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The Snake-legged god on the Magical Gems: Reflections on Nature, Greek, Egyptian and Jewish Influences, and the Afterlife¹

ERIKA ZWIERLEIN-DIEHL

Der hahnenköpfige, gepanzerte, schlangenbeinige Gottes mit Peitsche und Schild (Anguipes) ist eine Neuschöpfung, die ab dem 2. Jh. n. Chr. ausschließlich in der Gattung der magischen Gemmen vorkommt. Seine Deutung beschäftigt die Wissenschaft seit dem 16. Jahrhundert. Es wird hier davon ausgegangen, dass er nicht isoliert, sondern nur innerhalb seiner Gattung erklärt werden kann und dass die Figur den Trägern der Gemmen verständlich gewesen sein muss. Hauptgott der magischen Gemmen war der Sonnengott. Es war erforderlich, ihn möglichst in all seinen Erscheinungsformen darzustellen, um die Wirksamkeit der Amulette zu gewährleisten. Die meist auf dem Schild des Anguipes angebrachte Inschrift IAW ist die griechische Transkription des Namens des jüdischen Gottes Jahweh. Da gemäß den Zehn Geboten kein Bild von ihm existierte, schuf man ein neues, das aus Bildelementen zusammengesetzt ist, die in der griechisch-ägyptischen Welt der magischen Gemmen verständlich waren. Vom Mittelalter bis in die Renaissance galten Gemmen mit dem Anguipes als starkes Amulett. Ende des 16./Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts kam die Deutung des Anguipes als ‚Abraxas‘, Gott der von Basilides gegründeten gnostischen Sekte auf. Dies führte zur langlebigen Benennung der Gattung als ‚gnostische‘ Gemmen oder Amulette.

The snake-legged god with a cock's head is the most famous and most enigmatic figure depicted on the magical gems (**fig. 1 a. b**)². He faces front, with the cock's head mostly turned to the right. His torso and arms are human, and he wears a muscle cuirass with flaps at the hip. Because the chest part of the cuirass is represented sometimes in a cursory way, without shoulder pieces and shoulder lashes, the figure has sometimes erroneously been thought to be naked³. The right hand brandishes a whip, and the left arm carries a shield, which is mostly round, sometimes oval. Even though magical gems are intaglios, they were not normally used as seals. For this reason, their images are engraved so that they can be viewed directly, rather than created in reverse, as is usual on seals. The feet are two serpents, which are simply curved upwards or may form a double coil. In the present example, a

heliotrope in Kassel, the shield, as it does in most cases has the inscription IAW. The inscription on the obverse begins with the long Iaeo-Palindrome. This, according to Karl F. W. Schmidt, is Iaeo plus an Egyptian phrase: "Iaeō is the bearer of the secret name, the lion of Re secure in his shrine"⁴. In the Berlin papyrus with the rite for acquiring an assistant, the palindrome is included in the spell, which is to be spoken to Helios seven times seven times (PGM I 140). Later in the text it says "The address to the sun requires nothing except the formula "iaeō..." and the formula "Iarbatha" (PGM I 195, tr. E. N. O'Neil in: Betz 1986). The reverse of the heliotrope has a Greek inscription, which says δός μοι χάριν, νίκην ὅτι εἰρηκά σου τό κρυπτόν καὶ ἀληθινὸν ὄνομα ἦδη ἦδη τάχος τάχος ἐμοί, Φροντίνη, καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρα; „give me favour, victory because I spoke out your hidden and true name,

1 This is the annotated version of a talk given at the collaborative international conference "Egyptian and Jewish Magic in Antiquity", Bonn 5–9 July 2015, organized by Alessia Bellusci (Tel Aviv), Gideon Bohak (Tel Aviv), Rita Lucarelli (Bonn/Berkeley), Ludwig Morenz (Bonn) and David Sabel (Bonn).

2 Bonner 1950, 48 f.; AGD III Nr. 127 (P. Zazoff); A. Mast-rocinque; Studi sulle gemme gnostiche III, ZPE 120, 1998, 121 f.; S. Michel, Bunte Steine – dunkle Bilder: „Magische

Gemmen“. Exhibition 2001–2003, Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe etc., (München 2001) Nr. 55; Michel 2004, 210 n. 1094, 243 3.A.1.1) [no.7]; Koßmann 2014, 638 f. HaS 5 Taf. 73.

3 Goodenough II 1953, 248; Bonner 1950, 123 D. 173; Koßmann 2014, 20–22.

4 K. F. W. Schmidt, Review of PGM II, GGA 1934, 169–186. 177f.; cf. Bonner 1950, 204; Brashear 1995, 3587; Michel 2004, 484.



Fig. 1 a. b: Heliotrope, Kassel, Antikensammlung, 2nd/early 3rd century CE.
a) obverse: Anguipede, h: 46.8 mm; b) reverse: prayer.

immediately, immediately, quickly, quickly, to me Phrontinē and Alexandra”. The last name, written on the bevel after a damaged or deleted spot, may be a later addition, as Attilio Mastrocinque observed.

The figure appears as a new type in the main class of the magical amulets in the 2nd century CE. It is abundant in this and the following century, and lasts through the 4th century CE. It exists in deteriorated form in Syrio-Palestinian amulets of late 5th century CE⁵. The gems of the main class are usually engraved with Egyptian, Greek and magical motifs on both faces and with inscriptions in Greek characters that are, however, rarely intelligible, since they mostly consist of magical words and formulas.

Since the 16th century much scholarly work has been devoted to the whole class and especially to the explanation of the Anguipede. Campbell Bonner, in his groundbreaking study in 1950 established a firm base for understanding it⁶. Catalogues published since then have significantly increased the material available for study⁷. Simone Michel has published a thorough new study based on ca. 2600 magical gems⁸. Attilio Mastrocinque has edited two volumes of ‘Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum’ and put out a new catalogue of the magical gems in the Cabinet des Médailles⁹. Under the direction of Árpád Nagy ‘The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database’, housed by the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, is continuously growing. Several studies have also been published speci-

5 J. Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems* (Wiesbaden 2007) 109–114 nos. 631. 634. 650. 651. 655. 656.

6 Bonner 1950, 123–139.

7 Nagy 2002, 159 n. 1 gives a list of the most important catalogues up to that date the largest being: Michel 2001.

Published since then: Joachim Śliwa, *Magical Gems from the Schmidt-Ciażyński and from other Polish Collections* (Kraków 2014) and see n. 8.

8 Michel 2004; the Anguipede: 107–113. 239–249 (list 3).

9 SGG I 2003, II 2007; Mastrocinque 2014.



Fig. 2: Heliotrope, Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum inv. 12475, obverse, h: 20 mm. 2nd century CE. Bust of Helios, cock and lion.

fically on the figure of the Anguipede¹⁰. All this has contributed greatly to our understanding of the Anguipede. However, the explanations proposed, in my opinion, cannot all coexist side by side¹¹.

I certainly will not propose a completely new solution to the problem. Rather, I will attempt to determine the most probable explanation, and point to some evidence overlooked before now, or published only recently. I would like to make two presuppositions, which might seem plausible by themselves.

1. The Anguipede should not be considered in isolation, but should be explained in the context of the class of the magical gems.

2. We may assume, that not only the person or the group who invented the figure, but also the wearer of the amulet would have understood what it meant – just as he would have been familiar with the significance of the other Egyptian and Greek Gods, and would have also been aware that a given amulet represented Helios, Horus in the morning, Horus in the evening, Chnoubis etc.; or that it was helpful for the uterus, for the stomach or against sciatic pain.

The cock's head

To begin with the cock's head, Bonner's observation that the cock did not play a role in Egyptian mythology remains true. According to him, this element would have been inspired by Persian religion, where the cock "was regarded as an ally of the powers of light and goodness"¹². However, in the 2nd century CE, we need not reach so far back, as the idea of the connection of the cock with the sun god was widespread in the Graeco-Roman world. Bonner himself cites examples, such as Pausanias describing the cock on the shield of Idomeneus at Olympia, saying "The story goes, that Idomeneus was descended from the Sun, the father of Pasiphae, and that the cock is sacred to the Sun and proclaims when he is about to rise." (Paus. 5, 25, 9, trans. by W. H. S. Jones)¹³. According to Jamblichos, writing in the 3rd century CE, Pythagoras as early as the 6th century BCE, was of the opinion that the cock was holy to Helios¹⁴. On a heliotrope in Berlin, a cock stands in the front of a bust of Helios, greeting him; beneath is another solar animal, the lion (fig. 2)¹⁵. This Graeco-Roman image has the same signifi-

¹⁰ Post 1979, 173–210; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, 29–36 Nr. 9–12; Nagy 2002; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 221–225. 256–258; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007b, 255–257; SGG I 2003, 84–90 (A: Mastrocinque). 269–275 (A: Cosentino). For convenience I use here the short term „Anguipede“ for the full description „The snake-legged, cuirassed god with a cock's head, holding a whip and a shield“. Equivalent variants of such short descriptions: Nagy 2002, 160 f.

¹¹ A survey: Michel 2001, 115 f.

¹² Bonner 1950, 125. Similarly: Max Pieper, *Die Abraxasgemmen*, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Instituts für Ägyptische Altertumskunde in Kairo* 5, 1934, 119–143. 127 f. 138.

