

Roman Lead ‘Iao Abrasax’ Amulets: Magical Pendants, Rings, and Beads

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The practice of magic was widespread in the Graeco-Roman world. Traces are found abundantly, both in literary sources and in material culture. Particularly well-known and surviving in large numbers are the magical hardstone gems bearing esoteric inscriptions and a range of imaginative imagery.¹ The majority of these were set into the bezels of rings and worn as pendants. The largest number of magical gems can be dated to the late 2nd to 4th centuries and they are provenanced to virtually every part of the Roman empire. A class of lead objects consisting of magical pendants, rings and beads has not received much attention, even though they are clearly related to the hardstone gems and were likely used as their substitutes.² This paper and the catalogue below will serve to fill at least part of this lacuna. The catalogue distinguishes 110 different amulet moulds and records a corpus of 190 lead amulets.³

Magical and Gnostic

Firstly, some remarks concerning terminology. The term ‘magical’ is to be understood in a practical archaeological, not a cultural historical sense.⁴ ‘Magical’ gems (see figure 1a) – and the lead amulets presented here – are set apart from other objects on the basis of three characteristics, which may appear singularly or in combinations: 1) they make use of magical formulae (so-called *logoi* and *voces magicae*) and divine and angelic ‘names of power’⁵ in their inscriptions; 2) have distinct iconographic schemes that typically do not appear in other contexts; and, 3) show esoteric signs called *charakteres*. It is important to note that the thus defined ‘magical’ gems were certainly not the only type of gem used in the practice of magic in the Graeco-Roman world. In fact, we know this was not the case, as literary evidence for the use of amuletic rings goes back centuries before the emergence of the magical gems.

For similar reasons, the religious historical term ‘Gnostic’ is no longer generally used as a common denominator for magical gems. It was coined already in the 16th century, because *Abrasax* appears on many gems as a ‘name of power,’ and it was recognized that this name also appears in Gnostic traditions. However, as noted by Bonner, only a very small number of gems can be firmly identified as Gnostic on the basis of additional features,⁶ and the inscription *Abrasax* is hardly

¹ Bonner’s groundbreaking study (1950) is still one of the most relevant monographs on magical gems. Another major endeavor is Simone Michel’s attempt to bring together all known material (2004). A valuable online resource is currently under development at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest: the *Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database* (<<http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans>>). Other major studies of magical gems are Delatte and Derchain (1964), Michel (2001a), and Mastrocinque (2014).

² Nagy (2019): 209 on ‘non-glyptic’ amulets with depictions of the Anguipedes.

³ I would like to thank Jeffrey Spier for his insights expressed in private communications over the years. Any conclusions and mistakes are of course my own.

⁴ What follows is based on Nagy (2011 and 2019) and Barrett (2015). Essentially, as Nagy (2011): 76 summarizes, ‘magical gems as a genre are not defined by their function.’

⁵ For the term, see Bonner (1950): 30.

⁶ Bonner (1950): 1.

enough to attribute a particular object to a Gnostic sect, let alone proceed to do so with the entire corpus. The gems start to appear in a period of flourishing syncretism. Magicians incorporated diverse cultural influences – Graeco-Roman, Egyptian, Iranian, Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic – into their repertoire, which were again borrowed by others and spread across the ‘magical koine.’⁷

Form and function

All the lead amulets are cast and generally show crude workmanship. The pendants and beads come from a single mould, but the bezels and hoops of the rings were cast separately and soldered together afterwards.⁸ Pendants are usually round with one suspension loop, but a variety of shapes appear. The pendants bearing an image of Anubis have oval shapes (nos. 28-30), a distinct group of pendants are rectangular with two suspension loops (nos. 65-67), one square pendant is encountered (no. 60), as well as an exceptional pendant in the shape of a crescent (no. 108). Many pendants have their loops broken off (which may result in their misidentification as lead ‘tesserae’) and almost all the rings have their hoops broken off. The rings are usually designed with an oval bezel (except no. 93 which is round). Lastly, on nearly all the amulets, including the rings, designs appear on both sides (exceptions are nos. 26, 52, 62, 69 and 99) which implies that one side is being worn hidden. This is also a common feature of magical gems.

From their distinctly ‘magical’ features as defined above, it can be inferred that at one time, these amulets may have served a magical function for their wearer, typically to gain protection from harm, healing from disease or to bring good fortune. However, only a very small number of lead amulets refer directly to their function: nos. 69-73 have the imperative to ‘protect’ (φύλαξε and the plural φυλάξεσθε). Nos. 70-73 invoke Sarapis for this reason. The lead amulets also share the decorative function of the gems, as evidenced by their appearance in the form of jewelry – pendants, rings, and rectangular beads.⁹

Provenance

Even though many lead amulets have a general provenance or none at all, most of the material seems to originate in the eastern part of the Roman empire. One example was found in Izmir, Turkey (no. 41), another was reportedly found in Syria (no. 65) and another in Lebanon (no. 66). Several amulets have a provenance to Israel. The collection of J. Berlin houses some surface finds from Caesarea Maritima (nos. 13, 21, 65, 87-88, 100), as does the Hendler collection that was published recently (nos. 87 and 100-101). Interestingly, both collections include a type of ring with the image of Horus-Harpocrates on a lotus flower that was cast from the same mould. A simple ring with the inscription IAW (Iao) on the bezel also appears in both collections (nos. 87 and 100-101). Other examples too have reported provenances to this region (nos. 39 and 57, Bethlehem area) or likely originate there (nos. 16, 36, 91, 110).

Finally, several lead amulets were found in France, Lyon, on the right bank of the river Saône in the Saint-George quarter (nos. 74, 76, 94, 105-109). The find was purchased by the well-known

⁷ Nagy (2019): 210.

⁸ Amorai-Stark and Hershkovitz (2016): 436. But see Michel (2001): 145, no. 236 for a cast bronze ring very similar to no. 75 that according to her edition was cast with the hoop (‘mit Bügel gegossen.’)

⁹ Pendants: nos. 1-74, 108-109, rings: nos. 75-102, 110, and rectangular beads: nos. 103-107.

coin collector Etienne Récamier and published by Paul Dissard in 1905.¹⁰ Two more pieces are now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon (nos. 73, 108). Their types overlap with the amulets published by Dissard, and they may come from the same find. Provenance data is fragmentary and the over-representation of amulets from Israel and France is likely coincidental.

Date

The dating of magical gems is often problematic and the same is true of lead amulets. This is reflected by the wide range of proposed dates – from the 1st to the 7th centuries – for previously edited examples.¹¹ Here, a 3rd to 4th century date is preferred and argued for the bulk of the material, but it cannot be ruled out that some types may date to later times. In any case, the amulets catalogued below should be distinguished from the numerous lead amulets that are clearly early Byzantine (circa 6th-7th centuries) and must belong to a different magical *praxis*. These may show the same ‘words of power,’ divine and angelic names, but feature different iconographic schemes and are clearly of different style and fabric.¹²

Stylistic criteria are often helpful in dating ancient objects, but in regard to the lead amulets this approach is often difficult, due to their minimal designs and poor workmanship. A notable exception to this is an amulet of fine style from the R. Schoch collection which can date no later than the 4th century (no. 27). Fortunately, there is one group of amulets that can be relatively firmly dated to the 3rd century on the basis of the type of iconography: nos. 87-89 show the anchor and fishes motif, which was borrowed from early Christian image-makers. It appears on engraved gems dated mainly to the 3rd century and disappears during the early 4th century.¹³ The aforementioned amulets invoking Sarapis for protection also seem to date not much later than the 3rd century.¹⁴ In any case, the modest workmanship and material use does not necessarily reflect a later date than the precious gems. More likely it indicates that the intended users were people of lesser means. It is also possible that a regional or temporary lack of hardstone gem production may have caused a demand for amulets of other materials.¹⁵

Legends

Elaborate esoteric formulae like the ones found in magical papyri and inscribed on gems are not encountered on the lead amulets. What does appear, is a wide variety of ‘names of power,’ most of which are divine and angelic names that find their origin in Judaism and Christianity. The latter does not need to imply that the producers and users of the amulets were themselves Jews or Christians. Legends are encountered on almost all of the lead amulets. This, and the large number of amulets

¹⁰ Dissard (1905), nos. 1931-1941. See the note on their provenance on p. xxviii.

