

## Scorpion

**I. Introduction.** In ancient Near Eastern art the s. was sometimes identified with a particular deity, e.g., with →Ishkhara in Mesopotamia, or with Selqet in Egypt. However, the image more often exerted only a numinous power apart from any direct association with a deity. The properties of the s. in this regard were ambivalent: in Mesopotamia the animal could be associated with fertility, but also had an apotropaic force to avert evil. It furthermore appears in astral, solar, and lunar contexts. There are indications that the s. also played a role in legal issues, which is related to Ishkara's function to guard oaths, specifically to inflict sickness on those who violated an oath (for a detailed overview in regard to Mesopotamia see VAN BUREN 1937/1939). In Egypt the s.'s poisonous sting made it an apt symbol of protection and its nocturnal living, reproductive capabilities, and way of giving birth linked the s. with life-sustaining, regenerative, and reproductive powers (HORNUNG/STAEHELIN 1976: 131–133; BEHRENS 1984: 987f). Representations of the s. in Palestine/Israel and Jordan as known from excavations, the subject of investigation in this article, do not allow the identification of the s. with a particular deity. However, the numinous power associated with the animal merits a closer investigation of its role in religious thought as expressed in visual art.

### II. Typology

#### II.1. Phenotypes

Although stylistic variations occur, the s. is always depicted from above. A further discussion of phenotypes is thus not necessary, except to note that important visual identifiers of the animal are its pincers and tail.

#### II.2. Associations

1. ON ITS OWN (1–25) 2. ASSOCIATED WITH DEITIES/DEMONS 2.1. Master-of-s.s (26–30) 2.2. Naked goddess (31–32) 2.3. Introduction scene (33) 2.4. Amun-Re (13, 19, 34) 3. ASSOCIATED WITH ANIMALS 3.1. Caprid (35–55) 3.2. Bovine (34, 56–62) 3.3. Griffin (21, 63–65) 3.4. Horse (66–67) 3.5. Lion (1, 22, 34, 68) 3.6. Uraeus (16–18) 3.7. Animal procession (69) 4. ASSOCIATED WITH HUMANS (69–76)

1. **ON ITS OWN.** The s. frequently appears on its own (1–8), but may also be doubled (9\*–14) or tripled (15) to enforce its potency. An unambiguous function cannot be attributed to these representations due to the lack of an iconographic context, but the fact that only 5 out of 16 objects were recovered from tombs makes a primary regenerative and life-sustaining function less likely. In the first instance these

depictions probably functioned as an apotropaion, but could also be utilized as a burial object with regenerative force. The evil-averting aspect of the s. could be underlined by additional →uraei (16–18). S.s on their own may be accompanied by *nfr* hieroglyphs (19–20), which would suggest an association with regeneration (see KEEL 1995: 172 § 459). If the cross-like objects on a double-sided inscribed rectangular plaque from Gezer (21) are regarded as ankh signs, a similar meaning of the s. would apply here as well. An added solar disk (22–23) may bring to mind the sun god →Re, thus implying a regenerative aspect (see Spell 86 from the Book of the Dead cited in: HORNUNG/STAEHELIN 1976: 132). S.s on their own are supplemented with a *nb* or unclear sign (24–25) in two instances.

#### 2. ASSOCIATED WITH DEITIES/DEMONS

2.1. **Master-of-s.s.** The majority of s. representations attribute a positive force to the animal. The exception is the constellation of the “Master-of-s.s” (→Master-of-animals). The theme of controlling s.s by holding them in the hand has been traced back to →Horus as Shed, the savior god (KEEL 1978: 148f). On stamp seals the motif is depicted in Asiatic fashion with the hero holding the s.s in his raised hands (26–30).

2.2. **Naked goddess.** The s. is associated in two examples with a →naked goddess in frontal view, her breasts either presented (31) or well indicated (32). In the first case the female figure is flanked by s.s; in the other she seems to stand *behind* a →caprid, which is facing a badly damaged s. (only the pincers and tail have survived).