¹³ Bonner 1950, 127.

¹⁴ Iamb. v. P. 28, 147 (ed. L. Teubner, Leipzig 1937). Cited by Delatte 1914, 27–33. 31. Cf. Abd El-Mohse El-Kashab, *The Cock, the Cat, and the Chariot of the Sun*, *ZPE* 55, 1984, 215–222. 216.

¹⁵ Philipp 1986, no. 32; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, 29 pl. 28 Abb. 12; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 217. 459 fig. 776; CBd-2008.

cance as the Egyptian type showing a baboon adoring Harpocrates on the lotus¹⁶. Harpocrates, Horus the child, reborn every morning from the lotus, is an image of the rising sun. The inscriptions Phrē and ‘Akramachamarei’ on the reverse of the Berlin heliotrope refer to Helios. Phrē is Egyptian for “the sun”, Akrammachamarei is the name of the sun in the third hour (PGM III 506–508)¹⁷. Both names occur as well in association with the Anguipede. According to Egyptian belief the baboons greeted the rising sun god by yelling¹⁸.

The solar nature of the Anguipede can also be deduced from what Bonner calls “the interchange of type designs”¹⁹. The Anguipede may have a lion’s head as on this haematite in Vienna (fig. 3)²⁰. On this and other examples rays emerging from the head clearly define the figure as solar. In Egypt the lion is connected with Horus, who can also sometimes have the head of a lion and there are several magical types with lion’s heads that all have a solar character²¹. A lion rider may be Harpocrates. On a heliotrope in New York he has the sun disk on his head, holds the flail whip and raises his hand in the greeting gesture of Helios²². The rider may be Helios with a radiate head²³; but he can also have a cock’s head while holding the whip of Helios and raising his hand like him²⁴. Consequently, these types are equivalent; they represent the sun god in different forms. Sometimes the Anguipede holds his hand to his beak like Harpocrates holds it to his lips²⁵. The cock’s head designates the Anguipede as the sun god rising in the morning. This is emphasized by a heliotrope from the Newell collection, now in the collection of the American Numismatic Society, where a baboon with hands raised in adoration stands below him between two scarabs²⁶. Again, on the obverse of a heliotrope, in the Institut



Fig. 3: Haematite, Vienna, Antikensammlung des Kunsthistorischen Museums, inv. IX B 1245, obverse, h: 30 mm, 3rd century CE. Lion-headed Anguipede.

für Altertumskunde at the University of Cologne, there is a scarab below the Anguipede, which is Chepre, the form of the sun god in the morning. On the reverse is Harpocrates on the lotus – the

16 Michel 2004, 73. 271 f. list 19.1.e); 19.3.d).

17 Brashear 1995, 3601. 3578; Merkelbach II 1991, 10.

18 Bonner 1950, 154 f.

19 Bonner 1950, 142.

20 Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, no. 2230; Michel 2004, 177. 249 list 3.C. 1.a) [no.1]; Koßmann 2014, 628 Löw 14. Cf. Bonner 1950, 128 f. 169.

21 Bonner 1950, 151–154; Michel 2004, 76–78. 308–311 list 37.B. Leontokephalos.

22 New York, Metropolitan Museum 81.6.294, Bonner 1950, 288 D 211 pl. 10; Michel 2004, 276 list 19. 9. Harpocrates

auf Löwe reitend; CBd-1099; <<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/245137>> (13.03.2017).

23 Mastrocinque 2014, no. 51; Michel 2004, 280 list 22.3.a) Helios, reitend, auf Löwe.

24 Michel 2001, no. 286; Michel 2004, 308 list 37.A.3.d) [no.3] pl. 43, 4; CBd-672.

25 Mastrocinque 2014, no. 295.

26 Bonner 1950, D 175; M. Frances – J. H. Schwartz, Engraved Gems in the Collection of the American Numismatic Society 1. Ancient Magical Amulets, in: ANS Museum Notes 24, 1979, 149–197. 159 no. 4 pl. 34; Michel 2004, 246 list 3.A.3.h) [no. 3]; CBd-1374.



Fig. 4 a. b: Dark brown jasper, Cologne, Römisch-Germanisches Museum inv. 62,61, 2nd/early 3rd century CE.
a) obverse: Anguipede h: 21 mm; b) reverse: Helios on quadriga.

pictorial translation of the image into Egyptian²⁷. As with this example, the Anguipede is often combined with Harpocrates, Helios and other solar figures on the reverse, but also with complementary images of night and the underworld such as Hekate and Osiris²⁸. A Dark brown jasper from Xanten in the Römisch-Germanisches Museum in Cologne has a pictorial translation into Roman (fig. 4 a. b)²⁹. On the obverse is the figure of the Anguipede with IAW on the shield and ABPAΣAΞ CABAW, Jahweh, Abrasax (sc. god of the year), [Lord] of Hosts. Forming a bow over the Anguipede is the inscription KPECKENTINIOC BHNIGNOC. The reverse has the frontally represented Helios in the quadriga (the middle of the image is badly damaged). The name written in Greek is the transcription of the Latin name Crecentinius Benignus, evidently the owner of the gem. The inscription shows that the amulet was a commissioned work. Its language and style does not differ from that of the main class. Thus, I suppose that Crescentinius Benignus had made the gem during a stay in Egypt and later took it with him to Xanten. Apparently, he had been informed that the Anguipede is the same as Helios/Sol and therefore had his picture engraved

on the reverse. A gem that clearly identifies the Anguipede with Helios is unfortunately lost. It was a green jasper in the Bosanquet collection showing the Anguipede driving the four-horse chariot of Helios, seen from the front (fig. 5 a. b)³⁰. Apart

²⁷ Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, no. 9.

²⁸ Bonner 1950, 127 f. Michel 2004, 109.

²⁹ A. Krug, *Antike Gemmen im Römisch-Germanischen Museum Köln, Wissenschaftliche Kat. Röm.-Germ. Mus. Köln 4* (= Ber. RGK 61, 1980, 151–260 Taf. 64–137) (Mainz 1981) no. 47; P. J. Sijpesteijn, *Zu einigen Kölner Gemmen*, ZPE 51, 1983, 115 f.; Philipp 1986, 9 f. n. 18; G. Platz-Horster, *Die antiken Gemmen aus Xanten* (Bonn 1987) XXV n. 65; AE 1987 [1990] Nr. 776. Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, 34 pl. 30, 17 (obv.); Michel 2004, 246 3.A.3.e. [no. 2] Anguipedes, Motivverbindungen, Helios; A. Kakoschke, *Die Personennamen in den zwei germanischen Provinzen: ein Katalog. Band 1 – Gentilnomina ABILIUS-VOLUSIUS* (Rahden/Westf. 2006) 152 GN 375.1; Band 2,1 – *Cognomina ABAIUS-LYSIAS* (Rahden/Westf. 2007) 169 CN 499.1; Nagy 2014b.

³⁰ C. W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains* ¹(London 1864) 86 fig. 3 opposite the title; ²(London 1887) 103 fig. 4; C. W. King *Handbook of engraved Gems* ²(1885) pl. 12, 1. Bonner 1950, 128 with n. 20; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, 35 fig. 1; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 222 Text-Abb. 10; Nagy 2002, 159–172. 168 fig. 3; CBd-2445.

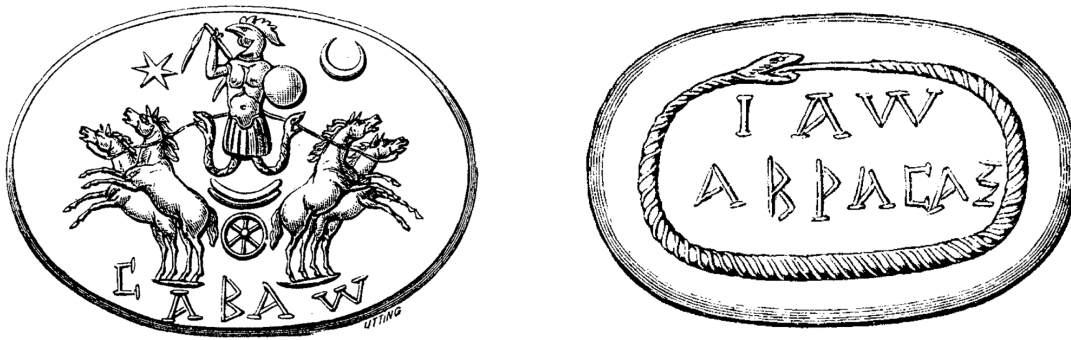


Fig. 5 a. b: Green jasper, lost, formerly in the Bosanquet collection.
a) obverse: Anguipede in quadriga of Helios; b) reverse: inscription in ouroboros.

from the altered style, the gem looks genuine. As an example in which only one wheel of the car is visible, we may compare a green jasper in the Cabinet des Médailles³¹. The two pole horses' heads in most cases turn towards each other, but here they also look in the same direction as the trace horses – Just as they do in the running quadriga on a 'topaz' in the same collection³².

The choice of material confirms the solar nature of the Anguipede: The image is most frequently engraved in heliotrope, the sun-turner, a stone said to have a special connection with the sun

(Plin. nat. 37, 165), often used for magical and non-magical gems with Helios³³. Alternatively, green jasper was frequently chosen.

