating the movement of goods, and the ways in which they enabled mechanisms of control. At the same time, their symbolic dimension points beyond administrative use to broader mechanisms of identification, social relations, and authority.

In the third section, “INTERACTION: Seal – Sealed Object – Social Message”, the aim is to explore how the material properties of both the sealed objects and the seal itself influenced sealing production. This culminates in a statement about the social context, which also incorporates the use as jewellery.

Programme

Monday, 26th October 2026

14.15–14.30

Welcome and Introduction

Lutz Doering, University of Münster, Germany

AGENCY: Sealer – Institution – Authority

14.30–15.15

A Multi-Analytical Approach to the Social Identity of Sealers

Siobhan Shinn, Barca Archaeology, United Kingdom

15.15–15.30 | *Coffee break*

15.30–16.15

The Seal Image: An Expression of Individual Identity or a Reflection of Socio-Cultural Practices?

Torben Schreiber, University of Münster, Germany

16.15–17.00

Condensing Personhood: Greek Monograms on Coins, Seals, and Stamps from the 5th to 9th Centuries AD

Michael Grünbart, University of Münster, Germany

18.15–19.45

Keynote Lecture

From Clay to Interaction to Data: Indexing and Exploring Ancient West Asian Seals and Sealings

Adelheid Otto, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, and
Elisa Roßberger, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
Fürstenberghaus, Room F2, Domplatz 20-22, 48143 Münster

19.45 | *Reception at the Archaeological Museum*

Archäologisches Museum, Domplatz 20-22, 48143 Münster

Tuesday, 27th October 2026

FUNCTION: Archives – Economy – Religion and Magic

9.30–10.15

Useful rubbish: Seal impressions as evidence for Egyptian palace logistics

Angelika Lohwasser, University of Münster, Germany

10.15–11.00

Rethinking Ancient Archives: The Evidence from Doliche

Michael Blömer and Torben Schreiber, University of Münster, Germany

11.00–11.15 | *Coffee break*

11.15–12.00

The Maresha Archive of Hellenistic Sealings

Donald T. Ariel, Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem, Israel
(retired)

12.00–12.45

Seals and Bullae in Early Rabbinic Literature (Mishnah and Tosefta)

Lutz Doering, University of Münster, Germany

12.45–14.00 | *Lunch*

INTERACTION: Seal – Sealed Object – Social Message

14.00–14.45

The practice of sealing in Early Dynastic Egypt (3rd Millennium BC)

Anke I. Blöbaum, University of Münster, Germany

14.45–15.30

How to effectively manage an administrative hub: a methodological case study on sealing practices from late 3rd millennium BCE Upper Egypt

Philipp Seyr, Université de Liège, Belgium

15.30–16.00 | *Coffee break*

16.00–16.45

‘And there came treasurers to seal its property’: Some considerations toward reconstructing the socio-economic context of seal use in the Kushite kingdom

Vlastimir Vrtal, National Museum, Czech Republic

16.45–17.30

More than Ownership Markers: The Functions of Seals and Their Impressions in the Iron Age Southern Levant

Noa Ranzer, University of Bielefeld, Germany

17.30–18.30

Concluding Discussion

19.00 | *Dinner*