

## EXCURSUS

### SCARAB SEALS

#### INTRODUCTION

As thorough research has already been done by other authors on scarab seals, this excursus will only deal with specific examples found in the Republic of South Africa. The examples will be described and analysed on both the obverse and reverse sides to explain their function. As it is very difficult to give an iconological interpretation of the individual seals, an interpretation incorporating all the seals, will follow at the end of this excursus.

Seals found in the Republic of South Africa included in this study, are all in the shape of a scarab beetle resting on a flat base, the underside of which is carved with an inscription or design. All these scarab seals are perforated lengthwise and would have been carried on a string. Two examples of scarab amulets are uninscribed and included in this study to stress the amuletic value of the scarab. These scarabs were exhibited as single objects or as beads on a string.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Scarabs beetles figured frequently in Egyptian objects, e.g. difference in reading (Miller, 1933:25). He called Aten's wife's god. Aten signified the sun as heavenly body. He was represented as a bird whose wings ended in hands holding the staff (Lurker, 1980:31).

the stamp seal<sup>67</sup>. Bray and Trump, 1982:216 ). Scarab amulets with engraved designs on the reverse side, appeared from the late Old Kingdom ( 2705-2250 B.C.) onwards ( Ward, 1978:45 ). Scarabs became extremely popular from the Middle Kingdom onwards ( 2035-1668 B.C.) ( Wilson, 1986:18 ). From the XIIth. Dynasty these inscribed amulets were used for actual sealing ( Ward, 1978:46 ).

During the rule of Akhenaten<sup>68</sup> known as the Amarna Period ( 1356-1339 B.C.) ( Aldred, 1986:8 ), a decline in the use of scarabs can be seen. The reason for this was that the minor deity Aten became the universal deity of the Amarna Period ( Millar, 1989:15 ). During the fifth year of the reign of Akhenaten, the final break with Amun and his priesthood became official ( Millar, 1989:25 ). The new monotheistic religion did not include other gods such as Khepri. Large scarabs were made up to the beginning of Atenism, e.g. the "lake" scarab, announcing the lake erected for Queen Taiy, of Amenhotep III, XVIIIth. Dynasty ( 1384-1345 B.C. ) ( Casson, 1982:64f.). During the rule of Akhenaten, not a single scarab was produced except for the heart

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67. A seal is a small device or object, made of a hard substance bearing an impression in intaglio which can be transferred upon a soft clay or wax. Usually the purpose was to mark ownership ( Wilson, 1986: 18 ).

68. Amenophis IV changed his name to Akhenaten because of the difference in meaning ( Millar, 1989:25 ). He exalted Aten as sole god. Aten signified the sun as heavenly body. He was represented as sun-disc whose sunrays ended in hands holding the ankh ( Lurker, 1980:31 ).

scarab of Akhenaten ( Petrie, 1978:27 ). This scarab is of silver plate on brown quartz and found in Tell Amarna ( Petrie, 1978:xxxvi no.33 ). Under other XVIIIth. Dynasty pharaohs such as Tutankhamen ( 1339-1329 B.C.), Ay ( 1329-1324 B.C.) and Harmhab ( 1324-1296 B.C.), scarabs again became popular ( Petrie, 1978:27 ) The reason for this was the abandonment of the Aten and the return to the previous religion during the reign of Tutankhamen.

During the XXVIth. Dynasty ( 664-525 B.C.), the use of scarabs became very rare because of the religious connotations of the scarab and disappeared under the Persians ( 450 B.C.). Seals were still used but not scarab shaped seals. It was never used again under the Saites ( 664-525 B.C.) and the Ptolemies ( 332-30 B.C.) ( Petrie, 1978:33 ).

From the selected examples found in the Republic of South Africa only four are dated. The dates given are 1720 B.C; 1479-1425 B.C; 1200 B.C. and 600 B.C.

#### FUNCTION OF SCARABS

The scarab was regarded as a very powerful amulet because of its ability to create new life after death ( Ward, 1978:44 ). The scarab signified the regenerative powers of Atum and the sun ( Ward, 1978:46 ). The inscribed amulet was used as a button seal or seal amulet of which the design is completely of native Egyptian origin ( Ward, 1978:45 ). Scarab seals were stamp seals which gave a single impression. The stamp seal was ideal for papyrus used by the Egyptians because of the flat, oval base. It became distinctive and its form, the scarab, almost a national

emblem ( Hughes, 1972:19 ). It became so popular that it was imitated by nations around the Mediteranean, such as the Greeks and Etruscans ( Hughes, 1972:19 ).

Inscribed scarabs were used for different purposes. Apart from scarabs used on the mummy as heart amulet or just scattered among the wrappings, they were used as temple or foundation deposits. An example is the temple deposits from the destroyed temple of Queen Tauseret, XIXth. Dynasty ( 1297 B.C.). These deposits consisted of a number of objects including an inscribed scarab ( Saleh, 1987:pl.224 ). They were used to mark the building as the property of the erector, or as dedication to a deity. It is also assumed that they may have had prophylactic functions ( Saleh, 1987:224 ).

Scarabs used for royal announcements date from the reign of Tuthmosis III ( 1479-1425 B.C.), but those belonging to Amenophis III ( 1384-1345 B.C.) are more common. These large inscribed historical scarabs [ fig.44 ] were unparalled in size. They bore long historical inscriptions and included "marriage"-, "lion hunt"-, "cattle hunt"- and "lake" scarabs ( Petrie, 1978:XXXI ). An inscription on a "lion hunt" scarab reads as follows: "Live in Horus, the strong bull, uprising in Truth, Lord of the Double Crown, establishing laws, making ready both plains. Horus of Nubti, great and mighty, smiting the Setiu, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, RA-NEB-MAOT, son of Ra, AMENHETEP HEQ UAST, granted life, and the royal wife TAIY who liveth. Reckoning of lions brought by His Majesty in his shooting by himself, beginning in the first year up to the tenth year, lions, terrible, 102."

