

SCULPTURE

Khepri is not often seen in sculpture in the round. Examples vary from miniatures to colossal scarabs. They were mainly used during life, e.g. on temple premises for the living to appreciate and to benefit by. They also protected the temple premises in the same way that a scarab amulet will protect a human being.

There is a fine example of a colossal scarab set on a plinth, belonging to the reign of Amenophis III (1417-1397 B.C.). It is to be found beside the sacred lake at the temple of Karnak (Lurker, 1980:104). An example of a similar colossal scarab is to be found in the British Museum, London.

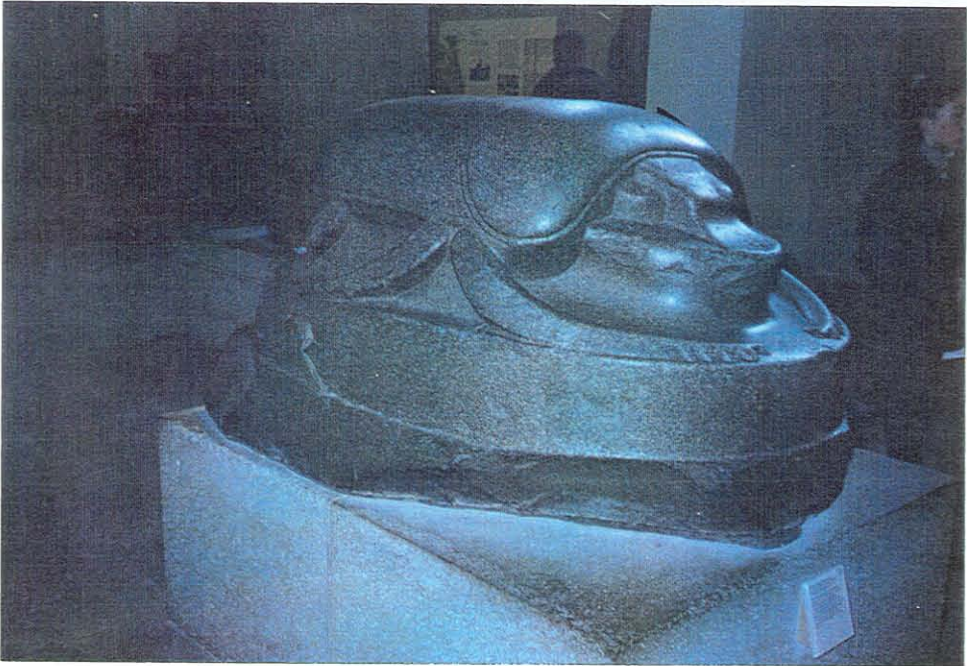
In this Great Granite Scarab [Fig. 41a-c] Ptolemaic Period, 200 B.C. (James and Davis, 1983:60), the main feature is the monumental size⁶⁶.

The black granite is smoothly finished and polished. There is no detail on the legs but for slight marks on the front legs to indicate claws. The head is heavy with enormous mandibles set deep into the thorax. The elytra are also finished off with a single groove around the edge and the "V"-shaped marks typical of the Egyptian way of portraying the *Scarabaeus sacer* L., are placed on the elytra.

66. This scarab was found in Constantinople in modern times. It may have been transported there in Roman times. Originally it was from Heliopolis and probably stood in a court of a temple of Ra at Heliopolis (James and Davis, 1983:6).



A



B

FIG.41 A-C. GREAT GRANITE SCARAB.



C

FIG.41 A-C. GREAT GRANITE SCARAB.

The proportions of the scarab are well executed, especially if one bears in mind that it is actually a tiny insect, enlarged to monumental proportions.

The Faience Scarab [Fig. 42], Ptolemaic Period, 3320-30 B.C. forms part of the Leo Mildenberg collection. (Kozloff, 1986:3). It is moulded in such a life-like manner that it appears to have been based on a mould cast from the real specimen (Kozloff, 1986:3). The bright blue colouring of the faience has a shiny finish caused by the glazing.

These scarabs were not necessarily connected with the tomb. They were used as good luck tokens in temples or for private purposes. These examples may be significant for the living, i.e. good luck meant to keep evil away from the individual person and from the temple. It would therefore safeguard the individual or architectural structure against all harm. For the same reason temple deposits were placed under the foundations of the temples.

Ramses IX Presenting a Shrine Surmounted by a Scarab Beetle [Fig. 43] 1126-1108 B.C, reveals workmanship of a very high quality.

In this sculpture the prostrating figure of Ramses IX is the main feature and the scarab serves only to decorate the inscribed shrine. The scarab is facing in the same direction as the king, i.e. to the front.

FIG 43. RAMSES IX PRESENTING A SHRINE SURMOUNTED BY A SCARAB BEETLE.

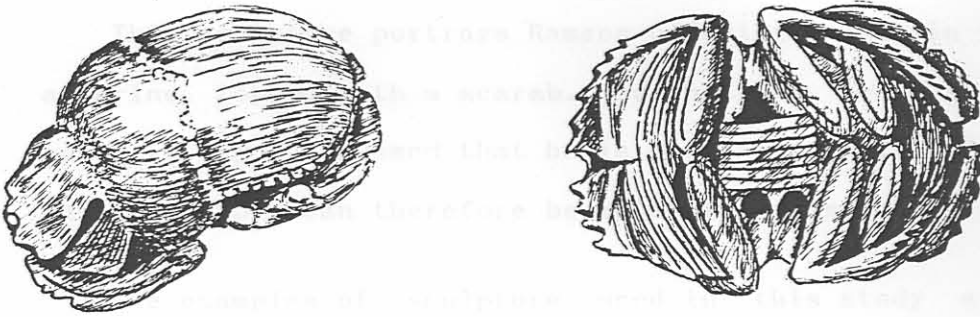


FIG.42. FAIENCE SCARAB.