¹¹ A telling example is no. 65, which is dated 1st to 5th century by the Kelsey Museum and 6th to 7th century in Wamser (2004).

¹² For examples of predominantly bronze amulets of early Byzantine date, see Bonner (1950, nos. 298-306, 309-324, especially 326, which is a lead pendant), Michel (2001a, nos. 451-456), Wamser (2004, nos. 236-240, all lead pendants), Spier (2014) and Matantseva (2014).

¹³ Spier (2007): 45-46.

¹⁴ See CBd-407 for a 3rd-century gem with the head of Sarapis and the imperative διαφύλασσε, similar in form and function to nos. 70-72.

¹⁵ Nagy (2019): 207-209.

that have no imagery, but are only inscribed with divine and angelic names,¹⁶ underscores their importance. All the legends use the Greek alphabet.

The Hebrew divine name YHWH, as evidenced by the Septuagint, is rendered in Greek as Iao (Ἰάω). Its use in some magical contexts may well have been prompted by the fact that the name consists of three vowels, which were themselves significant to magic users. Strings of vowels often appear as *voces magicae* in magical media. As symbols for the seven heavenly bodies they could be used to invoke solar deities.¹⁷ The divine name Iao is extremely common on magical gems, and it is also by far the most common inscription on the lead amulets, appearing on 99 out of the 110 moulds in the catalogue.¹⁸ Appearing on a smaller, but still relatively large number of amulets (19 examples) is the name Sabaoth (Σαβαώθ), often spelled without theta, Sabao.¹⁹ It derives from an epithet of the God of Israel 'of Hosts,' earthly or heavenly. By Roman imperial times, Sabaoth was also conceived as a separate divine being.²⁰ Adonai (Ἀδωναΐ), 'Lord' is another name for the God of Israel, and was used as a substitute for his unspeakable divine name. It is the least used name on the amulets, encountered on 7 examples.²¹ In Gnostic traditions, the names Iao, Sabaoth, and Adonai were reinterpreted as the names of archons, the divine builders of the physical universe and as rulers of the heavenly bodies.

The only divine name invoked on the lead amulets that apparently finds its origin in Gnosticism is Abrasax (Ἀβρασαξ). With 50 occurrences, it is the most common 'name of power' after Iao.²² In Basilidian Gnosticism Abrasax is the name of the Great Archon, ruler of all 365 heavens.²³ The etymology of the name is unclear, but it is evident that it is significant in a numerical, isopsephic sense. The letters add up to the numerical value of 365, which is the number of heavens in Basilidian cosmology and the number of the days in a solar year.²⁴ Furthermore, Abrasax consists of seven letters, which is the number of the heavenly bodies and the number of days in a week.²⁵

Angelic names appear on many lead amulets. The names of the traditional archangels Michael (Μιχαήλ), Gabriel (Γαβριήλ), and Raphael (Ραφαήλ) are encountered most often (10, 6 and 7 examples respectively).²⁶ The name Uriel (Οὐριήλ) appears on only one lead amulet type (no. 64).²⁷ On one rectangular bead bearing an angelic name on each side, the only attestation of Suriel is encountered (no. 103, spelled Σουρηήλ, with Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel). On another rectangular lead bead (no. 104) there appears an interesting and unique attestation of Samael (Σαμαήλ), the name of a rebellious angel in Jewish tradition, notably in the book of Enoch. In some

¹⁶ Nos. 53-68, 95-108, 110.

¹⁷ Bonner (1950): 138. Michel (2004): 487.

¹⁸ Nos. 1-10, 12-19, 27, 30-37, 41-48, 50-51, 53-60, 68-69, 74-79, 83, 86-89, 92-102, 105-108, 110.

¹⁹ Nos. 24, 37-38, 41, 44, 49, 55-58, 62, 64-66, 79, 102, 105-107.

²⁰ Bonner (1950): 170. Michel (2004): 486.

²¹ Nos. 24, 32, 42, 94, 105-107.

²² Nos. 1-11, 13, 20-23, 30, 33-36, 38, 50, 53-54, 61, 68, 75-77, 80-85, 87-88, 90-91, 95-99, 105-106, 108-109.

²³ Bonner (1950): 133-134. No text of Basilides survives. The nature of his teachings must be derived from later polemic writers who may be attributing later Gnostic tenets to him.

²⁴ A=1, B=2, P=100, A=1, Σ=200, A=1, Ξ=60, adding up to 365.

²⁵ Michel (2004): 481.

²⁶ Michael: nos. 28-30, 39-40, 59-60, 102-104. Gabriel: nos. 30, 61, 64, 67, 103-104. Raphael: nos. 28-29, 65-67, 103-104.

²⁷ It is worthy of note that the two pairs of names on this amulet appear 'upside down' to the observer of the pendant on the wearer. However, they would appear right side up to the wearer, if he or she would raise it up to the eyes to read it. It may be assumed that this was done intentionally. (I thank Derek Content for this observation.)

Gnostic traditions, Samael is the name of one of the seven archons, or the name of the chief archon or demiurge, the creator of the material universe.

The legend Chrestos can be read on the underside of a ring with the divine name Iao and an image of an anchor and two fishes on the bezel (no. 89). Although the editors of the Campbell Bonner database (CBd-2612) read χρηστός ('good'), the reading of the divine name Christos (Χριστός) seems more likely, because the legend is paired with distinctly early Christian iconography.²⁸ Furthermore, the same image of an anchor and fishes is paired with the legend Ichthys (Ἰχθύς, 'fish') on another ring (no. 92) and here the Christian origin is obvious: it is the acrostic 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior' which figures prominently in early Christian art.²⁹ On the amuletic ring, it can be interpreted as a 'name of power' equivalent to Christos. The name and image of Christ figures on a small number of magical gems,³⁰ but Ichthys as a divine name or *vox magica* is very rare.³¹ However, magical papyri use Christian formulae and names extensively.³²

Finally, the only divine name on the lead amulets that derives from Egyptian religion is that of the Sun-god Ra (Ῥῆ). It is included with Iao, Abrasax, Michael, and Gabriel on an oval pendant bearing the image of Anubis (no. 30).

Iconography

Next to the use of divine names and *voces*, another distinguishing feature of magical objects is their use of distinct imagery. However, some examples incorporate imagery from other contexts by the addition of divine names, *voces*, and *charakteres*. Below, the main iconographical schemes that appear on the lead amulets are discussed.

It can be no surprise that the most commonly used image on magical gems also figures heavily on the lead amulets. This is the Anguipede or 'Snake-legged God' (see figure 1a and nos. 1-27 and 75-86). The Anguipede is a hybrid creature with a cock's head, a human body wearing a cuirass and two serpents for legs. He holds a whip and a shield. On the gems, there is usually the inscription IAW (Iao) on the shield, but in his representations on the lead amulets, IAW is transferred to the fields below or across.

