

21) **The Office Seal of the Šatammu of E-sangil during the Hellenistic Period: a résumé** — Antonio Invernizzi, director of the Italian excavations at the site of ancient Seleucia on the Tigris, first published a photograph (Invernizzi 1976: fig. 5) of the impression on a clay sealing (S7-4033) of a large stamp seal depicting a modeled profile left recumbent Neo-Babylonian-style serpo-dragon (*mušhuššu*), an attribute of Bēl-Marduk, whose main temple was E-sangil in Babylon, located some sixty kilometers south-southwest of Seleucia. The monster rests on an altar-like pedestal decorated with a niche-and-pilaster-like façade represented by twenty evenly-spaced narrow vertical panels in low relief set between individual horizontal rectangular bands above and below, each band decorated with four parallel horizontal rows of nested undulating lines in low relief; three cuneiform signs occupy the field above the creature's back. This sealing was but one of some twenty-five thousand cretulae and ring-bullae, the majority evidencing the state-regulated salt trade, excavated in the public archive building on Seleucia's northern agora (see now Messina & Mollo 2004; Bollati & Messina 2004a; *Eid.* 2004b).<sup>1)</sup> Nearly two decades later, in an article cataloging Babylonian motifs among the Seleucia seal impressions, Invernizzi (1994: 357, fig. 1b) included a photograph of a second impression of the same seal on another excavated clay sealing (S7-4650). That same year this writer incidentally noted the reading of the cuneiform inscription: NÍG.GA UMUN "(temple-)property of Bēl" (Wallenfels 1994: 69–70).

In 2004, Ira Spar invited me to edit the remaining unpublished Late Babylonian period cuneiform tablets in The Metropolitan Museum of Art for Volume IV of the series Cuneiform Texts in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (= CTMMA), which would not see the light of day until 2014. Among these tablets is an Early Macedonian period temple *amirtu*-inventory (MMA 86.II.314 = CTMMA 4 145) with two incomplete stamp seal impressions on the tablet's upper edge, one immediately recognizable as identical to the two Seleucia impressions just noted, the other illegible, but, based on its partially preserved outline, it is likely a duplicate of the first. On the basis of its content and dating (9 Alexander III), I assigned this tablet to the so-called E-sangil Archive (Wallenfels 2014: 201–202). Among other tablets assigned to this archive,<sup>2)</sup> one in the Louvre particularly caught my attention: Durand 1981 (= *TBER*): pl. 9, AO 6015, also an inventory (previously described as a ration list), dated 1 Philip III (= 14 Alexander III), bearing on its reverse a large nearly circular seal impression, which, upon collation (courtesy of Julien Monerie), turned out to be another impression of the same seal.

In 2008, T. C. Mitchell and Ann Searight published a drawing of a large circular seal impression (Mitchell & Searight 2008: no. 687b) that appears impressed four times on an early Seleucid period sealed and cuneiform-inscribed clay envelope in the British Museum, CT 49 122 (BM 47316 + 47323—the reverse of 47323 is not illustrated), that originally enclosed the cuneiform tablet CT 49 123 (BM 47329), a letter-order from Marduk-šum-iddin and his son Bēl-rē'ūšunu, both designated *šatammū* of E-sangil in 54 S.E.<sup>3)</sup> Although dated more than six decades after the Metropolitan Museum and Louvre tablets, the seal drawing nonetheless strongly reminded me of the seal under

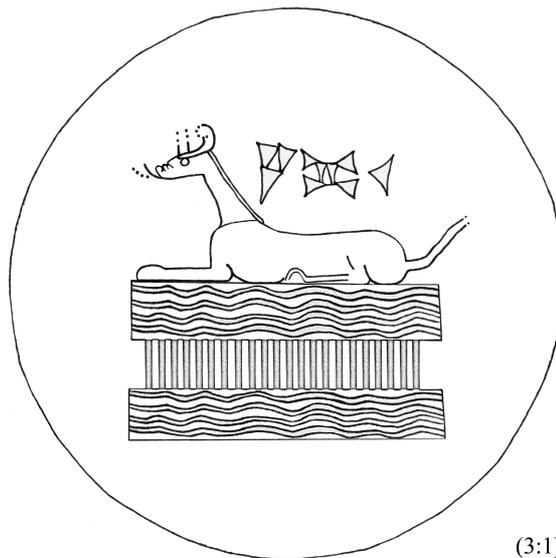
discussion: collation (courtesy of Laurie E. Pearce) confirmed that the envelope reverse indeed bore four more impressions of this same seal (see now Altavilla & Walker 2016: Photographs, GMH 201 + 47316). One other early Seleucid period British Museum tablet, CT 49 115 (BM 31473), the protocol of a hearing before Bēl-ibni *šatammu* in E-sangil in 46 S.E., on the basis of its content and the shapes of the seal impressions in the hand copy suggested yet another four impressions of this same seal and this too was confirmed by collation (courtesy Jonathan Taylor; see now Dercksen 2011: 75, fig. 6). Given the more than a half century separating the Metropolitan Museum and Louvre tablets from the British Museum envelope and tablet, and the three different *šatammū* named in the latter separated by less than one decade, it seemed perfectly obvious that the original intaglio, whether of stone or (precious) metal, was not that of any individual *šatammu* but rather that of the temple office itself. I have elsewhere (Wallenfels 2014: 208) suggested that this seal's iconography and inscription are intimately connected to the two large lapis lazuli cylinder seals ("god's seals"), heirlooms from the early Neo-Babylonian period, eventually excavated in an early Parthian structure near E-sangil.

