Stamp seals from the Southern Levant: a multi-faceted prism for studying entangled histories in an interdisciplinary perspective

A SINERGIA research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation [CRSIIIS_La6426]

This interdisciplinary, collaborative and multi-site project focuses on ancient stamp seals as a key medium for the study of second-to-first millennia historical entanglements in the Southern Levant (see CSSL factsheet 1.1 for further details). It engages a board of directors and an additional team of postdoc researchers and PhD students, an ICT technician, draftsperson(s) and student assistants.

Job opening – Postdoc 80%, University of Bern, 48 months (January 2020 to December 2023)

Application deadline: September 1, 2019, 24:00 CET

Your responsibilities
Cataloguing, editing and revising corpus and database entries (c. 10’000 artifacts), based on your own research and staff contributions, data processing and quality management, supervision of student assistants and draftspersons, scientific reporting, management of project funds in cooperation with the local and the leading house administration.

Your profile
You hold a finished PhD, based on a (preferably published) thesis of exceptional quality in Levantine/Egyptian/Near Eastern archaeology or a closely related field. Well acquainted with glyptic studies as well as Egyptian, Eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern history BCE, you have a qualified interest in contributing to the Digital Humanities transition. You have thorough computing skills, talents for efficient and reliable (data-)management, and teamwork skills.

We offer
varied and interesting work based at the Institute of Jewish Studies, both in the stimulating intellectual environment of the University of Bern and in the inspiring cultural atmosphere of the capital of Switzerland, a UNESCO world heritage city.
The University of Bern encourages gender equality and diversity and is committed to balance career and personal development. Salary according to cantonal regulations (Postdoc 20/09).

Place of work
Institute of Jewish Studies, Länggassstrasse 51, CH-3012 Bern.

Suggested start of employment (rescheduled)
01.01.2020.

Application
Please submit your application as one PDF document in English (cover letter, curriculum vitae, a copy of relevant degree transcripts, research statement, publications if applicable) via e-mail to stefan.muenger@theol.unibe.ch

Links
http://www.unibe.ch/ (general information)
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https://www.judaistik.unibe.ch/ueber_uns/personen/prof_dr_muenger_stefan/index_ger.html (supervisor)
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Directors
Prof. Dr. Christoph Uehlinger, University of Zurich, christoph.uehlinger@uzh.ch
Department of Religious Studies (coordinator)
Prof. Dr. Stefan Münger, University of Bern, stefan.muenger@unibe.ch
Institute of Jewish Studies
Prof. Dr. Silvia Schroer, University of Bern, silvia.schroer@unibe.ch
Institute of Old Testament Studies
Dr. Ido Koch, Tel Aviv University, idokoch@tauex.tau.ac.il
Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures

Research
Dr. Shirly Ben-Dor Evian, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Partners
Dr. Vanessa Boschloos, Ghent University & Royal Museums of History and Arts, Brussels
Prof. Dr. Yuval Gadot, Tel Aviv University, Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures

Advisory Board
Dr. Alexander Ahrens, German Archaeological Institute, Berlin/Damascus
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Prof. em. Dr. Benjamin Sass, Tel Aviv University, Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures

The project addresses stamp seals, a common but highly valued and multi-functional artefact class, as a privileged media to study various aspects of ancient Levantine social, economic, cultural and religious history especially in pre-Hellenistic times. Its core aim is to develop an online open-access, collaborative and expandable database entitled *Corpus of Stamp Seals from the Southern Levant* (CSSL) as a sustainable reference tool for future research in several disciplines: archaeology, ancient history, biblical studies, history of religion's, Mediterranean studies, and others including exact sciences.