The nature and origin of the Anguipede are still a matter of debate. Any conclusion about his identity can only be based on the objects, as he is absent from the magical papyri and any other written source. Early scholarship, with its heavy emphasis on Gnosticism, identified the Anguipede as a depiction of the Gnostic deity Abrasax, but this view is now generally abandoned, as there is no decisive proof that the name refers to the figure, and the connection to Gnosticism is unclear.³³ Campbell Bonner, the pioneer of modern scholarship of magical gems, understood the figure primarily as a solar deity.³⁴

²⁸ Jensen (2000): 140 views the anchor and fishes motif as exclusively Christian, but see Spier (2007): 41-49. For gems bearing the imagery, see Spier (2007), nos. 198-205. The anchor, with and without fishes, also occurs frequently in early Christian funerary inscriptions in the catacombs.

²⁹ It appears on early Christian gems, many times combined with an anchor and fishes, similar to the amulets: Spier (2007), nos. 198-205. It also appears in inscriptions, notably in the epitaph of Licinia, in the Museo Nazionale in Rome, which also shows an anchor and two fishes.

³⁰ As examples, see CBd-815 (with an image of the Crucifixion) and CBd-1831, combining it with other divine names and *voces*.

³¹ CBd-3765 and possibly CbD-3766.

³² Cf. De Bruyn (2017), a monograph on Christian amulets, mainly papyri.

³³ See Nagy (2002): 159-164 for an overview of the history of scholarship.

³⁴ Bonner (1950): 123-139.



Figure 1a: Jasper magical gem showing an image of the Anguipede holding a whip and a shield, *voces magicae* in a circular legend and *charakteres* below (3rd century); Figure 1b: Bronze magical ring showing an anchor and fishes and a legend invoking Solomon to protect (3rd century).³⁵

More recently, Árpád Nagy has proposed the interesting hypothesis that the Anguipede is a pictogram of one of the epithets of the God of Israel, imagined by the use of paronomasia or 'deep punning.' The Hebrew root GBR appearing in the name 'The Mighty One' (*ha-Gvurah*), unifies the different components of the Anguipede: the cock's head (*gever*) and the male body (*gever*) wearing a cuirass (*gibbor*). In Graeco-Roman art, serpent legs represent the giants (*gibbor*).³⁶ Whatever the merits of this hypothesis may be, Nagy makes it clear that the Anguipede figure is somehow related to the Hebrew God, as he is paired with divine names associated to him on an overwhelming number of gems.³⁷ The same is true for the lead amulets. The Anguipede is typically paired with the names Iao Abrasax or with one of these two.³⁸ If there is an inscription on the side with the Anguipede, it is always Iao (with the sole exception of no. 85, which has Abrasax). One amulet has the names Adonai and Sabaoth (no. 13) and another Iao Sabao (no. 79).

Three rings provenanced to Caesarea show the image of Horus-Harpocrates sitting on a lotus flower (nos. 87-88). He is raising his hand to his lips. This image belongs to Egyptian religious tradition, alluding to the morning sun, representing regeneration and renewal.³⁹ On all the rings, Horus-Harpocrates is accompanied by the divine name Iao, with Abrasax to be read on the underside. The scheme of Horus-Harpocrates on a lotus flower also appears on a large number of magical gems.

The jackal-headed Egyptian god Anubis appears on a small number of oval lead amulets (nos. 28-30). The objects he is holding are not always clear. He likely holds a sistrum on nos. 28 and 29, and he certainly holds one on no. 30, as well as the caduceus, which associates him with Hermes,

³⁵ Both from the author's collection. The gem (Sternberg XXV, lot 118) was previously published by Michel (2004): 246, 3.A.3.d, no. 1 and plate 49, 3. The ring (Heritage Europe 48, lot 450) is unpublished.

³⁶ First proposed in Nagy (2002), refuted categorically by Bohak (2008) and defended with additional statistical evidence in Nagy (2019).

³⁷ As Nagy shows, 73% of the corpus has Iao in the inscription. Less commonly encountered are Sabaoth and Adonai (2019): 198.

³⁸ Iao Abrasax: nos. 1-10, 75-77, 83. Only Iao: nos. 12, 14-19, 27, 78. Only Abrasax: nos. 11, 20-23, 80-82, 84-86.

³⁹ Bonner (1950): 140. Michel (2001b): 27.

the *psychopompos*, guide of souls to the underworld. As mentioned above, the third type (no. 30) has a unique attestation of the Egyptian solar deity Ra as a divine name. Finally, five amulets bear the head of Sarapis (nos. 70-74), four with the imperative to 'protect' and one reportedly with Iao and a thunderbolt on the other side (no. 75).

Two amulet types, both known from single examples, show an enigmatic scene which does not seem to appear on magical gems, nor on other media. A seated male figure is raising a small staff or wand over an object which is very crudely designed on no. 31, but can be identified quite certainly as a vessel on no. 32. There is another vessel on the ground behind his back. The divine names are Iao on no. 31 and Iao Adonai on no. 32. Both amulets show a right hand as the main device on the other side. It is very tempting to identify this scene as Christ turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana, marking the beginning of his ministry (John 2:1-11). However, this is problematic for lack of a clear parallel. The narrative scene does appear in early Christian art, but it is shown differently. Christ is normally depicted standing, pointing the wand down towards the vessel. On the other hand, the wand is a typical feature in depictions of Christ performing miracles and seldomly occurs in non-Christian contexts.⁴⁰ As for the connection to magic, the wedding at Cana is almost non-existent on magical gems. One late antique example in Leiden centers the wedding, not the miracle in its design. It shows Christ officiating the wedding, standing behind the bride and groom.⁴¹ The miracle is alluded to by several amphorae depicted in the field to their left.

The right hand, shown with the palm outward and the fingers close together, is a device that appears on a number of amulets of different styles, certainly originating from different workshops (nos. 31-38). The divine name that is usually included is Iao, with one or more letters shown inside the palm of the hand. Exceptions to this are no. 32 with the name Adonai and no. 38 which has no legend, but possibly a star. The right hand is combined with the seated male figure on nos. 31 and 32 discussed in the paragraph above, and on the remaining pendants with the plain legend Abrasax (nos. 33-36, 38) or Sabao (no. 37).

The right hand may be interpreted as an apotropaic image, much like it still functions today – consider for example the hand talismans ('Hamsa' or 'Hand of Fatima') used across North-Africa, the Middle East and India, a tradition that may well go back to antiquity. However, considering the solar connections of much of the iconographic schemes appearing on the lead amulets, the hand may belong to Helios/Sol Invictus, who is typically portrayed with his right hand raised in greeting.

Alternatively, the only part of the Judeo-Christian God portrayed in ancient art is his hand: the *manus Dei*. Most notably, it appears in several frescoes of the Dura-Europos synagoge. It is also a fixed element in representations of the sacrifice of Isaac in early Christian art. In scripture, the (right) hand of God provides divine blessing (Ezra 7:9, Neh. 2:18), aid (Psalm 119:173), and protection (Psalm 138:7). Nagy argues that magical image-makers would have faced a compelling need to depict the God of Israel, but lacked an iconographic tradition, which may have resulted in the conception of the Anguipede scheme.⁴² Perhaps a similar need to use imagery in addition to divine names prompted the adoption of a right hand on the lead amulets.

⁴⁰ Jensen (2000): 120-124.

⁴¹ Rijksmuseum van Oudheden inv. no. GS-11127. Cf. Sombroek (1989). Compare also a rock crystal gem published by Spier (2007): 122 and no. 682.

⁴² Nagy (2002): 167.