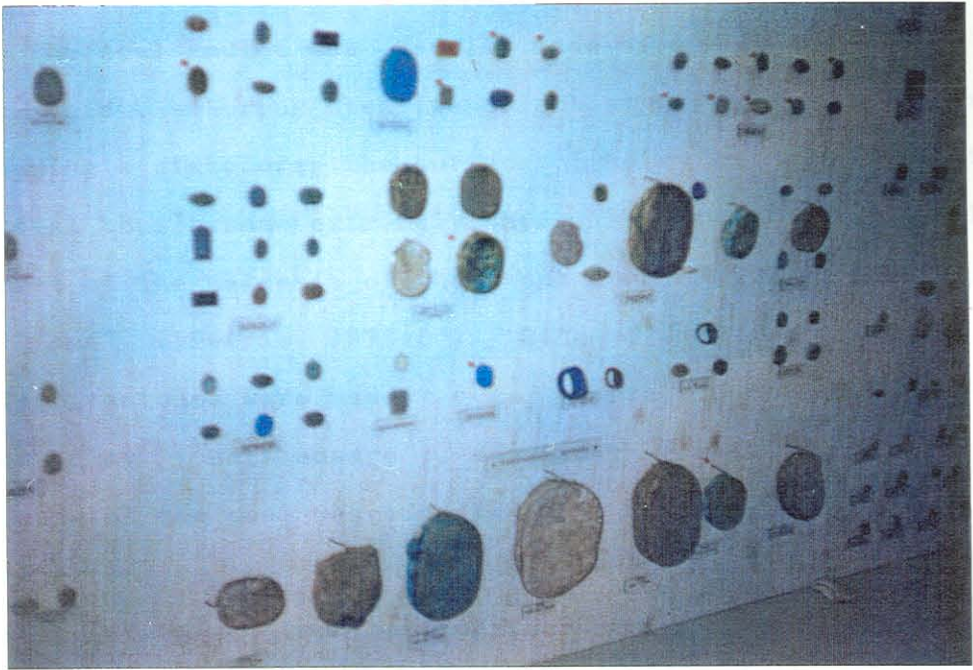


FIG.44. SELECTION OF SCARABS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON  
SHOWING THE LARGE HISTORICAL SCARABS.

( Petrie, 1978:xxxii ). Scarabs used for announcement had the historical function, as they were used during the lifetime of the pharaoh, to document certain events.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The seal amulet was usually made of a hard substance, e.g. steatite, fibrous steatite or schist which were all hardened by adding a glaze over the surface ( Helck and Otto, 1984:973 ). The seal thus became extremely hard. "The result seems to be due to part of the magnesia of the stone combining with the silica of the glaze" ( Petrie, 1978:8 ). Often a coloured glaze was used. Different stones were used, e.g. quartz, jade etc. as well as baked clay ( earthenware ) and ivory ( Petrie, 1978:8 ). The hardness of the seal was important to keep the inscription clear after extensive use. Examples included in this study were made of steatite, faience, ivory and earthenware.

For engraving the Egyptians used a metal needle. Bronze, hardened copper and flint splinters were also used. No tools have been found, with the result that it can only be assumed that the above mentioned materials were used ( Petrie, 1978:9 ).

Scarabs from the Republic of South Africa included in this study were mainly executed as follows; feather pattern to indicate hairy legs; head of lunate form; notched clypeus; "V"-notches on the elytra or smooth elytra. Varieties do exist, e.g. the elytra portrayed as if covered by a net [ fig.49 ] and "V"-notches omitted and being replaced by short lines [ fig.51 ].

When scarabs in general are studied, a variety of designs can be seen, e.g. the geometric design, of which the "maze" pattern may be the oldest ( Ward, 1978:47 ). The "maze" pattern is difficult to classify in a specific group as it is very individual and unique. It was used in the making of early scarabs. Examples were found in Matmar, Mostagedda, Qay and Abydos ( Ward, 1978:47 ). These designs may have developed from designs of stick animals or human figures. The area covered with the design is usually divided in half ( Wilson, 1986:pl.91 ).

Scroll patterns were made up of interlocking spirals. These developed from plant ornaments. They were often used as a framework around a design. Concentric circles were used in the same way, but also as primary motif. Coiled and knotted designs were inclined to fill the whole seal-surface ( Wilson, 1986:92ff.).

Early animal and human motifs were very simple, but developed to more elaborate designs. The same may be found in plant motifs which often included the papyrus or lotus ( Wilson, 1986:98ff.).

The inscriptions on the undersides of the scarabs found in the Republic of South Africa, may be hieroglyphic inscriptions, e.g. the name of Tuthmosis III, or designs which may be of plants or animals, or abstract patterns.

FIG. 45. SCARABS ON DISPLAY IN THE NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY AND OPEN AIR MUSEUM, PRETORIA.

SEALS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

A number of scarab seals can be found in the Republic of

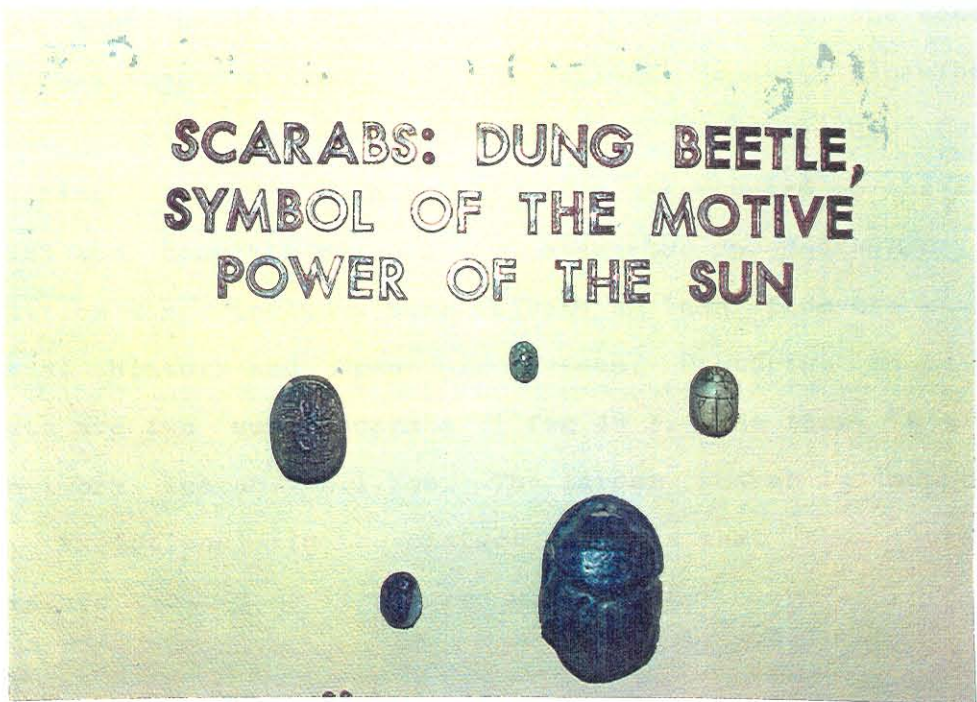


FIG.45. SCARABS ON DISPLAY IN THE NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY AND OPEN AIR MUSEUM, PRETORIA.



South Africa, but only certain examples were selected for this study. In the National Cultural History and Open Air Museum, Pretoria, five scarabs are exhibited [ fig.45 ]. The Wellington Museum, Wellington, has eighteen scarabs in its possession [ fig.46 ] of which some are badly damaged [ figs.47a+b ]. This museum also houses a scarab mould<sup>69</sup> with which the scarab itself was shaped [ fig.16 ]. The National Museum, Bloemfontein houses a small collection of objects from the Guy Brunton collection [ fig.48 ]. This collection was donated to the museum in 1928 and consists of objects excavated in Mostagedda. The exhibition also includes some objects on loan from the National Cultural History and Open Air Museum, Pretoria. Among these objects are two small scarabs [ fig.49 ]. The first is a small green ivory scarab, L.1,2cm. The larger scarab is mounted in gold. Exceptional in the larger one, is that the thorax and elytra are treated as if covered with a net<sup>70</sup>.