2.3. **Introduction scene.** The constellation depicted on a cylinder seal from the Amman airport (33) is well known. It shows the introduction of a worshipper to a deity. In front of the divinity is a s., and behind it a →moon crescent standard. The lunar-astral context of the scene is underscored by a second crescent and a star before the deity's head. Concerning a s. in the presence of a deity, VAN BUREN (1937/39: 22) remarked that the s. must not necessarily be considered “the attribute of the deity to whom the presentation was made, but its presence was conditioned by the nature of the worshipper's petition.”

2.4. **Amun-Re.** On a conoid from Tell el-Far'ah (South), which depicts on its base a s. over a →bull, hieroglyphs (an *mn*, two/three *n*-signs, and three disks) are engraved on two of its sides, which cryptically hint at the name of →Amun-Re (34\*). *Mn*-hieroglyphs and disks together with a s.

also appear on a conoid acquired near Jaffa (BUCHANAN/MOOREY 1988: no. 113). The name of Amun-Re is spelled out on two plaques depicting a s. on the other side (13, 19).

### 3. ASSOCIATED WITH ANIMALS

**3.1. Caprid.** A substantial group of representations shows the s. together with a →caprid suckling its young (35–45; possibly also KEEL 1980: figs. 1, 14, 16), a powerful symbol of the propagation of life and prosperity of the herd (for similar early Mesopotamian depictions see KEEL 1980: figs. 55, 59, 62, 80). Closely related to these images are representations which also show a caprid with a s. but lack the young animal, thus omitting the idea of motherhood (46–55; possibly also: EGGLEL/KEEL 2006: Chirbat Umm ad-Dananir no. 1; Dschabal al-Hawayah; Tall al-Hamma no. 1; Tall as-Sa‘idiya nos. 5, 9; Umm al-Bayyara no. 4).

**3.2. Bovine.** The combination of bovines with a s. on early Iron Age II stamp seals is to be interpreted in the same light. As enforcing elements a →tree (56; see also SCHROER 1989: 126–129; STAUBLI 2005) or the →moon (57; with additional disk) may be added, both of which are recognized as symbols of regeneration and fertility, the latter particularly in connection with cattle (THEUER 2000: 565). The grouping of bovine-s.-moon-disk also occurs on a square plaque from Acco (58), but is supplemented by a quadruped with a pointed head and tail bent over its back. The shape of the animal’s head makes the identification with a →lion difficult. However, a very similar animal also appears on a cylinder seal impression from Gezer (59) with a conglomeration of fertility related symbols, such as the moon, a tree, s., →fish (for a s. with a fish in an astral and lunar context see also cylinder seal 60 from Megiddo), →serpent (see also bulla 61 from Tall Jalul with a serpent flanking a s.), and horned animals. The base of a conoid from Tell el-Far‘ah (South) depicts a bovine with a s. above its back (34\*). The s. appears in the same position on a cylinder seal from Lachish (62\*). The striding →griffin behind the bovine may be a clue to its function (see below).

**3.3. Griffin.** When the s. appears together with the →griffin its role is of a protective nature. A scarab from Tell el-‘Ajjul illustrates this well; it shows two s.s. placed before a griffin (63). On two cylinder seals the sphere, which is protected by a s. and griffin, is symbolized by two →caprids flanking a →tree (64–65). The above-mentioned cylinder seal from Lachish has to be interpreted in the same light

(62\*). On the rectangular plaque 21 a griffin is depicted on the other side.

**3.4. Horse.** The s. appears over a →horse (66\*–67) in two examples. Since →Ishkhara has been identified with →Ish-tar/→Astarte (LAMBERT 1976–1980: 177) and the latter is strongly connected with horses (CORNELIUS 2004: 40–45), the s. on these seals may indicate the sphere of this particular goddess.