The solar nature of the cock also appears in a small bronze object (height 49 mm) found at Karnak together with a coin hoard from the time of Constantine (fig. 6)³⁴. A cock sits on a sun disk folded slightly vertically. The base is said to resemble snake legs, which is not clear in the published figures.

It follows from the solar nature of the god that the whip in his right hand is the whip of Helios.

The cuirass and the shield

The cuirass and the shield indicate that the god is also a warrior. The inscription IAW, which very often appears on the shield, also occurs in the field of the stones³⁵. Publishing the magical gems in Athens in 1914, Armand Delatte concluded that the name Iaō on the shield was the name of the god himself³⁶. In 1953 Erwin R. Goodenough confirms the solar character of the god and, based on the inscription IAW, concludes "... I see no reason for doubting that the Anguipede itself, since it was chiefly identified with Iaō, was made primarily by and for Jews ..."³⁷.

The name Iaō certainly indicates a Jewish influence, but it is an indirect one via Greek, which is the language of the magical gems. *Ἰαώ* is a bisyllabic Greek transcription of a foreshortened form of the name of the Hebrew god Yahweh. It departs from the short form jh or jhw, probably vocalized as jahō, which to Greek ears would have sounded like já-o³⁸. Since the name written on the shield is

- 31 Mastrocinque 2014, no. 388. Due to this parallel my note (Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, 35 n. 106,) saying that a single wheel does not occur with the type, has to be revised.
- 32 Mastrocinque 2014, no. 390; cf. no. 389.
- 33 Michel 2004, 108.
- 34 Abd El-Mohse El-Kashab, *Cahiers de Karnak VI* 1973–1977 (Kairo 1980) 117 f. pl. 30 a. b; Abd El-Mohse El-Kashab, *ZPE* 1984 (n. 14), 215–222. 220 pl. 14, 5.
- 35 Michel 2004, 108. 239–249 list 3.A.1.b) Iaō, 3.A.1.c) Abrasax, 3.A.1.d) Abrasax, 3.A.1.e) Iaō Abrasax, 3.A.1.f) Sabaōth Adonai etc.
- 36 Delatte 1914, 29; A. Delatte – Ph. Derchain, *Bibliothèque nationale. Cabinet des médailles et antiques. Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris 1964) 25 express themselves more cautiously.
- 37 Goodenough 1953 II, 245–258; Goodenough 1953 III, fig. 1078–1115 (including several early modern types), citation p. 250.
- 38 RAC 17 (1996) 1–12, 1 s. v. Iao (David E. Aune). Cf. RE IX (1914) 698–721 s. v. Iao (R. Ganschinietz); Der kleine Pauly 2 (1975) 1314–1319 s. v. Iao (W. Fauth); G. J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament V* (1986, repr. 1988) 500–521 s. v. YHWH, 3. Greek: 509 f. (Freedman–O'Connor); Brashear 1995, 3588.



Fig. 6: Cock on a sun disk, bronze object from Karnak, h: 49 mm

closely associated with the Anguipede, it must be regarded as his main name. Of course, he may also be called by other names. As the inscription on the Kassel gem and many papyri show, it was important to know the name of the god one wanted to address, and the more names one knew, the better it was. The Anguipede could also be invoked as ‘Abraxas’, which designates him as god of the year, the numerical value being 365. The name has seven letters corresponding to the number of planets. In a London papyrus we read “and the second name with the number 7, corresponding to those who rule the world, with the exact number 365, corresponding to the days of the year. Truly. ABRASAX”. (PGM VIII 46–48, Tr. É. N. O’Neil in: Betz 1986). On a dark grey quartz in Cologne we have on the shield $\text{I}\alpha\omega\ \text{I}\alpha\eta\ \text{A}\beta\rho\alpha\sigma\alpha\zeta$ (fig. 7)³⁹. $\text{I}\alpha\omega\ \text{I}\alpha\epsilon$ – is the beginning of a logos which continues on the bevel ending with $\omega\nu$, which in the papyri reads $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu$,

that is the name of Yahweh which he gave to Moses (Exod. 3, 14); e.g. $\text{I}\alpha\omega\ \text{I}\alpha\eta\ \text{I}\omega\alpha\ \alpha\iota\ \acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu$ (PGM IV 1564 f.)⁴⁰. On the reverse are seven snakes bearing sun discs over the letters of the name ‘Abraxas’. Other names occurring with the Anguipede are $\text{Ad}\acute{\omicron}\nu\alpha\iota\ \text{Saba}\acute{\omicron}\theta$, Lord of Hosts. These as well as the names of Archangels stem from the Bible.

There are magical words of more or less certain Hebrew origin such as *Semesilam*, mostly derived from Hebrew ‘eternal sun’⁴¹, *Akrammachamarei*, in PGM III 506–508 the name of the sun in the third hour, the Hebrew or Aramaic roots of which are disputed⁴², and *Ablanathanalba*, a palindrome possibly of Hebrew origin⁴³. These names occur also with other solar deities of the magical pantheon.

In 1979 Marc Philonenko also concluded that the cock headed Anguipede is identified by the inscription on the shield as $\text{I}\alpha\omega$ ⁴⁴, and pointed to the often repeated biblical verses “But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me” (psalm 3, 3)⁴⁵. It is to Reinhold Merkelbach’s credit that he calls attention to the fact that the Septuagint does not speak of a shield but of a warrior protecting with his shield, a $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\alpha\sigma\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\varsigma$ ⁴⁶. Thus, $\text{I}\alpha\omega$ is depicted as a militant protector.

The snake legs

The most puzzling part of the entity is the snake legs. They remind most scholars of the Greek giants, who however are earth-borne opponents to the gods. Martin P. Nilsson proposed a philosophical solution: “Thus, it seems probable that the cock-headed god of the magical amulets has his snaky legs to denote him as the god of the Nether World, just as the cock’s head shows him to be the god of the Sun, the Light, and the Heaven, and his military costume the Lord of Human Life.”⁴⁷

39 Zwielerlein-Diehl 1992, no. 11.

40 $\text{I}\alpha\omega\ \text{I}\alpha\epsilon$ -logos: PGM Index 240.

41 Brashear 1995, 3427. 3598.

42 Brashear 1995, 3578.

43 Brashear 1995, 3577.

44 Philonenko 1979, 297–304.

45 Further references: Philonenko 1979, 299 n. 11 (counting $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\alpha\sigma\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\varsigma$ among the more abstract words); Zwielerlein-Diehl 1992, 31 n. 86; Post 1979, 192 rejects the connection of the shield with the bible passages.

46 R. Merkelbach in: Zwielerlein-Diehl 1992, 31. Consenting: Nagy 2002, 164; Nagy 2014b, 338. Cosentino 2013, 224 f., unaware of Merkelbach’s observation, is of the opinion that the reference to the biblical “shield” is of little importance because the figure is fully armed; cf. A. Cosentino in: SGG I 2003, 270 f. n. 315.

47 M. P. Nilsson, *The Anguipede of the Magical Amulets*, *The Harvard Theological Review* 44, 1951, 61–64, 63 = *Opuscula selecta* III (1960) 228–232.



Fig. 7: Dark grey quartz, Cologne, Institut für Altertums-kunde der Universität, obverse, h: 15 mm, 2nd century CE. Anguipede.

Yvan Koenig connects the snakes with the nether world as well. Presupposing that the snake in Egyptian tradition is associated with darkness and humidity, he interprets the Anguipede as a representation of three stages of the course of the sun. The cock's head would correspond to the rising sun, the officer's torso to the sun at its zenith and the serpentine legs to the setting sun⁴⁸.

Bonner remarks that serpents may be favorable demons, as for example Agathodaimon, but does not find this a satisfying explanation for the snake legs of the god with the cock's head⁴⁹. As a "remote and hazardous guess" he ponders whether a Jew attracted by the solar cult might have invented the Anguipede on the basis of psalm 18, 6 in the Septuagint version where "the poet says of the sun 'He shall rejoice as a giant (ὡς γίγας) to run his course.'" He notes however, that the Hebrew word 'gibbor' simply signifies a strong man.

In 1957, Alphons A. Barb also points to the GiBoR – γίγαντες of the Bible, but to another passage, Gen. 6, 4, where it designates the godless giants of early times destroyed by God in the Deluge⁵⁰. He remarks that GiBoR may also mean 'warrior', and that the same root in the vocalization GeBeR means "man" but also "cock", a pun, which according to him could be the explanation for the cock's head. The inscription IAO on the shield would express that the shield is the Lord, saying himself in Gen. 15, 1 "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield"; and who is also called "shield" in the psalms. However, considering that the GiBoR wearing God as a shield cannot be one of the godless giants, Barb thinks it is rather the primordial man Adam⁵¹.

Árpád Nagy in 2002 further developed the idea of a pun based on Hebrew words: "The manifestly heterogeneous elements of the scheme can only be viewed as a unity by arranging the material around the root GBR. The cocks head (*gever*), the male body (*gever*), shown in the form of a warrior in cuirass (*gibbor*, *gvurah*), and the double snake's legs (*gigas-gibbor*) which connote gigantic valour, all allude to a mighty (*gvurah*) God, who triumphs (*gavar*) over his enemies, in short: the Mighty One (*Gibbor*, *ha-Gvurah*)." The whip would refer to the punishing God. "In this context we can view the Anguipede as a 'syncretistic creation': a scheme created with knowledge of the Jewish tradition but from a position somewhat outside it, perhaps by a hellenising Jew who no longer felt himself tightly bound by the letter of the Law." "The resulting scheme represented for outsiders a rather odd, if immediately recognizable, 'solar divinity' reflecting the influence of many traditions" "... the scheme does not represent the God of Israel. The subject of the representation is a single *name of God*"⁵².