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69. See Petrie ( 1978:XXXVII no. 30 ) for terra-cotta mould which belonged to Amen-onkh-Tut- Heq-an-Nesut ( Tut-onkh-Amen - after the conversion). Moulds were used in the XVIIIth. and XIXth. Dynasties. Two moulds were used - a back and a face. The two halves were joined together and glazing added to link them. This method was also used in the making of Ushabtis ( Petrie,1978:9 ). An example of a mould for the underside can be seen in Petrie ( 1978:xxxiii no.45 ).

70. A similar example can be found in Petrie ( 1978:lxviii no.75 ).

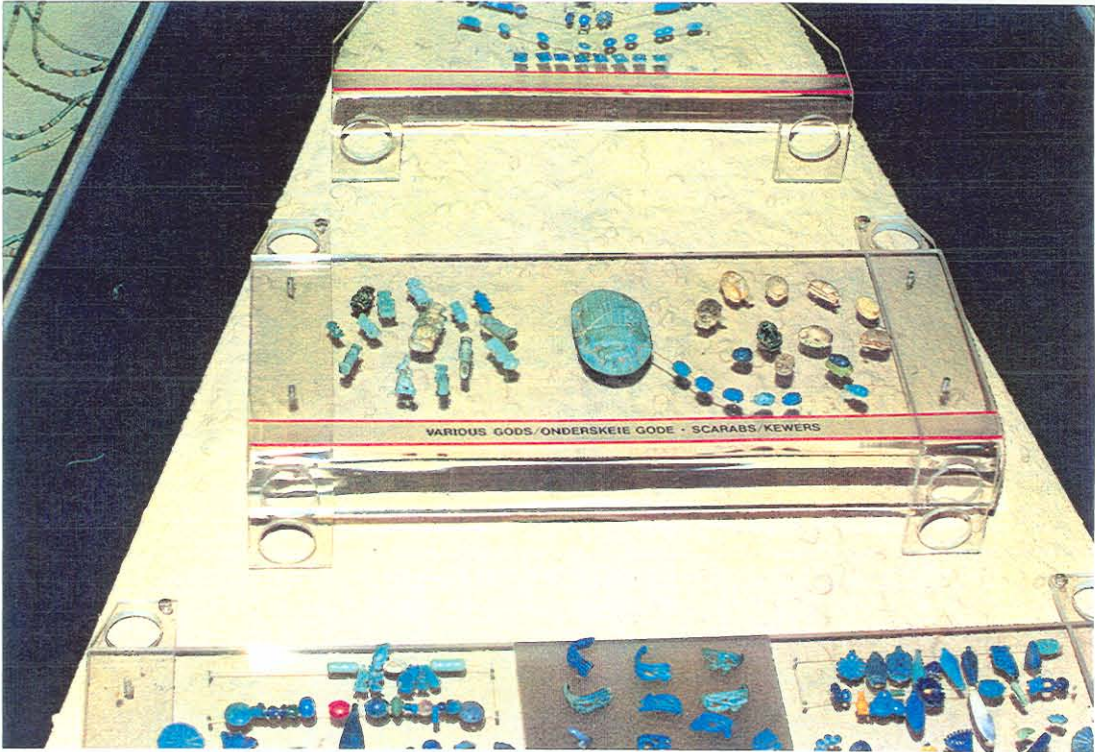
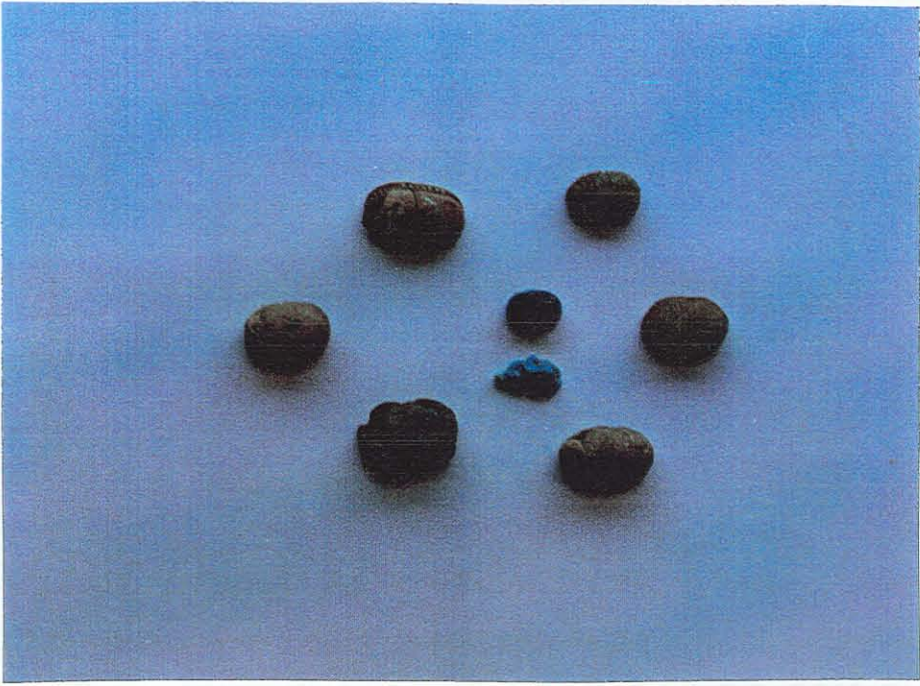


FIG.46. SELECTION OF SCARABS ON DISPLAY IN THE WELLINGTON MUSEUM, WELLINGTON.



A



B

FIG.47 A+B. SCARABS HOUSED IN THE WELLINGTON MUSEUM,  
WELLINGTON. OBTVERSE AND REVERSE SIDES.



FIG.48. PART OF EXHIBITION IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, BLOEMFONTEIN.