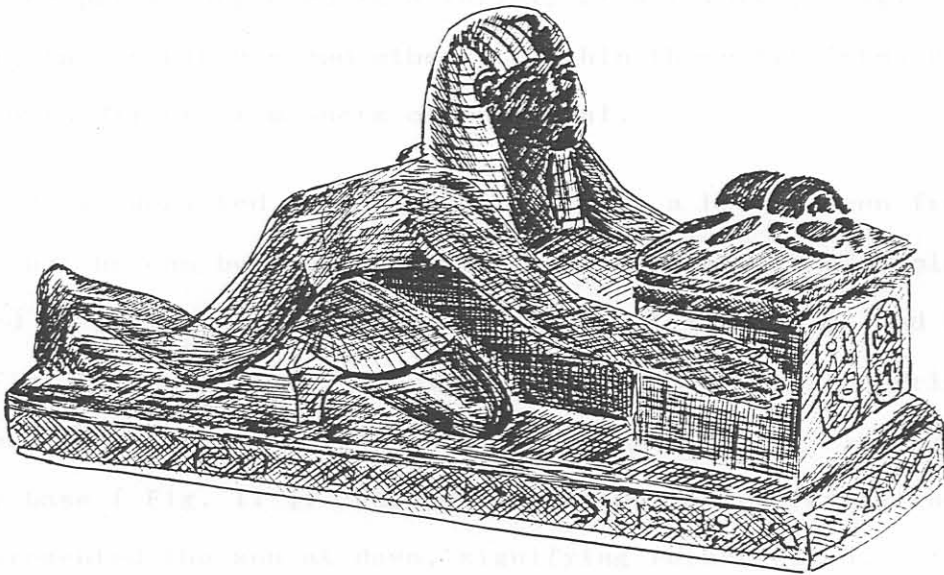


FIG 43. RAMSES IX PRESENTING A SHRINE SURMOUNTED BY A SCARAB BEETLE.

This sculpture portrays Ramses offering a gift in the form of a shrine, topped with a scarab. As the king is in a prostrating pose, it may be assumed that he is presenting this gift to a god. This sculpture can therefore be interpreted as an offering scene.

The examples of sculpture used in this study stresses the fact that Khepri had a specific significance for the living and for the dead. Although Khepri was more often connected with the dead as god of protection and resurrection, he also protected the living. These functions are apparent in sculpture as well as in jewelry worn during life, or in seals with their dual function as seal and amulet of goodwill and protection.

CONCLUSION

Khepri is depicted in a variety of art forms, e.g. jewelry, painting, sculpture and others. Within these art forms he can be seen in different manners of portrayal.

He is depicted theriomorphically, as a beetle seen from above so that he can be clearly recognised. This manner of depiction is used in relief [Fig. 40], painting [fig. 31] and beadwork [Fig. 15]. Beetles, included in bead mummy coverings are executed in the same way as amulets but for the inscription on the base [Fig. 17]. When depicted theriomorphically the beetle represented the sun at dawn, signifying resurrection.

The beetle is also depicted in combination with other animals or birds, e.g. the ram-headed winged scarabs on the Coffin of Maakare [Fig. 22].

Anthropomorphically the beetle is portrayed with a human figure plus the whole beetle for a head. In these examples the human figure may be standing, sitting or squatting, but the beetle is seen from above, with or without the wig. This manner of depiction can be found in papyrus illustrations and painted reliefs. An unusual manner of portrayal is the human being with the body of a scarab [Fig. 35], plus the human head and limbs. In the Heart Scarab of Sobkemsaf a human-faced beetle is found. In this example the human face and head are masterfully incorporated in the shape of the beetle.

Whether depicted theriomorphically or anthropomorphically, it is important that Khepri is depicted as clearly as possible so as to be recognizable. Khepri was incarnated in the scarab beetle which to the Egyptians was the symbol of resurrection. The anthropomorphic form of Khepri is nothing but a representation of the nature and function of the god. The image does not represent the true form of the god. The theriomorphic form on the other hand, is a true representation of the beetle in which the god incarnated.

A very important aspect in Egyptian art is the inclusion of signs and symbols with religious meaning. Through analysis of these signs and symbols the purpose of the work of art can be explained and understood. The Egyptian artist therefore expressed himself very clearly. Khepri, symbolising protection and rebirth, was often found in combination with other gods, signs and symbols.

In Egyptian religious art colour was used for its symbolic value. Khepri was depicted mainly in blue, black and green - all colours referring to death and afterlife.

Egyptian religion used works of art to act out religious performances. Khepri was therefore deliberately included in art. Khepri was depicted as creator who created himself. As protector he appeared in the following ways: a) He protected the heart which to the Egyptians symbolized the conscience etc. b) Together with the sons of Horus he protected the intestines. c) He protected the body of the deceased as well as the Ba. He was the god of resurrection ensuring new life in the Netherworld and together with the falcon wings formed the emblem of Upper and Lower Egypt.