There are, however, some objections to this solution⁵³. The language of the persons who desi-

48 Y. Koenig, Des „trigrammes panthéistes“ ramessides aux gemmes magiques de l'Antiquité tardive: le cas d'Abrasax, continuité et rupture, BIFAO 109, 2009, 311–325. 314. 317.

49 Bonner 1950, 125–128. Post 1979, 198–200 emphasizes the positive character of the snakes.

50 Barb 1957, 76–81. 77: "Dass der Schlangenfüssler die in der hellenistischen Kunst wohlvertraute Gigantengestalt entlehnt hat, ist klar".

51 A. Mastrocinque, Le gemme gnostiche, 13. Il gallo anguipede: Lettura della Genesi, in: SGG I 2003, 84–90 also departs from Genesis.

52 Nagy 2002, 166–171, citations pp. 168. 170. Cf. Nagy 2014b, 336–338.

53 Cosentino 2013, 223 objects that there is no iconographic evidence for a similar combination of words.

gned, made and used the magical gems, the actual initiates of the magical religion, was Greek. Who else apart from the inventor could have solved the puzzle?

If the pictorial elements suffice to explain the figure, it is highly probable that it was composed as a picture and not as a pun.

Moreover the Anguipede cannot be a giant as one of his names is 'breaker of giants', γγαντορήκτης. The name occurs with the cock headed Anguipede in the vocative γγαντορήκτα⁵⁴, and as γγαντοπνικτορήκτα, 'throttler and breaker of giants'⁵⁵. It is frequently associated with the lion headed snake, Chnoubis, which in the class of the magical gems is not only the image of the first decan of Leo but also a manifestation of the sun god⁵⁶. In a prayer to the rising Sun, he is addressed as the god, whose bodyguards are sixteen giants (PGM II 102)⁵⁷.

The snakes are clearly solar in nature. A heliotrope in Vienna of very good quality, datable to the late 2nd/early 3rd century CE, shows snakes wearing sun disks (fig. 8)⁵⁸. Not all the snake legs of Anguipede figures have solar discs, but once they have been identified in detailed figures, signs of them can also be recognized on pieces that are less carefully carved⁵⁹. There are several solar snakes in the world of magical gems. Horus/Harpocrates himself may appear in the form of a snake. He is born from the lotus as a winged, falcon headed snake wearing the sun disk and additionally designated as the morning sun by the scarab, Chepre, above him⁶⁰.



Fig. 8: Heliotrope, Vienna, Antikensammlung des Kunsthistorischen Museums, inv. IX 2002, obverse, h: 22.4 mm, late 2nd/early 3rd century CE.
Anguipede.

The Harpocrates snake bearing the sun disk emerges from the neck of Sarapis, the Greek form of Osiris and is adored by a baboon like Harpocrates on the lotus on a haematite in Vienna (fig. 9)⁶¹. On a dark green jasper in the British Museum Harpocrates is seated in his boat on a lotus flower. Two baboons adore him. Two snakes are likewise evidently greeting him (on the right end of the boat sits

54 Mastrocinque 2014, no. 294

55 Catalogue of the Collection of Antique Gems, formed by James ninth Earl of Southesk K. T., edited by his Daughter Lady Helena Carnegie I–II (London 1908) I N4.

56 Michel 2004, 168–169, 258 f. liste 11.3.b); Zwierlein-Diehl, 2007b, 257–259. On the Decan see J. F. Quack, Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen und ihrer Rezeption in der griechisch-römischen Welt. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* (forthcoming).

57 Cf. Merkelbach, *Abrasax I* 1990, 50 f. 62.

58 Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, no. 2231. Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, 32 pl. 29, 13. Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 221–223. 460 Abb. 789. For the date see: E. Zwierlein-Diehl, Dating Magical Gems, in: K. Endreffy, al. (eds.), *Magical gems in their contexts. Papers from the international conference held at the Museum of Fine Arts Budapest 16 – 18 February 2012* (forthcoming).

59 E.g. Zwierlein-Diehl 1991 nos. 2232. 2234. Philipp 1986, no. 163. 165. 166. Cf. Michel 2004, 108; Koßmann

2014, 268. Goodenough II 1953, 247 f. emphasizes the solar character of the snakes though without taking notice of the solar discs. Nagy 2002, 160 disregards the solar discs on the snakes' heads because they could reflect a later interpretation of the figure. However, fig. 8 is one of the earlier representations of the entity.

60 Bonn, Dölger-Institut Inv. 69, J. Engemann in: *RAC 11* (1979) 287 f. s. v. Glyptik (drawing). E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Siegel und Abdruck. Antike Gemmen in Bonn. Ausstellungskatalog Bonn* (Bonn 2002) 51 Kat.115 Farb-Abb. 16 a. b; A. Mastrocinque, *From Jewish Magic to Gnosticism* (Tübingen 2005) 198 f. fig. 22 (drawing); A. Mastrocinque, *Kronos, Shiva & Asklepios. Studies in Magical Gems and Religions of the Roman Empire* (Philadelphia 2011) 118 n. 19 (on Hekate on the obverse); Michel 2004, 66 n. 338; 278 list 21.3. [no. 3].

61 Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, no. 2241; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, 32 pl. 29 fig. 14; Michel 2004, 328 list 46.4 [no. 7]; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 223. 460 fig. 790.

a falcon, the bird of Horus, the left end is missing)⁶² Harpocrates as Harponchnouphi is a snake with the head of Harpocrates wearing the sun disk. On a haematite-fragment in Vienna the head is shaved except for the single child's lock. On the reverse the formula "Harponchnouphi brintatēnōphi niptou" gives the name of the god⁶³. Harponchnouphi may also be simply a snake with the sun disk⁶⁴. In this shape he resembles Agathodaimon, to whom he is equated in the Great Paris Papyrus (PGM IV 2429–2435, cf. PGM I 27). On the snake coiled around the staff of the little beggar, fashioned of beeswax, shall be written the name of 'Agathos Daimon'. This is according to one of the writer's sources a formula beginning with 'PHRĒ ... but according to another source, which he consulted, the formula begins with 'Harponknouphi'. Agathos Daimon–Harponchnouphi can ride a horse like Harpocrates⁶⁵. In addition there are the abundant images of snake bodied Chnoubis mentioned above. In a spell to Helios in the Great Paris Papyrus the sun in the 3rd hour has the form of a serpent (PGM IV 1655 f.).

All these snakes have solar aspects, but this cannot explain the snake-legs of the Anguipede. Scholars have repeatedly stated the lack of Egyptian parallels. As Bonner says: "The fancy of Egyptian artists depicted serpents with wings, with human heads, occasionally even with human arms and legs, also serpents heads and necks on human bodies, but I have seen no Egyptian work of dynastic times representing a human head, arms, and torso combined with two serpent coils instead of legs"⁶⁶.

Actually, such a figure does exist, though it has gone nearly unnoticed by scholars working on magical gems. It is a picture in Corridor G above the doorway into room H of the tomb of Ramesses VI (1142–1134 BCE), which in 2004 was thoroughly studied in a greater context by John Coleman Darnell (fig. 10)⁶⁷. The panel represents a mountain supporting the heavens. Four fire-breathing snakes



Fig. 9: Heliotrope, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Antikensammlung, inv. IX 2024, obverse, h: 14.4 mm, 2nd century CE. The Harpocrates-snake emerging from Sarapis.

radiate from the large red sun disk in the centre, aiming their fire in the direction of the damned in the four corners. At left and right are two scarabs. Above and below are two smaller yellow discs from which the heads of a crocodile and a snake emerge.

Most interesting in our context is the figure at right. A god in a short cloth has the solar disk as a head and two human shanks reaching the earth, ending in upward-turned snakes for feet. The arms are not visible. The annotation says in Darnell's translation:

"In this fashion does he, namely this god, exist, his two (visible) limbs being two snakes. his two arms remaining in the solar disk."

Joachim Friedrich Quack correcting his reading translates: "seine Arme sind <nicht vorhanden>, seine Beine sind Schlangen, sein <Kopf> ist eine Scheibe'. Das würde der Darstellung, die einen Gott ohne Arme mit Schlangen als Beine und Scheibe als Kopf zeigt, deutlich besser gerecht wer-

⁶² Michel 2001, no. 124.

⁶³ Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, no. 2229; Michel 2004, 159. 168. 483 (logos). 328 list 46.3.a) [no.1].

⁶⁴ Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, no. 19; Michel 327 list 46.1.a) [no. 6].

⁶⁵ Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, no. 5; Michel 2004, 327 list 45.5 vgl. [no. 4].

⁶⁶ Bonner 1950, 124; cf. Nagy 2002, 165; SGG I 2003, 84 f. (A. Mastrocinque).