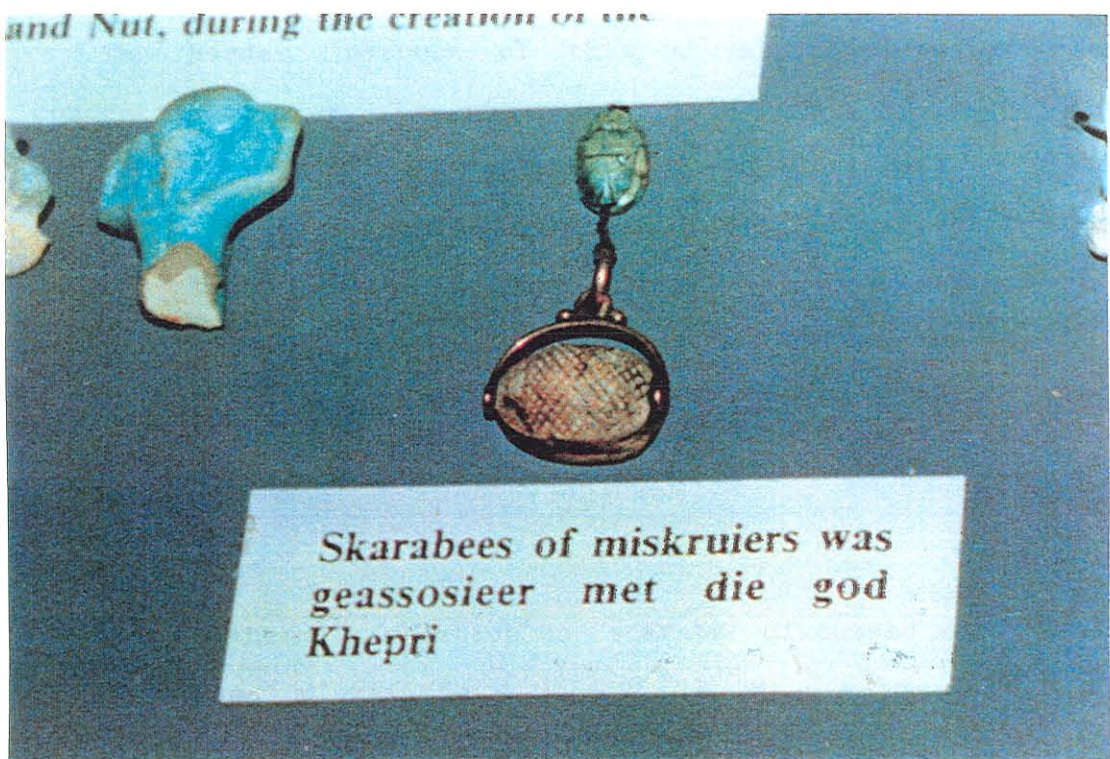


FIG.49. SCARABS IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, BLOEMFONTEIN ON LOAN FROM PRETORIA.

The seals will be discussed according to the inscription or decoration carved on the reverse side. The selected examples from the Republic of South Africa do not represent all the kinds of designs described by Ward ( 1978:49ff. ) and Wilson ( 1986:pl.91ff. ), e.g. the "maze" design is not represented. Some bear hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Concentric circles ( Wilson, 1986:pl.95 ), became extensively used over a long period ( Wilson, 1986:18 ). They may occur as primary motif or in conjunction with other motifs, such as religious symbols or personal names. The design was used in two ways: a) repeatedly over the seal surface and b) as a border pattern.

The Ivory Scarab [ figs. 50 a+b ]<sup>71</sup> is an example of a seal inscription where concentric circles are used as a border pattern around the oval circle bearing the royal name of Tuthmosis III.

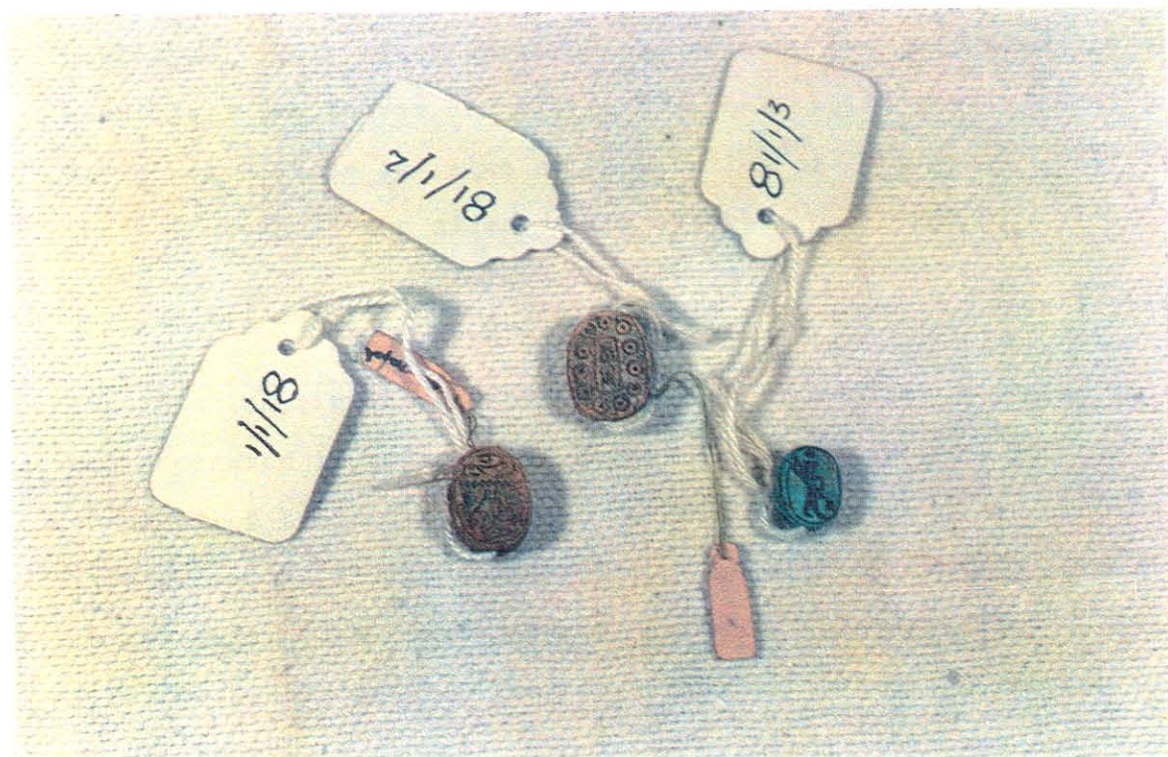
The border pattern of this scarab consists of eleven concentric circles. The number of circles bears no significance as they vary according to size and space available. In other similar examples the amount vary from eight, as in the scarab of Pepa ( Petrie, 1978:XXI no. 6 ), up to fourteen circles as can be seen in the scarabs of Ramses ( Petrie, 1978:XLI 64-51 ). The

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71. For further information on scarabs discussed see "List of Illustrations" p. xiiiiff.



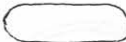





A



B

FIG.50 A+B. SCARABS FROM THE NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY AND OPEN AIR MUSEUM, PRETORIA. OBVERSE AND REVERSE SIDES.

edge of the seal has a thin line around it<sup>72</sup>.

The date given in the Museum Catalogue ( see p.xiii ) being the Vth. Dynasty, is therefore incorrect. Tuthmosis III ruled during the XVIIIth. Dynasty, 1479-1425 B.C. [ fig.51 ]. The name of Tuthmosis is written in a oval  replacing the cartouche ( Zauzich, 1980:39 )  which is an elongated "shen"-sign , signifying eternity ( Budge, 1988:61f.). The name of Tuthmosis III consists of a triconsonantal sign "hpr" , the biconsonantal sign "mn" , and a taxogram, sun ( light, time )  ( Davies, 1987:32ff.).

All six legs of the scarab are visible, with feathery lines to portray claws. The head is executed as a half circle with a thin line around the edge. The mandible and flanks are delicately portrayed. Only four protruding points can be seen in the mandible. The thorax and elytra form one solid area without any divisions. There is also no indication of a suture. Only two short lines mark the sides of the elytra.