Then, Jan Gerrit Dercksen, in an article (2011) comparing the two Seleucia on the Tigris impressions with the same British Museum impressions noted above, independently came to the same initial conclusion I had. However, noting that I had elsewhere previously observed that the appearance of *mušhuššū* on small flat elliptical private seal impressions on cuneiform archival tablets from Uruk clustered closely in the mid-30s S.E.<sup>4</sup>—but unaware of the sealed Metropolitan Museum and Louvre tablets and their much earlier dating—Dercksen went on to suggest the possibility of a connection specifically between the original intaglio and construction work undertaken on E-sangil by Antiochus I (Dercksen 2011: 74). Dercksen offered a composite drawing of the seal (Dercksen 2011: 75, fig. 1), but his rendering is incomplete: the *mušhuššū*'s head, that of a stylized Arabian horned viper, is lacking the base of the horn projecting upward from the middle of the nose, the circular eye beneath the base of the horn, the two wrinkles on the nose in front of the horn, the bottom line of the flicking forked tongue, and the volute curl at the back of the head; also missing are the erect mane running the length of the neck, and hind leg ending in a raptor's tarsometatarsus and clawed foot, the (partial) outlines of each of which are visible in the better reproductions of especially the two Seleucia impressions. Close comparisons may be drawn with similar details depicted on the striding *mušhuššū* in the glazed and molded brick reliefs on Babylon's Istar Gate completed by Nebuchadnezzar II (Aruz et al. 2014: 344–45, no. 210), and the on the recumbent *mušhuššū* among the private seal impressions from Seleucia and contemporary Uruk and Babylon (see note 4). The expected stinging tip of the monster's scorpion tail is not preserved in any of the known *šatammu* seal impressions. Dercksen (2011: 68–69) also suggested that at approximately twenty-three millimeters, the original intaglio would be the largest circular stamp seal from the Late Babylonian period; based on my own measurements taken directly from the Metropolitan Museum example (confirmed courtesy Yelena Rakic), the diameter of the original intaglio is significantly larger, on the order of twenty-seven millimeters.<sup>5</sup>

Most recently, Stefania Altavilla and Christopher B. F. Walker (2016: 205–206, GMH201) have identified another five tablets in the British Museum displaying additional impressions of this seal, including BM 27767 (12<sup>3</sup> Alexander III); BM 32999 + 33026 + 33028 + 33053a (?? S.E.); BM 64259 (two impressions: see Altavilla & Walker 2016, Photographs, GMH201 + 64259) (ca. 59 S.E.); BM 74189 (?? S.E.); BM 140648 (7 Alexander III).<sup>6</sup> Although considerably later than these tablets, Pinches 1890 (= BOR 4) 132, the protocol of a decision taken by the *šatammu* and assembly of E-sangil in 185 S.E. during the brief hegemony of Hyspaosines, king of Characene, is also noted to have been impressed by perhaps this or another large circular seal (on the lower half of the reverse, to judge by Pinches' mechanical copy).

Assuming that accidents of preservation, recovery, and publication have not skewed the data, the above noted dated sealed tablets (ignoring BOR 4 132) fall