⁶⁷ Piankoff – Rambova 1954, 437 fig. 141 pl. 182; F. Abitz, Baugeschichte und Dekoration des Grabes Ramses' VI. (Göttingen 1989) 157–158; Darnell 2004, 231. 385–390 pl. 29.

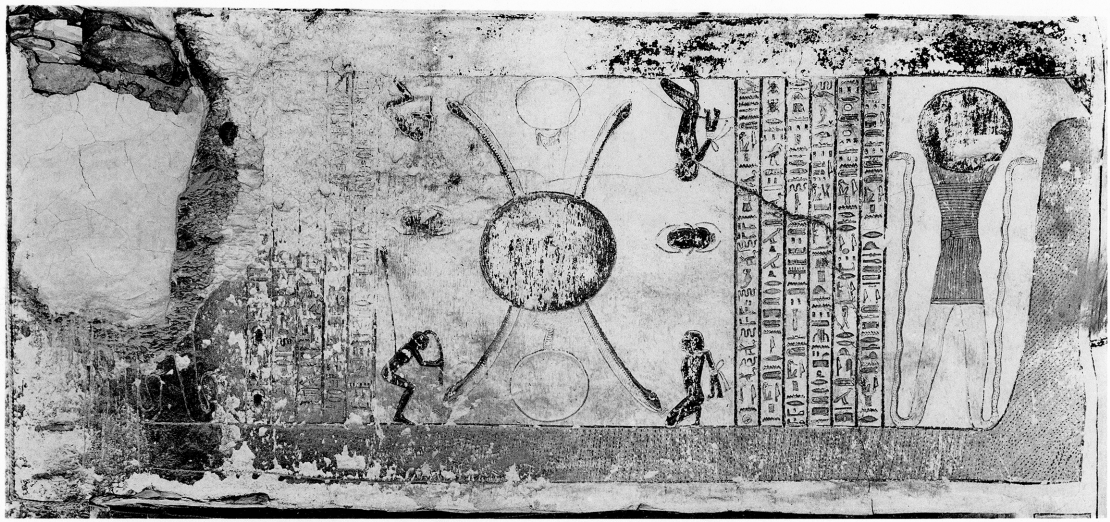


Fig. 10: Valley of the Kings, tomb of Ramesses VI, "Schutzbild".

den als Darnells 'his two (visible) limbs being two snakes, his two arms remaining in the solar disk.'" He finds the closest analogies to the Anguipede of the magical gems with a demon having snake-arms and snake-legs on 'Zaubermessern' of the Middle Kingdom⁶⁸.

Darnell retains the term 'Schutzbild' given to the image by Friedrich Abitz and Erik Hornung, as it protects the tomb from hostile demons. He calls it: "the snake-legged Re-Osiris at the birth of the morning sun" (p. 231), and interprets it as follows: "The snake-legged being ... emphasizes the fiery, punishing aspect of the giant Re-Osiris." (p. 385)⁶⁹. And: "The legs of the sun here depict the designation of the sun as ... "runner," and the twice attested designation of Amun-Re at Khons Temple as [the god] ... 'whose legs are more vigorous than (those of) millions'. These are designations of the sun as one who travels the sky not in his bark, but as the great cosmic racer running his celestial course on

giant, untiring legs." (p. 386 f.). He agrees with Bruno Stricker and Hornung who related the image of the corridor G in the tomb of Ramesses VI. to the Anguipede on the magical gems⁷⁰, which he calls conventionally 'Abraxas'. Against the conception of the snake-legs as opposite to the solar nature of the cock's head, he states: "In Egypt, however, the serpent uraeus is a solar symbol, often hanging pendant from the disk of the sun; in the iconography of Abraxas the disk or other solar icon (lion head, etc.) is replaced by the "Hellenistic" rooster, but the Egyptian solar uraeus remains." (p. 387 f.). He convincingly argues that in the light of Egyptian iconography the association of a serpent and a solar element is perfectly explicable.

At left of the image there was a similar figure from which only the snake-feet remain. In contrast, however, they are both turned to one side. The Anguipede of the magical gems occurs also in this form⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Quack 2005, 31. 40. H. Altenmüller, *Die Apotropaia und die Götter Mittelägyptens. Eine typologische und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung der sogenannten "Zaubermesser" des Mittleren Reiches* (Diss. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München 1965) I 166, II 34 f. 70 f. 116 fig. 8; 117 fig. 9. The entity has arms and legs in the form of snakes with raised heads, the torso is human, the head is not preserved. According to Altenmüller he is an ally of the sun god.

⁶⁹ As the focus here lies on the sun god (Re), we may disregard Darnell's suggestion that Re and Osiris are a unity, which according to Quack 2005, 39 and passim, is an error.

⁷⁰ B. Stricker, *De Geboorte van Horus II* (Leiden 1968), 120 f.; E. Hornung, *Zum Schutzbild im Grabe Ramses' VI.*, in: J. H. Kamstra – H. Milde – L. Wagendonk (eds.), *Funerary Symbols and Religion* (Kampen 1988) 45–51. 50. Cf. Quack 2005, 40.

⁷¹ E.g. Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, no. 2239.

I largely approve of Darnell's interpretation⁷². It is, however, improbable, that the Anguipede of the magical gems is the sun as avenger like the 'Schutzbild'. The context is very different. The Anguipede of the magical gems is a protecting god, as is expressed by his cuirass and the shield⁷³.

It is very important to note here Darnell's reference to Wolfhart Westendorf's remark that in the late period the uraei hang down from the winged sun disk to the earth⁷⁴. Westendorf points to the gables of late Egyptian stelae, where winged solar disks with two long uraei hanging down are depicted. These stelae exist from about 700 BCE to Ptolemaic and Roman times. The uraei wear the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, or sun disks, as in the example selected here, the stela of Djed-her in Vienna (**fig. 11**)⁷⁵.

All this leads to the assumption that the figure of the Anguipede was invented in the religious context of the main group of magical gems which is the same as that of the magical papyri; apart from some differences due to each respective genre⁷⁶. Morton Smith's impression holds true that "most of the gems ... seem to have been designed by men who thought in pictures." The magician, probably working in cooperation with a gem engraver – or a group of them – spoke and wrote Greek, and he would have known Egyptian and Greek Gods and their representations. The main god of the magical religion was the sun god, the Greek Helios, who was the same as the Egyptian Horus/Harpocrates,

as Zeus and Sarapis⁷⁷. It was important to invoke the great God with as many names as possible. There are long lists of such names, Greek, Egyptian and magical in the papyri. Likewise, it was important to depict the great God on the magical gems in all his forms of appearance. The name most frequently occurring in the papyri is Iaō⁷⁸. However, in accordance with the Decalogue, a Jewish representation of him did not exist. Thus, his figure had to be invented for the magical gems. In accordance with the idea of the protecting warrior in the Septuagint he was provided with the cuirass and the shield inscribed with Iaō. The cuirass was easily understandable for every contemporary viewer considering that many Egyptian gods were represented in cuirass from Hellenistic to Roman times. First of all Horus (**fig. 12**)⁷⁹. The material has recently been studied thoroughly in the Cologne thesis of Dirk Koßmann, 'Ägyptische Götter in Panzertracht in der römischen Kaiserzeit' published in 2014⁸⁰. He comes to the conclusion that three aspects may explain the representation in cuirass: 1) The god is a kingly god or connected with the king, 2) he is a martial god, 3) he is a protecting god. Each cuirassed god has at least one of these characteristics, often two, rarely all three⁸¹.

In the case of the Anguipede the cuirass designates him as a martial and protecting god. As an image of the sun god he was given the head of the Greek solar animal, the cock. This was a new element but it was easily understandable in analogy

72 Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 222 f.; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007b, 255–257.

73 Darnell 2004, 387 wonders if the shield could be an allusion to the disk of the sun, but often the bracket on the inside of the shield is clearly visible, thus it is always the protective weapon even if it is shown from the outside.

74 W. Westendorf, *Uräus und Sonnenscheibe*, Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur 6, 1978, 201–226. 222–223 Abb. 21 (Sonnenscheibe mit lang herabhängenden Uräen, nach Munro [n. 75] Taf. 13 Abb. 47). Abb. 22 („Schutzbild“ nach Piankoff – Rambova 1954, 437 fig. 141).

75 Vienna, AE inv. 891, stela of Djed-her, H ca. 35,5 cm, B ca. 25,5 cm, painted wood, 26th dynasty, ca. 620–560 BCE, <www.khm.at/de/object/d5db1465ec/> (13.03.2017); P. Munro, *Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen* (Glückstadt 1973) 223 Theben II RG. D pl. 10 fig. 40.

76 Betz 1986, XLI–LIII „Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri“; M. Smith, *Relations between Magical Papyri*

and Magical Gems, *Papyrologica Bruxelliana* 18, 1979, 129–136 (citation p. 135); J. Schwartz, *XIX Papyri magicae graecae und magische Gemmen*, in: M. J. Vermaseren, *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römerreich*, EPRO 93 (Leiden 1981) 485–509; Otto 2011, 382–412.

77 E. Peterson, *Εἰς Θεός* (Göttingen 1926); Bonner 1950, 174 f; Merkelbach, *Abrasax I* 1990, 121 ad; PGM IV 1715; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992, ad no. 1; R. Merkelbach, *ZPE* 102, 1994, 296.