**3.5. Lion.** On a scarab from Lachish (68) a s. appears above a →lion, which is trampling a human. In front of them is a →falcon. Most likely the s. indicates here the protection of the victorious royal power symbolized by the lion (on the protective nature of the s. in regard to the pharaoh see HORNUNG/STAEHELIN 1976: 132; see also a enigmatic seal design from Tawilan [EGGLEL/KEEL 2006: Tawilan no. 2] with what appears to be a s. and a stylized red crown). Although not directly associated with the s., the lion also appears on one of the sides of conoid 34\*, which shows on its base a s. over a bull. On two plaques with an engraved s. a lion appears on the other side (1, 22).

**3.6. Uraeus.** See § 1 with 16–18.

**3.7. Animal procession.** On the so-called “Orpheus jug” from Megiddo a s. fills the space behind the head of a lyre player in a scene dominated by an animal procession (→lion, →dog, crab, →caprid, →horse, swan, →fish) heading towards a lotus flower (69).

### 4. ASSOCIATED WITH HUMANS.

Human figures appear a number of times together with the s. On a seal impression from Dhiban (70) a s. is placed before a striding horned animal, above which there is a horizontally arranged human figure. The protection of the herd may possibly be intended by this arrangement. The s. in the lower field of a scaraboid from Tell Jemmeh (71) is also probably of a protective nature. Above the s. on a baseline two humans are striding to the right. In front of them is a →falcon. A similar notion may be intended on a rectangular plaque from the vicinity of Amman (72). The s.’s role is ambiguous when it is placed next to a schematized standing human figure, as on a scarab from Gezer (73) and Tel ‘Eton (74). Likewise unclear is the meaning of the combination of elements on a rectangular plaque from Beth-Shemesh (75): to the left is a striding figure, in the middle above is a quadruped, which may be a →lion, below it is a s., and to the very left an unclear, long object. A cylinder seal from Tell el-‘Ajjul, which depicts two figures flanking a tree and next to them a s. with the crescent and moon disk

above it, conveys the theme of life-sustaining and regenerative powers (76). The s. behind the lyre player in the animal procession scene on the so-called “Orpheus jug” most likely functions as filling motif (69).

### III. Sources

**III.1. Chronological range.** Early depictions of s.s. from Palestine/Israel are two cylinder seal impressions from the late 3rd mill. and early 2nd mill. (Megiddo: LOUD 1948: pl. 160:4 with a →bull, →lion [?], and two other quadrupeds; Lachish: BECK 1998: 174–177, fig. 1 with two caprids and a star). However, the majority of representations date to the 15th–9th cent. Representations of s.s. on their own are mainly attested from the 15th–9th cent. (exceptions: 2, 7\*, 11). Those supplemented by *nfr* and ankh signs, →uraei, or solar disks date to the 15th–12th cent. (exceptions: 20, 25). Depictions of the s. with the →griffin, lion, and references to →Amun-Re also belong to the second half of the 2nd mill. During the early Iron Age (12th–9th cent.) →caprids suckling their young, caprids on their own, and bovines together with s.s. were in vogue. The “Master-of-s.s.” is a typical constellation of the 12–10th cent. as are depictions of a →horse with a s. No particular chronological pattern can be observed in regard to the →naked goddess or human figures associated with a s., except that they belong to the Iron Age (12–8th cent.).

### III.2. Geographical distribution.

Roughly 10% (if uncertain representations are included, about 15%) of s. depictions come from Jordan. The geographical distribution of the objects from Palestine/Israel is of interest in regard to substantial iconographic groups. Depictions with the s. on its own (with and without additional elements) are concentrated in the south at the Coastal Plain and nearby Shephela, and in the north at the Plain of Acco, Plain of Megiddo, and Valley of Jezreel. It is notable that Galilee, Samaria, and Judea are not represented. A very similar distribution in the south can be observed for motifs involving →Amun-Re, the →lion, and →griffin as well as the “Master-of-s.s.” In the north these motifs are attested at the Plain of Acco (with one example of a “Master-of-s.s.” from Megiddo). The distribution of the combination of a →caprid (with or without suckled animal) with a s. is markedly different. With exceptions at Tell el-Far’ah (South) it only occurs in the south in the Eastern Shephela and in Judea, in Central Samaria, and at the Plain of Megiddo and is not represented in the coastal regions. In contrast to

this, bovine animals together with a s. occur thus far only at the Plain of Acco and once in the south at Tell el-Far’ah (South).

