



SHIRE
EGYPTOLOGY

EGYPTIAN SCARABS

The scarab is the single most abundant artefact to have survived from ancient Egypt and hundreds of thousands were made throughout the course of Egyptian history. Today, scarabs continue to be found on excavations throughout Egypt and thousands reside in museums around the world. This volume examines these artefacts by considering the unique biology and behaviour of the scarab beetle and its incorporation into Egyptian symbolism, religion and art. The development of the scarab amulet is considered, and the many types of scarab produced by the Egyptians are surveyed. Two particularly important classes of scarab – the heart scarab and the commemorative scarab – are examined in detail. Finally, the export of Egyptian scarabs and their imitation by neighbouring nations are considered as indicators of the extent of Egypt's influence in the ancient world and of the importance of the scarab itself.

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COVER IMAGE

Lion hunt scarab of Amenhotep III, c.1410–1372 BC. (Courtesy of the British Museum, EA 64661)

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CHRONOLOGY

From W. J. Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 1983.

Pre-dynastic and Proto-dynastic periods	before 3050 BC	Badarian, Naqada I to III phases
Early Dynastic or Archaic Period	3050 to 2686 BC	Dynasties I to II
Old Kingdom	2686 to 2181 BC	Dynasties III to VI
First Intermediate Period	2181 to 2040 BC	Dynasties VII to XI
Middle Kingdom	2040 to 1782 BC	Dynasties XI to XII
Second Intermediate Period	1782 to 1570 BC	Dynasties XIII to XVII
New Kingdom	1570 to 1070 BC	Dynasties XVIII to XX
Third Intermediate Period	1070 to 713 BC	Dynasties XXI to XXIV
Late Period	713 to 332 BC	Dynasties XXV to XXXI
Graeco-Roman Period	332 BC to AD 395	Ptolemies and Roman Emperors

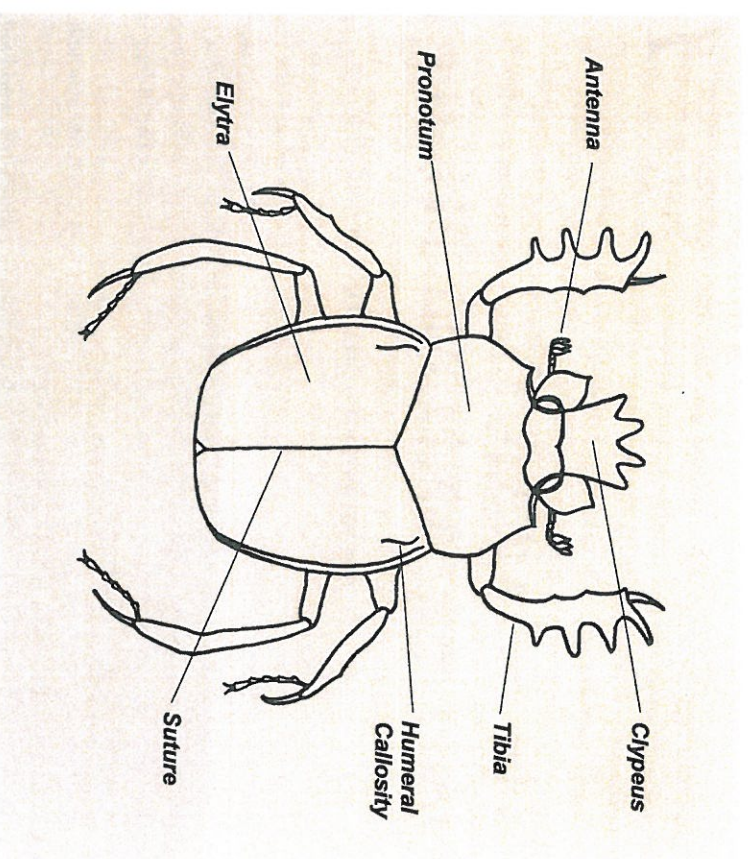
THE SCARAB IN NATURE AND MYTH

SCARABS are the most abundant artefacts to have survived from ancient Egypt, and they are arguably the most important, as countless numbers of these amulets and seals were made over a period of some two thousand years. Appearing at the end of the Old Kingdom and continuing until the Graeco-Roman Period, scarabs were truly ubiquitous in Egypt and also spread far beyond the land of the Nile. But to understand the reason for the great popularity of these artefacts and their importance for the Egyptians, one must first understand both the biology and the mythology of the scarab beetle after which they were modelled.

THE BIOLOGY OF THE SCARAB BEETLE

Scarabs belong to the family of beetles called Scarabaeidae, which has worldwide distribution and, as presently defined, consists of about 30,000 known species. Most of these species belong to the subfamilies Scarabaeinae, Aphodiinae and Melolonthinae; the first group, the Scarabaeinae, are the so-called dung beetles, of which there are some 5,000 species. Scarabs may range in size from 2 to 160 mm and include the most massive of all insects – the giant Goliath and Hercules beetles found in tropical areas. Most scarabs are brown in colour (though the bodies of some species have a metallic sheen), and most are stoutly built insects of great strength – with some being capable of moving objects as much as fifty times their own weight. Many have powerful legs with spine-like projections adapted for burrowing in the ground, and some species also have hairs on the legs which facilitate movement on sand. Most species have strong wings and are active flyers. Dung beetles also have a shovel-like clypeus, which they use to manipulate food or earth, and also distinctive, clubbed antennae with fan-like *lamellae* that can be spread out to increase their surface area to better sense odours (figure 1).

TAXONOMY OF THE SCARAB BEETLE	
Phylum:	Arthropoda
Class:	Insecta
Order:	Coleoptera
Superfamily:	Scarabaeoidea
Family:	Scarabaeidae
Subfamily:	Scarabaeinae



1. *The anatomy of a typical scarab beetle. (After Ward, 1994, p. 194)*

Dung beetles are informally arranged into different groups according to their behaviour, with those known as 'rollers' representing the category in which the Egyptian sacred scarab fits. Rollers are found mainly in warmer areas like Egypt and are named for their habit of rolling balls of dung into their feeding and nesting burrows. They are most active in winter in Egypt and tend to activate beneath the ground during the hot summer months. They use their legs and mouth parts to form what are often almost perfectly spherical balls of dung, which they roll – sometimes over considerable distances – to their living areas. The beetles will roll these dung-balls over even the roughest ground and past seemingly insurmountable obstacles with great tenacity in order to reach their desired destination.

Rolling is usually accomplished by the beetle standing on its front legs and then pushing and manoeuvring the ball with its hind legs (figure 2), and some members of the Scarabaeidae have exoskeletons which act as left-handed polarisers (one of the very few known examples of the utilisation of circular polarisation in nature) and which help guide the insects when rolling dung-balls in this manner. Often other

scarabs will contest the ownership of a dung-ball and try to steal it from the insect which produced it, a habit which led to the old but erroneous idea that the insects would assist each other in rolling the ball past obstacles. Once the scarab has successfully deposited the ball of dung in a feeding tunnel (figure 3), it will live on it until it is used up – at which point the beetle will emerge to begin the cycle again.

The sexes often divide the work associated with reproduction, and the female insect may dig the underground nest chamber while the male collects the dung which will be placed there as a brooding ball. In this case, the female insect constructs a different type of ball – one that is pear-shaped rather than spherical – and it is in this ball that she lays an egg which will eventually develop through the larval stage by feeding on the dung which surrounds it.

2. *A male scarab beetle pushing a dung-ball in characteristic fashion with its hind legs. (Courtesy of M. Johnson)*





3. A cross-section of a scarab's underground tunnel showing the spherical dung-ball upon which the beetle lives. (Courtesy of M. Johnson)

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE SCARAB BEETLE

The biology of the scarab is directly reflected in the mythology which developed regarding the insect. The scarab may have been accorded religious significance from very early times in Egypt, judging by the fact that beetles have been found in jars buried with the deceased in graves from the time of King Den of the First Dynasty. A scaraboid-shaped calcite box discovered at Tarkhan also seems to indicate that the scarab may have been an important symbol during this time, although the insect's precise significance in this early period is unknown. It is clear, however, that at some point the scarab came to represent Khepri – the form of the sun god associated with the solar disk rising on the eastern horizon. Khepri was one of three major forms or aspects of the solar deity, who was 'Khepri in the morning, Ra at midday and Atum in the evening' (figure 4).

The Egyptians visualised the scarab beetle as a symbol of the sun god owing to its habit of rolling a ball of dung along the ground in a manner suggestive of the

movement of the solar orb across the sky. Because the female scarab beetle also lays her eggs in a similar dung-ball, from which the young eventually emerge – as though spontaneously – the reproductive biology of the insect may underlie the name of the god, as *Khepri* suggests the Egyptian verb *kheper*, meaning 'to develop' or 'to come into being'. As a result, Khepri, 'he who comes into being', was the god of the dawn of creation and was sometimes linked with the creator Atum as Atum-Khepri, though his identity as the morning sun remained primary and his essential mythological role was that of raising the sun from the horizon in the eternal cycle of solar rebirth.

As a god who was constantly reborn, Khepri also came to be associated with the concept of resurrection. In this regard it was suggested by classical writers such as Plutarch and Horapollon that the vertical shafts and horizontal passages leading to the burial chambers found in many Egyptian tombs were to be associated with the underground tunnels of the insect, and even that the bandaged mummy of the deceased resembled the pupa of the insect. Although there is no proof that the Egyptians themselves recognised such embellishments of the lore of the scarab, the insect's association with the Egyptian concepts of resurrection and afterlife is clear. As was the case with many cosmic deities, Khepri was not accorded a cult of his own. Yet examples of colossal stone statues of the beetle god, such as the one now

4. The three major forms of the sun god – the beetle god Khepri (morning), the solar disk Ra (midday) and the ram-headed Atum (evening). Tomb of Seti II, Valley of the Kings. (Author's photograph)



standing beside the sacred lake in the Temple of Amun at Karnak (figure 5), clearly indicate that Khepri was honoured in some Egyptian temples, perhaps in relation to the concepts of creation and the never-ending solar journey which were symbolically incorporated into the architecture of many Egyptian temples.

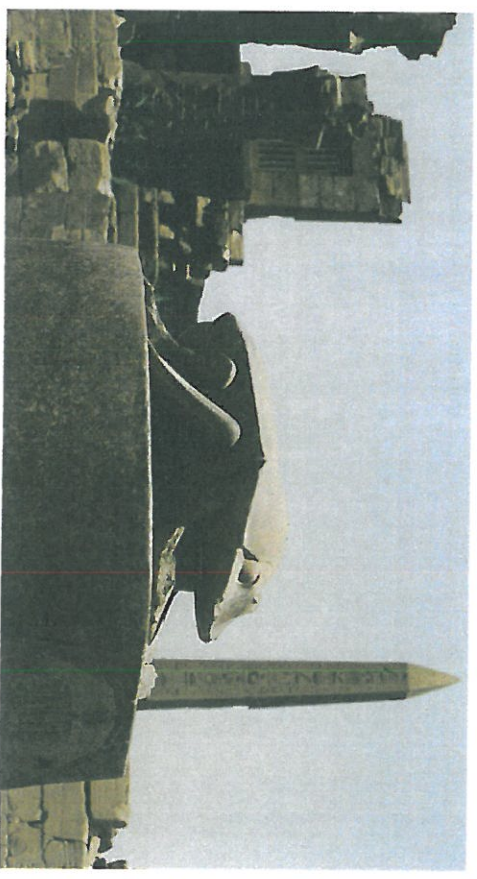
While Khepri may not have been accorded the rites of a formal cult, his utilisation as a potent symbol of creation and afterlife resurrection was widespread and made him an almost ubiquitous deity in ancient Egyptian culture. As a result, the beetle god appears in many mythological representations. Khepri was frequently depicted in the solar boat which carried the sun across the sky – either accompanying the god Ra or as the nascent sun god himself. This is a motif found especially in royal and private tombs and as a potent image used in funerary and everyday jewellery. In the well-known pectoral from the tomb of Tutankhamun (figure 6), the god raises the sun disk in the solar boat while receiving the worship of two baboons, which were mythologically associated with the sun and moon.

Various representations also show the scarab-form god in the solar boat being lifted by the god Nun (the personification of the primeval watery chaos) to depict the creation event. Scenes such as these – where the god is accompanied by other solar-related deities – are especially common in the royal tombs of the New Kingdom and in the vignettes that illustrate funerary papyri. In these settings Khepri may appear either in fully zoomorphic form – as the scarab beetle itself – or in partially anthropomorphic form, as a human-bodied god with the head of a scarab.