The following kind of design to be discussed is human figures

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72. This inscription may be compared with similar examples which are decorated in the same way, but for the amount of circles surrounding the royal name ( in both cases only eight circles ) ( Petrie, 1978:XXVIII nos.94+95 ). The circles are all depicted in exactly the same manner as the hieroglyphic sun-sign ( Davies, 1987:32ff.). Therefore they may represent the sun with which Khepri is closely associated as being the sun at dawn. The decoration bears the religious significance of Tuthmosis as son of the sun-god Ra, who will live eternally.

which can be seen as stick-like figures shown in the First Intermediate Period (2250-2055 B.C. | | Gard, 1970:49 ), but became more elaborate in later periods (Wilson, 1966:pl. 29 ). They are shown in various positions. Some walking figures are of the form:

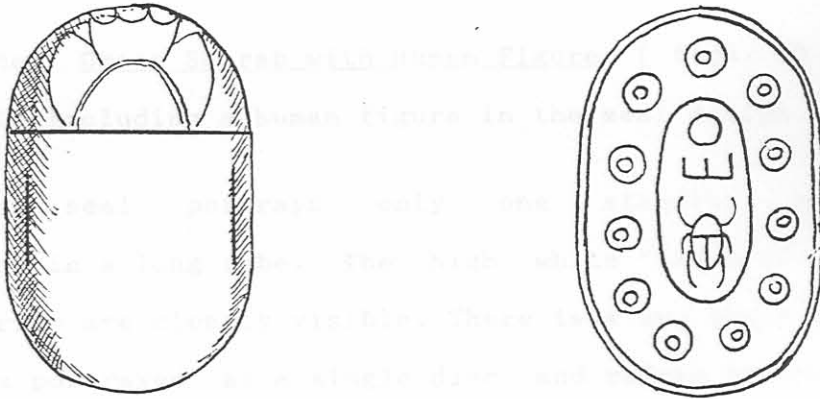


FIG.51. IVORY SCARAB.

They are shown walking free of the sun-god. The figure walks free of the sun-god. The seal was used to seal the jar with the scarab.

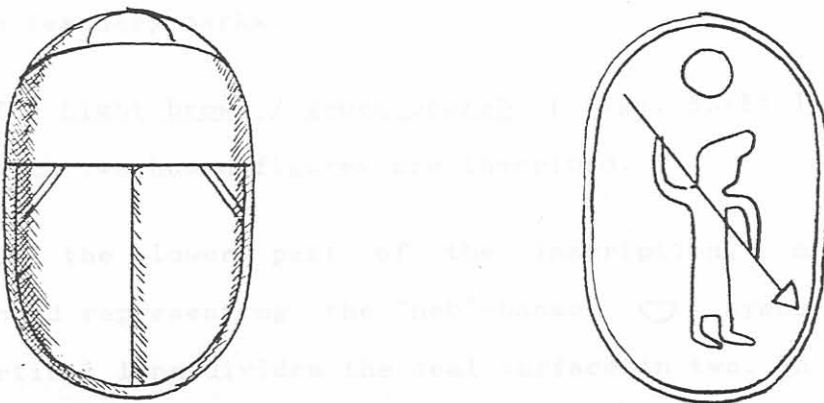


FIG.52. GREEN SCARAB WITH HUMAN FIGURE.

A vertical line human figure can be seen. There are two small dots above each figure. | fig. 34 |. Short lines of dots placed next to one another indicates plural (Robson, 1987:133 ). The plural is




which can be seen as stick-like figures shown in the First Intermediate Period ( 2250-2035 B.C. ) ( Ward, 1978:49 ), but became more elaborate in later periods ( Wilson,1986:pl.99 ). They are shown in various positions. Single walking figures are often found.

The Green Scarab with Human Figure [ figs. 50 a+b ] is an example including a human figure in the seal design.

The seal portrays only one standing male figure, dressed in a long robe. The high white crown of Upper Egypt and arrow are clearly visible. There is a sun above his head. The sun is portrayed as a single disc and refers to the pharaoh as son of the sun-god. The figure walks from left to right. The seal has a thin groove around the edge [ fig. 52 ].

The scarab is very small with fine detail. The thorax is simple and the elytra divided with a suture. There is a thin line around the edge. The usual "V" notches are replaced by two short diagonal lines on each wing-shield. The legs show very vague feathery marks.

The Light brown / green Scarab [ figs. 53+54 ] is an example on which two human figures are inscribed.

On the lower part of the inscription, a half circle is found representing the "neb"-basket  symbolizing safety. A vertical line divides the seal surface in two. On both sides of this line human figures can be seen. There are two small dots above each figure. [ fig.54 ]. Short lines or dots placed next to one another indicates plural ( Hobson, 1987:159 ). The numeral is

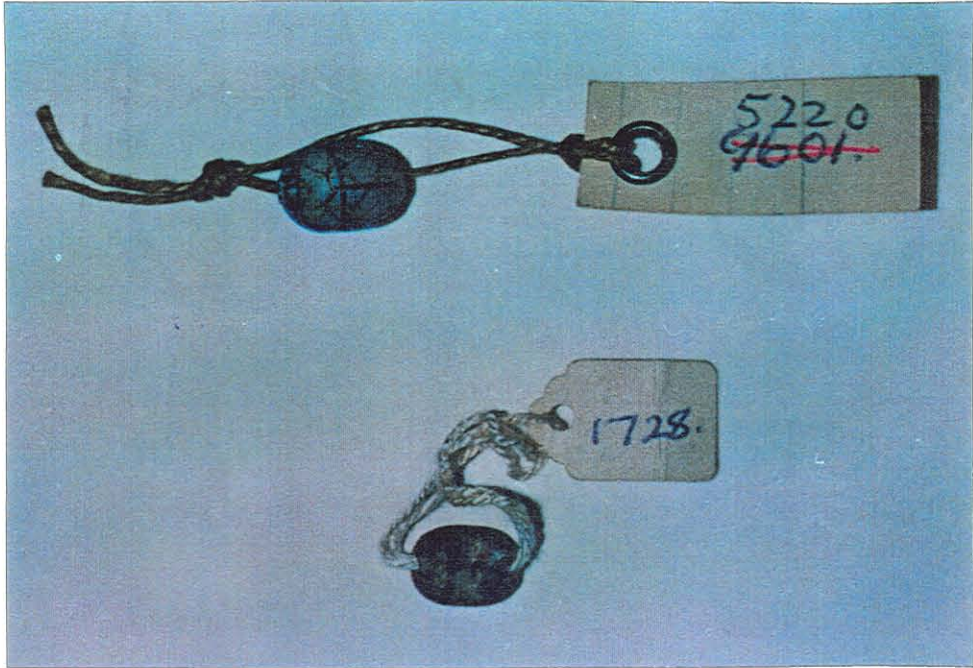


FIG.53. SCARABS FROM THE CULTURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, CAPE TOWN.