78 Preisendanz, index; Betz 1986, XLVII; Otto 2011, 397.

79 Bronze statuette of Horus in cuirass, Moskau, Puschkin Museum, Beck et al. 2005, 617 f. no. 197 fig. 31.197 (O. E. Kaper, „Roman“); Koßmann 2014, 332f. Kat. Hor 10 pl. 4d–5a (with further bibliography, „Hellenistic?“). Horus in cuirass: Koßmann 2014, 38–63, 322–412 Hor 1–63.

80 *The Anguipede*: Koßmann 2014, 259–264.633–653 Kat. HaS 1–17 (selection).

81 Koßmann 2014, 281 f.



Fig. 11: Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Ägyptisch-Orientalische Sammlung AE inv.891. Stela of Djed-her. h: ca. 35,5 cm, painted wood, 26th dynasty, ca. 620–560 BCE.



Fig. 12: Moskau, Puschkin Museum. Bronze statuette of Horus in cuirass. h: 43 cm, Roman, possibly Hellenistic.

to the animal heads of Egyptian gods, especially to the falcon head of Horus. The uraei as feet are based on the model of the uraei hanging from the winged solar disk, or rather supporting it. The ‘Schutzbild’ in the tomb of Ramesses VI preserves an Egyptian archetype of the figure. If the image

of a Greek giant did play a role at all, the influence was only a pictorial one, not one concerning the nature of the god. The newly created figure adds the image of Iaō as one of the manifestations of the great sun god to the imagery of the magical gems and is perfectly plausible and understandable in their context⁸².

The Anguipede in medieval times

Finally we may take a quick glance at the afterlife of gems with the Anguipede. Among other ancient gems that were used as seals in the Middle Ages, the image of the Anguipede was held in high esteem. There are examples from the 12th century to the early 16th century. A haematite set in a ring was found in the grave of an early medieval bishop of Chichester. The bishop, who was previously identified as Seffrid I (1125–1151), has more recently been thought to be either Seffrid II (1180–1204) or unknown⁸³. Other high-ranking persons also used such a seal: Rotrou archbishop of Rouen (1168–1184), Louis VII, king of France, had it as counter-seal in 1174 and Konrad II, bishop of Hildesheim, used one on a document from 1285⁸⁴. The motif is attested as counter-seal of the Knights Templar in 1214 and 1235. Ladies as well were fond of such a gem. An example is the secret seal of Margaret, Countess of Flanders, dating from 1285⁸⁵. I do not discuss here the question of whether some of these gems might be medieval copies, which is not relevant in this context.

⁸² The image shows a god, not a pictorial pun as has been proposed by J. H. Schwartz, *Engraved Gems in the Collection of the American Numismatic Society IV: Ancient Magical amulets, an Addendum*, *AJN Second Series* 18, 2006, 51–61. 53. He cites Darnell’s interpretation and adds: “Alternatively (or perhaps in addition), the anguipede may be a complex ideogram compounded of discreet visual puns, something like Renaissance *devices*. Even though his precise meaning may never be revealed, one can suggest that the image represents a titanic power (snake legs), herald of the morning (cock), lord of the sun (whip), with the strength of both Yaveh (shield) and a Roman emperor (armor) – a warrior to protect against all evil.” “Titanic” probably means “gigantic”, as Titans don’t have snake-legs.

⁸³ Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 256–258. 471 f. fig. 849 a. b (with earlier references); J. Cherry in: Anne Ward, *Der Ring im Wandel der Zeiten* (München 1981) 61 fig. 116;

M. Henig, *The Re-use and Copying of Ancient Intaglios set in Medieval Personal Seals, mainly found in England: An Aspect of the Renaissance of the 12th Century*, in: N. Adams, *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Mediaeval Seals* (London 2008) 25–34. 29 with n. 61 (“erroneously ascribed to Bishop Seffrid”); Zwierlein-Diehl 2008, 256 Abb. 14; Zwierlein-Diehl 2014, 88 f. fig. 1; Nagy 2014, 143 fig. 7. As C. W. King, *Handbook of Engraved Gems* ²(London 1885), 222 pl. 36, 3 and M. Henig, *A Corpus of Engraved Roman Gemstones from British Sites*, *BAR* 8 ²(Oxford 1978) 285 no. M 19 (dating the ring to the 14th century), Nagy favors a medieval (12th century) date of the stone.

⁸⁴ G. Hiebaum, *Gemmensiegel und andere im Steinschnitt hergestellte Siegel des Mittelalters* (Graz 1931) no. 75; Nagy 2014, 141 f. n. 36 fig. 6; CBd-1453.

⁸⁵ Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 258. 471 fig. 848. Further examples mentioned loc. cit. and Nagy 2014, 140–145.

At first glance we might wonder why good Christians would wear such a figure, which looks rather like a demon, but the riddle is solved when we discover that the figure is described as a mighty amulet in the lapidary of Techel⁸⁶. This is one of the two medieval lapidaries of engraved stones. It was named after the alleged authors Azareus and Techel by David Pingree⁸⁷. Recently the “Complex” (as she calls it) was thoroughly studied by Katelyn Mesler⁸⁸. Pingree identified 30 manuscripts of Techel’s lapidary, “of which the oldest, now in Berlin, was copied in France in the second half of the twelfth century”⁸⁹. Of these manuscripts only a few are published. However, the Lapidary was included in several encyclopedias and books on stones. The fullest account is given in Thomas of Cantimpré’s, *liber de natura rerum*, whose first version was finished in 1241 (14, 70)⁹⁰.

The prologue claims that this *liber sigillorum* presents gems made by the Jews during their passage through the desert and that it is written by a Jew of the time named Techel.

The name Techel occurs in many variants. Some scholars identified Techel with Zahel Israelita (Zael, Zahel Benbriz)⁹¹. This name refers to Sahl Ben Bišr, a Jewish astrologer who wrote in Arabic, living in the first half of the 9th century. This identification however has not proved true⁹². Mesler following Moritz Steinschneider is inclined to take the name for a corruption of Bešal’el⁹³.

The belief that the engraved gems were made by the Jews during their crossing of the desert is certainly based on the Biblical passages on the artists Bezalel and Oholiab, who were appointed

by God (Exod. 31, 1–11; 35, 30–36, 2; cf. 38, 22 f.) to make, among other works of art, the breastplate of judgement bearing twelve stones set in gold and engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Exod. 28, 15–21; 39, 8–14), and whom God endowed with the ability to instruct others in their art.

In the introduction to his lapidary (14, 1, 45–62) Thomas of Cantimpré explicitly specifies its source as the Biblical passages. The belief can be traced as far as the Carolingian period⁹⁴. Most of the engravings in the Techel lapidary refer to types of Roman gems that could be understood as images of stars. A few are purely medieval. In addition, there are also some magical images.

In Thomas of Cantimpré we find the Anguipede as no. 1 (14, 70, 8–10 no. 1):

“If one finds a jasper and on it a man having a shield at his neck or in his hand and a spear in the other hand and a snake under his feet, this has power against all enemies.”

In a manuscript from the 13th century the seal, that one is supposed to find, is a sigil of the planet Mars, it is of red jasper and has the image of a man with a shield at his neck, wearing a helmet and a sword, and trampling a snake under foot. Worn on a necklace, it makes the wearer a victor over all enemies⁹⁵. Here evidently the cock’s head has been mistaken for a medieval helmet, the whip for a sword and the snake legs as a snake trampled by the feet of the man.

Camillus Leonardus, a doctor and astronomer from Pesaro († after 1532), excerpted older lapidaries in his *Speculum Lapidum*, first published

86 Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 256–258; Zwierlein-Diehl 2008, 255–258; Zwierlein-Diehl 2014, 105 f.; Nagy 2014, 145–151.

87 Pingree 1987, 64–67.

88 Mesler 2014.

89 Pingree 1987, 65; cf. Thorndike II 1923, 399. Mesler counts 70 manuscripts of the *Complex*: Mesler 2014, 126. 137–142 Appendix D: Preliminary List of Manuscripts.

90 Thomas Cantimpratensis, *Liber de natura rerum*, Teil I Text, ed. Helmut Boese (Berlin 1973) 317–373.

91 Thorndike II 1923, 389 f. 399 f.; followed by, amongst others: D. Wyckoff, Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals* (Oxford 1967) 275 f.; M. Angel, Albert le Grand, *Le monde minéral. Les pierres. De mineralibus*, livres I et II (Paris 1995) 437 f.; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 252; Nagy 2014, 145. Cf. Mesler 2014, 90 f. n. 40.

92 Pingree 1987, 64–66 suggests a late antique Greek source. The fact that Thomas of Cantimpré says that he translated the booklet into Latin, reinforces this suggestion, cf. Zwierlein-Diehl 2014, 103 f.

93 M. Steinschneider, *Lapidarien: Cethel, Hebraeische Bibliographie* 16 (95), 1876, 104–106, especially 106; Mesler 2014, 90 with n. 41.