When represented in the form of the scarab beetle, Khepri may be depicted with varying degrees of stylisation of the insect's anatomy and behaviour. Painted and inlaid works often colour the insect blue or utilise lapis lazuli inlay to stress symbolically the beetle's association with the heavens, though in the vignettes in funerary texts the scarab is usually black, as in nature. The beetle may be shown alone or pushing the solar disk ahead of it – with its front legs – although in nature the insect usually propels its ball with its hind legs.

Because the scarab beetle was used as a hieroglyphic sign to write the Egyptian word *kheper* and its variants, with meanings such as 'to come into being' or 'manifestation', the image of the scarab is prominent in the cartouches of many kings whose names incorporated some version of this concept. The throne name of the Middle Kingdom pharaoh Sennusret I, *Kheper-ka-Ra*, meaning 'Manifestation of the ka of Ra' (figure 7), provides an example of this principle. It also allowed Egyptian craftsmen to create many items of jewellery and other works incorporating a visual reference to both the name of the king and the mythology of the scarab god Khepri raising or pushing the sun.

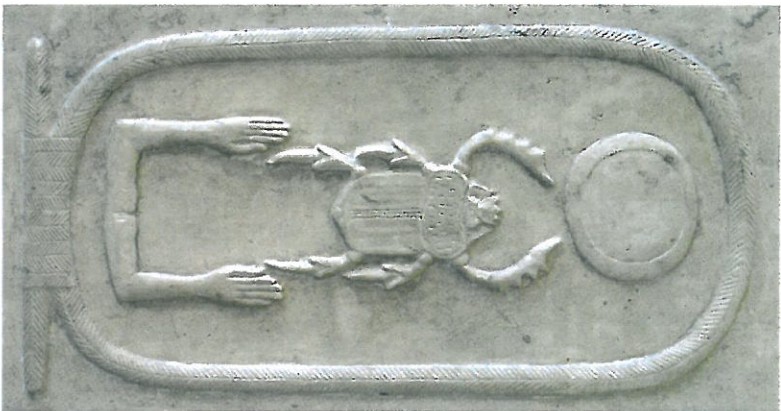
The tomb of Tutankhamun, whose throne name was *Neb-kheperu-ia*, or 'Lord of the manifestations of Ra', revealed multiple examples of such visual wordplays on



5. The giant scarab of Amenhotep III, now by the sacred lake in the Temple of Amun at Karnak. (Courtesy of C. S. Schaffer)

6. A pectoral of Tutankhamun, showing the scarab god Khepri in the solar boat flanked by two worshipping baboons. (Author's photograph)





7. A cartouche of Senusret I from the White Chapel at Karnak. The cartouche employs the scarab hieroglyph in spelling out the king's throne name, Kheper-ka-ra, meaning 'Manifestation of the ka of Ra'. (Courtesy of A. Goodwin)

the name of the king/god. While the pectoral of Tutankhamun discussed above may be seen as one of these examples, others are even more explicit.

Khepri was also depicted on occasion in anthropomorphic or semi-anthropomorphic form as a man with a scarab beetle on his head, or with his head in the form of the beetle. An example may be found in the tomb of Nefertari in the Valley of the Queens (figure 8), and vignettes of the various afterlife books sometimes show the mummified body of Osiris surmounted with this type of scarab head in order to unite the solar and netherworld realms in one mythological image. In the tomb of the Egyptian priest Petosiris at Tuna el-Gebel (fourth century BC), the insect itself is depicted wearing the *atef* crown of Osiris in a variant of this same imagery.

The body of the scarab was also occasionally fused with that of other creatures. The creature is sometimes a large bird, such as the falcon or vulture, with the body of the insect then being given avian legs, a tail and wings. Another variant of this type of image fuses the head of a ram on a scarab body in order to represent the joining of Atum-Khepri as the combined god of the rising and setting sun. Such mythologically inspired images of the scarab beetle are particularly prominent in the royal and private funerary decoration of the New Kingdom, where we find the god Khepri in countless vignettes of funerary books as well as painted on the walls of tombs – settings which were particularly rich in mythological and symbolic significance.



8. The god Khepri depicted in anthropomorphic form but with the head of a beetle – stressing the essential identity of the god. Tomb of Nefertari, Thebes. (Courtesy of G. Johnson)

SCARAB DEVELOPMENT

THE development of the Egyptian scarab is interesting in that it followed a somewhat slow and unlikely path. The earliest scarabs functioned mainly as amulets, and the origin of the objects must be viewed in that context. Amulets – small objects of religious or magical significance which were believed to provide power or protection – appear very early in Egyptian history and examples in the shape of animals are known from the Predynastic Period, as early as 3200 BC. There were many types of amulet, however, and objects in the shape of scarab beetles were originally just one form of a type often called ‘design amulets’ or ‘design seals’, which developed during the latter part of the Old Kingdom. The earliest examples of these design amulets or seals were usually pierced for suspension and had a pyramidal shape with some type of significant or decorative design on their lower surface (figure 9). As time progressed these objects developed into forms with rounded shanks often called ‘button seals’, from their similarity to small buttons, and then into the form from which the classic scarab would appear – seal amulets with backs that were made in zoomorphic or anthropomorphic shapes. Over time the popularity of the scarab type increased dramatically, and the scarab eventually became established as the most common of all Egyptian amulets.

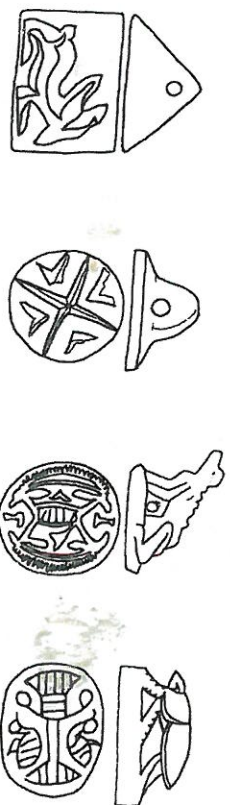
After the close of the Old Kingdom, during the First Intermediate Period, scarabs and other types of design amulet also began to be utilised as seals. Seals appear in Egypt from a very early date (at first as cylinder seals, then stamp seals) and were used to impress a mark or design of ownership, or to prevent tampering with sealed objects or containers. Although this usage came relatively late to the scarab, it appears that many scarabs were functioning as seals during this time of frequent power shifts and bureaucratic reorganisation.

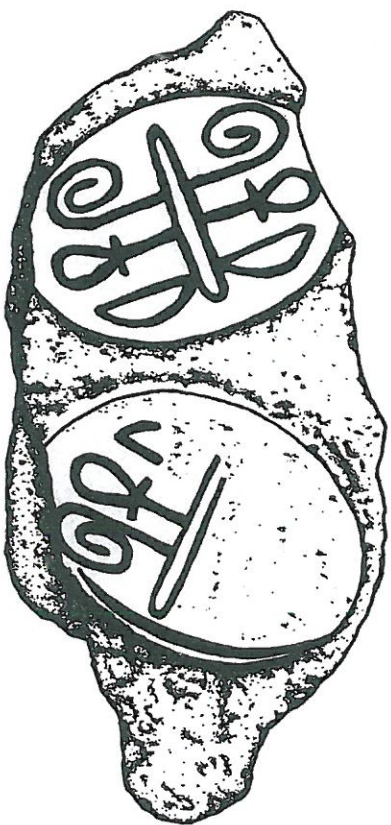
Stylistic details also changed during this period. Scarabs of the Old Kingdom and much of the First Intermediate Period were crudely formed, with body parts often roughly delineated and the insect’s legs unnaturally extended from the body, but by the close of the First Intermediate Period the delineation of the scarab’s back

markings was more precise and the insect’s legs were usually more clearly defined as well as being shown more accurately as bent at the sides of the body. The scarab was now carved in a more naturalistic manner, with the insect’s body often being undercut somewhat from its plinth, and added details such as the crenations of the clypeus also being shown. Scarab bases were often decorated with the same maze-like patterns commonly found on seals of the First Intermediate Period, but they also now began to be decorated with representations of living things – especially creatures such as the fish, serpent, lizard and crocodile which symbolised fertility or regeneration, or the lion and baboon, which had solar, and hence regenerative, connotations (see chapter 3). These early motifs would continue to be used for centuries but were soon joined by others.

Many developments took place during the Middle Kingdom. Mass production of scarabs seems to begin in the latter part of this period (probably during or immediately after the reign of Senwosret III). Also during the Middle Kingdom and the following Second Intermediate Period, the range of designs on the underside of scarab amulets widened considerably, with new elements appearing in many combinations. Floral motifs and designs with scrolls, spirals, coils and other patterns became increasingly common, as did images of certain deities such as Hathor, and scarabs now incorporated hieroglyphic symbols connoting desirable amuletic qualities and powers. Sometimes the hieroglyphs were arranged in columns or symmetric patterns such that the multiple signs look like short texts, but the hieroglyphs appearing on many scarabs of the Middle Kingdom are merely decorative groupings utilised only for the magical value of the signs themselves. During the later Middle Kingdom and into the Second Intermediate Period, however, a good number of scarabs were inscribed with the names and titles of officials (see chapter 3). These were perhaps primarily amuletic in nature, though in the Middle Kingdom (and very occasionally later) some of these scarabs were used as seals, and mud sealings with the impressions of scarabs have

9. The development of the scarab (from left to right) from pyramidal amulets to the so-called ‘button seal’, zoomorphic amulets and seals, and finally the classic scarab. (Selection from Ward, 1994, p. 187)





10. Many scarabs of the Middle Kingdom were used as seals – as shown by these seal impressions – though this use disappeared and metal signet rings eventually replaced them in this role. (After T. Bagh, figure 3:83 6a)

survived from this period (figure 10). Scarabs also first appear as the bezels of finger rings during this time.

During the New Kingdom, although the 'developed' form of the scarab was already established, certain stylistic developments continued to occur. While not always constant, there was a gradual increase in the naturalistic representation of the scarab beetle, with more – or more accurate – details often tending to be added as time progressed. For example, the small protrusions at the base of the insect's wing cases known as humeral callosities, which are depicted as small triangular shapes on the elytra (figure 11) or in other stylised ways, are certainly first attested on a scarab of Apophis from the Second Intermediate Period but only become common on scarab amulets in the New Kingdom.

The trend towards naturalistic representation continued and was heightened during the Late Period of Egyptian history, when scarabs were routinely constructed with a great deal of anatomical detailing. It was also during the Late Period that a particular development of the class of naturalistic scarabs took place, in the form of amulets that do not have flattened bases like scarab seals but are formed instead with a detailed representation of the beetle's legs and underparts (figure 12). Such naturalistic scarabs usually have loops for suspension so that they could be worn on the body.

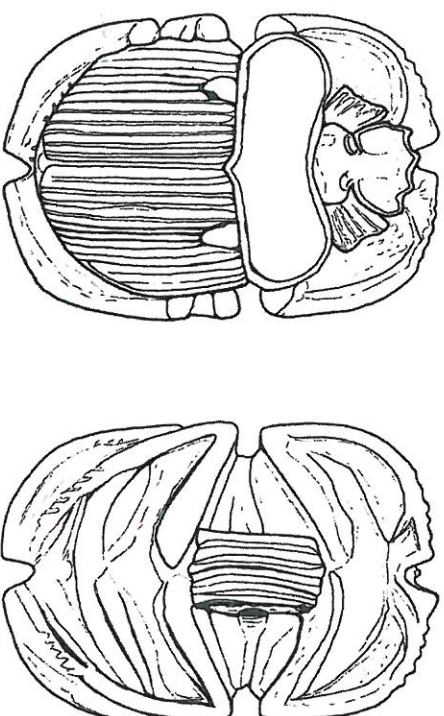
Some of these naturalistic scarabs are also differentiated by the fact that they have the head of a hawk rather than that of a beetle – with virtually all known examples of these scarabs being made of lapis lazuli, a stone with particular symbolism relating to

11. A scarab with stylised but clearly marked humeral callosities – the small triangular features at the base of each wing case. These features became common only on scarabs of the New Kingdom and later. (Courtesy of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem: 76.31.4174)

the heavens. These may have had specific mythological or magical significance for the Egyptians considering the funerary settings in which they have been found. Other rarer examples have the head of a human, bull or ram – or even four ram's heads.