chronologically into two distinct groups. Four are dated to the earliest years of the Early Macedonian period, more or less coincident with cuneiform texts referring to the collection of tithes for repairs to E-sangil during the reign of Alexander III (see Boiy 2004: 110–11), and four more are dated to the 40s and 50s S.E., more or less coincident with the years when further repairs were apparently undertaken by Antiochus I during his reign, ca. 31–51 S.E. (V R 66; see Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1991: 75f.): note the “large number of bricks for the reconstruction of E-sangil” being molded “above” and “below” Babylon in 38 S.E. (AD I –273B: rev. 38’). There are, however, additional references to clearing debris from E-sangil during the reigns of Philip III and Alexander IV (ABC 10: obv. 6, rev. 30’), and while Antiochus was still crown prince (ABC 11: obv. 2). Nonetheless, if this apparent bimodal distribution of the dated impressions is sustained, Dercksen might still have been correct to associate Antiochus I and his repairs to E-sangil with this seal: it may be that during these renovations the original intaglio was rediscovered after having been “lost” since the Early Macedonian period: perhaps the intaglio had been put away for safe keeping shortly after the death of Alexander III (323 BCE), but was later forgotten or otherwise became inaccessible due to the turmoil in which Babylon found itself during the disorderly period of the Wars of the Successors (*Diádochi*) prior to Seleucus I firmly reestablishing himself in Babylon, ca. 305 BCE (see conveniently Boiy 2004: 117–37).<sup>7)</sup> Should BOR 4 132 be shown to have been impressed with this seal,<sup>8)</sup> but certainly when other dated impressions of the Hellenistic seal of the *šatammu* of E-sangil come to light, all such speculations will be duly tested.



(3:1)

**1** The earliest extant dated tax stamp seal impressions in the Seleucia public archive are from 56 S.E. (SIS I nos. kat 1, inc 1), but the archive building itself may have been built earlier and may also have held older material previously archived elsewhere—Seleucia on the Tigris itself is variously argued to have been founded sometime between 311 and 300 BCE (see Boiy 2004: 135–37). The archive was destroyed by fire, apparently shortly after the second reign of Demetrius II (129–125 BCE) (see SIS I nos. SE 48–49).

**2** See Jursa 2005: 73–75; cf. Boiy 2004: 17–21.

**3** Van der Speck 2000: 438, followed by, e.g., Boiy 2004: 200, identified CT 49 182 (BM 37015), an unsealed tablet fragment, as a duplicate of CT 49 122 = CT 49 123; cf. Jursa 2006: 191. However, note the different recipients’ PNs in what appear to be the corresponding lines in CT 49 122:10 = CT 49 123:12 (<sup>m</sup>UMUN-TIN-su <sup>lú</sup>GÍR.LÁ) and in CT 49 182: rev. 2’ ([. . .]-’MU’-URU, <sup>lú</sup>[. . .]), suggesting that CT 49 182 is a letter-order quite similar to but not identical with CT 49 122 = 123.

**4** AUWE 19 nos. 455–57 (all 35 S.E.); see additionally Mitchell & Searight 2008 nos. 659n (BM 109956 L2) = AUWE 19 no. 457 (YOS 20 17 L2); OECT 9 7 B4 (CDLI no. P342344 Lo.E.) (32 S.E.);

OECT 9 8 T<sub>3</sub> (CDLI no. P342345 U.E.) (ca. 31–ca. 45 S.E.). Two other undated seal impressions of this type occur at Seleucia: SIS III nos. AF 78 (= AUWE 19 no. 456!), Og 319; cf. Mitchell & Searight 2008 nos. 600c (BM 79100 B1) (II Alexander III), 656b (DT.189 L1) (reign of Antiochus III?), both from Babylon.

**5** For the twenty-five millimeter diameter circular stamp seal impression on a Seleucid archival tablet from Uruk dated 149 S.E., an uninscribed private seal depicting the finely modeled profile right male head of a Babylonian, beardless and bald, see Wallenfels 2015: 72, pl. 6; this seal was used by one Dēmokrátēs, a son of Anu-uballit–Kephálōn/Anu-balāssu-iqbi//Aḫ-ūtu *rab ša reš āli ša Uruk*, Uruk’s chief administrator, ca.103–125(+) S.E.

**6** Also note the small remnant of a seal impression indicated in the hand copy of the fragmentary clay envelope CT 49 118a (BM 37009) originally enclosing CT 49 118 (BM 36507), a letter-order from Bēl-ibni *šatammu* of E-sangil in 50 S.E. Whether this is a portion of the *šatammu*’s seal or of one of the seals of the members of the temple assembly is uncertain (not collated).

**7** In this context note Stolper 1993 (= AION Suppl. 77): 83, A2-7, a receipt dated 4<sup>?</sup> Antigonus (= 3 Alexander IV) for the disbursement of three minas of silver from the treasury of E-sangil at the order of one Kallínikos, an “Ionian” bearing the Iranian title *azdakarri* “herald,” to one Dra[kon]tidēs, also an Ionian, *a-na ma-ka-lu-ú* “for food(?); in the hand copy the impressions of three elliptical finger rings are indicated on the tablet reverse.

**8** Pinches 1890: 131, described the tablet at the time of his writing as being in the hands of one W. Lucas, Esq.; the tablet’s present whereabouts are unknown to me.

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