**III.3. Object types.** With the exception of one figurative s. amulet (6), s.s. are depicted on stamp seal amulets or cylinder seals, which is in accord with the numinous power associated with the animal. The majority of depictions of the s. on its own occur on scarabs (2–5, 11–12, 14, 16–18, 23–24), and those of the s. together with →caprids appear on conoids (35–37, 39–41, 43–45, 47, 49, 51, 53–54). Once a s. occurs as filling motif on a vessel painting (69).

**IV. Conclusion.** In the iconography of Palestine/Israel and Jordan, a connection between the s. and a particular deity does not stand out. The numinous power attached to the animal is of greater importance. From the 15th–9th cent. the s. functioned in the Shephela and the Southern und Northern Lowlands in the first instance as an apotropaion by depicting the animal on its own. The s. is iconographically attested in the highlands of Palestine/Israel during the 12th–9th cent.; however, this time it is connected with the ideas of propagation of life and prosperity of the herd by depicting the s. together with caprids alone or with a suckled young animal. S.s. together with bovines, expressing a similar concept, are again restricted to the Lowlands.

### V. Catalogue

1 Rectangular plaque, enstatite, Tell el-‘Ajjul, 1400–1300. KEEL 1997: Tell el-‘Agul no. 342 2 Scarab, serpentine, Megiddo, 800–650. LAMON/SHIPTON 1939: pl. 70:9 3 Scarab, composition, Megiddo, 1500–1350. LOUD 1948: pl. 152:155 4 Scarab, limestone, Megiddo, 1350–1150 LOUD 1948: pl. 162:11 5 Scarab, Gezer, 1500. MACALISTER 1912: III pl. 203b:5 6 Amulet, composition, Tell Jemmeh, 1200–1000. HERRMANN 1994: no. 882 7\* Scaraboid, enstatite, c. 24.5 x 12 x 3.5 mm, Khirbat Khilda, 650–539. Unknown private collection. EGGLEER/KEEL 2006: Chirbat Childa no. 3 8 Seal impression, fired clay, Sahab, 1200–1100. EGGLEER/KEEL 2006: Sahab no. 5 9\* Conoid, enstatite, 13.5 x 13.4, Beth-Shemesh, 1150–800. Jerusalem, Rockefeller Museum, 217D. MACKENZIE 1912–1913: pl. 29:B2; ROWE 1936: no. S.94A 10 Scaraboid, limestone, Megiddo, 1200–1100. LAMON/SHIPTON 1939: pl. 71:58 11 Scarab, limestone, Megiddo, 600–350. LAMON/SHIPTON 1939: pl. 72:8 12 Scarab, Tell Abu Salima, 1300–1200. PETRIE 1937: pl. 6:45 13 Rectangular plaque, composition, Timna, 1300–1000. ROTHENBERG 1972: 166, fig. 54:12 14 Scarab, enstatite, Yavneh-Yam, 1300–1200. Unpublished, Israel Department of Antiquities no. 60–954 15 Scaraboid, enstatite or calcite (?), Beth-Shean, 1150–800. ROWE 1940: pl. 36:12 16 Scarab, enstatite, Acco, 1600–1400. KEEL 1997: Akko no. 45 17 Scarab, enstatite, Lachish, 1300–1200. TUFNELL et al. 1953: pl. 43:57 18 Scarab, enstatite, Tell Jemmeh, 1300–1200. PETRIE 1933: pl. 4:194 19 Rectangular plaque, composition, Tell el-‘Ajjul, 1400–1150. KEEL 1997: Tell el-‘Agul no. 1211 20 Rectangular plaque, enstatite, Achzib, 950–700. KEEL 1997: Achsib no. 55 21 Rectangular plaque, serpentine, Gezer, 1400–1300. MACALISTER 1912: III pl. 207:10 22 Rectangular plaque, limestone, Acco, 1400–1300. KEEL 1997: Akko no. 138 23 Scarab, bone (?), Shiqmona, 1300–1200. ELGAVISH 1977: pl. 10 24 Scarab, enstatite, Tell el-Far’ah (South), 1450–1300. STARKEY/HARDING 1932: pl. 55:310 25 Scaraboid, limestone, Megiddo, 780–650. LAMON/SHIPTON 1939: pl. 70:7 26 Scarab, limestone, Acco, 1050–900. KEEL 1997: Akko no. 117 27 Conoid, Gezer, 1200–1000. MACALISTER 1912: II 295, fig. 437:7 28 Scaraboid, limestone, 15 x 13 x 8 mm, Gezer, 1200–900.