94 Zwierlein-Diehl 2007a, 251.

95 Bodleian Digby 79, fols. 178v.–179v.; J. Evans, *Magical Jewels of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Oxford 1922, repr. New York 1976) 102–107. 235. Similar the text: Th. Wright, *On Antiquarian Excavations and Researches in the Middle Ages*, *Archaeologia* 30, 1844, 438–457. 451 (MS Harl. no. 80, fol. 105, r^o. of the 13th cent. compared with MS. Arundel, 342, fol. 69 r^o.)

in Venice in 1502⁹⁶. He has short descriptions following the old scheme in the chapters on *‘Imagines seu sigilla Chael’* and *‘Sculpturae seu imagines Salomonis’* (lib. 3, cap. 15, pag. 58 u. [cap. 17] pag. 61). A longer account appears in the section *‘Imagines seu sigilla Thetel’* (lib. 3 cap. 16 pag. 61). The figure is in jasper. The man wears a cuirass, has a shield in his left hand and an idol or something bellicose in his right, instead of the feet there are snakes and instead of the head there is the head of a cock or a lion. This gem helps against enemies and brings victory, is potent against poison and stops bleeding. Here, evidently, the tradition has been complemented by the inspection of actual magical gems. Leonardus did indeed own a jasper showing the snake-legged god, which he describes very accurately under the heading “non-astronomical engravings” (lib. 3, cap. 6, p. 52 *Capitulum sextum de sculpturis non astronomicis...*). The figure has a cock’s head, a human, cuirassed torso, a shield in the left hand and a whip in the right; the legs are snakes. The parts of the figure are supposed to

indicate the different virtues of the stone. Leonardus does not explain this in detail, either here or in the chapter on jasper to which he refers (lib. 2, pag. 35). We may infer that the bellicose aspects of the figure represent aid against enemies and the snakes an antidote to poison. The styptic virtue lies in the stone itself. If Camillus Leonardus did look closer at a magical gem, his interpretation follows the medieval scheme.

Imitations and Copies of magical gems with the Anguipede

The unceasing fascination with this figure led to the manufacture of copies. An interesting example is an Italian cameo from the collection of Thomas, fourteenth Earl of Arundel (1585–1646), now in New York (**fig. 13 a. b**)⁹⁷. On the obverse is a cameo bust of Emperor Commodus. The portrait of Commodus was known from coins⁹⁸. As the emperor is bare headed, wears cuirass and paludamentum the immediate model could have been an aureus of 184–185 CE⁹⁹. On the reverse is the engraved figure of the Anguipede. The engraving may be later than the cameo on the obverse but probably also dates to the 16th, possibly early 17th century. The Anguipede is surrounded by an inscription. It is Greek, imitating the magical gems, but the text does not correspond to any inscription on magical gems. It is newly invented by a scholar, who knew Greek and did not even omit the *iota adscriptum* at the end: ΑΡΔΟΥ ΓΕΝΝΑΙΩ ΔΑΪΜΟΝΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΚΩΙ. Which I suppose is a somewhat corrupt writing by the engraver of the text submitted to him and should be read as: ἄρδου γενναίω δαίμονι βασιλίσκω; „May you be fostered by the noble demon Basilisk.“

Evidently the Anguipede here is taken for an image of the basilisk, a fabulous creature which mostly was imagined to have a cock’s head and feet as well as a snake’s body¹⁰⁰. Its gaze is lethal. But here evidently he is thought to protect the emperor and probably the actual wearer of the gem as well, averting evil in the same way that the head of a Medusa would.

In the 16th century scholars realized that magical gems were products of antiquity. Abraham Gorlaeus (van Goorle, 1549–1608) in his *Dactyliotheca* published in 1601, the first publication dedicated exclusively to gems, features two examples from

96 Camillus Leonardus, *Speculum Lapidum* (Venice 1502). L. Boyle – E. Mittler (eds.), Bibliotheca Palatina Druck-schriften (microfiche); Zwierlein-Diehl 2014, 106 (recapitulated here). Nagy 2014, 148 f.

97 New York, The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.15); E. Kris, Meister und Meisterwerke der Steinschneidekunst in der italienischen Renaissance (Wien 1929, repr. 1979) no. 397 pl. 92; E. Kris, Catalogue of post-classical Cameos in the Milton Weil Collection (Vienna 1932) 16 pl. 5 figs. 13. 14 “Italian, 16th century. “Roman Emperor ... Symbolic monster”; J. D. Draper, Cameo Appearances (New York 2008) 25 no. 46; metmuseum.org>art>MetPublications>links author [James David Draper], title [Cameo Appearances], “Marcus Aurelius. Italian, late 16th–early 17th century” (information by Joan Mertens); J. Boardman, The Marlborough Gems formerly at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire (Oxford 2009) no. 77 “A. Commodus ... B. Abraxas ... Renaissance”.

98 S. Erizzo, Discorso sopra le medaglie antiche con la particular dichiarazione di molti riversi (Venetia 1559) 368, <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10187655-2> V. Wiegartz, Die Kaiserbildnisse in der ‘Sala dello Zodiaco’ im Palazzo d’Arco in Mantua, Boreas 20, 1997, 107–122. 115. 121 pl. 20, 3. 4 (early 16th century).

99 BMCRE IV 719 no. 168.

100 H. Köhn, Basilisk, in: Reallexikon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte I (1937), Sp. 1488–1492; in: RDK Labor, URL: <<http://www.rdklabor.de/w/?oldid=89197>> (06.06.2015).



Fig. 13 a. b: Kameo, Sardonyx, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.15), h: 63 mm, 16th century. a) Kameo. Bust of Commodus; b) Intaglio. Anguipede and inscription.

his collection¹⁰¹. The sard I no. 183, were the Anguipede is holding the fancy attributes of a wreath and a helmet, again is an imitation¹⁰² (fig. 14). The heliotrope II no. 137 (fig. 15) was probably ancient, but was misunderstood by the illustrator (see below). This publication gave access to the image of the Anguipede to a wider audience. However, there were no explanatory notes to the figures in this first edition. An annotated and enlarged edition was not published until 1695 by Jakob Gronovius (1645–1716). By then the discussion about the meaning of the Anguipede was widely regarded as concluded.

At the end of the 16th, or the beginning of the 17th century Joannes Macarius (Jean l'Heureux, c. 1550–1614) had dedicated a detailed study to the subject, “Abraxas seu Apistopistus...” His point of departure is a gem with the Anguipede and the inscription ‘Abraxas’ (probably in the Greek form Abrasax). In the Church Fathers he found that this was the name given to God Almighty by the followers of the Gnostic sect founded by Basilides in the 2nd century CE. Thus, he concluded that Abraxas was the name of the snake-legged being and that the magical gems were amulets of the Basilidians. He is aware of the numerical value of Abraxas and

thinks it points to the 365 heavens in the system of Basilides. Macarius’ manuscript was published only posthumously in 1657 by Ioannes Chifletius (Jean-Jacques Chiflet, 1588–1660) in his ‘Abraxas Proteus’¹⁰³. This illustrated work had the greatest influence in the following era.

101 Gorlaeus 1601. Edition with annotations by Gronovius and new drawings: Abrahama Gorlaei Antverpiani Dactyliothecae pars ... cum explicationibus Jacobi Gronovii ... I u. II (Lugduni Batavorum 1695, reprint 1707). P. Zazoff – H. Zazoff, *Gemmensammler und Gemmenforscher* (München 1983) 30 f.; P. Berghaus (ed.) *Der Archäologe* (Münster 1983) 148 Nr. 15; P. Berghaus, *Zu den graphischen Porträts Abraham van Goorles (1549–1608), de beeldenaar; munt- en pennigkundig nieuws* 13 no. 5, sept/okt. 1989, 157–160; M. Maaskant-Kleibrink, *Engraved Gems and Northern European Humanists*, in: C. M. Brown (ed.), *Engraved Gems: Survivals and Revivals*. National Gallery of Art, Washington. *Studies in the History of Art* 54. *Symposium Papers XXXII* (Hanover – London 1997) 228–247. 231–235. The Gorlaeus’ Collection was acquired by Henry, Prince of Wales in 1612 it is now lost for the most part: M. Henig, *Gems from the Collection of Henry, Prince of Wales, and Charles I.*, in: K. Aschengreen Piacenti – J. Boardman, *Ancient and Modern Gems and Jewels in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (London 2008) 268–271.

102 SGG I 2003, no. 232.

103 Macarius – Chifletius 1657.



Fig 14: Gorlaeus 1601, I no. 183. 184.

Macarius' argument, which fills 24 pages in print, is exhaustive, and filled with evidence from all the texts he could find. It seems that he was the first to identify the Anguipede with the Abraxas of the

Gnostics. Macarius mentions that he explained his opinion on the subject to Seraphinus Olivarius (Séraphin Olivier-Razali, *Lyon 1538, †Rom 1609), when he was not yet appointed Cardinal, that is



Fig 15: Gorlaeus 1601, II no. 137–140.

before 1604¹⁰⁴. This may be his claim to priority. The discussion may have taken place orally and by letters. Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609) in a letter sent from Leiden to Marquard Freher (1565–

1614) in Heidelberg on March 23, 1606 expresses the same opinion as Macarius. He describes gems

¹⁰⁴ <<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bolra.html>> (06.06.2015).

TABVLA.II.



Fig. 16: Macarius – Chifletius 1657, pl. 2, 6–11.



Fig. 17: Dark green Jasper. Bonn. AKM, Müller Coll. Anguipede, 2nd half of 17th century.

with the figure of the Anguipede wearing a cuirass and having the head of a cock or an eagle, wearing a shield and a whip and having snake's legs. He claims to have seen many such gems with the inscription 'Abraxas' and says that they are inventions of the Valentiniani or other heretics¹⁰⁵. Scaliger's letters were first published in 1627.