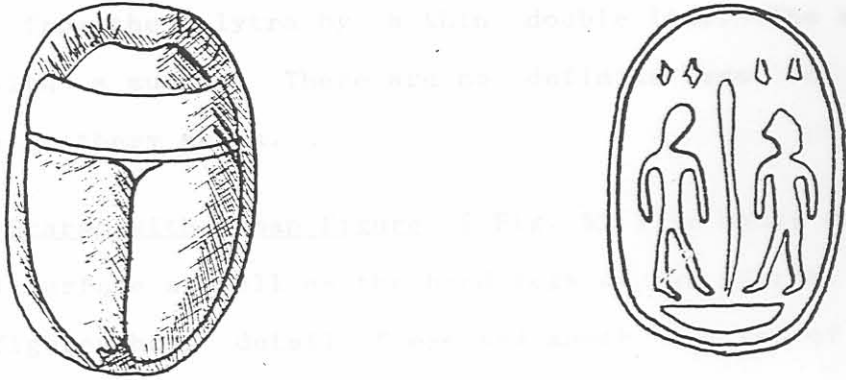


FIG.54. LIGHT BROWN/GREEN SCARAB.

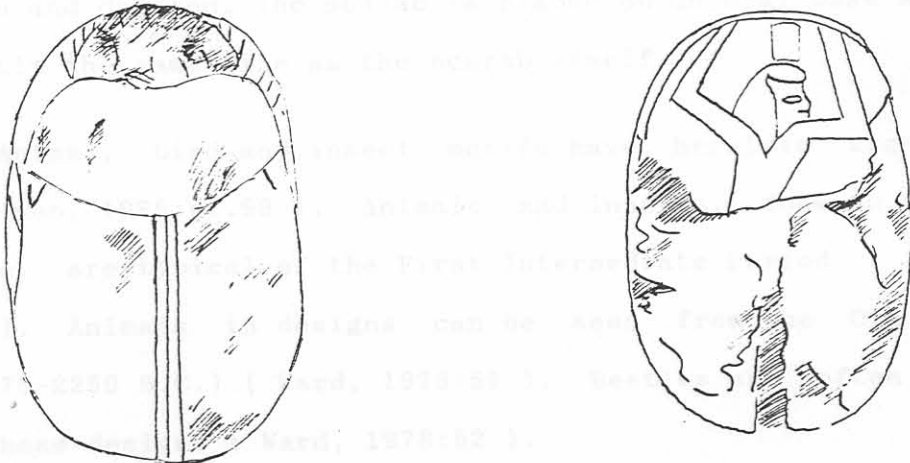


FIG.55. SCARAB WITH HUMAN FIGURE.

placed after the noun which is generally portrayed in the singular ( Davies, 1988:43f.). Because of the inclusion of the "neb", this inscription signifies safety.


The scarab itself shows very little detail. The thorax is divided from the elytra by a thin double line. The elytra is simple with a suture. There are no definite legs but the base has fine feathery marks.

The Scarab with Human Figure [ Fig. 55 ] is badly damaged on the seal surface as well as the hind legs of the scarab. The face of the figure shows detail of eye and mouth. On top of the head is a perfume cone. Both arms are raised, in the pose of a Ka figure. Because of the badly damaged seal surface ( only the upper part of the figure can be distinguished ) it is not possible to analyse the significance of the seal.

The head of the scarab shows fine detail, especially in the mandibles. The thorax is depicted in a slight curve. Three lines indicate the suture and small "V" marks can be seen on the elytra. The front legs show fine markings, but the hind legs are plain and damaged. The scarab is placed on an oval base which has exactly the same size as the scarab itself.





Animal, bird and insect motifs have heraldic significance ( Wilson, 1986:pl.99 ). Animals and insects, done in a linear style, are typical of the First Intermediate Period ( 2250-2035 B.C.). Animals in designs can be seen from the Old Kingdom ( 2075-2250 B.C.) ( Ward, 1978:51 ). Beetles are often included in these designs ( Ward, 1978:52 ).

The Scarab with Bird Inscription [ fig.56 ] is unfortunately damaged all around the edge, but the inscribed bird can still clearly be seen. The bird is portrayed as a chick.

Traces of a thin line around the edge can be distinguished. A chick represents the hieroglyphic sign "w". A bird as portrayed in this example bears the hieroglyphic meaning of "weak" or "small". The inscription portrays a bird facing right. It is placed on a line and has a sun-disc above it. The sun-disc represents the god Ra or in hieroglyphic writing the sun, light or time ( Davies, 1987:34 ). The other two parts of the inscription, to the left and right, are too badly damaged to be distinguished. The sign to the right may however be the biconsonantal sign "ti"  . Below the feet of the chick is one horizontal line. Because of the damaged signs at the sides, it is difficult to analyse the meaning of the total inscription<sup>73</sup>.

The scarab itself is badly damaged around the edge. The thorax and elytra show no detail, but for a suture. All the legs are depicted. They are all damaged.

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73. A number of similar examples with bird-inscriptions can be seen in the work of Petrie ( 1978:LV 29-37 ). These examples are mainly executed in pottery. The birds all face right. They are placed either on the "Neb"  or on two or three horizontal lines ( multiples )  ( Davies, 1987:44 ). A sun-disc or small square, the "p"-sign  ( Davies, 1987:31 ), is included plus the "s"-sign  . These examples in Petrie ( 1978:LV29-37 ) all belonged to Psemthek I, XXVIth. Dynasty. They are very similar to the one described.

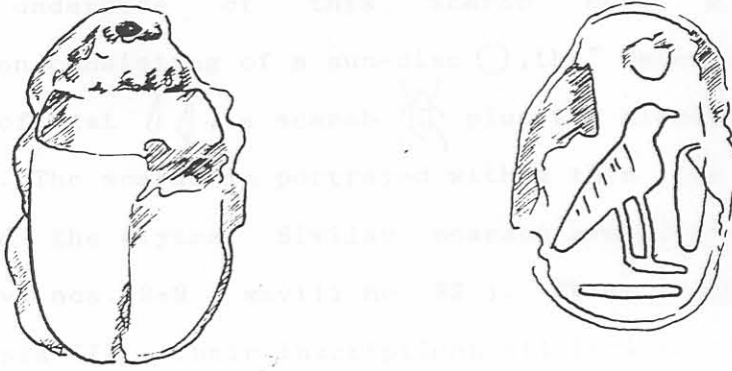


FIG.56. SCARAB WITH BIRD INSCRIPTION.