Beyond the Late Period a gradual decline of the scarab as a religious and magical object began. Scarabs are still found from the latest dynasties of Egyptian history, but they are not so common and seem to have become generic items with less intrinsic importance. On the other hand, scarabs were still utilised in some religious settings. From one Greek magical

12. Naturalistic scarabs of the Late Period show highly detailed upper surfaces as well as renditions of the undersides of the scarabs' bodies in place of the usual flattened base. (Oriental Museum, Durham: N1784)



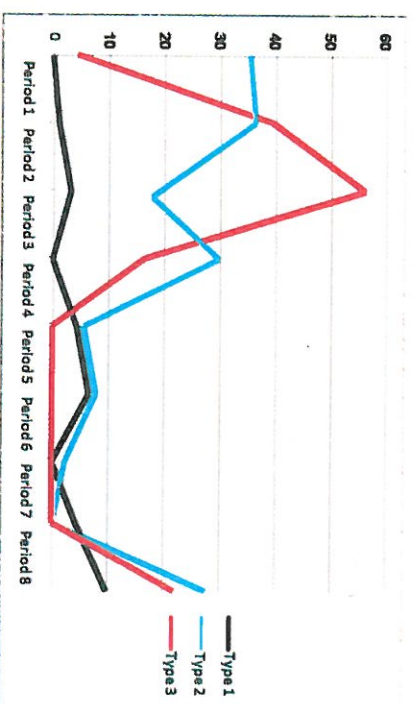
papyrus we learn that there was a 'ceremony of the beetle' performed in sanctifying scarabs during the Ptolemaic Period, if not earlier. The ceremony was an elaborate one involving various offerings, ritual actions and the reading of spells. It was to be performed only at certain times – on the 7th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 14th, 16th, 21st, 24th and 25th days of the month – and its complex ritual demonstrates that scarabs were still objects of at least traditional religious importance sometimes utilised in burials during this time.

The Egyptian burial ritual and other religious practices are known to have undergone profound changes between the Thirtieth Dynasty and Roman times. Artefacts which had previously been central elements in the funerary assemblage – such as shabti and canopic jars, as well as scarabs – largely disappeared by the time of Augustus. As a result, the funerary as well as amuletic use of the scarab effectively ended within the Roman Period, and it was at this time that one of ancient Egypt's most potent and enduring symbols finally dropped from view.

THE DATING OF SCARABS

Although the basic history of the scarab as outlined above is fairly well established, many questions remain regarding the development of certain types or forms of these artefacts, and it is often far from simple to date specific examples. There are a number of reasons for this difficulty. Early scholars presumed that the name of a monarch inscribed on a scarab base dated the scarab to that monarch's reign, but it was soon found that this is often not the case. Scarabs inscribed with the names of certain kings are now known to have been produced centuries after their deaths (see chapter 3), and this ancient practice precludes the dating of many scarabs bearing a royal name by means of the name alone. Precise dating can also be rendered difficult because some typological traits of scarab form and decoration developed slowly and unevenly. It is also true that most scarabs – apart from those that were produced in moulds – are unique in some way, and the variations that result from this fact can also make successful dating difficult. Perhaps above all, the large number of scarabs whose archaeological context is unknown means that the precise dating of some scarab types is not possible.

A number of scholars have laboured to reconstruct the chronological sequence of scarab development, and this has proved to be an intricate and often difficult quest given the problems outlined above. Beginning in the late 1970s William A. Ward demonstrated the importance of analysing scarabs on the basis of many different characteristics, including the form and decoration of their upper and lower surfaces, as well as their side profiles, base types, size, and materials of construction. This broad-based approach was furthered in Ward's own work as well as his work with other scholars, and was accepted by most archaeologists in



13. A chart based on the research of William Ward showing the frequency fluctuation of three different styles of scarab head design (Type 1 with double lines delineating the eyes, Type 2 with single lines, Type 3 without eye lines) over eight periods, ranging from the earliest scarabs through to those of the Eighteenth Dynasty. (Redrawn from Ward, 1994, p. 196)

terms of its typological basis if not all of its chronological implications. Other scholars, such as David O'Connor, Manfred Bietak, James Weinstein and Daphna Ben-Tor, have argued that many of the absolute dates assigned by Ward's typological framework are too early for the archaeological evidence with which they must be aligned. This has led to considerable scholarly discussion and the refinement of a number of earlier conclusions.

Other scholars have continued the work of methodically tracking the development of specific scarab forms and the types existing at specific times and locations. For example, the typology of many of the scarabs bearing administrative or private names of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period has been studied in detail by Geoffrey Martin, and while questions still remain regarding the dating of scarabs to these periods, our knowledge of many of the aspects of development has been greatly advanced in this area. In a similar manner, our understanding of the development of scarabs from specific sites such as Tell el-Daba and Amarna has been greatly increased by recent studies.

Yet scarab typology and dating are still a complex field with many remaining difficulties and gaps in our knowledge. This may be seen in how little we actually know regarding the centres of scarab production. While it is clear that many scarabs were produced in Egypt from the time of their first appearance, many were also apparently imported. Judging by the details of their designs, for example, many scarabs of the Second Intermediate Period appear to have been produced in the area

of Palestine, though we know few details of their production and importation. Although it is sometimes thought that no major centre of scarab production existed in Upper Egypt before New Kingdom times, it is possible, as Daphna Ben-Tor has argued, that scarabs were produced in Thebes in the early Middle Kingdom. It is also likely, though many details remain unclear, that the Lower Egyptian political sites of Tell el-Daba and Ijtawy, as well as the religious centres of Memphis (the city of Ptah, the god of craftsmen) and Heliopolis, were important areas for domestic scarab production.

Although it has traditionally been a complex issue, increasingly sophisticated criteria are now being used to date scarabs, and the combination of new methods of study and archaeological finds will doubtless fill many of the present gaps in our knowledge. Yet the precise area of origin and the dating of certain types of scarabs, especially rare varieties without known provenance, may always be difficult to pin down. Despite these underlying challenges – or perhaps because of them – the field of scarab research is a thriving branch of historical and archaeological study. The developmental history of the scarab has an important bearing on archaeological fieldwork in Egypt, and scarabs themselves play an increasingly important role as historical documents in their own right.

TYPES OF SCARAB

EGYPTIAN scarabs may be considered from several perspectives including their form and function, material of construction, and incised designs and inscriptions. This chapter summarises some of the more important of these different dimensions.

FORM AND FUNCTION

Whether utilised as amulets, seals, decorative elements in jewellery, or for other purposes, Egyptian scarabs followed a fairly consistent form. While many details certainly changed over time, most scarabs were essentially variations of the basic type that originated with Old Kingdom zoomorphic amulets. Some of the more pronounced variations of form are found in the naturalistic scarabs with realistically depicted underparts and in the winged scarabs meant to be attached to mummy bandages – both of which appeared in the Late Period – as well as in ‘double scarabs’, which join two scarabs at the side. But these and other variants still remain recognisable developments of the classic scarab. Functionally, scarabs of the various types may have played differing roles in ritual or everyday life, but their form unites them in terms of their underlying symbolic significance.

MATERIALS OF CONSTRUCTION

Scarabs were constructed from a great range of materials, and although the majority were of steatite, many examples of other materials are known.

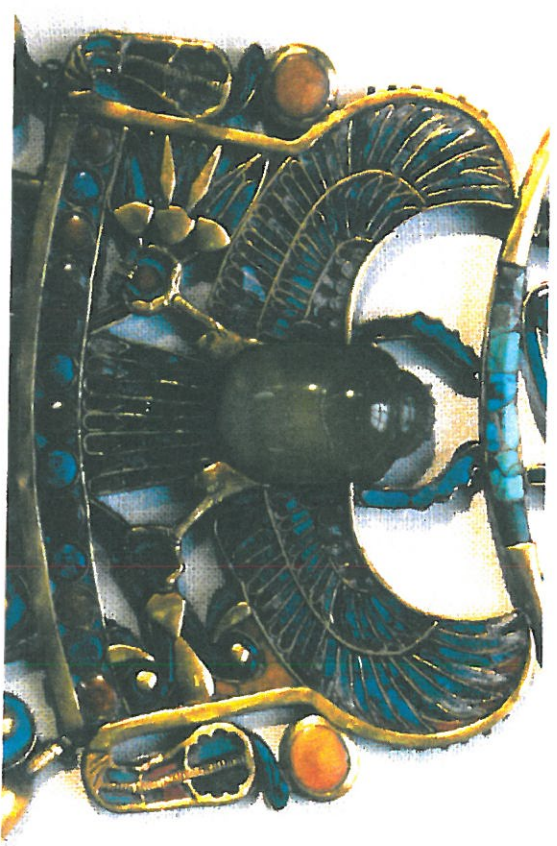
Steatite is the heat-hardened form of ‘soapstone’ – the scarab makers’ most commonly used material. The basic stone is a variety of talc which is soft and easily carved. It usually has a whitish appearance but may also be cream or even brown in colour, but, as the stone takes glazing well, many soapstone scarabs were glazed in various shades of green and blue, as well as some other colours. The act of plunging the talc into superheated glaze hardens the material and converts it into the substance termed steatite.

Faience was widely used in Egypt for amulets and was a prime material employed in scarab production. This is a ceramic material based on crushed quartz or quartz sand which was heated with glazing material until it fused into a smooth, shiny surface. The glazed surface of fired faience usually ranges through various shades of blue and green, although other colours and polychrome pieces were also made. Because faience could easily be utilised in moulds, vast numbers of scarabs were produced in this manner from New Kingdom times onwards.

Metals were also used in the production of some scarabs. Gold scarabs have survived from New Kingdom times, though it is unclear how common they were as many were doubtless melted down as time progressed. A fine example with the name of Nefertiti was found in the Uluburun shipwreck off the coast of Turkey (see chapter 6), and most known examples are from similar sealed archaeological deposits. Scarabs of silver – a metal of equal or even greater worth for the Egyptians – were also made but were probably always uncommon due to the scarcity of silver in Egypt. Some few scarabs of bronze are known, though these objects may have served as weights rather than amulets or seals.

Glass was first made in Egypt at a relatively late date – perhaps in the time of Thutmose III and certainly not before the New Kingdom (though it may have been imported before then). Although some scarabs were formed from glass during the New Kingdom and perhaps later, they are extremely rare. Like faience, glass was used to imitate semi-precious stones in the production of amulets, so it is perhaps surprising that more scarabs were not produced from this material. Even rarer than man-made glass, desert glass – formed by the impact of comets or meteorites – was also utilised as an exotic material by the Egyptians. The scarab inset in one of the pectoral ornaments of Tutankhamun (figure 14) was shown to have been uniquely constructed from such naturally formed glass.

Stones of many types – including those we now refer to as ‘semi-precious stones’ – were quite abundant in Egypt’s eastern desert regions, and several varieties were used in the production of scarabs. Agate was quite abundant, though scarabs made from this material are known only from the Late and Ptolemaic periods. Amethyst was highly valued, and many scarabs were produced from this purple stone in Middle Kingdom times and some during the New Kingdom. Carnelian, red and translucent, was particularly loved by the Egyptians and was not rare, though it seems to have been used only occasionally for scarabs – mainly, again, during the New Kingdom. Feldspar, a more opaque and usually mottled green stone, was used for scarab production during both Middle and New Kingdom times. Jasper, which exists in various colours, was particularly used in its green form for heart scarabs (see chapter 4) and in its red form as a substitute for carnelian. Onyx, like the related agate, is a banded stone which was sometimes



14. A scarab incorporated in the pectoral ornament of Tutankhamun made from rare, naturally formed desert glass. Egyptian Museum, Cairo. (Author's photograph)

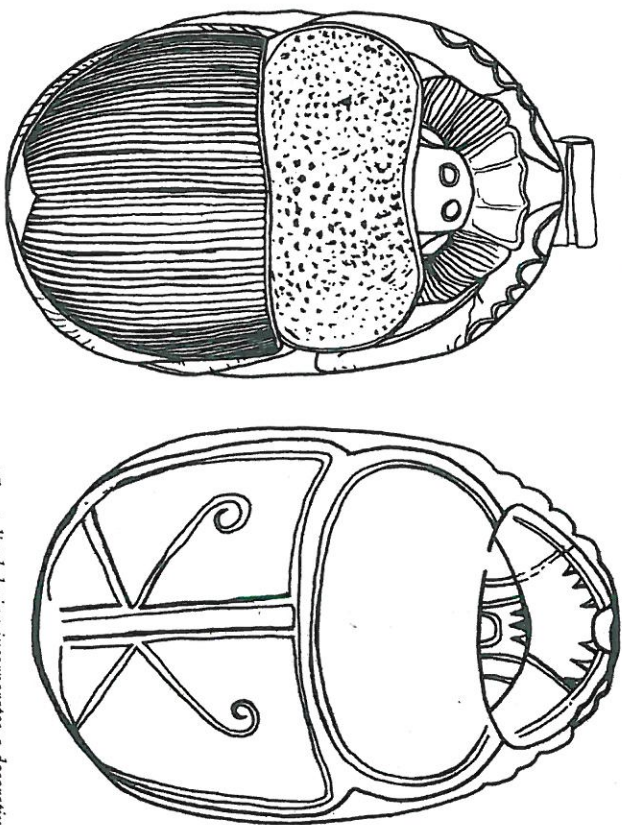
used for scarabs of the later dynasties. Lapis lazuli, which was not found naturally in Egypt and which had to be imported from the Near East, was symbolic of the starry heavens for the Egyptians because of its dark blue colour with golden flecks; it was used, primarily in the New Kingdom, for high-quality scarab seals and amulets as well as for decorative scarabs incorporated into jewellery. Some other materials, such as ebony, ivory, resin and other exotic substances imported into Egypt, were also used to varying degrees at least in New Kingdom times, depending on their availability.