Claudius Salmasius (Claude de Saumaise, 1588–1653), over a generation younger than Macarius and Scaliger and of the same age as Chifletius, retells the argument and states that contrary to Scaliger's suggestion the inscription on the gems is 'Abraxas' not 'Abraxas'¹⁰⁶. Chifletius cites Salma-

sus approvingly¹⁰⁷.

The drawings by Iacobus Werdius (Jacob van Werden) in Chifletius of course do not render correctly the style of the gems. Some gems are copies, like pl. II no. 6, the sard of Gorlaeus (fig. 16, cf. above fig. 14). Most gems probably were genuine but are somewhat distorted by misunderstandings. For instance, no. 7 and 8 on plate 2 have antlers instead of a cockscomb. Salmasius, who features no. 7 after Gorlaeus in a new drawing (p. 573), had criticized that as a mistake by the engraver, but Chifletius thinks antlers are possible. The etchings are mostly reversed left to right, due to the printing process or because the drawing was made after an impression.

If on the one hand the book of Macarius and Chifletius had a big impact on the scholarly discussion, on the other the drawings were of great importance as models for gem copies. The Heliotrop of Gorlaeus II no. 137 (fig. 15) repeated by Chiflet on pl. II no. 7 (fig. 16)¹⁰⁸, was probably genuine, the antlers and presumably the straight line of the snakes and the stars, are alterations by the drawer. He also misread the inscription, writing RAIN XIOIO IOX instead of BAINXWWX, from the Coptic words for 'soul of the darkness', an epithet of the sun, with the numerical value of 3663¹⁰⁹. This incorrect spelling is copied on a dark green jasper from the Müller collection, now in the Akademisches Kunstmuseum Antikensammlung der Universität Bonn (fig. 17)¹¹⁰. The subdivision of the inscription in three groups is not exactly the same as in Macarius – Chifletius but shows that this was the model, not Gorlaeus, where it is divided in two groups. The gem engraver had looked at other figures of the Anguipede and converted the antlers back to a high cockscomb. He altered the

105 *Illustriss. Viri Josephi Scaligeri Epistolae omnes quae reperiri potuerunt, nunc primum collectae et editae. Caeteris praefixa est De Gente Scaligera, in qua de autoris vita; & sub finem Danielis Heinsii De morte eius altera* (Lugduni Batavorum 1627) 487 ep. 226, <<http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10403880-6>> (13.03.2017); P. Botley – D. van Miert (eds.), *The Correspondence of Joseph Justus Scaliger VI* May 1605 to December 1606 (Geneva 2012) 360–366, 364.

106 *Cl. Salmasii de Annis Climactericis et Antiqua Astrologia Diatribae* (Lugd. Batavor. Ex Officina Elzeviriorum. 1648)

571–574, <<http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11110149-3>> (06.06.2015).

107 Macarius – Chifletius 1657, 62 f.

108 SGG I 2003, no. 241.

109 Bonner 1950, 26. 146. 188; Brashear 1995, 3581; Michel 2004, 483.

110 Karteiblatt Müller no. 271, 41 × 31 × 5.6 mm, reverse plain. As to the Müller collection see: E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Stiftung der bedeutenden Gemmen-Sammlung Klaus J. Müller für die Universität Bonn*, KuBA 5, 2015, 235–250.

curving of the snakes and the position of the stars and embellished his work by the perspective rendering of the border of the cuirass and by adding two *characteres* and a pentagram, which in the 16th and 17th century was considered to be a symbol of *Salus/Hygieia*¹¹¹.

The opinion that the magical gems were amulets of the Gnostics had a long life, which led to the name ‘Gnostic gems’ or ‘amulets’ for the whole class¹¹². The title of Charles W. King’s book ‘The Gnostics and their remains, Ancient and Mediaeval’ first published in 1864 is programmatic. However, Campbell Bonner states that there are only very few gems which can be described as Gnostic and terms the class as “Magical amulets, chiefly Graeco-Egyptian”¹¹³. In the case of the Anguipede his definition again proves true. The figure is formed out of Egyptian and Greek roots with the intention of creating an image of the Jewish god Iaō as one of the manifestations of the great sun god.

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¹¹¹ V. Cartari, *Imagini delli Dei de gl’ Antichi di Vicenzo* [sic] Cartari Reggiano (Tomasini, Venedig 1647) 48, <<http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/17-9-quod-1s/start.htm>> (07.06.2015). Nachdruck, vermehrt durch ein Inhaltsverzeichnis und neue Register: Einleitung W. Koschatzky, *Instrumentaria Artium I* (Graz 1963) 48; Macarius – Chifletius 1657, 134 ad tab. 25 fig.103.

¹¹² Despite the objections of Giovanni Battista Passeri, *De gemmis Basilidianis diatriba*, in: Antonio Francesco Gori (ed.), *Thesaurus Gemmarum Antiquarum Astriferarum II* (Florenz 1750) 222–286, <<http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?PPN656492929>> (04.02.2017). Cf. M. E. Micheli, *Le gemme gnostiche tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, in: B. P. Venetucci (ed.), *Culti orientali tra scavo e collezionismo* (Rom 2008) 141–148. 145 f.

¹¹³ Bonner 1950, I. 123.

Abbreviations

AGD

Antike Gemmen in Deutschen Sammlungen (München 1968–).

AKM

Akademisches Kunstmuseum. Antikensammlung der Universität Bonn.

Barb 1957

A. A. Barb, *Abraxas-Studien*, in: *Hommages à Walde-mar Deonna. Collection Latomus XXVIII* (Brüssel 1957) 67–86.

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H. Beck et al. (eds.), *Ägypten Griechenland Rom. Abwehr und Berührung. Ausstellung Frankfurt a. M., Städtisches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, 26. November 2005 – 26. Februar 2006* (Tübingen 2005).

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Bonner 1950

C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor 1950).

Brashear 1995

W. M. Brashear *The Greek Magical Papyri: an Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)*, in: *ANRW II 18, 5* (Berlin 1995), 3380–3684.

CBd

Campbell Bonner database, <<http://www2.szepmuveszeti.hu/talismans2/>> (13.03.2017).

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D. Koßmann, *Ägyptische Götter in Panzertracht in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Köln 2014) <<http://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/5896/>> (13.03.2017).
- Macarius – Chifletius 1657
Ioannis Macarii, Canonici Ariensis, Abraxas, seu Apistopistus; quae est antiquaria de Gemmis Basilidianis Disquisitio. Accedit Abraxas Proteus, seu multiformis Gemmae Basilidianae portentosa Varietas; Exhibita, & Commentario illustrata à Ioanne Chifletio, Canonico Tornacensi ... Antverpiae, ex Officina Plantiniana Balthazaris Moreti. M. DC. LVII, <<http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/resolve/display/bsb10221603.html>> (13.03.2017).
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A. Mastrocinque, *Les intailles magiques du département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques. Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Paris 2014).
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R. Merkelbach, *Abrasax. Ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts. Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Papyrologica Colonensia XVII 1–5* (Opladen 1990, 1991, 1992, 1996, 2001). I u. II mit M. Totti.
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Á. M. Nagy, *Étude sur la transmission du savoir magique. L'Histoire post-antique du schéma anguipède (V^e – XVII^e siècles)*, in: Dasen – Spieser 2014, 131–155.
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A. Piankoff – N. Rambova, *The Tomb of Ramesses VI* (New York 1954).
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P. Post, *Le genie anguipède alectorocephale: une divinité magique solaire. Une analyse des pierres dites Abraxas-gemmes*, *Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie* 40, 1979, 173–210.
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A. Mastrocinque (ed.), *Sylloge Gemmarum gnosticarum I and II*, *Bollettino di Numismatica, Monografia* 8.2.I (2003), 8.2.II (2007) (Rom 2004 u. 2008).
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L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science I–VIII* (New York 1923–1958).

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E. Zwierlein-Diehl, Die antiken Gemmen des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien III (München 1991).

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Abbildungsnachweis: Fig. 1a. b: Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Antikensammlung. – Fig. 2: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Inv. ÄM 12475, photo: Margarete Büsing. – Fig. 3: Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Antikensammlung, photo: Isolde Luckert. – Fig. 4a. b: Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, photos: Rheinisches Bildarchiv L 4638/08, L 11158-3. – Fig. 5: After C. W. King, The Gnostics and their remains, Ancient and Mediaeval ¹(London 1864) 86 fig. 3. – Fig. 6: After Abd El-Mohse El-Kashab, Cahiers de Karnak VI 1973–1977 (Kairo 1980) 117s. pl. 30 a. b. – Fig. 7: Institut für Altertumskunde Köln. – Abb. 8. 9: Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Antikensammlung, photo: Isolde Luckert. – Fig. 10: After Piankoff – Rambova 1954, pl. 182. – Fig. 11: KHM-Museumsverband. – Fig. 12: After Beck et al. 2005, fig. 31.197. – Fig. 13 a. b: Beazley Archive, photo John Boardman. – Fig. 14. 15: Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek Köln. – Fig. 16. 17: Akademisches Kunstmuseum Bonn. Antikensammlung der Universität (Müller collection).

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