Catalogue of Egyptian scarabs, etc., in the British museum

Hall H R
CATALOGUE

OF

EGYPTIAN SCARABS, ETC.,

IN THE

BRITISH MUSEUM.

BY

H. R. HALL, M.A., F.S.A.,

ASSISTANT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EGYPTIAN AND ASSYRIAN ANTIQUITIES.

VOLUME 1.

ROYAL SCARABS.

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This volume contains full descriptions of 2,891 royal Egyptian Scarabs, Cylinder-seals, Seal-amulets, etc., on which are cut the names of kings and royal personages who flourished from the period of the First dynasty, about B.C. 4000, to the end of that of the Ptolemies, about B.C. 50. These are illustrated by 1,518 full-sized photographic reproductions and line drawings distributed throughout the text. Taken as a whole, this Collection of Royal Scarabs, which, however, only forms one-fifth of the Scarab Collection in the British Museum, is the largest and most important in the world, and is invaluable to the student of Egyptian history, religion, and art. The interest of the Scarab is primarily religious and historical, and there is no evidence that it was ever used as currency, as some have supposed. The greater number of the Scarabs herein published have been acquired during recent years, and have not previously been edited. The descriptions given form the greatest mass of material for the study of this subject hitherto made available. And special attention has been given in the descriptions to comparative archaeology, e.g., in the case of the important Scarabs found with Minoan remains in Cyprus and Greece, and those from Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria and Western Asia generally.

This volume is the work of Mr. H. R. Hall, M.A., F.S.A., Assistant in the Department. I have read in manuscript Mr. Hall’s descriptions and compared them with the original objects. The identifications of the various kinds of stones used in the manufacture of Scarabs are due to Mr. L. J. Spencer, M.A., Assistant in the Department of Mineralogy in the British Museum (Natural History).

E. A. WALLIS BUDGE.

Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities,
British Museum.

November 12th, 1913.
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INTRODUCTION.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECTS AND SCOPE OF THE CATALOGUE.

In the present Catalogue are described the Collections of Ancient Egyptian Cylinder-seals and Scarabs, and their derived forms, the Scaraboids, Cowroids, Plaques, etc., which are preserved in the British Museum.

The **Cylinder-seal**: So made as to be rolled over the wax or clay intended to take its impression.

The **Button-seal**: A small signet, intended to be strung as a bead or to hang from a chain or necklace in exactly the same way as a modern "charm."

The **Scarab**: An amulet, representing the sacred beetle (*Scarabaeus aegyptiaca* or *Atenchaus sacer*), the type and emblem of Khepera, the creator Sun-god. This amulet was adapted for use as a seal, and was largely so used; the signet being cut on its base. When not too large, it could be strung as a bead or mounted as the bezel of a ring.

The **Scaraboid** is a modification of the Scarab, retaining the "Scaraboid" form and the engraved base of the Seal-scarab, while the back was either absolutely plain or could be cut (if of stone) or impressed (if of faience) in various forms, such as that of the head of a negro, of a cynocephalus ape, and so forth.

The **Cowroid** is a "cross" between a Scaraboid and a bead of lentoid shape, originally made in imitation of the form of a cowry-shell, but afterwards losing all trace of this original form. It was inscribed (in imitation of a seal) in the same way as the Scarab and Scaraboid.

**Plaques** (in the specially restricted sense of the appellation used in this Catalogue) are plaque-shaped amulets developed from the flat bead and inscribed in the same manner as the Seal-scarabs.

Various combinations of the Scaraboid and the Plaque are met with. All these derivatives of the Scarab partake of the nature of beads, as also does the Scarab itself to a great extent, since all are perforated for stringing, and, when worn as amulets, were usually strung with beads on necklaces, etc. Even the Cylinder-seal is perforated in the same way (though usually on a larger scale), so that it might be slung on a necklace. When intended not to be strung as
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a bead, but, as was often the case, to be mounted as the bezel of a signet-ring, the Scarab or Plaque was still always perforated, and was secured to the ring by means of a metal wire passing through the perforation. With the exception of the larger Scarabs, which were placed as amulets on the bodies of the dead, all the objects described in this Catalogue are thus either perforated in the manner of a bead, or provided with some other means of being strung on, or suspended from, a chain. They were, therefore, all originally intended to be worn upon the person.