BACK DESIGNS – TRUE SCARABS AND SCARABOIDS

The back designs of true scarabs range from the extremely simple or stylised – sometimes with no more than a line or two delineating major areas of the insect's body – to extremely realistic renditions displaying almost photographic detail. Some scarab backs also incorporate added texts or decoration in the form of geometric designs or images of gods or religious symbols, and the number of varieties is huge. Nevertheless, many details of back design have been catalogued and are used in dating scarabs of different types.

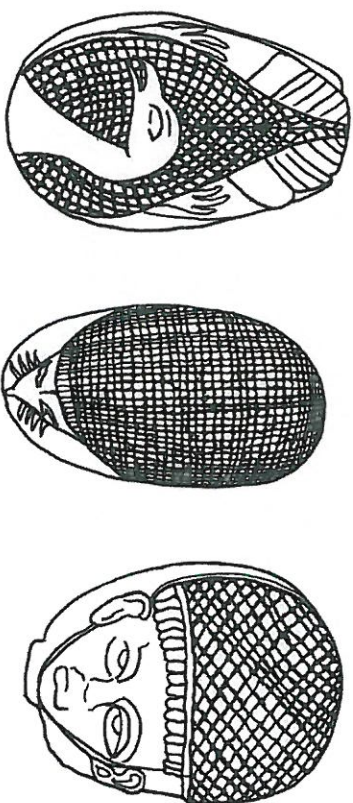
More radically changed than even the most stylised true scarabs are the so-called scaraboids, which were produced with backs in the form of other animals or even

human faces while being constructed so as to adapt their form to the shape of the scarab (figures 17–19). These artefacts parallel true scarabs in many ways and were utilised for the same purposes, but are traditionally termed scaraboids to distinguish them from artefacts based on the scarabaeus beetle itself.



15–16. A realistic back design and stylised back design. The stylised design incorporates a decorative spiral motif. (British Museum: EA 29626; after Keel, 2004, figure 90)

17–19. Scaraboids – amulets and seals in forms other than the scarab beetle yet made in the form of scarabs. From left to right, a duck, a hedgehog, a human face. Second Intermediate Period to Late Period. (British Museum: EA 66117, EA 48793, EA 52810)

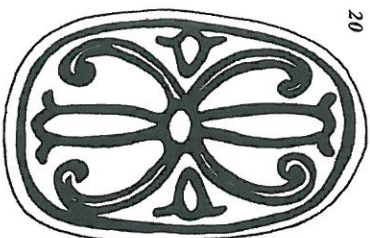


BASE DESIGNS AND INSCRIPTIONS

The bases of most scarabs were carved with designs or inscriptions that gave the artefacts added symbolic, magical or decorative value. These designs are difficult to characterise effectively as so many scarabs employed variants and combinations of given motifs and themes, yet certain basic categories may be widely recognised.

Geometric designs appeared on scarabs from early times and continued as a form of decoration through the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period. These designs include a wide range of spirals, scrolls, coils, circles, and stylised floral motifs in various combinations and degrees of intricacy. Although these geometric patterns are perhaps the most commonly depicted designs found on scarabs, it is not known whether they were simply decorative or were invested with some magical significance, as was the case with many other design types.

During the Second Intermediate Period and continuing into the early Eighteenth Dynasty, anthropomorphic figures were represented on the bases of many scarabs of Canaanite production. They may be depicted standing or kneeling



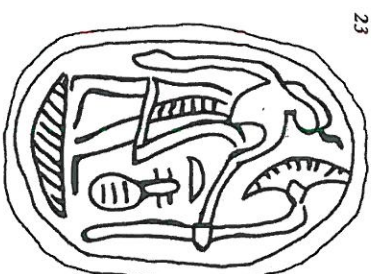
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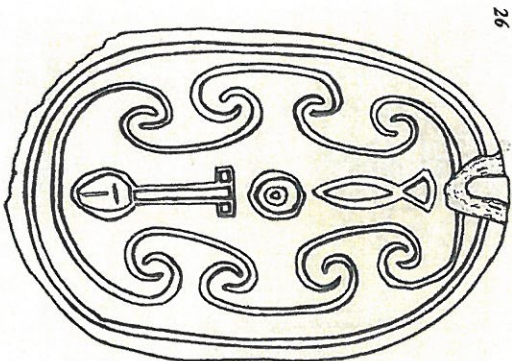
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20–21. Geometric-type base designs – cross and scroll types. (After Ben-Tor, 1993, p. 31; after Milnar, 2004, figure 1:1)

22–23. Anthropomorphic-type base designs, showing Egyptian and Near Eastern clothing styles. (After Keel, 2004, figures 79 and 85)



24-25. Zoomorphic-type base designs – a ram with a crocodile, and a lion with a cobra. (After Milnar, 2004, figure 13b:11; courtesy of The Virtual Egyptian Museum, www.virtual-egyptian-museum.org; STO. VS.01118.F)



26-27. Hieroglyphic design types – generic sign wadji-ra-nefer, and an 'a-n-r' inscription. (After Milnar, 2004, figure 1:3; Boston Museum of Fine Arts: 67.1129)

and often hold symbolic objects such as a lotus flower, palm branch, uraeus or *was* sceptre. The figures are usually though not always, clothed and may wear Egyptian-style clothing or garments which are clearly of western Asiatic design. Some of these figures are crowned and clearly represent kings, while others bear divine attributes and just as clearly represent deities, though a large number are of indeterminate nature.

Animals of various types make up a distinct category of scarab base designs. The animals depicted may have been used to symbolise kings or deities in some cases, but may have represented powers of general amuletic significance in others. The animals most commonly depicted are aggressive ones – the lion, sphinx and griffin (these three often attacking humans or other animals), crocodile, cobra and falcon – though herbivores such as antelope are also represented. Often different animals are shown together, especially when the design includes a cobra, which is frequently paired with a lion, sphinx or falcon.

Hieroglyphic designs appeared on scarabs in the Middle Kingdom and became one of the most widely utilised forms of decoration in this period. The hieroglyphs in this class of scarab were not written as coherent texts, however, and simply consisted of combinations of symbols connoting desirable qualities and powers; for example, *ankh* (life), *was* (good), *djed* (stability), *was* (power) or *hat* (foremost). Not all types are fully understood, however. A very common hieroglyphic motif of Canaanite origin during the Second Intermediate Period involved the repetitive use of the letters 'a', 'n' and 'r', sometimes in varied sequences and combined with other signs, but the meaning of this device is unknown.

Mottoes and good luck formulae inscribed on scarabs are clearly different from the last type of design as they do not appear until the Eighteenth

28-29. Motto-type texts – 'Push repays every good thing' and 'May your name endure and may you have many children'. (Courtesy of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem: 76.31.4518, after Ben-Tor, 1993, p.34)

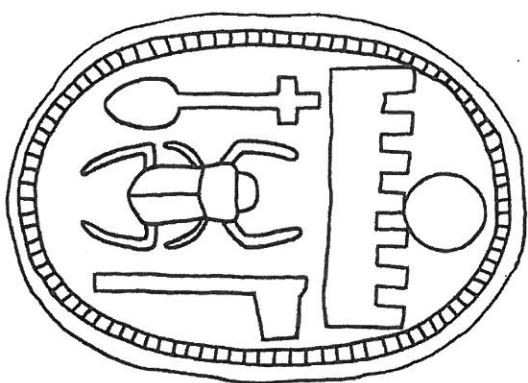


Dynasty but do include coherent if very simple inscriptions. Many of these overlap with the category of divine images and texts discussed below and include theophoric statements such as 'Amun is behind you' or 'Ptah rewards every good deed'. Such statements often dispense with the name of the deity, though their theophoric intent may still be present – 'May the god grant long life', for example. Sometimes, however, the divine connection is not evident at all and we find what appear to be generic notices such as 'May your name live' or even 'Happy New Year', although in these cases the favour of the gods may still be implicit.

Names and titles of officials and members of the royal family which appear on scarabs towards the close of the Twelfth Dynasty account for many of the inscriptions on scarabs of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period. Several thousand of these scarabs are known, and it is clear that some of them served as the seals of their owners as well as amulets for use in life; in other cases, the names are followed by hieroglyphic formulae such as *maat henu*, meaning 'true of voice', indicating that the individual was deceased and that the scarab served a funerary purpose.

Royal names and images were extremely common subjects for scarabs. The great number of such scarabs that have been found makes it clear that only a few can have belonged to the monarchs themselves, and most were commonly made amulets showing loyalty and devotion to a monarch or intended to tap the power of the king in the same manner as divine images and names were utilised. Ancient Egyptian

30–31. Names of officials and other elites – titles of a treasurer and a noble 'Mistress of the House'. (After Quirke, 2004, figure 6; after Martin, 1984, figure 1)



32–33. Royal names and images – scarabs such as these depicting the name of Thutmose III, and the name and image of Ramesses II, were produced long after the time of the kings themselves. (Petrie Museum: UC13204; courtesy of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem: 76.31.4174)

monarchs acted as intermediaries to the divine and the use of their images or names is similar to the way in which saints are called upon by some religions in the modern world. Not only living kings but also past (and especially famous) monarchs were utilised in this manner. It is known, for example, that the names of the famous Old Kingdom monarchs Khufu and Unis were first inscribed on scarabs of New Kingdom date and not before. Similarly, the names and images of the great New Kingdom pharaohs Thutmose III and Ramesses II were utilised well beyond the end of the New Kingdom.

Divine names and images are found on a great number of scarabs of the New Kingdom, with fewer examples being known from earlier or later times. The divine motifs were evidently intended to endow blessing and support, or to stress the devotion of the individual to the deity represented. It is impossible to know to what extent one or other – or both – of these purposes was involved in any given instance. What is clear is that images of certain Egyptian deities, especially many of the greatest ones such as Amun, Ra, Ptah, Horus, Seth, Hathor, Isis and Osiris, or minor but popular 'household' deities such as Bes and Tawaret, become extremely common on the bases of scarabs. Other gods and goddesses could also be depicted, however,



34–35. Divine names and images – a falconiform sun god (in almost purely hieroglyphic representation) and the Nile god Hapy (Boston Museum of Fine Arts: 06.1; National Museum of Ireland: 1904.479)

and we find occasional representations of less commonly venerated gods such as the Nile god Hapy and foreign deities like the Canaanite goddess Astarte. Divine figures such as these might be represented graphically – either alone or in combination with one another – or simply named in this type of scarab base design.

Formal inscriptions – in the sense of relatively long, coherent texts of a royal or religious nature – do not appear as inscriptions on the bases of scarabs until New Kingdom times, and these are primarily represented by scarab types with very particular functions: the heart scarabs and commemorative scarabs that are considered in the following chapters.

HEART SCARABS

THE ancient Egyptians considered the heart to be the most important organ of the body – the seat of feeling, emotion, and life itself. The heart was thus often left in place within the mummy and, according to Egyptian religious beliefs, it played a vital role in the afterlife judgement conducted in the ‘hall of justice’ of Osiris. Vignettes of chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead depict this judgement scene, where the heart was weighed on a scale against *maat* – the concept of truth and justice. This concept was often symbolised by a diminutive of the goddess of truth, Maat, or by a feather, which was her attribute. During the judgement various questions pertaining to the life of the deceased were asked, and afterlife was assured

36. The weighing of the heart scene – a vignette from the Nineteenth Dynasty *Book of the Dead* Papyrus of Hunfer, British Museum. (Author’s photograph)



only if the heart remained balanced against truth. As a result, from at least the Thirteenth Dynasty, special scarabs were made to assist the heart magically in this judgement and these became some of the most important and commonly made amulets to be placed in or on the mummy of the deceased.

One chapter of the Book of the Dead, chapter 30B – the so-called 'heart scarab chapter' (though its origins probably date to the Old Kingdom, before heart scarabs were utilised) – prescribes a 'spell for preventing the heart from opposing the deceased', and this spell was later commonly inscribed on heart scarabs:

*O my heart [which I received] from my mother,
my heart [which I received] from my mother,
my heart of my coming into being!
Do not rise up as a witness against me!
Do not create opposition against me among the judges!
Do not tip the scales against me in the presence of the Guardian of the Balance!
You are my ka which was in my body ...
Do not tell lies about me
in the presence of the great god! ...*

A variant of chapter 30, known as 30A, differs from 30B in not making any reference to the weighing of the heart but is otherwise similar. Chapter 26, an entirely different spell 'for giving the deceased's heart to him in the realm of the dead', was also sometimes utilised on heart scarabs, although this text was more commonly found on heart-shaped amulets. These may have been made as a sort of insurance, in case the deceased's heart was lost, rather than, as with heart scarabs, to assist the heart in the judgement. Sometimes maxims such as 'There is no refuge for the heart except Amun' were also inscribed on heart scarabs of the Eighteenth Dynasty and later.