A lion can be seen on three amulet types of very different styles. On two small pendants that may have originated from the same workshop the angelic name Michael appears on the other side. The lion is advancing to the left on no. 39 and to the right on no. 40 and it is shown with a crescent and with a crescent and star. The lion also appears on a pendant of fine style from the R. Schoch collection (no. 27), bearing an image of the Anguipede on the other side. This amulet too has a star and crescent. It may well be that this image was borrowed from gem-engraving, as a lion combined with a star and crescent is often used to depict the solar sign of Leo.

The star in crescent appears as a secondary device on several amulets. It is combined with the Anguipede on the other side of 15 different pendants (nos. 1-9, 12, 16-18, 20, 23). It is also encountered as the main device on nos. 41-43 with the name Iao, and without an inscription on nos. 44-46. Sometimes, the star in crescent is combined with a varying number of stars: no. 47 has four stars flanking, no. 48 has six more and no. 49 has eight.

The last of the iconographic types to be discussed has already been touched upon earlier. Four ring types (nos. 89-92) bear the image of an anchor with a fish on either side, while a fifth example only shows the anchor (no. 93). Aside from the common divine names Iao and Abrasax,⁴³ the motif is accompanied by Ichthys on no. 92 and Chrestos on the underside of no. 89. These names, as well as the imagery, originate in Christian tradition, as has been argued above. The anchor and fishes motif does not appear as the main device on magical gems,⁴⁴ but a 3rd century carnelian in a silver ring shows the related image of a large cross with two fishes on either side. The legend suggests an amuletic function because it invokes the Old Testament king Solomon, who by Roman imperial times had gained the reputation of being master of demons.⁴⁵ A similar use of the anchor and fishes motif in a 'magical' context occurs on a type of bronze ring, also from the 3rd century, bearing the legend Σολομών λέγει φύλαξε ('Solomon says 'protect!'). Jeffrey Spier identified three more aniconographic rings from the same workshop with an identical legend. A fifth ring in the author's collection can also be added to the group (see figure 1b).⁴⁶ Although these rings clearly belong to a different magical *praxis*, one that was centered on Solomon, they are important examples of early amuletic use of Christian iconography and they form valuable parallels to the lead amulets presently discussed.

Finally, some concluding remarks on iconography. It is worthy of note that the only iconographic scheme that appears on both the lead pendants and the rings is the Anguipede. All the other imagery is reserved to one medium. Anubis, Sarapis, the seated male figure, the right hand, the lion, and the various star and crescent designs only appear on the pendants. Horus-Harpocrates on the lotus flower and the anchor and fishes only appear on rings. It should also be noted that some of the iconographies encountered on the lead amulets – the seated male figure, the right hand, and the anchor and fishes – have no counterpart on the gems. This is an indication that although the lead amulets can be viewed as functional and practical substitutes for hardstone gems, they are not merely derivative of them. There were distinct magical *praxeis* associated to lead amulets.⁴⁷

⁴³ Iao on no. 89 and nos. 92-93. Abrasax on nos. 90 and 91.

⁴⁴ It can be seen as part of the design of CBd-3765, with other typically early Christian imagery of Good Shepherd, lamb, and dove.

⁴⁵ The main textual source for this is the *Testament of Solomon*, a pseudepigraphical work dated 1st to 5th century. For the carnelian gem, see Spier (2007): 48 and no. 290. For other magical objects invoking Solomon see Spier (2019).

⁴⁶ Spier (2019). All the rings bear the same inscription, engraved by the same hand. The example in the author's collection has the addition of the divine name Iao in the legend.

⁴⁷ This conclusion was already made by Nagy in his summary of 'non-glyptic' amulets (2019): 209, especially in regard to a distinct group of Solomon-Anguipede amulets from Sicily (published by Giannobile, 2002.)

Charakteres

Esoteric signs designated as *charakteres* (χαρακτήρες) in the magical papyri are widely encountered on magical objects (see figure 1a).⁴⁸ These *charakteres* may have found their origin in symbols for the planetary bodies. They could be invoked to protect the wearer of the amulet, just like the divine and angelic beings referenced by the ‘names of power.’⁴⁹ Richard Gordon proposes that *charakteres* were designed by taking letters from the Greek and Latin alphabets and some basic shapes like stars and rectangles, which were then modified by adding ‘estranging devices.’ Using this method, the possibilities for creating *charakteres* were practically infinite, and it is no surprise that Gordon found over a thousand of them. However, the overwhelming majority occur only once. A much smaller subset of *charakteres* is used more regularly.⁵⁰

On the lead amulets, *charakteres* are encountered, but they are by no means ubiquitous. Three lead amulets show a *charakter* as the main design. An eight-pointed star with a circlet at each extremity, one of the most common signs in the papyri and on magical gems, appears as the main device on a lead pendant (no. 51). Another very common sign on gems is the so-called Chnoubsign, named after the radiate serpent with which it regularly appears. It consists of three S-shapes with a cross-bar and it is reported as the main device on a lead pendant (no. 43). Finally, a third lead pendant has a *charakter* resembling a cross within a circle as the main device (no. 52).⁵¹ This *charakter* is also encountered on the underside of a lead ring (no. 78), where it is followed by two more *charakteres* (a retrograde S and a star-design). It is also part of the design of one of the six panels of a hexagonal ring (no. 110) that is included in the appendix. This ring could well be viewed as a *charakter*-ring because, apart from one panel inscribed Iao, it shows *charakteres* on all sides. Finally, one of the beads described by Paul Dissard as having planetary signs (‘signes planétaire’) likely shows *charakteres* as well.

Catalogue

Apart from a description of both sides, every entry has the divine and angelic names or *voces* that appear in the legends, stated in their Latinized form after the catalogue number. The catalogue describes each distinct amulet mould identified. Whenever multiple moulds could be identified for a single type of amulet, the moulds are numbered with lower case Greek letters. Each entry closes with citations of all the known examples using lower case Latin letters. Whenever a mould could not be identified for a published amulet (usually because they were edited with a line drawing or no illustration at all), this is mentioned in the catalogue. Lastly, whenever a variant mould of a particular type is described, the primary identifying feature is indicated as an aid to the user of this catalogue.⁵²

⁴⁸ Michel (2004): 484.

⁴⁹ Bonner (1950): 193-194.

⁵⁰ Gordon (2011).

⁵¹ This sign of a cross within a circlet resembles a device that appears on a bronze ring published by Gary Vikan (1991/1992): 38 and fig. 7, which certainly dates to early Byzantine times. However, the sign on the ring is not necessarily related to the magical *charakter* that appears on the amulets. Rather, it seems to be connected to the cross within a diadem or a wreath that is shown on top of an uncertain object between busts of the Sun and the Moon on a group of early Byzantine lead and bronze amulets (Bonner 1950: 326, Matantseva 2014, no. c).

⁵² I wish to thank Jimi Berlin, Ergün Laflı, Mika Merviö, Robert Schoch, Kevin Peese and Steve McIntosh as well as the public auction houses for their kind permission to use their photos.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



1 Iao Abrasax

A: IAW below Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE beneath star in crescent. Dotted border.