MACALISTER 1912: III pl. 200:27 **29\*** Conoid, enstatite, 14 x 14 mm, Megiddo, 1100–1000. Istanbul, Museum of Archaeology, 2515m. SCHUMACHER 1908: 86, fig. 124 (2nd row, 3rd from left) **30** Scarab, Tell Jemmeh, 1200–900. PETRIE 1934: pl. 11:432 **31** Triangular seal, calcite, 12.3 x 12 x 7.4 mm, Buseira, 730–539. Amman, Jordan Archaeological Museum, untraceable (last seen in 1995). EGGLEER/KEEL 2006: Buseira no. 13 **32** Conoid, limestone, Tell el-Far'ah (South), 1200–1075. PETRIE 1930: pl. 33:339 (bad drawing) **33** Cylinder seal, lapislazuli, 16 x 6 mm, 'Amman airport, 1800. Canberra, Classics Museum, Australian National University, 75.16. EGGLEER/KEEL 2006: 'Amman Flughafen no. 30 **34\*** Conoid, enstatite, 13 x 16.2 mm, Tell el-Far'ah (South), 1200–900. Jerusalem, Rockefeller Museum, I 4434. PETRIE 1930: pl. 29:256; ROWE 1936: no. S.76 **35** Conoid, limestone, Tell el-Far'ah (North), 1150–900. CHAMBON 1984: pl. 80:3; KEEL 1980: fig. 89 **36\*** Conoid, calcite, 15.8 x 16 mm, Taanach, 1100. Jerusalem, Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, TT 702. LAPP 1967: 34f, fig. 24; KEEL 1980: fig. 90 **37** Conoid, limestone, Megiddo, 1100–1000. LAMON/SHIPTON 1939: pl. 70:22; KEEL 1980: fig. 91 **38** Scaraboid, calcite, Tell en-Naşbeh, 1150–700. McCOWN 1947: pl. 54:19; KEEL 1980: fig. 92 **39** Conoid, fired clay, Shechem, 800–700. WRIGHT 1962: 11f, fig. 4; KEEL 1980: fig. 93 **40** Conoid, calcite, Beth-Shemesh, 1200–1000. GRANT 1934: 43, fig. 3:16; KEEL 1980: fig. 94 **41** Conoid, quartz, Tell el-Far'ah (South), 1075–950. PETRIE 1930: pl. 29:281; KEEL 1985: fig. 2 **42** Scaraboid, Tell en-Naşbeh, 1150–700. KEEL 1985: fig. 3 **43** Conoid, calcite, Tell en-Naşbeh, 1000–700. McCOWN 1947: pl. 55:67. KEEL 1985: fig. 10 **44** Conoid, stone, Gezer, 1200–700. KEEL 1985: fig. 11 **45** Conoid, Megiddo, 1200–700, Unpublished, file no. 609 at the Department of Biblical Studies of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland **46** Round plaque with domed back, sandstone (?), Megiddo, 1150–1000. LOUD 1948: pl. 163:19; KEEL 1985: fig. 6 **47** Conoid, stone, Megiddo, 1150–1000. LOUD 1948: pl. 163:20; KEEL 1985: fig. 7 **48** Scaraboid, bone (?), Lachish, 1150–700. TUFNELL et al. 1953: pl. 44:91; KEEL 1985: fig. 8 **49** Conoid, calcite, Beth-Shemesh, 1000–800. GRANT 1932: pl. 51:48 **50** Scaraboid, calcite, Beth-Shemesh, 