

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Khepri was most often depicted in the form of a scarab seal. The stamp seal in the form of a scarab was so extensively used in Egypt, that it was imitated by nations around the Mediterranean. Khepri however was also depicted in art.

The aim of this thesis was to determine the presence and significance of Khepri in religion and art. Art forms such as heart scarabs, mummy - coverings, coffins, jewelry, painting, relief and sculpture were studied and iconographically analysed to point out the presence and determine the significance of Khepri in Egyptian religion and art.

Since Pre-dynastic times, Khepri (Khepera) was included in Egyptian religion and mythology. During the Middle Kingdom his inclusion in art became extremely important. He was mainly a god of resurrection. This function is explained by his name Khepri, derived from the word "Kheper", meaning "to become". He was incarnated in the dung beetle, *Scarabaeus sacer* L. because of the natural habits of this beetle.

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

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in the later Theban cosmogony, which incorporated the earlier cosmogonies such as that of Heliopolis. Khepri was included in Egyptian mythology because of his self creative powers as sun-god at dawn. He was described as a bisexual god or a god of single sex.

In Egyptian funerary literature, Khepri was included, e.g. in the Book of the Dead, where he had the religious significance of protecting the heart of the deceased for life in the Netherworld. This was done according to certain instructions, e.g. Spell 30B. In the Am Duat he traveled together with Ra in the night barque to renewed youth and life in the Netherworld. He triumphed over death as he appeared as the morning sun at dawn. Therefore life triumphed over death and light over darkness.

Khepri was associated with the sun. According to the Egyptians the sun was a ball rolled across the heaven by a creator. He was seen as a self existant creator-god and therefore called "Father of the gods".

By including Khepri in tomb art, religious literature and funerary equipment, his religious significance was to ensure, for the deceased, a safe journey through the realm of the night to the Netherworld. As a result of which the deceased would enjoy renewed youth and life. Being a god of rebirth Khepri was also a protector and as such played an important role for both the living and the dead.

Within the art forms in which Khepri appeared he was portrayed theriomorphically and anthropomorphically.

Theriomorphically, Khepri was seen as a beetle pushing the sun-disc in front of him or placed inside the sun-disc. He may even hold two sun-discs - one between the front and one between the hind legs. Often he would hold other objects between his legs, e.g. a cartouche, "shen"-sign or "neb"-basket. The figure of Khepri may be combined with that of other deities, e.g. the ram-headed Ra or Horus (falcon wings). Whenever Khepri was depicted theriomorphically, he represents the sun at dawn. Therefore he signified the coming of a new day which had the religious significance of new life for the deceased.

When depicted anthropomorphically the entire insect was used to replace the human head. The human figure may be standing, seated, crouching or squatting, but the beetle would always be seen from above. The human figure was executed according to the canon of proportions based on the grid, used by Egyptian artists. The different parts of the body were placed either in full frontal view or in profile (except for the hips). The figure may be depicted with or without the thick mass of hair (wig) on anthropomorphical depictions. Depicted according to this manner the god Khepri had the religious significance of creator, protector and ruler.

For the living Khepri had the religious significance of protector who saw to their well being and was as such included in jewelry and sculpture.

For the dead Khepri was a god of protection who protected in different ways. Firstly as heart scarab he protected the heart which was not merely seen as an organ but as the seat of the mind

(emotions, reason, memory etc.). Secondly Khepri protected the inner organs together with the four sons of Horus on mummy-coverings. Thirdly, together with other deities depicted on coffins he protected the body as well as the Ba. These different aspects of the human being were all needed for a safe and successful life in the Netherworld.

Khepri was also included in art as god of resurrection. As such he assured the deceased of a new life in the Netherworld where he would live (and rule) for-ever. As god of resurrection he was mainly depicted in papyrus vignettes.

When depicted as winged scarab, with the falcon wings of Horus, Khepri acted as protector as well as symbol of Upper and Lower Egypt.

In all forms of art included in this study, the use of colour in depicting Khepri was very important. The reason for this was the religious significance attached to specific colours. Khepri was depicted mainly in black, blue or green. These colours referred to death and rebirth.

The religious significance of Khepri has been clearly portrayed. It has been shown that he was deliberately included in art because of his religious significance as creator, protector, important god of resurrection and symbol of Egypt. In this way art was used to further the ends of Egyptian religion.