Mould α (vertical line emerging from W, horizontal dots above star in crescent) a. Leu Numismatik 3, lot 194. 18mm, 3.22 gram*; b. Roma Numismatics E-Sale 58, lot 362. 19mm, 3.09 gram; c. Leu Numismatik WA 13, lot 1066. 20mm. 2.54 gram; d. Author's collection 19359. 17mm, 2.44 gram; e. M. Merviö collection. 19mm; f. Numismatik Naumann 94, lot 295. 19mm, 2.64 gram; g. Papillon 3, lot 570. 18mm, 2.80 gram; h. Leu Numismatik WA 17, lot 2116. 19mm, 2.86 gram; i. Leu Numismatik WA 19, lot 2419. 17mm, 2.74 gram; j. R. Schoch collection, Boston. 19mm. k. Zeus WA 18, lot 757. 21mm, 3.3 gram; l. S. McIntosh collection. 18mm, 2.96 gram; m. Athens, Numismatic Museum, ed. Engel (1884), no 59. (line drawing, mould unconfirmed) 17mm.



2 Iao Abrasax

Mould β (large dot next to the top right of the shield, space between dots above star in crescent) a. Istanbul, Archaeological Museum (Ist. 796), ed. Cheynet c.s. (2012), no. 9.34 (dated 6th century) 16mm; b. Nomos Obolos 12, lot 946. 18mm, 3.17 gram; c. Leu Numismatik WA 11, lot 1556. 20mm, 3.40 gram; d. Leu Numismatik WA 16, lot 3093. 17mm, 2.78 gram; e. Leu Numismatik WA 17, lot 2115. 18mm, 2.94 gram; f. Leu Numismatik WA 18, lot 2215. 17mm, 2.72 gram*; g. Numismatik Naumann 111, lot 662. 17mm, 2.58 gram; h. Author's collection 19360. 17mm, 2.30 gram; i. Author's collection. 17mm, 3.07 gram.



3 Iao Abrasax

Mould γ (small P and square Ξ) a. Leu Numismatik WA 14, lot 1179. 20mm, 2.62 gram.



4 Iao Abrasax

Mould δ (fewer dots in borders, P attached to crescent); a. Leu Numismatik WA 19, lot 2420. 17mm (across), 3.43 gram.



5 Iao Abrasax

Mould ϵ (both A's in ABPA placed higher and large dots) a. Leu Numismatik WA 16, lot 3092. 18mm, 3.57 gram.



6 Iao Abrasax

A: I|A|W spread across fields (I to the left of the elbow, A in upper right field and W below.) Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Neatly dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE beneath star in crescent, pellet on either side of crescent. Neatly dotted border.

Mould α (sloping Ξ) a. Author's collection 9125 (reportedly from the Trau collection) = CBd 2541. 19mm, 2.85 gram; b. Rauch Mail Bid Sale 8, lot 685. 19mm; c. Jean Elsen 124, lot 404. 18mm, 3.42 gram; d. Zeus BA 11, lot 986. 22mm, 4.20 gram*; e. Leu Numismatik WA 12, lot 1009. 18mm, 3.31 gram; f. Nomos Obolos 15, lot 721. 19mm 3.72 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



7 Iao Abrasax

Mould β (arm closer on the serpent leg, vertical grips on the shield) a. Author's collection 19318. 19mm, 3.57 gram.



8 Iao Abrasax

Mould γ (smaller C and Ε) a. Roma Numismatics E-Sale 62, lot 480 = CBd 4076. 25mm, 4.15 gram*; b. Papillon 8, lot 518. 24mm, 4.10 gram.



9 Iao Abrasax

A: I|A|W spread across fields (I and A to left and right of the serpents and W below.) Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE above and below star in crescent. Dotted border.

a. Leu Numismatik WA 12, lot 1010. 20mm, 3.18 gram*; b. Papillon 2, lot 410. 19mm, 3.63 gram.



10 Iao Abrasax

A: IAW below Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE. Dotted border.

a. Roma Numismatics E-Sale 81, lot 1957. 11mm 1.50 gram.



11 Abrasax

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: ABP|ACA|E. Dotted border.

a. Lydia 9, lot 794 (part). 11mm.



12 Iao

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: IAW below star in crescent. Line border.

a. Leu Numismatik WA 16, lot 3096. 18mm, 4.37 gram*; b. Papillon 3, lot 557 = Leu Numismatik WA 17, lot 2118. 17mm, 3.56 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



13 Iao Abrasax

A: Anguipede holding shield in right hand, whip in left.

B: IAW|ABPA|CAΞ (all retrograde.)

a. J. Berlin Caesarea collection (L9). 14x12.5mm, 2.19 gram. Found in Caesarea Maritima*; b. Sternberg XXIII, lot 257; c. K. Peese collection. 14mm, 2.37 gram.



14 Iao

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: IAW. Line border.

a. Author's collection 18306. 13x16mm, 3.18 gram*; b. Papillon 3, lot 558. 15mm, 3.15 gram; c. Leu Numismatik WA 16, lot 3095. 13mm, 3.00 gram; d. Leu Numismatik WA 19, lot 2421. 13mm, 3.21 gram.

15 Iao

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: WIA. Line border.

a. München, Staatlichen Münzsammlung, ed. Overbeck (1995), no. 630. 13mm, 2.876 gram.



16 Iao

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: IAW. Star in crescent. Dotted border.

Mould α (star between extremities of crescent) a. Author's collection, bought in Jerusalem in the 1980s. 15mm, 2.01 gram*; b. Author's collection 18319. 13mm, 1.31 gram; c. M. Merviö collection. 13mm, 1.25 gram.



17 Iao
Mould β (crude style) a. Zeus 3, lot 852. 12mm, 1.30 gram.



18 Iao
Mould γ (crude style) a. Author's collection 18936. 12mm, 0.93 gram.



19 Iao
A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.
B: IAW below large star (*charakter?*). Dotted border.
a. Numismatik Lanz, Ebay 2019. 15mm, 1.45 gram.



20 Abrasax
A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.
B: ABPA|CAE beneath star in crescent, pellet on either side of crescent. Dotted border.
a. R. Schoch collection, Boston = CBd 2970. 20mm, 6.62 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



21 Abrasax

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE (last line retrograde.)

Mould α (long neck) a. J. Berlin Caesarea collection (L6). 16x22mm, 3.86 gram. Found in Caesarea Maritima.



22 Abrasax

Mould β (short neck and narrow border) a. Zeus 3, lot 856. 18mm, 3.50 gram*; b. K. Peese collection. 16mm, 3.34 gram.



23 Abrasax

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE (retrograde) beneath star in crescent, pellet on either side of crescent. Dotted border.

a. American private collection. 17mm, 2.68 gram.



24 Ado(nai) Sabaoth

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: ΑΔΩ|CABA|WΘ (first line retrograde.) Dotted border.

a. NBS 6, lot 832. 18mm, 2.3 gram*; b. Endres, N212 (Amulets and Talismans), lot 98 (possibly the same mould, but with the reverse incorrectly described MIXAΗΛ.)



25

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: Uncertain object in crescent. Line border.

a. Author's collection 11687 = CBd 2543. 15mm, 2.01 gram.

26

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: Blank.

a. New York, ANS, ed. Schwartz and Schwartz (1979), no. 6 = Michel (2004), no. 3.A.5-9 = CBd 1761.



27 Iao

A: IAW below Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: Lion advancing right. In upper field, star in crescent and star.

a. R. Schoch collection, Boston. 20mm.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



28 Raphael Michael

A: PAΦAH|Λ (first part inward, Λ outward.) Anubis standing right, wearing kilt and holding sistrum. Line border.

B: MI|XA|HA. Line border.

Mould α (XA apart) a. Author's collection 19520. 15x27mm, 4.55 gram*; b. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ed. Comte de Caylus (1752-1767), IV, pl. CIV, xi = Rostowzew and Prou (1900), no. 818 (with a corrected reading, mould unconfirmed.)



29 Raphael Michael

Mould β (slightly smaller module, XA close together) a. Author's collection 17419. 14x26mm, 4.10 gram*; b. M. Merviö collection.