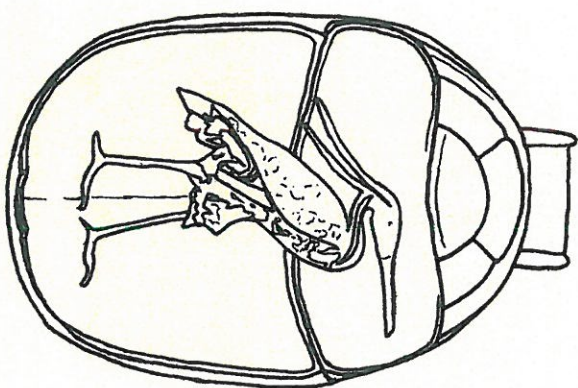
The 'standard' heart scarab chapter (30B) also gives instructions for the making of an effective heart scarab. These instructions contain a specific injunction: 'Make a scarab of *nemhef* stone adorned with gold and place it upon a man's heart.' The *nemhef* stone cited in the spell is probably what we today call green jasper, a variety of silica, as a great many heart scarabs were made from this material. The colour of silica, as a great many heart scarabs were made from this material. The colour green – associated with green living things – was symbolic of life itself (and hence of resurrection and the afterlife), which no doubt explains the preference for green stone for these scarabs. Jasper was uncommon, however, and also difficult to work, so more common stones such as green serpentine, feldspar, schist (silstone) and basalt were also frequently used, as well as green-glazed steatite and other materials. Some heart scarabs were made from materials of different colours, such as black or

red, however. Many were finely made and decorated. Indeed, some of the finest may have been royal gifts produced in royal workshops.

The earliest-known heart scarab belonged to an Egyptian official named Nebankh and dates to the reign of the Thirteenth-Dynasty pharaoh Sobekhotep IV, c.1720 BC. As private burials usually followed as far as possible the example set by royal burials, it is unlikely that such an important amulet had not been utilised before the burial of Nebankh took place. Royal heart scarabs may therefore have existed before this time. In any event, this type of scarab soon became an important part of the funerary assemblage, as is reflected by the size, variety and fine workmanship associated with many of these amulets.

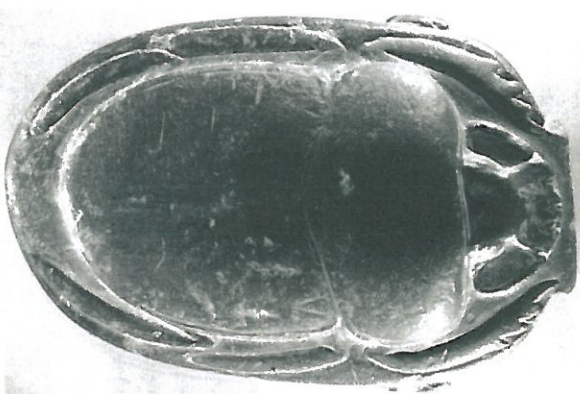
Most heart scarabs are quite large, many averaging about 7 cm and with some examples as large as 11 cm being known. Most were constructed in the form of the scarab insect with varying degrees of anatomical detail, but there were a number of interesting variants to the traditional scarab form, and in some cases additional decorative or symbolic elements were added to the beetle's body. A fine example can be seen in a heart scarab of Tutankhamun, which is decorated on its upper surface with the depiction of a blue heron – a bird often associated with afterlife symbolism and also sometimes found on regular heart amulets (figure 37). Another motif found on the backs of some heart scarabs is that of the juxtaposed seated figures of Ra and Osiris drawn on the insect's wing cases, with the image of a lunar or solar disk and *wedjat* eyes (symbolic eyes of the god Horus) drawn on the prothorax area. These scarabs sometimes have representations of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys flanking Osiris on the underside of their bases instead of the usual texts.

Some heart scarabs were made in the shape of the heart itself or, more accurately, in the shape of the hieroglyphic symbol for the heart, which was represented by a small jar – the receptacle of the spirit. The mouth of this stylised jar projected in a similar manner to the clypeus of the scarab beetle, and the overall shape of these



37. A heart scarab of Tutankhamun, (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

EGYPTIAN SCARABS



38–39. The upper and lower surfaces of a heart scarab carved in the approximate shape of the ib or heart hieroglyph. The small projections at the sides represent the handles of the jar on which the sign is based. (Courtesy of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem: 76.18.273)

annulus thus resembles that of a traditional scarab when seen from the top. Sometimes the heart and scarab images were effectively combined by the fusion of a scarab body on a heart-shaped base (figure 38), and occasionally heart scarabs combine the two ideas in other ways, such as elongated examples which place the image of the heart and that of the scarab end to end as one long artefact somewhat resembling a scarab pushing the solar orb.

Perhaps the most imaginative variant of the heart scarab, however, and the earliest form in which these annulus seem to have been made, is the human-headed form which has human features where the front part of the beetle



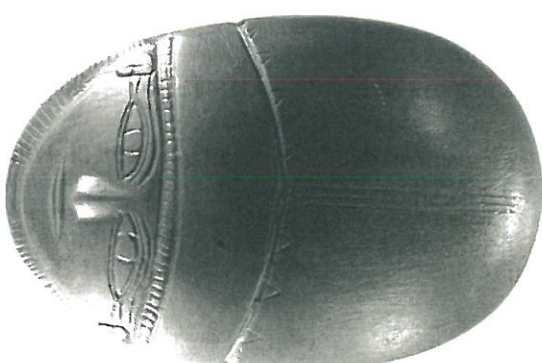
40. A heart scarab of Sobekemsaf. (British Museum: EA 7876)

would have been, so that the top of the scarab looks like a human face. These seem to have first appeared in the Second Intermediate Period and the few heart scarabs known from this time are all of this type. An example is found in the celebrated heart scarab of King Sobekemsaf from the Seventeenth Dynasty, c.1590 BC (figure 40).

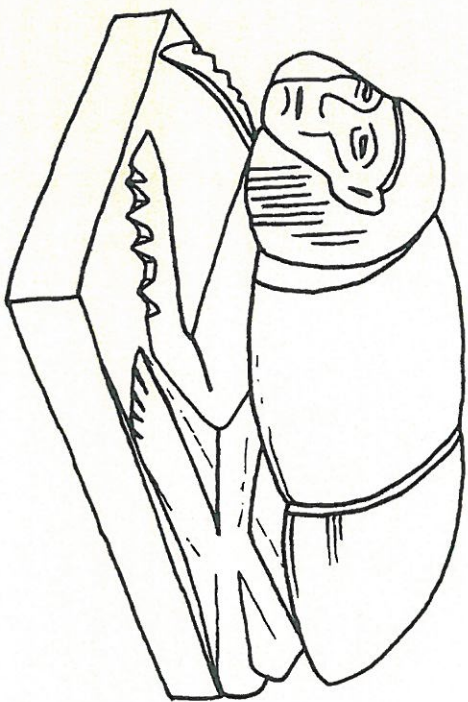
Although this is the oldest-known royal heart scarab, it is likely, as mentioned above, that earlier ones existed. It is carved from green jasper with a smiling human face in place of the forepart of the scarab beetle's body and set in a gold base, the sides and underside of which are inscribed with crudely formed hieroglyphs spelling out some of the text of chapter 30 from the Book of the Dead. The hieroglyphs depicting living things in the inscription are drawn without legs – symbolically rendering them harmless to the deceased. The scarab also appears to have a fascinating history. An Egyptian text of the Twentieth Dynasty, c.1110 BC, records the confession of some thieves who broke into King Sobekemsaf's tomb at Thebes and stole much of its jewellery, including, as is very likely, the king's heart scarab. The artefact eventually came to light again in modern times when it was sold by some local residents, who had discovered it in a robbers' cache that had survived untouched and forgotten since the apprehension of the robbers themselves thousands of years earlier.

Human-headed heart scarabs also continued to be made in the New Kingdom and most of the known examples are from this period. A range of sizes and designs is found in these New Kingdom examples,

HEART SCARABS



41–42. A green phyllite heart scarab with its forepart in the form of a human face. The scarab is shown with the upper surface head-end down. (Courtesy of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem: 76.18.263)



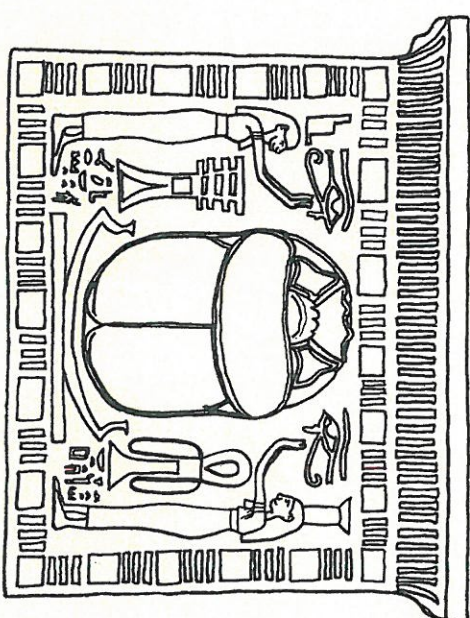
43. A human-headed heart scarab. Scarabs of this type are uncommon but represent a variety of the earlier human-face scarabs. (University Museum, Leipzig: 2439)

with varying framing designs and treatments of the body area of the scarab, which may show decorative lines or hatching to indicate hair or a covering at the top of the depicted face.

A less common variant of the fused anthropo-zoomorphic type of scarab depicts the insect in the normal manner but with a human head projecting from the body, rather in the form of the sphinx or other Egyptian creations which joined the human head to the body of a non-anthropomorphic creature (figure 43).

Because heart scarabs were intended to assist the heart of the deceased, many have been found wrapped on top of the chest area of intact mummies. Examples from the Twenty-sixth Dynasty have also been found wrapped within the chest or abdominal cavities of mummies. But many New Kingdom examples were constructed with loops for a chain or wire, which indicate that they may also have been placed around the neck or otherwise suspended from the body; indeed, a variant of chapter 30B of the Book of the Dead indicates that heart scarabs were suspended from the neck during the recitation of the spell. A good number of these scarabs with suspension loops have golden bands or 'harnesses' running round the base and over the back of the scarab in order to hold the amulet more securely when it was suspended.

As time progressed, heart scarabs – especially royal ones – were also set into pectoral plaques, which were often made in the shape of a naos or shrine and decorated with the protective images of gods or goddesses flanking the inset scarab (figure 44). These pectorals were often decorated on both sides, with the upper surface



44. A heart scarab pectoral plaque of the Nineteenth Dynasty with an inset scarab flanked by Isis and Nephthys. (British Museum: EA 7865)

of the scarab being visible on one side and the lower, inscribed surface on the other. The scarab might be flanked by Isis and Nephthys or by representations of the *dyed* and *tjet* amulets of Osiris and Isis. From the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, generic funerary scarabs (rather than true heart scarabs) were also produced, often with outstretched wings that were made separately and attached to the body of the scarab. These, and other scarabs with drilled or hollowed spaces beneath the body of the insect, were often constructed to be sewn onto the mummy's outer linen wrappings.

It is clear that heart scarabs were often produced in large numbers and utilised as needed because their inscriptions – like those of many funerary papyri – frequently had blank spaces left in them intended for the name of the deceased; yet, in fact, these spaces were often never filled. Similarly, only part of the requisite spell was frequently carved on the scarab's base. It can be concluded from this that the mere presence of a generic scarab within the funerary assemblage – with or without the deceased's name or a full inscription – was felt to be sufficient. On the other hand, multiple heart scarabs were sometimes included in the burial. The mummy of King Psusennes of the Twenty-first Dynasty, discovered at Tanis, was adorned with four of these amulets.

By Graeco-Roman times, heart scarabs had fallen out of use, and the few that have been found in burials of this period were evidently of primarily ornamental nature and without the great magical and symbolic importance that was invested in them in earlier periods.

5

COMMEMORATIVE SCARABS

ONE of the most fascinating – and historically important – classes of scarab is the commemorative type, which represents a large number of artefacts that were specially commissioned to celebrate and record specific important events or occasions. Several hundred of these scarabs are known, all of which date to the New Kingdom. Most are from the reign of Amenhotep III, but the type begins before this king and continued for a while after him.