Taking its starting-point from groundbreaking research initiated since the 1970s by Othmar Keel, particularly through his *Corpus of Stamp-Seal Amulets from Palestine/Israel* (CSSPI) and the *Corpus of Seal Amulets from Jordan* (CSAJ), the project will bring that unfinished task to completion while fully engaging the Digital Humanities transition. All relevant data will be translated from a pre-digital format into a digitized research infrastructure. Fulfilling latest Open Access requirements, the new database will allow for active contributions by all interested scholars worldwide. Conceived to be easily updated and expanded, it will remain operative for decades to come.

CSSPI’s focus will be extended to wider regional concerns by removing modern borders from historical considerations: While “Southern Levant” designates the territories covered by the territories of present-day Israel, Jordan, and Palestine, CSSL will be so designed that it can easily be enlarged to integrate additional data from sites lying beyond that region, e.g., in the Central and Northern Levant, the Egyptian delta, or the Arabian peninsula.

A particular aim of the project is to increase the value of the data by interdisciplinary cooperation involving the specialized expertise of an international network of scholars and institutions. The full and best currently available documentation will allow senior scholars, postdocs and PhD students of several disciplines (archaeology, biblical studies, history of religion’s) and three universities (Bern, Tel Aviv, Zurich) to conduct a series of innovative studies. The latter will, for example, explore seal designs and their iconography as a resource for religio-historical investigation; questions of social archaeology will be studied alongside matters of political and economic history; gender history, social archaeology and biblical studies will intersect in a study of seal use by...
women. We want to draw on the full potential of the glyptic material to develop new approaches both to the history of ancient Levantine society, culture, and religion, and to the study of biblical texts. Last but not least, a crucial aim is to bring the study of ancient glyptics into conversation with scientists. An overall concern of the project is to transmit established expertise and encourage a new generation of scholars to pursue, consolidate and renew the study of ancient glyptics as a key medium for understanding historical entanglements in the Southern Levant.

**PROJECT MODULES**

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<th>Research positions and location*</th>
<th>Duration (months)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A Digital Humanities module: creating the CSSL database</strong></td>
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<td><strong>B Honoring CSSPI, moving forward to CSSL</strong> (includes final publication of CSSPI vols. VI–VII)</td>
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<td><strong>C Exploring production, diffusion, and circulation—with a view on iconography</strong></td>
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<td>C1 – Production and diffusion; group characteristics and workshop issues</td>
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<td><strong>D Connectivity: CSSL at the crossroads of disciplines</strong></td>
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<td>D1 – Social archaeology: context, function, and consumption</td>
<td>PhD TAU/UZH</td>
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<td><strong>E Decades of change: contextualizing a long-term research project in its history and interdisciplinary ramifications</strong></td>
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* TAU: Tel Aviv University, UBE: University of Bern, UZH: University of Zurich.

CSSPI’s development over almost 50 years reflects tremendous changes in scholarship, whether in terms of technology, methods, theoretical models, or scholarly paradigms. Adding a self-reflective dimension to the project should allow us to historicize our own research, to critically reflect how historical knowledge is framed by the conditions of its production, and evaluate how much our research is embedded in and impacted by changing concerns of society at large.

Project duration: 4 years (January 2020 – December 2023)
Total grant amount: 2.7 mio. CHF/USD

**Five junior research positions** are currently open to applications (call extended, new deadline: September 1, 2019, 24:00 CET):

1. **A/B Postdoc 80–100%**: general scientific coordination, basic research and editorial work on corpus and database; required background qualification: archaeology, glyptic studies, Egyptology, Levantine history BCE, data processing and management skills (UZH, 2020–2023).
2. **A/B Postdoc 80–100%**: basic research and editorial work on corpus and database, data processing and quality management, supervision of student assistants and draftsperson; required background qualification: archaeology, glyptic studies, Egyptology, data processing and management skills (UBE, 2020–2023).
3. **D2 Postdoc 80–100%**: stamp seals and interconnections (social, political, and economic history; required background qualification: archaeology, Levantine history BCE (TAU 2020–2022, second year at UBE).

Detailed job descriptions can be requested from the project directors. Further positions will be advertised in 2020.