The common bond between these various objects is the fact that the majority of them were intended to be used as seals, or were adapted to be used for that purpose, or were inscribed and ornamented in imitation of seals. Thus the Cylinder-seal was, originally, never intended to be anything else than a seal; while the Scarab, originally a religious amulet, was adapted to be used as a seal, with the result that thousands of Scarabs and their derivatives, the Scaraboids, Cowroids, Plaques, etc., which were never intended to be anything else than amulets, bore inscriptions or ornaments of a kind appropriate only to a seal. Other Scarabs not only remained purely amuletic in nature, but also in form, taking on none of the characteristics of the seal. The connecting-link between the Cylinder-seal, or Button-seal, and the Heart-scarab, which often bore no inscription or ornament at all, is the ordinary Scarab and its derived forms, which were at once amulets and seals or imitations of seals. This connection it is impossible to sever if the Scarabs are treated as a whole, so that objects as wide apart in nature and form as the Cylinder-seal and the Heart-scarab must be described in the same Catalogue. The chief place is, of course, taken by the Scarab, on account not only of its more common occurrence, but of its unique religious and artistic interest.

Of all the smaller productions of the Egyptian artists, the Scarab was one of the most characteristically Egyptian, and as such was greatly prized as a curiosity among the surrounding nations. In Palestine, Scarabs of the XIth dynasty and of all the later periods are found in tombs and on town sites. Sporadic specimens have occurred in Mesopotamia,¹ and some are said to have been found as far afield as Elam.² In Phoenicia the Scarab was regularly imitated by the local craftsmen, and was acclimatized as an object of Phoenician art; Phoenician Scarabs have been found as far West as Etruria, and at Tharros in Sardinia.³ In Cyprus and in Greece the Scarab was, at an early period, imported from Egypt. A XIth dynasty Scarab was found at Enkomi,⁴ and others are known from

¹ E.g., 1556 1559.
² Several Scarabs in the British Museum Collection.
⁴ 98.
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In the time of the XVIIIth dynasty, Scarabs and rings bearing the names of Amenyhetep III, of Queen Tii, and of Amenhetep IV (Khuenâten), were prized by the chiefs of Mycenae, of Ialysos in Rhodes, and of Enkomi (Salamis) in Cyprus, and buried with them in their tombs. In later days the Scarab, introduced from Phoenicia, again became popular in Greece, and throughout the sixth century the usual form of Greek seal-gem was the Scarab, of hard stone, with the designs on the base cut with the lapidary’s wheel. These Greek Scarabs were Greek-made, and their designs were purely Greek. They are, therefore, not included in the present Catalogue, from which the Phoenician Scarabs found at Tharros are also excluded.

Of course, none of the religious ideas that were typified to the Egyptian by his Scarab were known to the foreign owners or makers of Scarabs. To them they were merely curious objects, often beautifully made or of beautiful colour, which might be used as seals (if the material of which they were made was hard enough), and undoubtedly possessed some vague magic virtue which rendered them desirable acquisitions. With the dead man they were buried like the rest of his personal possessions.

To the moderns, the Scarab and its congeneres have also always been objects of interest, either as emblems of Egyptian religion or specimens of the art of the Egyptian craftsman, while to the archaeologist and historian they have often proved most useful as evidence.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EGYPTIAN SEAL-AMULET.