An interesting early example is found in a scarab commemorating the construction of a pair of obelisks by King Thutmose III (figure 45), probably in celebration of his *heb-sed* jubilee. Royal jubilees were celebrated after thirty years of rule and then at shorter periods thereafter, so this would date the scarab to at least the thirtieth year of Thutmose's reign, around 1470 BC, when it was probably produced as a souvenir of the erection of the great monuments and the associated festivities. Although it is not known which of Thutmose's obelisks the scarab commemorates, the fact that a scarab was issued to celebrate them indicates that they were almost certainly of a monumental size, like those placed by the king in Karnak Temple. While the authenticity of a commemorative scarab of Thutmose IV in the British Museum is now generally questioned, other scarabs could have been produced to commemorate similar events from relatively early in the New Kingdom, though the nature of the very first commemorative examples may never be known.

The form was certainly heavily utilised by the craftsmen of Amenhotep III, who produced at least five different types of large commemorative scarab. The long and successful reign of this king (c.1410–1372 BC) lent itself to the commemoration of many events, and the resulting scarabs have been found in Nubia and Palestine as well as Egypt, indicating that they may even have been sent out as royal gifts to announce the events they record. The texts of all five of the scarab series follow the same pattern: the full fivefold titulary of the king is given first; this list is then followed by the name of the great royal wife Tiy; and then the texts continue to give an account of whatever event they commemorate.



45. An early commemorative scarab from the reign of Thutmose III, Eighteenth Dynasty. The scarab records the construction of two obelisks by the king, probably on the occasion of one of his royal jubilees. (Photograph by Kelly Mitchell, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: 14.8)



46. A marriage scarab of Amenhotep III, Eighteenth Dynasty. Such scarabs do not seem to have celebrated the actual marriage of Amenhotep and his wife Tiy, but to have been produced later during the king's reign to stress the position of Tiy as the primary royal wife. (After C. Blanckenberg-van Delden, 1969)

First and perhaps earliest among these commemorative scarabs of Amenhotep III are the so-called 'marriage scarabs', over sixty of which are known. These scarabs bear no date, nor do they mention any clear individual event, but all add the names of Tiy's parents to her name and reiterate her title as the king's wife. For this reason these examples have long been termed 'marriage scarabs', but it is unlikely that they celebrate the actual marriage as it appears that Amenhotep and Tiy were married before the king ascended the throne. Because Tiy was not of royal parentage it is now believed that these scarabs may have been produced to stress her marriage to the king and to help legitimise her position as the king's primary wife. The text of one such marriage scarab (figure 46) reads:

1. *Living Horns, Mighty Bull, Appearing in Truth,*
 2. *[He of] The Two Ladies, Establisher of Laus,*
 3. *Protector of the Two Lands, Horns of Gold,*
- Great of Strength, Smiter of the Asiatics;*

4. King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two lands, Neb-Maat-Ra, Son of Ra Amenhotep Ruler of Thebes,
5. May he Live. The Great Royal wife Tiy, May she Live
- Her father's name
6. Yuya, Her mother's name Tjuya,
7. She is the wife of the mighty king
8. His southern boundary stretches to Kariy [in Nubia]
9. [His] northern [boundary] to Naha-
10. rin [in Syria]

Possibly the next two groups of scarabs to have appeared are the 'bull hunt scarabs' and 'lion hunt scarabs', which celebrate successful royal hunts of dangerous creatures in the first ten years of Amenhotep III's reign, when he was young and active. The well-known representations of Tutankhamun hunting lions on a chest from his tomb, and of Ramesses II hunting wild bulls on the walls of Karnak Temple are celebrations of a similar theme.

A small number (only four are known) of the hunt scarabs celebrate a wild-bull hunt. These are large specimens, with the longest texts of all King Amenhotep's scarabs. They name, as usual, the king and his queen and then describe in detail how the king killed a total of 96 wild cattle (it is perhaps unlikely that they were all bulls!) over a period of several days in the second year of his reign. The hunt took place in the region of Shetep, between Memphis and the Mediterranean, and was accomplished with the help of Amenhotep's men, who herded the cattle into a confined area:

Year 2 of the majesty of the Living Horus ... A marvel that happened to his majesty: One came to say to his majesty: 'There are wild bulls in the hills of the region of Shetep.' His majesty sailed downstream in the royal barge called 'Appearing in Truth' in the time of night, made an early start to the journey, and arrived safely in the region of Shetep at the time of dawn. His majesty appeared on a chariot [or horse] with his whole army behind him. The officers of the army, the regular soldiers of the army, and the children of the Kap [the royal school] were instructed to keep watch for the wild bulls. Then his majesty commanded that one drive the bulls into a walled enclosure with a ditch. Then his majesty went forth to all the bulls. The number of bulls was 170. The number taken by his majesty in hunting on this day was 56 bulls. His majesty passed four days, giving rest to his horses. [Then] His majesty appeared in a chariot. Number of wild bulls taken in hunting: 40 bulls, total wild bulls [taken]: 96.

The lion hunt scarabs are the most common of all known commemorative scarabs and over 137 are now known, commemorating over a hundred successful lion hunts. Each scarab inscription gives the king's titles, as well as the name of the queen, and

47. A lion hunt scarab of Amenhotep III, Eighteenth Dynasty. Scarabs of this series glorify the king's hunting prowess through the celebration of over a hundred lion hunts in the first ten years of his reign. (After C. Blankenberg-van der Velde, 1969)

then details the number of lions killed. The assistance of others is not indicated in these scarabs, which focus only on the king's own accomplishment. In several of his inscriptions Amenhotep himself is referred to as 'the mighty lion', 'the fierce-eyed lion', and the like, which shows the special importance of these hunting exploits in terms of monarchical ideology and propaganda. One text on a lion hunt scarab (figure 47) reads:

1. Living Horus, Mighty Bull, Appearing in Truth
2. [He of] The Two Ladies, Establisher of Laws, Pacifier of
3. the Two Lands, Horus of Gold, Great of Strength, Smiter of the Asiatics, King of Upper and Lower Egypt,
4. Neb-Maat-Ra, Son of Ra, Amenhotep Ruler of Thebes [May he Live].
5. The [Great] Royal Wife Tiy [May she Live]. Number of Lions
6. taken by his majesty with his own shooting, beginning
7. from year 1 until year 10: Lions
8. fierce, 102 [variant, 110].

The fourth group consists of the seven known scarabs which celebrate the coming to the Egyptian court of the Mitannian princess Gilukhepa, the daughter of King Shuttarna III. The texts describe the arrival of the princess along with 317 female attendants from her Syrian homeland and her entry into the royal harem. Because Egypt had been at war with the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni until the reign of Amenhotep's father, Thutmose IV, Amenhotep's marriage to this princess (confirmed by a later text) was clearly an important diplomatic event. Interestingly, even on these scarabs Queen Tiy's name appears after that of the king, indicating that she was still the great royal wife.

Finally, eleven known examples of a fifth type of commemorative scarab from Amenhotep's reign tell of the construction of a great pleasure lake which the king had made in his eleventh year for Queen Tiy to sail on. This huge lake was 3,700 cubits (just over a mile) long and 700 cubits (about a quarter of a mile) wide and was made



at the town of Djairoukha – thought to be near Akhmim in Middle Egypt, or possibly next to the king's great palace at Malkata in western Thebes. The scarabs tell how the king and queen sailed on the lake in a royal barge called 'The Aten Gleams' – an interesting foreshadowing of the events of their son Akhenaten's reign.

Historical questions remain as to why these particular subjects were chosen for commemoration by Amenhotep while other events – such as the king's military campaigns in Nubia – apparently were not. It is possible that other events were celebrated in this manner, and that their commemorative scarabs have been lost, though the large numbers of most of the surviving scarab types would seem to suggest this is unlikely. Equally intriguing is the question of why such scarabs do not seem to have been produced after the eleventh year of the king's long reign. One scholar, Lawrence Berman, has suggested that all these scarabs may have been produced around the same time – in year eleven of the king's reign. In any event, all of these commemorative scarabs of Amenhotep were large steatite examples glazed in various shades of turquoise and blue. Like the glazing, the level of workmanship and the exact form of the texts vary somewhat, suggesting that they were produced by different craftsmen and probably in different workshops.

In the early years of the reign of Amenhotep's son, Amenhotep IV (later called Akhenaten), the commemorative practice was continued. Only a very few examples are known of this king's scarabs, but given the 'heretical' nature of his Aten-centred religion and the resulting destruction of his monuments, this might not be so remarkable. These scarabs are made of glazed steatite and are similar in form to the commemorative scarabs of Amenhotep III. Apart from giving the king's names and that of his queen, Neferiti, the texts of Amenhotep IV's scarabs are, however, decidedly different from those of his father. One of the surviving scarabs resides in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (figures 48, 49), and the inscription on this example may be summarised as follows (after Ben-Tor, 1993):

- 1–2. Praise to the god Aten who celebrates the jubilee [two cartouches with the name of the Aten];
- 3–6. The names of Amenhotep IV;
7. Title and name of Queen Neferiti.

Doubtless, the *heb-sed* jubilee mentioned in this text was the official reason for the scarab's production, but the important role of the Aten as a god at this early point in the king's reign – before his name change to Akhenaten – is clear. In this scarab the 'kinship' of the Aten is highlighted by means of the double royal cartouches in which its name is inscribed, and the Aten is clearly presented as a god in its own right – essentially the actual subject of this commemorative text.

48–49. A scarab of Amenhotep IV commemorating the king's jubilee and praising the god Aten. (Courtesy of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem: 76.18.247)



Whether large commemorative scarabs of this type continued to be produced after Akhenaten's reign is unclear as none is known from directly after the Amarna period. Nor is it known whether this is simply owing to a lack of evidence, or that the form was then avoided because of its association with the reigns of the Amarna-era kings. In the broader sense, royal commemorative scarabs were produced at least one more time, in the Ramesside period, when we find that Ramesses II recorded his eighth jubilee on specially issued scarabs. After the close of the New Kingdom, however, as scarabs inscribed with royal names became increasingly rare, the commemorative type would have naturally come to an end.

SCARABS ABROAD

EGYPTIAN AND EGYPTIANISING SCARABS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

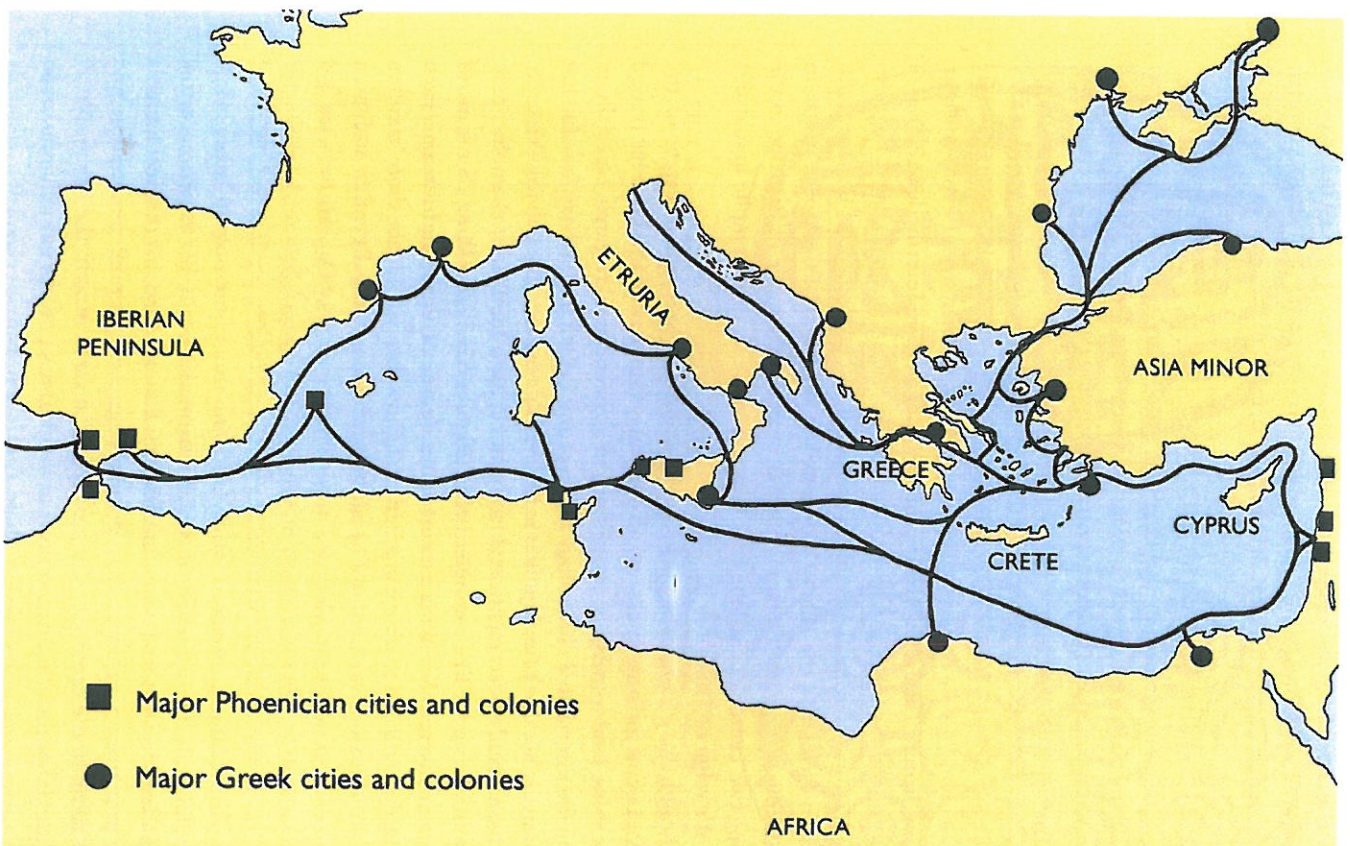
THE peoples of the ancient Mediterranean world held the culture of Egypt in great esteem, and their merchants obtained and traded in many luxury goods and other items from Egyptian sources. Among those items were Egyptian scarabs, which were perhaps valued as much for their perceived magical potency as for their decorative use.