30 Iao Ra Abrasax Michael Gabriel

A: IAΩ-PH-A-BPACAΞ. Anubis standing left, wearing kilt, holding sistrum and caduceus. Line border.

B: MI|XA|HA|ΓABP|IHA. Line border.

a. Spink's Numismatic Circular, July 1982, 197 = Mitchiner (1986): 273, no 1059. 16x22mm (lower part broken off); b. Leu Numismatik 4, lot 535. 16x25mm, 2.95 gram*; c. Author's collection 19234. 16x24mm, 2.76 gram.



31 Iao

A: IAW (A on the hand, I and W in left and right fields.) Hand. Dotted border.

B: Man seated left on stool, holding wand in his right hand, his left hand placed behind his back. To left, in front, uncertain object. Dotted border.

a. Author's collection 18677. 15mm, 1.87 gram.



32 Adonai Iao

A: AΔW-NAI (inward.) Hand.

B: I|AW (retrograde.) Man seated right on chair, holding wand in his left hand, his right hand placed behind his back. To the left and in front, vase.

a. Author's collection 15124. 19x22mm, 5.08 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



33 Iao Abrasax

A: IAW (A on the hand, W and I in left and right fields.) Hand. Inner line border, outer dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE (retrograde.) Line border intersected with dots.

Mould α (extension reverse above) a. Roma Numismatics E-sale 63, lot 291 = CBd 4077. 23mm, 3.19 gram.



34 Iao Abrasax

Mould β (extension reverse below) a. Author's collection 11685 = CBd 2533. 22x17mm, 2.74 gram; b. Leu Numismatik WA 12, lot 1013. 17mm, 2.45 gram; c. Nomos Obolos 22, lot 581. 22x18mm, 3.36 gram.*



35 Iao Abrasax

A: IA|W on hand. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE (last line retrograde.) Large central dot. Line border.

Mould α (regular W) a. Roma Numismatics E-Sale 90, lot 573.



36 Iao Abrasax

Mould β (spread W) a. Author's collection, bought in Jerusalem in the 1980s. 16mm, 2.24 gram*; b. K. Peese collection.



37 Iao Sabao

A: IAW (A on the hand, I and W in left and right fields.) Hand. Dotted border.

B: CABA|W in very low relief. Dotted border.

a. Author's collection 19503. 16mm, 2.95 gram*; b. Author's collection 19504. 16mm, 3.20 gram.



38 Sabao Abra(sax)

A: Hand. To left, star. Line border.

B: CA|BPA|W.⁵³ Line border.

a. Author's collection 18644. 13x16mm, 2.89 gram.

⁵³ The word *Sabrao* does make sense by itself. It combines the common divine names Sabao and Abrasax.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



39 Michael

A: Lion standing left. Above, crescent.

B: MIX|AΗΛ (retrograde.)

a. Athens, Numismatic Museum, ed. Engel (1884), no. 150 (line drawing, mould unconfirmed) 13mm; b. Author's collection 12051 = CBd 2544. 14x11mm, 1.42 gram. Found in Israel.*

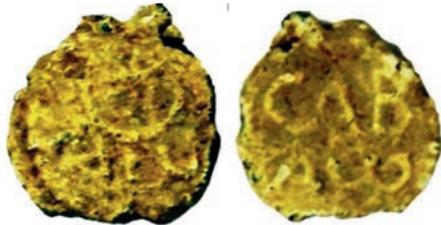


40 Michael

A: Lion standing right. Above, crescent. Below, star. Line border interrupted below.

B: MIX|AΗΛ (retrograde.) Line border interrupted below.

a. Author's collection 19340. 14x18mm. 2.16 gram.



41 Iao Sabao

A: IAW. Star in crescent. Dotted border.

B: CAB|AW. Dotted border.

a. Izmir, Archaeological Museum (2016.861.3), ed. Lafli and Buora (2020): appendix and fig. 5a-b (dated 'perhaps early Byzantine period') 13mm. Found in Izmir.

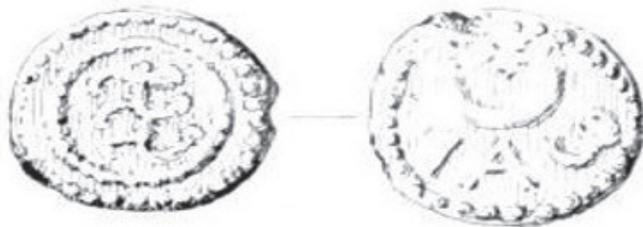


42 Iao Adonai

A: IAW. Star in crescent. Dotted border.

B: ΑΔΩ|ΝΑΙ. Dotted border.

a. Endres, N212 (Amulets and Talismans), lot 98 and with Lenny Wolfe, Jerusalem. 12x14mm.



43 Iao

A: IAW. Star in crescent. Dotted border.

B: Chnoubis sign within circle. Dotted border.

a. Athens, Numismatic Museum, ed. Engel (1884), no 57 (line drawing.) 14mm.



44 Iao Sabao

A: Star in crescent. Line border.

B: ΙΑΩ|ΣΑΒ|ΑΩ. Line border.

a. Leu Numismatik 16, lot 3099. 15mm, 1.87 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



45 Iao

A: Star in crescent. Line border

B: I|A|W around central pellet. Line border.

a. Athens, Numismatic Museum, ed. Engel (1884), no 61. 13mm (line drawing, mould unconfirmed);

b. Author's collection 9938 = Cbd 2542. 16mm, 3.00 gram.*



46 Iao

A: IA|W (retrograde.) Line border intersected with dots.

B: Star in crescent. Line border.

a. Author's collection 18937. 13mm, 1.47 gram.



47 Iao

A: I|AW. Line border.

B: Star in crescent. Four more stars, two flanking the crescent and two below. Line border.

a. Author's collection. 17mm, 2.72 gram.



48 Iao

A: IAW

B: Crescent with seven stars around.

a. Athens, Numismatic Museum, ed. Engel (1884), no. 60 (line drawing, mould unconfirmed) 12mm;

b. Sternberg XXIII, lot 259. 13x18mm.*



49 Sabao

A: Star in crescent. Eight stars around. Dotted border.

B: CA|BAW (retrograde.) Dotted border.

a. Author's collection. 13mm, 2.27 gram.



50 Iao Abrasax

A: IAW. Crescent above. Star below. Dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE. Decorations above and below. Dotted border.

a. Author's collection 19531. 16x21mm, 2.71 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



51 Iao

A: IA|W. Line border.

B: *Charakter* in the form of an eight-rayed star with circlets at the ends. Dotted border.

a. Author's collection 18315. 14x18mm. 1.46 gram.



52

A: *Charakter* in the form of a cross in circlet. Dotted border within decorated border.

B: Blank.

a. Author's collection 18404. 15x19mm. 2.13 gram.



53 Iao Abrasax

A: IA|W. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE. Line border.

a. Author's collection 18518. 19x21mm. 3.39 gram.



54 Iao Abrasax

A: IA|W within circle. Dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE (retrograde.) Dotted border.

a. Author's collection 19105. 14x13mm, 2.25 gram.



55 Iao Sabao

A: IA|W (retrograde.) Line border.

B: CA|BA|W (retrograde.) Line border.

Mould α (W beneath A) a. Author's collection 10778 = CBd 2531. 13x17mm, 2.52 gram*; b. Gorny & Mosch 156, lot 2566. 2.25 gram; c. Leu Numismatik 12, lot 1016. 13mm (across), 2.26 gram.