1150–900. GRANT 1934: 43, fig. 3:18 **51** Conoid, limestone, Tell el-Far'ah (South), 1200–1000. PETRIE 1930: pl. 31:288 **52** Scaraboid, stone, Tell el-Far'ah (South), 1200–1000. STARKEY/HARDING 1932: pl. 73:35 **53** Conoid, Tell el-Far'ah (South), 1200–1000. STARKEY/HARDING 1932: pl. 73:41 **54** Conoid, stone, Tell en-Naşbeh, 1150–600. McCOWN 1947: pl. 55:75 **55** Scarab, limestone, Megiddo, 780–650. Unpublished, Berlin, VA 15065b **56** Scarab, haematite, Acco, 1000–900. KEEL 1997: Akko no. 131 **57** Scarab, stone, Acco, 1000–900. KEEL 1997: Akko no. 132 **58** Square plaque, limestone, Acco, 1000–900. KEEL 1997: Akko no. 128 **59** Cylinder seal impression, fired clay, Gezer, 1400–1300. MACALISTER 1912: II 349, fig. 466 **60** Cylinder seal, jasper, Megiddo, 800–600. SCHUMACHER 1908: I/B pl. 44c **61** Bulla, burnt clay. Tall Jalul, 800–600. EGGLEER/KEEL 2006: Tall Dschalul no. 5 **62\*** Cylinder seal, steatite, Lachish, 1500–1200. Jerusalem, Israel Antiquity Authority, 38.56. TUFNELL et al. 1958: pl. 34:164 = PARKER 1949: no. 151 **63** Scaraboid, lapislazuli, Tell el-'Ajjul, 1550–1400. KEEL 1997: Tell el-'Ağul no. 323 **64** Cylinder seal, steatite, Tell Abu Hawam, 1400–1200. HAMILTON 1935: no. 413 = PARKER 1949: no. 153 **65** Cylinder seal, haematite, Lachish, 1400–1200. TUFNELL 1940: pl. 33:49 = PARKER 1949: no. 107 **66\*** Scaraboid, quartz, 16.1 x 13.9 x 10 mm, Tell Keisan, 1150–900. Jerusalem, École Biblique et Archéologique Française. KEEL 1980a: no. 14 **67** Scarab, limestone, Megiddo, 1200–900. SCHUMACHER 1908: pl. 18e **68** Scarab, enstatite, 1400–1000. TUFNELL 1940: pl. 33B:58 **69** Jug, clay, Megiddo, 1100–1000. LOUD 1948: pl. 76:1 **70** Stamp seal impression, fired clay, Dhiban, 1250–900. EGGLEER/KEEL 2006: Dhiban no. 3 **71** Scaraboid, composition, Tell Jemmeh, 950–700. PETRIE 1928: pl. 19:51 **72** Rectangular plaque or pyramidal seal, tuff, Tall al-'Umeiri, 1250–1000. EGGLEER/KEEL 2006: Tall al-'Umeiri no. 43 **73** Scaraboid, limestone, Gezer, 1000–700. MACALISTER 1912: III pl. 200:16 **74** Scarab, composition, Tel 'Eton, 900–700. GIVEON 1974: 121, fig. 9:15 **75** Rectangular plaque, bone (?), Beth-Shemesh, 1300–1150. GRANT 1932: pl. 48:1108 **76** Cylinder seal, haematite, Tell el-'Ajjul, 1400–1200. PARKER 1949: no. 193

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