An example of the way in which Egyptian scarabs travelled to distant locations is found in the Uluburun wreck that was discovered off the coast of Kas in southern Turkey. In addition to its cargo of more than ten tons of Cypriot copper, this anciently lost ship was found to contain a number of small items of jewellery and Egyptian scarabs. Among the scarabs was a solid gold example bearing the cartouche of Queen Nefertiti, the wife of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaten (figure 50). How this important scarab arrived at this point, and what its destination was, are unknown, but the object demonstrates the way in which even scarabs of great value were distributed abroad.

It is also clear that the scarab amulet was adopted and spread by Canaanite, Phoenician, Cypriot, Greek, Etruscan and other traders across the length and breadth



50. A gold scarab inscribed with the name of Queen Nefertiti discovered in a Bronze Age shipwreck off the coast of Uluburun, Turkey. (Courtesy of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Texas A&M University)



51. A map of the ancient Mediterranean world showing the major sea-trade routes. Egyptian and Egyptianising scarabs were spread along these routes in great numbers, especially by Phoenician and Greek traders.

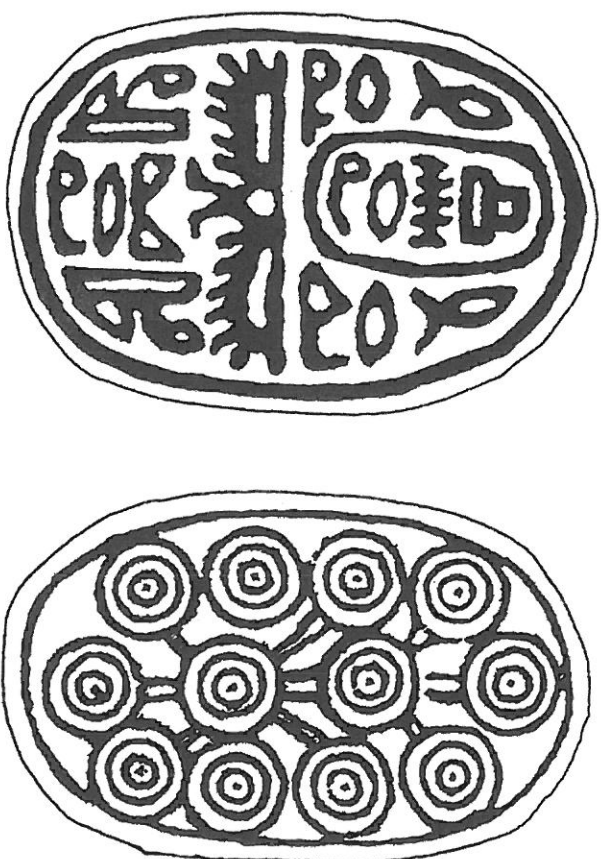
of the Mediterranean. These peoples not only traded scarabs produced in Egypt, but also produced their own copies and variants with differing degrees of Egyptian influence, yet usually with a clear debt to their original models.

SCARABS OF THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

Among the cultures to adopt the Egyptian scarab were several of the southern Levant. Over time, the ancient Canaanites, Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites and Israelites all obtained and produced scarabs in varying degrees of local or Egyptian style. The earliest scarabs known from the area are from the time of the Twelfth Dynasty. They include scarabs bearing the names of Egyptian kings as well as very high officials (though not military officers), and it seems that they were entirely imported or, in the case of funerary examples, perhaps stolen from Egypt. However, beginning around 1700 BC – the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period of Egyptian history and the Middle Bronze IIB period in Canaan – scarabs began to be produced in Palestine as a result of the large-scale settlement of Canaanites in the eastern Delta, and the rule of a dynasty (or dynasties) of Canaanite origin in Egypt during this period. Great numbers of scarabs were made in Palestine in the following two centuries until the establishment of the Egyptian empire in that area during the reign of Thutmose III.

Although they cannot be surveyed in any detail here, these scarabs of the southern Levant form an extensive and extremely important corpus that has proved of great value (and sometimes contention) in archaeological research, especially in studying the interrelated chronology of Egypt and Palestine, which is often difficult to reconstruct because of ambiguities in the available evidence. Scarabs of Canaanite to origin have already been mentioned in chapter 2 and a number of examples are to be seen in chapter 3. The examples below (figures 52–3) also show that some of these scarabs were made with a tremendous degree of Egyptian influence, even though the original motifs were adapted or slightly changed. In fact, there has often been confusion between some Canaanite scarabs and true Egyptian scarabs, a problem that has now been addressed in detail in the work of Daphna Ben-Tor and other scholars.

The early scarabs of the southern Levant considerably predate the scarabs of most of the cultures discussed below and are also interesting in other ways. Archaeologically, the presence of such items made locally but imitating actual Egyptian amulets and seals is sometimes more significant than that of direct imports, as the imitations may indicate a greater degree of cultural penetration and interrelation. In the case of locally produced Canaanite scarabs the situation may sometimes be more complex, however, as the degree of overall cultural interaction between Egypt and areas of the southern Levant is not always clear.

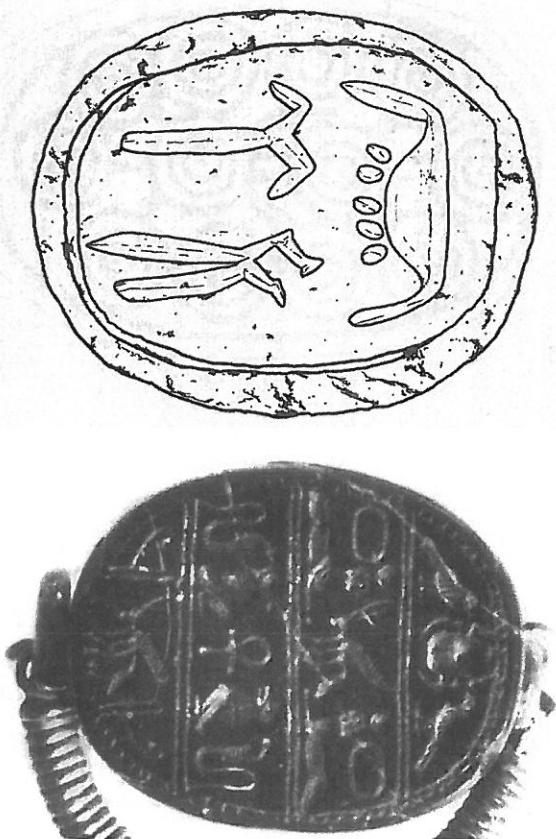


52–53. *Canaanite scarabs contemporaneous with the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt employing variations of Egyptian hieroglyphic and decorative elements. (After Ben-Tor, 2004, figures 4.12 and 6.30)*

PHOENICIAN SCARABS

The home of intrepid mariners and masters of commerce, the Phoenician cities of the northern Levant established an extensive network of trade routes and colonies throughout the Mediterranean in the first millennium BC. Among their many traded goods, the Phoenicians are perhaps best remembered for their cedar wood and the 'royal purple' dye extracted from the murex shell, but beginning in Old Kingdom times they also traded many Egyptian goods – eventually including Egyptian scarabs as well as scarab copies and adaptations which they made themselves. Although known to have been produced from the eighth century BC onwards, the majority of the classical Phoenician scarabs date to the period of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, from the later sixth century to the mid fourth century. A great many of the known examples have been found in the west Phoenician (Punic) sites of Carthage, Sardinia and Spain, but recent research by John Boardman suggests that most may have been made in Phoenicia itself.

Many of these scarabs copied Egyptian motifs – sometimes with great fidelity. More often than not, however, variations in theme or in the treatment of individual elements of the representation reveal Phoenician influence on their locally produced

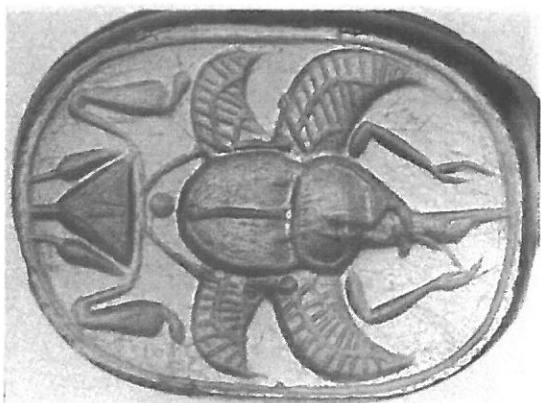


54–55. A Phoenician scarab with mixed real and 'pseudo' hieroglyphic signs, and a scarab with a constructed 'pseudo-text'. (Courtesy of the Beazley Archive of Oxford University: 01.02, 01.01)

scarabs. In any event, the Egyptianising scarabs of the Phoenicians may emulate a number of aspects of the Egyptian originals. Some copy Egyptian words or phrases while many use random or 'pseudo' hieroglyphs (figure 54) that do not actually say anything coherent, and in other cases even 'pseudo-texts' were constructed (figure 55).

Of particular interest are the Phoenician scarabs that utilise variants of Egyptian representational motifs. These include a great many different types, but solar-related motifs, anthropomorphic deities, and scenes relating to Egyptian kingship – all themes which were probably regarded as quintessentially Egyptian – are especially common.

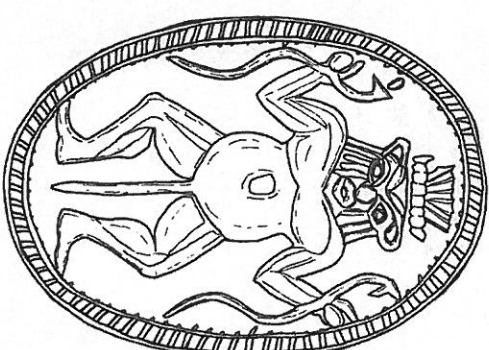
Among the solar motifs we find elaborate representations of solar disks as well as zoomorphic solar creatures such as the uraeus, sphinx and scarab. Some are of general Egyptian type, such as the solar disk flanked by sacred uraei, while others show outside influences, such as those exhibited by the hawk-headed scarab in figure 56. While the elements of this composition are Egyptian, the treatment of many of its details are not. The 'arms' of the beetle, for example, are atypical for Egyptian works, and the insect's four wings are a product of Phoenician and Syrian art not found on Egyptian originals. Other variants of the solar type include solar cartouches, human-headed scarabs and uraei, and even figures holding sun disks or raising the solar boat (figure 57) – all based



56–57. Egyptianising Phoenician scarab seals of the solar-related motif type. (Courtesy of the Beazley Archive of Oxford University: 05.x03, 02.26)



58–59. Phoenician scarab impressions of the anthropomorphic deity motif type. The first, of Isis and Horus, shows Near Eastern influences such as the incense burner, while that of the god Bes is rendered almost entirely in Egyptian style. (Courtesy of the Beazley Archive of Oxford University: 11.x26, 22.x38)



on Egyptian solar concepts and motifs, yet expressed in a manner revealing influences absorbed by the Phoenicians from other areas.

Egyptian anthropomorphic deities are common subjects of classical Phoenician scarabs. While a wide range of gods and goddesses was utilised, the afterlife-related deities – Osiris, Isis, Horus and Anubis – were especially popular and outnumber all others. These deities could appear singly or in groups, and scenes of the goddess Isis nursing the infant Horus (figure 58) were particularly valued, as was the household and protective god Bes (figure 59).

A third, less common, category of Phoenician Egyptianising scarab designs is that of royal motifs, which show kings before gods, in battle, and in traditional Egyptian monarchical poses such as the 'smiting scene' depicted in figure 60.