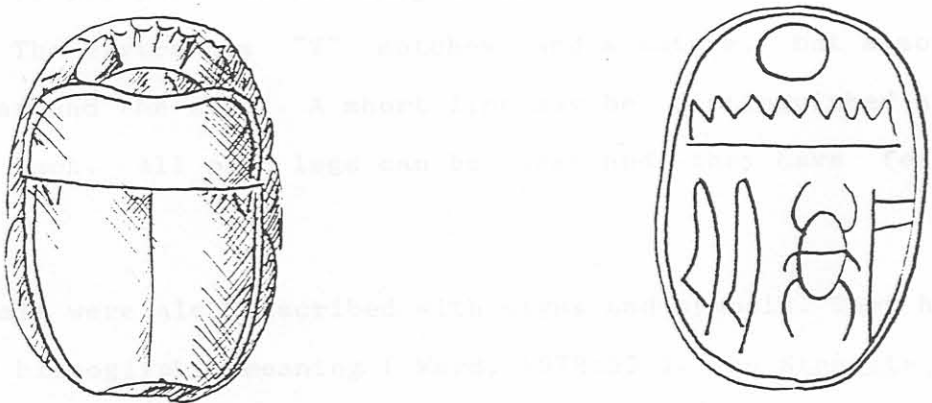








FIG.57. GREEN STEATITE SCARAB.

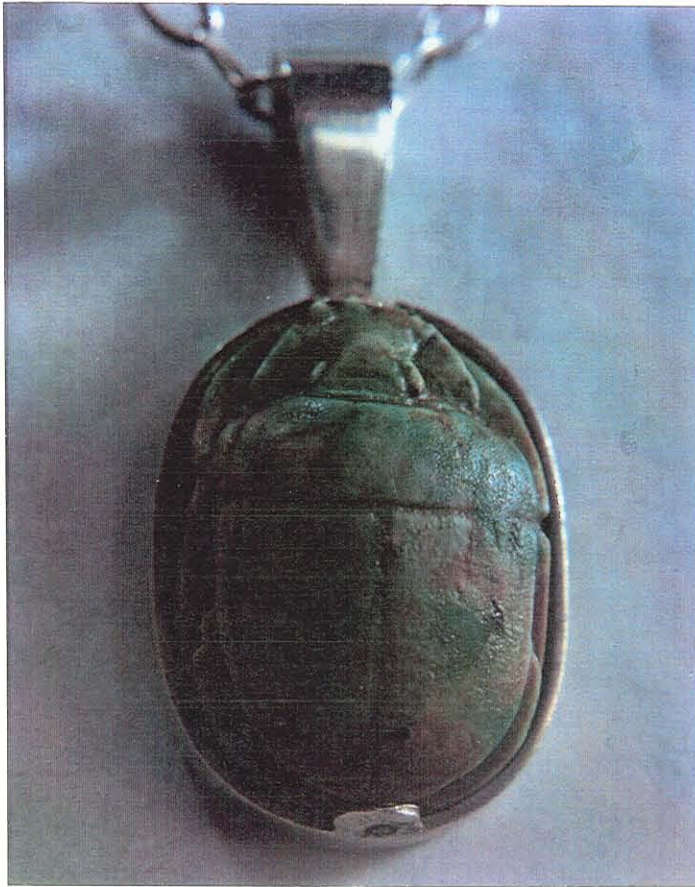
The Green Steatite Scarab [ figs. 53+57 ] is an example of an animal ( or insect ) design incorporating a scarab.

The underside of this scarab bears a hieroglyphic inscription consisting of a sun-disc , the "water" sign , two feathers of Maat , a scarab  plus the hieroglyph for "ntr" - god  . The scarab is portrayed with a thin line dividing the thorax and the elytra. Similar scarabs are depicted in Petrie ( 1978:xxvi nos. 8+9 + xxviii no. 82 ). These examples belonged to Tuthmosis III. Their inscriptions all include the sun, water and scarab, therefore they, as well as the Green Steatite Scarab, are personal name scarabs of Tuthmosis III [ fig.3 ]. But in the first mentioned examples in Petrie ( 1978 ), the feathers of Maat are replaced by a "nfr"-sign ( nefer ) , meaning good luck and happiness as well as "god" ( Davies, 1987:44 ). In the second mentioned example the scarab is flanked by the feathers of Maat.

The Green Steatite Scarab itself shows fine detail. The thorax is decorated with a single line around the side and front edge. The elytra has "V" notches and a suture, but also fine lines around the edge. A short line may be distinguished at the centre back. All six legs can be seen and they have feathery marks.

Seals were also inscribed with signs and symbols. They have a strong hieroglyphic meaning ( Ward, 1978:55 ). The Steatite Stone Scarab of Balyana [ figs. 58 a-d ] is a well preserved example with such an inscription.

The inscription shows a winged scarab, Khepri, with



A



B

FIG.58 A-D. STEATITE STONE SCARAB FROM BALYANA.





C



D

FIG.58 A-D. STEATITE STONE SCARAB FROM BALYANA.

horizontally outstretched wings of Horus. Falcon wings may be interpreted as "the Living Horus". They were also used to refer to the two parts of Egypt, Upper and Lower Egypt. Eternal unity was of great significance in Egypt ( Bonnet, 1952:720 ). All six legs of Khepri can be seen. Khepri is portrayed as the morning sun with the sun-disc in front of him. The sun-disc refers to the sun-god Ra. On both sides of the sun-disc are uraei with their tails curling over the sun to form one line connecting the two. Two ankhs are also seen. Minute detail of feathers is shown on the outstretched wings of the scarab. The body of the scarab is divided by a line indicating the thorax. No clear suture can be seen. This inscription signifies new life in the Netherworld under the protection of Horus and loved by Amen.

A scarab with a similar inscription can be seen in the work of Petrie ( 1978:XXX no.38 ). The scarab has no wings but the uraei are executed in the same manner as the above-mentioned example. It is described as: Ra - oa - Kheperu between uraei ( reverse, Amen Mer-Amenhetep II "loved by Amen" ) ( Petrie, 1978:XXX ) [ fig. 59 ].

The scarab from Balyana is of a green colour with brown patches, covered with glaze. The head is sunk deeply into the pro-thorax. Detail is given in the mandibles. The thorax is portrayed as a transverse section just behind the head. It has a very thin line around the edge at the front and sides. The elytra have thin lines around the edges plus a definite suture, dividing the two wing-shields and a small "V" shape mark at the top of

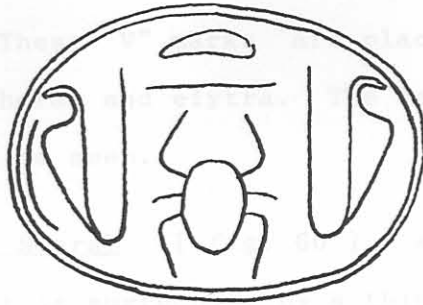


FIG.59. SCARAB WITH INSCRIPTION INCLUDING KHEPRI, SUN-DISC AND URAEI.

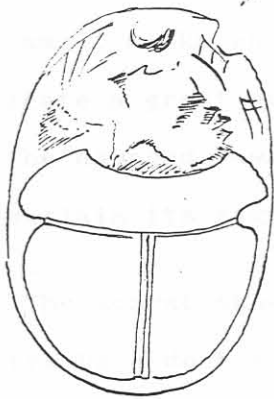


FIG.60. BEIGE SCARAB.