56 Iao Sabao

Mould β (W half beneath A) a. Münzzentrum Rheinland 134, lot 1006 = 136, lot 1032;

b. Leu Numismatik WA 14, lot 1182. 17mm, 2.15 gram.*

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



57 Iao Sabao

A: I|A|W around central pellet within circle. Line border.

B: CA|BA|W (retrograde.) Line border intersected with dots.

Mould α (CA aligned) a. Heritage Auctions 3032, lot 23493 (erroneously described as a seal) 20mm, 5.95 gram. Reportedly found in the Bethlehem area.



58 Iao Sabao

Mould β (C larger than A) a. Author's collection 11683 = CBd 2538. 20mm, 3.45 gram.



59 Iao Michael

A: I|A|W. Line border.

B: M|I|X|A|H|A, in a circular arrangement around a central X. Line border.

a. Author's collection 15122. 15x20mm, 2.61 gram.



60 Iao Michael

A: IA|W (retrograde.) Line border.

B: MI|XA|HA. Line border.

a. Author's collection 19502. 12x19mm, 3.52 gram.



61 Abrasax Gabriel

A: ABP|ACA|E. Dotted border.

B: ΓA|BPIH|A. Dotted border.

a. Author's collection. 15mm, 2.80 gram.



62 Sabao

A: CA|BA|W. Central pellet. Line border.

B: Blank.

a. Leu Numismatik 12, lot 1015. 14mm, 1.02 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



63 Sab(a)o

A: CABO. Line border.

B: Uncertain inscription.

a. Author's collection 11689 = CBd 2532. 12x15mm, 1.63 gram.



64 Sabao Gabriel M(i)chael (U)riel

A: CABAW (circular) - ΓΑ|ΒΡ|Ι|ΗΛ in three lines. Line border.

B: MEIXAHL (circular) - ΟΥ|ΡΗ|Λ in three lines. Line border.

a. Archaeological Center Auction 40, lot 541. 17mm; b. Author's collection 17639. 17x21mm, 3.70 gram*; c. Leu Numismatik WA 12, lot 1017. 16mm, 2.50 gram; d. M. Merviö collection. 17mm.



65 Sabao Raphael

A: CABAW (retrograde.)

B: PEΦAHL (retrograde.)

Mould α (C in CABAW beneath loop) a. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology (26129, dated 1st to 5th century), ed. Bonner (1950): 225 and no. 342 = CBd 1510. 23x7x2 mm. Reportedly from Syria; b. Author's collection 11686. 23x13mm, 3.52 gram*; c. J. Berlin Caesarea collection (L12) 23mm. Found in Caesarea Maritima; d. J. Berlin Caesarea collection (L32) 24x12mm, 3.07 gram. Found in Caesarea Maritima; e. C.S. collection, Munich, ed. Wamser (2004), no. 587 (dated 6th to 7th century.)



66 Sabao Raphael

Mould β (CA in CABAW beneath loop.) a. Mitchiner (1986): 273, no 1060. 23x13mm. Reportedly found in Lebanon; b. M. Merviö collection. 23x12mm, 3.16 gram*; c. Archaeological Center Auction 41, lot 597 (part); d. Archaeological Center Auction 42, lot 106; e. Endres, N212 (Amulets and Talismans), lot 92.



67 Gabriel Raphael

A: ΓΑΒΡΗΛ (individual letters retrograde.)

B: ΡΕΦΑΗΛ (individual letters retrograde, P and E ligate.)

a. Sternberg XXIII, lot 256. 27x7mm; b. Author's collection 14101. 27x15 mm, 4.48 gram; c. Archaeological Center Auction 40, lot 443; d. Author's collection 19501. 27x15mm, 5.28 gram.*



68 Iao Abrasax

A: ΙΑΩ|ΤΡΕ (P retrograde) above and below central pellet. Line border.

B: ΑΒΡΑ|CΑΕ. Dotted border.

a. Author's collection 8687 = CBd 2540. 14mm, 1.29 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



69 Iao

A: IAW|ΦVΛA|ΞECΘE. Star beneath. Dotted border.

B: Blank.

a. Author's collection 8520 = CBd 2530. 23x28mm, 6.78 gram.



70

A: Head of Sarapis to right.

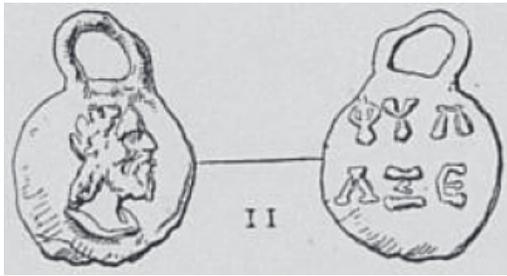
B: ΦVΛA|ΞAI in two lines. Line border.

Mould α (well-aligned inscription) a. Leu Numismatik WA 16, lot 3265. 17mm, 2.13 gram.



71

Mould β (sloping inscription) a. Leu Numismatik WA 17, lot 3973. 18mm, 1.86 gram.



72

A: Head of Sarapis to right.

B: ΦΥΛ|ΑΞΕ in two lines.

a. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ed. Rostowzew and Prou (1900), no. 820b and plate XII, fig. 11 (line drawing.)

73

A: Head of Sarapis to right.

B: ΦΥΛ

a. Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, ed. Turcan (1987), no. 849. Square, 9x11mm.

74 Iao

A: Head of Sarapis to right.

B: IAW. Below, thunderbolt.

a. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1931 (no photo) Found in Lyon.



75 Iao Abrasax⁵⁴

A: IAW below Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAΞ (retrograde) in two lines.

a. Ares 1, lot 644. 19mm, 4,05 gram; b. Leu Numismatik WA 7, lot 967. 15x21mm, 4.06 gram.*

⁵⁴ For a very similar cast bronze ring currently in the British Museum, see Michel (2001): 145, no. 236. Michel dates this ring to the 4th century.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



76 Iao Abrasax

A: I|A|W spread across fields (I and A in the left and right fields, W below.) Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE in two lines.

Mould α (vertical W) a. Author's collection 8720 = CBd 2535. 13x19mm, 2.08 gram*; b. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ed. Rostowzew and Prou (1900), no. 820 (no photo, mould unconfirmed. From the description it is clear that the object is not a pendant, but an oval ring bezel with the usual horizontal casting seam on the back); c. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1932 (no photo) Found in Lyon.



77 Iao Abrasax

Mould β (spread W) a. Author's collection 12564. 13x19mm, 2.70 gram*; b. Nomos Obolos 22, lot 580. 19mm, 2.45 gram.



78 Iao

A: IA|W across fields (IA to left and W to right.) Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: IAW. Below, *charakteres*, X in circlet, retrograde S, and star.

a. Leu Numismatik WA 12, lot 1012. 17mm, 2.30 gram.



79 Iao Sabao

A: IAW below Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Dotted border.

B: CAB|AW (retrograde, read from bottom up.)

a. Author's collection 19550. 12x23mm (bezel), 4.76 gram.



80 Abrasax

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE (retrograde.)

a. Zeus 1, lot 450. 19mm, 2.89 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



81 Abrasax

A: Anguipede holding shield in right hand, whip in left hand. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE (first line retrograde.)

a. M. Merviö collection. 22x15mm, 4.14 gram.



82 Abrasax

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: ABP|ACAΕ (last part appearing upside down.)

a. Leu Numismatik WA 12, lot 1011. 16mm, 2,49 gram.



83 Iao Abrasax

A: IAW below Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE

a. R. Schoch collection, Boston. 17x12 mm.



84 Abrasax

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE

a. Leu Numismatik WA 14, lot 1180 = CBd 2613. 16mm, 1.84 gram.