Some Phoenician scarabs show completely mixed influences, often combining unrelated Egyptian, Greek or Near Eastern motifs and symbols. The example in figure 61 exhibits Aegean elements such as the turtle and dolphin along with the Greek foot motif and an Egyptian falcon. The overall result appears to be a meaningless jumble of unrelated images, yet because each was significant in its own context the essentially Egyptian scarab became the carrier of unrelated symbols brought together for their combined decorative or, more likely, magical value.

60. *A Phoenician scarab impression of the royal motif type. This well-crafted representation shows a common Egyptian motif but with many details, still not fully understood, that diverge from an authentic Egyptian style.* (Courtesy of the Beazley Archive of Oxford University: 18.x04)



61. *Impression of a Phoenician scarab decorated with mixed Greek, Aegean and Egyptian elements.* (Courtesy of the Beazley Archive of Oxford University: 01.05)



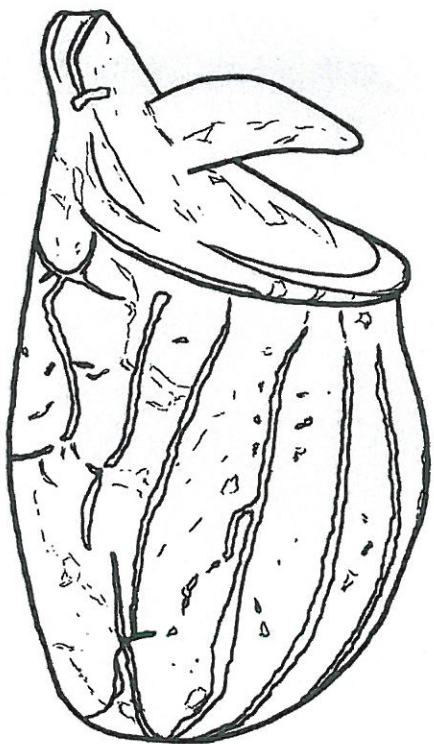
SCARABS OF THE AEGEAN

Egyptian contact with the nations of the ancient Aegean – particularly the Minoans and later the Greeks – led to the spread of the scarab throughout this region. Many Egyptian scarabs were traded to this area, and local craftsmen soon began to copy these seals and amulets and to produce their own versions.

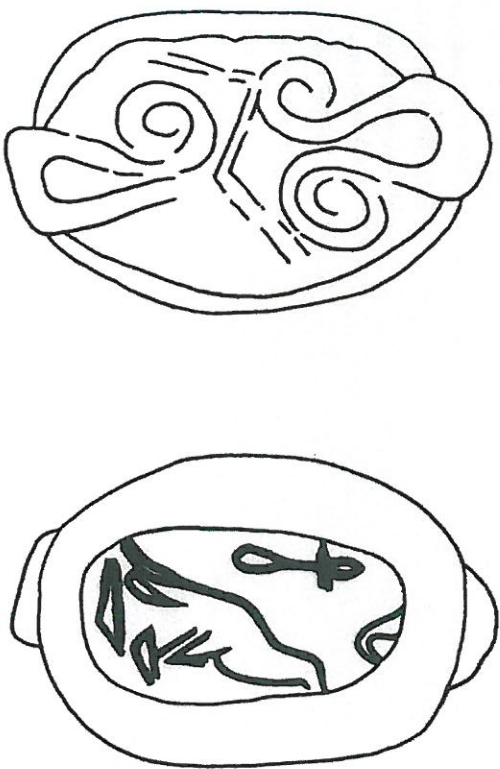
Egyptian scarabs were imported into Minoan Crete in the Pre- and Early Proto-Palatial periods, and locally produced variants have also been found dating from this time (contemporary with the Middle Kingdom in Egypt). All the known examples are from tombs, and this fact would seem to indicate the funerary importance of the objects for the Minoans. However, during the Proto- and Neo-Palatial periods the symbolic significance of the scarab may have widened on Crete, as sculpted beetle-form votives have been found in sanctuaries and sacred enclosures. These later scarab votives were modelled on the indigenous Cretan horned beetle *Copris hispanus* (figure 62) rather than the Egyptian scarab, however, and their significance is not fully understood.

Egyptian scarabs also appear at sites on mainland Greece, and Greek craftsmen were themselves making scarab seals under Phoenician influence from around the sixth century BC. The influence may have come via Cyprus, where Greek and Phoenician colonies existed side by side, and it seems that it was there that the Greeks learned how to work hard semi-precious stones such as carnelian, agate and onyx into the scarab form. Eventually, Greek scarabs and scaraboids developed into a rich and varied array of types, including some with Egyptian designs, as in the example in figure 63.

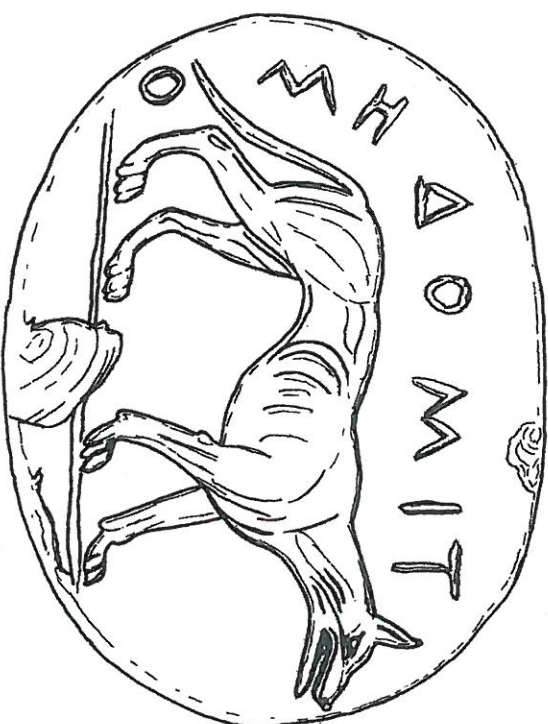
Far more often, however, the bases of Greek scarabs and scaraboids display both realistic and heraldic animals (figure 64), warriors, satyrs, or other motifs based on



62. A votive Minoan scarab based on the indigenous Cretan horned scarab beetle. (Drawing based on author's photograph)



63. A Greek scaraboid from Tegea (G09-297) with a pseudo-Egyptian inscription of unrelated though recognisable hieroglyphs. (Courtesy of Mary Voyatzis)



64. The base of a Greek scarab from Sparta showing a canine on the ground line, fifth century BC. Although simple in design, the carving of the image is of very high quality as with many Greek scarabs. The text reads 'Of [belonging to] Timodemos.' (Beazley Archive of Oxford University: D.012)

Greek myth. In terms of production, the Greeks took the scarab-cutter's art to new heights and many small masterpieces were produced in the Hellenic forms. The Greeks also introduced the cutting of scarabs and gems to other peoples with whom they interacted – not least the Etruscans.

ETRUSCAN SCARABS

Egyptian and Egyptianising scarabs eventually found their way from Greece into Etruria, where they seem to have been produced in some numbers and were used as ornaments as well as seals. It is not known whether the Etruscan scarabs were carved by native Etruscan artists or by Greek craftsmen working in Etruria, though it is possible, of course, that both are true. Certainly the majority of Etruscan scarabs show heavy Greek influence even when Etruscan elements are present.

A masterfully cut scarab from Etruria now in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art collection provides a final example of this Graeco-Etruscan fusion of design elements. The scarab itself is remarkably well cut with an elaborate border around its base, which is typical of Etruscan scarab seals. But the base image of this example (figure 67) depicts Kapanews, one of the 'Seven against Thebes' struck by a

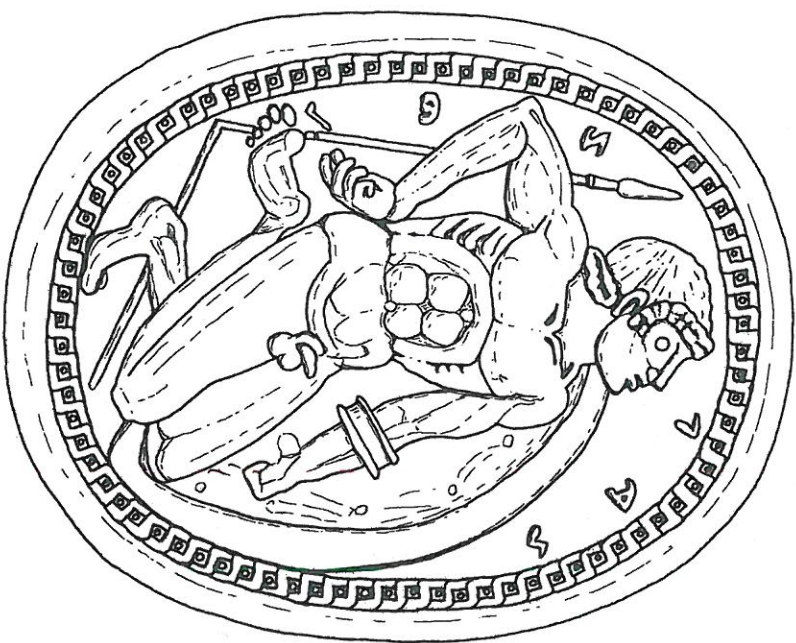
thunderbolt of Zeus in Greek mythology. Although the representation of the warrior is Greek in every detail, his name is inscribed in Etruscan letters. Examples such as this, showing the Egyptian scarab beetle fused with Greek imagery and Etruscan script – elements from three distinct cultures blended into a single artefact – clearly stress the remarkable appeal and adaptation of the scarab throughout the ancient Mediterranean world.

SCARABS IN OTHER CULTURES

In addition to their spread throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, Egyptian scarabs as well as locally made copies and variants spread south into Africa and east into Asia, though the spread of scarabs in these areas, while confirmed, is not so well documented. Egyptian and Egyptianising scarabs were certainly well known in the great empires of Mesopotamia and in ancient Persia. These eastern cultures traded in scarabs if they did not copy them, and they often added their cultural distinctiveness to the scarab's many forms. Phoenician scarabs, for example, sometimes include Persian representational elements, and some of these could have been made for trade



65–66. A damaged but finely cut Etruscan scarab from Cetamura del Chianti (c. 300 BC), showing a Greek base design set within an Etruscan-type body. The 'beaded' design dividing the beetle's back is not found on Greek examples. (Courtesy of Nancy de Gnummond)



67. An Etruscan scarab seal impression of Kapaneus – known from Greek myth but named in Etruscan letters on this scarab base, c. 510–480 BC. (Metropolitan Museum of Art: 48.1.1)

with the East or may simply reflect Persian cultural influence during the middle centuries of the first millennium BC. While the details of this type of diffusion and trade are often not clear to us, it is obvious that the spread of the scarab as an artefact of Egyptian culture was to no small degree a measure of the great importance and far-reaching influence of Egypt in the ancient world, as well as the inherent importance invested by ancient peoples in the Egyptian scarab itself.

FURTHER READING

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MUSEUMS

Virtually every museum in the world with a collection of Egyptian antiquities houses numerous examples of Egyptian scarabs, and some have thousands. Listed below are only some of the most major collections or those where scarabs mentioned in this book reside. Many of the larger museums have placed catalogues of their collections online – in many cases with images of scarabs – and these are readily accessible through the internet.

UNITED KINGDOM

Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH. Telephone: 01865 278000. Website: www.ashmolean.org

The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG. Telephone: 020 7323 8000. Website: www.britishmuseum.org

Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT. Telephone: 020 7679 2884. Website: www.petrie.ucl.ac.uk

CANADA

Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C6. Website: www.rom.on.ca

EGYPT

Egyptian Museum, Midan El Tehrir, Cairo, Egypt, 11557. Website: www.egyptianmuseum.gov.eg

FRANCE

Musée du Louvre, 34–6 Quai du Louvre, F-75058 Paris Cedex 01. Website: www.louvre.fr

GERMANY

Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Am Lustgarten, D-10178 Berlin-Mitte, Berlin. Website: www.egyptian-museum-berlin.com

Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Am Steine 1, D-31134 Hildesheim. Website: www.rpmuseum.de

ISRAEL

Israel Museum, POB 71117, Ruppin Boulevard, 91710, Jerusalem. Website: www.imj.org.il

ITALY

Museo Egizio, Via Accademia delle Scienze, 6, I-10123 Turin. Website: www.museoegizio.it

NETHERLANDS

National Museum of Antiquities, Rapenburg 28, 2311 EW Leiden.
Website: www.sitecx.nl/rmo

SWITZERLAND

Museum of Antiquities, St Alban-Graben 5, CH-4010 Basel.
Website: www.antikmuseumbasel.ch

UNITED STATES

Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11238.
Website: www.brooklynmuseum.org

Museum of Fine Arts, Avenue of the Arts, 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02115. Website: www.mfa.org

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10028.
Website: www.metmuseum.org

University of Chicago Oriental Institute Museum, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637. Website: <http://oi.uchicago.edu/museum>

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 3260 South Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. Website: www.museum.upenn.edu

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