The oldest of the objects described is the **Seal-cylinder**, the earliest form of seal in use in Egypt. It was of the same form as the typical Babylonian Cylinder-seal. From this fact has been argued an early connexion between the Egyptian and Babylonian civilizations, but the validity of the argument is doubtful, as the Cylinder is found in Egypt used by the Pre-dynastic population, certainly before any foreign influence of any kind can be traced in the country. As many of the earliest Egyptian Cylinders are of wood, they may perhaps have originated in Egypt itself, and be derived from a piece of reed on which primitive ideographic signs were cut. Very soon ivory was used, and then the soft stone, steatite:

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2. See p. 192, *post*, s.m., 1915.
4. Cf. 2595 (1st dynasty). One of the oldest wooden Cylinders of the Early Dynastic Period was found at Abydos by Mr. E. R. Ayrton in 1909, and is now in the British Museum (No. 49018).
5. The ivory Cylinder-seals from Hierakopolis (Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, I, Pl. xv) date from the very beginning of the 1st dynasty, or shortly before it. An ivory Cylinder of the same period was found by Ayrton at Mahasna in 1909 (*Predynastic Cemetery of el-Mahasna*, Pl. xxvii, i). No. 2597 (Vth dynasty) is of ivory (p. xxix, *post*).
and this, unglazed, is the usual material of most of the Cylinders of the earliest dynasties that have survived. Under the VIth dynasty a hard blue ceramic paste was utilized, and also, occasionally, copper or bronze.\textsuperscript{1} Under the XI\textsuperscript{th} dynasty steatite, glazed blue, was usual. One of the finest specimens of the Seal-cylinder known is that, made of glazed steatite, which bears the rare name of Sebekneferu (Sekhemphis), the queen regnant with whom the XI\textsuperscript{th} dynasty came to an end (2639). Cylinders of Amenemhat III, and of several of his predecessors, are well known. Usually, they bear the prenomen of the king, with the addition "Beloved of Sebek, Lord of Khmunu," or some other place in the neighbourhood of the Fayyum, the province which the kings of this dynasty specially favoured. Complicated Cylinders occur, forming quatrefoils, which could not have been used as seals, and show that the Cylinder-seal was beginning to become simply an amulet bearing the name of the king, which was popularly considered to be of great magical protective power. On an elaborate Cylinder of Æntef V, Nub-kheper-Ra (2644), we see the figure of the king cut in alternation with that of the god Sebek and in combination with protective symbols: this Cylinder must have been an amulet pure and simple, in spite of its size.

Under the XVIII\textsuperscript{th} dynasty Cylinders, both simple seals and amulets, occur,\textsuperscript{2} though they are rare: afterwards they practically disappear.

The archaic revival under the Ethiopians and Saites brought the Cylinder again into partial use. It was now usually made of faïence, and not of much practical utility as a seal.\textsuperscript{3}

The Cylinder was originally simply rolled by the palm of the hand over the surface of the clay to be stamped. A picture of this primitive method survived to the last (though in a misunderstood form) in the Egyptian hieroglyphic system as the determinative sign of the word shen, $\bigcirc$, to "repeat," to "circle round" (to "come full circle"). The idea of the word is to "roll over and over again," and for this conception the symbol adopted was $\bigcirc$, which, it has been suggested, simply represents in a diagrammatic form the Seal-cylinder rolling over the flat clay.\textsuperscript{4} That it is an actual Seal-cylinder that is represented is shown by the fact that at first the sign was used to mean an actual seal only, and we find it used in this sense in the inscription on the ivory box-lid of King Ten, $\bigcirc$, "golden seal of judgment."\textsuperscript{5} This is the oldest example of the sign, and there is no doubt as to what it was intended to represent. Later on, the origin of the symbol was lost sight of, and it was taken to be

\textsuperscript{1} Cf. 2603-2605, and 2865.
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{E.g.} 2645, of Amenhetep I.
\textsuperscript{3} 2648-2651.
\textsuperscript{4} Petrie, \textit{Royal Tombs}, II, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{5} British Museum No. 35532; Petrie, \textit{Royal Tombs}, II, Pl. vii, 12.