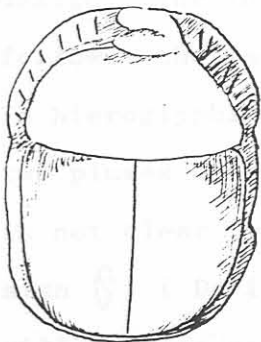







FIG.61. LIGHT BROWN SCARAB.

each elytron. These "V" marks are placed against the dividing line between thorax and elytra. The legs have no detail but all six can clearly be seen.



The Beige Scarab [ fig. 60 ] shows a fine intriguing inscription. It is surrounded by a thin line around the edge of the seal. The inscription includes the wings of Horus ( protection ) on top. Below that, in the centre is a fish. The fish was often used ( Wilson, 1986:99 ) and had a heraldic significance. This sign is flanked by two udjat eyes. Below that are small marks which are not clearly distinguishable. They may indicate a great number ( plural ) ( Davies, 1988:46 ). Because of the damaged lower part of the scarab seal it is not possible to explain its significance.

The scarab shows fine detail. The thorax is divided from the elytra by a double line. The suture consists of three lines. The legs form a horizontal strip with fine markings. The head of the scarab is damaged.

The Light Brown Earthenware Scarab [ fig. 61 ] is an example where a purely hieroglyphic inscription is portrayed in the seal design. The inscription of the scarab reads transversely as follows: the "neb"-basket  ; ankh  and the "nefer"  ("god"). In hieroglyphics this sign means "lucky" ( Budge, 1988:226 ). The two plumes of Maat  , are also included. The sign to the right is not clear because of the damaged edge, but may be the "ti"-sign  ( Davies, 1987:32 ). This seal signifies that the owner will have a safe rebirth, that he will receive a just trial before Osiris and that good luck and happiness will await him in

the Netherworld.

Fine detail can be seen on the head, but the right side of the scarab is damaged. The thorax is simple and divided from the elytra by a small line. A suture is found. All six legs are vaguely indicated with feathery marks.

The delicate Small faience Scarab [ fig. 62 ] portrays only the feather of Maat , the hieroglyphic "i" as well as the "nefer" -sign, "nfr" . As hieroglyphic inscription the seal reads "i-nefer" or "Maat-nefer". The two signs combined bear the significance of a fair trial against the truth or justice of Maat. It will therefore safeguard the owner in the trial before Osiris.

The scarab is depicted in a very vague manner. The thorax and elytra form one plane with only three marks to indicate division. No legs can be seen. The scarab is placed on a base.

The following two examples bear no inscription - therefore they are not seals, but were used as amulets. They were selected for this study to stress the significance of the scarab. The scarab had its own strong religious significance of goodwill and rebirth, which did not depend on the inscriptions on the reverse side of seals.

The very small Blue Faience Bead [ Fig.63 ] shows practically no detail. The body-parts are vaguely indicated. All six legs are portrayed. There is no base and the bead is flat on the underside. There is no inscription. It is not perforated like the seals, but a tiny faience loop is added at the head of the scarab.

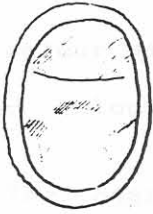


FIG.62. SMALL FAIENCE SCARAB.

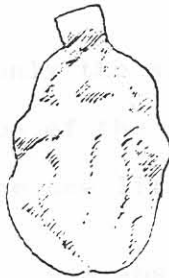


FIG.63. BLUE FAIENCE BEAD.

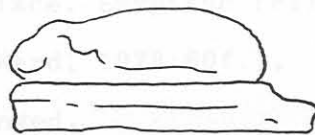


FIG.64. SCARAB BEZEL.

The amuletic significance of this bead lies solely in the scarab shape, signifying well being and resurrection to a new life in the Netherworld. The colour blue refers to death. The colour was chosen deliberately. Faience was mostly blue but other colours are also found.

The Scarab Bezel [ fig. 64 ] is slightly damaged at the front and back. This scarab is executed in blue faience. The head is visible, but the thorax and elytra form one area with only very vague indications of a division. The legs are not clearly indicated. The scarab is placed on a green base. No perforation, holes or loops can be seen, therefore this scarab may have been placed in a setting for use either as ring or amulet. The scarab is not inscribed.

The scarab bears only the significance of Khepri - goodwill and new life. The shape of the scarab in combination with the use of colour, stresses the new life after death.

The meaning of scarabs changed over the centuries. Uninscribed scarab amulets, or the obverse side of the amulet depicted as a scarab, assured recreation. According to Ward ( 1978:60 ) they came to be used as personal seals since the XIth Dynasty. The amuletic value of the beetle still continued, but the meaning also included good luck for the wearer. As the amuletic meaning became less important, the natural oval base was still very handy as seal surface. Egyptian religious concepts changed during the history ( Ward, 1978:60f.), therefore the interpretation of the scarab changed.

In the interpretation of the inscriptions on reverse side, royal names were often used as symbols of power and did not necessarily imply direct connection with the king [ Figs.51+57 ]. "The 'goodly god' thus represented could grant life, an idea that would apply to the living and the dead alike" ( Ward, 1978:61 ).

Signs such as the two wings of Horus [ Fig. 58a-d ] may refer to the "living Horus", or the combination of Upper and Lower Egypt, but may also be used for symmetry. Animals were often included and it is not sure whether they were used as hieroglyphs or symbols [ Fig. 56 ]. Many designs can therefore be interpreted in different ways, e.g. as hieroglyphic inscriptions, as religious symbols, included for symmetry or decoration, e.g. the spiral bordered or border of circles which may replace the cartouche ( Ward, 1978:64 ) [ Fig. 51 ].

These examples of scarabs, found in the Republic of South Africa, all bear the amuletic significance of the beetle, personifying the god Khepri. The object had a meaning in itself. " A scarab signifies the regenerative powers of Atum and the sun, making it a potent talisman to aid in obtaining life after death" ( Ward, 1978:46 ). These seal amulets were all in the shape of a beetle. They were depicted according to the variety of details used to portray the scarab seal.

Completeness in Egyptian art had a religious significance of its own. The object or figure portrayed was required to be as complete as possible to be clearly recognised. Every aspect omitted would be incomplete in the life hereafter. Scarab seals



had an amuletic significance. The scarab representing the god Khepri, must therefore be executed in full detail so that the god is clearly identified and its magic potency can operate with maximum effect.

Each inscription or decoration, on the other hand, had its own specific meaning. Inscriptions on seals in the Republic of South Africa, included in this study, vary from concentric circles, human figures, bird and insect designs to hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Since Pre-dynastic times, Ptah, the Egyptian god of creation, was included in art because of his function as a god of resurrection. This function is indicated by his name Khepri, derived from the word "kheper", meaning "to become". He was incorporated in the dung beetle, the scarab, because of the natural habits of this beetle.

Khepri was included in the Heliopolitan category as creator god together with Atum. Atum created himself from the chaos of Nun and later became identified with Ra. Khepri was also the