85 Abrasa(x)

A: ABPAEA in a circular legend, starting with A on the left, below arm, continuing BPA to the right of the head and ending EA below. Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border.

B: Traces of inscription.

a. Author's collection 11684. 25x21mm, 6.10 gram*; b. Archaeological Center Auction 41, lot 257. 23x21mm; c. Archaeological Center Auction 47, lot 86.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



86 Iao

A: Anguipede holding shield in left hand, whip in right hand. Line border. Possibly with legend I|A|W in the fields and below.

a. Endres, N212 (Amulets and Talismans), lot 100. 23x18mm.



87 Iao Abrasax

A: I|A|W (I and W to the right and A to the left.) Harpocrates/Horus seated left on lotus flower, raising his right hand to his face, left hand behind. Dotted border.

B: ABPA|CAE

Mould α (larger module) a. S. Hendler collection, ed. Amoraï-Stark and Hershkovitz (2016), no. 479 (dated 3rd century and later) 15x13 (bezel) Found in Caesarea Maritima; b. J. Berlin Caesarea collection (L30) 24x12x10mm (total), 17x12mm (bezel), 4.32 gram. Found in Caesarea Maritima.*



88 Iao Abrasax

Mould β (smaller module) a. J. Berlin Caesarea collection (L31) 12.5x9mm (bezel), 2.41 gram. Found in Caesarea Maritima.



89 Iao Chr(i)stos

A: IA|W. Anchor with fishes left and right. Line border.

B: XPHC|TOC (retrograde.)

a. Author's collection 14102 = CBd 2612 (with the reading χρηστός, 'good') 15x18.5mm, 2.91 gram*;

b. M. Merviö collection. 15x22mm, 2.59 gram.



90 Abrasax

A: Anchor with fishes left and right. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE

a. Author's collection 18272. 16x20mm, 3.96 gram; b. Author's collection 19499. 16x20mm, 3.96 gram.*

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



91 Abrasax

A: Anchor with fishes left and right. Line border.

B: ABPA|CAE above and below casting seam.

a. Author's collection, bought in Jerusalem in the 1980s. 14x16mm, 2.65 gram.



92 Ichthys Iao

A: Anchor. In left field, uncertain inscription. In right and upper field, IXΘV-C (C above anchor.)

Line border.

B: IAW|IAW (second line individual letters upside down.)

a. Author's collection 19236. 14x19mm, 3.58 gram.



93 Iao

A: Anchor. In fields, uncertain inscription. Line border.

B: IA|W (retrograde.)

a. Author's collection 10545 = CBd 2536. 17mm, 2.90 gram*; b. Ares 7, lot 856. 18mm, 2.77 gram; c. K. Peese collection.

94 Iao Sab(ao) Ado(nai)

A: IAW

B: CAB|AΔW

a. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1940 (no photo) Found in Lyon. Oval 9x12mm (no photo); b. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1941 (no photo) Found in Lyon.



95 Abrasax Iao

A: ABPA|CAE. Dotted border.

B: IAW (on casting seam.)

a. Author's collection 17749. 20x17mm (bezel), 6.84 gram*; b. Endres, N212 (Amulets and Talismans), lot 99. 21.5x16.5mm.



96 Abrasax Iao

A: ABP|ACAΕ. Dotted border.

B: IA|W

a. Guttus 4, lot 46 = Leu Numismatik WA 14, lot 1181. 20mm, 3.84 gram.



97 Abrasax Iao

A: ABPA|CAE. Dotted border.

B: IA|W

a. Author's collection 11688 = CBd 2537. 17mm, 2.94 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS



98 Abrasax Iao

A: ABPA|CAE. Dotted border.

B: IA|W

a. Leu Numismatik WA 12, lot 1014. 20x15mm, 3.40 gram.



99 Abrasax Iao

A: IAW|CABAW. Line border.

B: Blank.

a. Author's collection. 18x13mm, 3.52 gram.



100 Iao

A: IAW.

Mould α (larger module) a. J. Berlin Caesarea collection (L11). 22x17mm, 3.24 gram. Found in Caesarea Maritima*; b. S. Hendler collection, ed. Amoraï-Stark and Hershkovitz (2016), no. 477 (dated probably 3rd century) 19x16 (total), 18x6 (bezel). Found in Caesarea Maritima.

101 Iao

Mould β (smaller module.) a. S. Hendler collection, ed. Amoraï-Stark and Hershkovitz (2016), no. 477 (dated probably 3rd century) 18x15 (total), 15x5 (bezel) Found in Caesarea Maritima.

102 Iao Sabaoth M(i)chael

A: IAW

B: CABAWΘ

C: TΞE*

D: MΧΑΗΛ

a. New York, ANS, ed. Schwartz and Schwartz (1979), no. 63.



103 Michael S(u)r(i)el Raphael Gabriel

A: ΜΙΧΑΗΛ

B: COVPHΛ

C: ΡΕΦΑΗΛ

D: ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ (retrograde.)

a. Author's collection 15090. 24x6mm. 4.17 gram.



104 Michael Samael Gabriel Raphael

A: ΜΙΧΑΗΛ

B: САΜΑΗΛ

C: ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ

D: ΡΕΦΑΗΛ

a. Author's collection 18489. 24x7mm, 8.07 gram.

ROMAN LEAD 'IAO ABRASAX' AMULETS

105 Abrasa(x) Iao Sabao Adon(ai)

A: ABPACA

B: IAW

C: CABAW

D: AΔWNE

a. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1936 (no photo) 21x5mm. Found in Lyon.

106 Abrasax Iao Sabaoth Adon(ai)

A: ABPACdE

B: IAW

C: CABAWΘ

D: AΔWNE

a. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1937 (no photo) 25x5mm. Found in Lyon.

107 Iao Sabao Adonai

A: *IAW-star in crescent.

B: CABAW

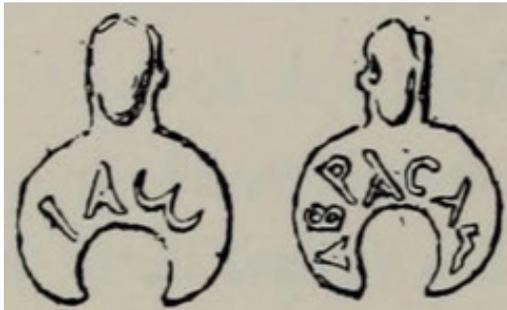
C: AΔWNAI

D: *Charakteres* ('Signes planétaire'.)

a. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1938 (no photo) Found in Lyon (CABAO), 21x5mm;

b-d. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1939 (no photo) 21x6mm. Found in Lyon.

APPENDIX



108 Iao Abrasax

A: IAW

B: ABPACAE

Pendant in the shape of a crescent. a. Steyert (1895-1899), tome I, p. 418, no. 521 (line drawing)*; b-f. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1933 (no photos.) Found in Lyon; g. Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, ed. Turcan (1987), no. 851. 13mm.

109 Abrasax Ad(o)nai

A: ABPACAE. Fig leaf.

B: AΔANAI. Shrub.

Hexagonal pendant. a. Récamier collection, ed. Dissard (1905), no. 1934 (no photo) Found in Lyon. 14mm.



110 Iao

A: IAW

B: *Charakter*, E.

C: *Charakter*, Π-shape with a circlet on the left side of the horizontal bar.

D: *Charakter*, cross in circlet. Above and below, *charakteres*, XE and XK.

E: *Charakter*, E.

F: *Charakter*, six-rayed star with circlets at the ends.

a. Author's collection, bought in Jerusalem in the 1980s. Hexagonal ring. 21mm, 8.57 gram.

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