CHAPTER IX

THE SNAKE-LEGGED GOD WITH THE COCK’S HEAD

Such serious study as scholars have bestowed upon magical amulets has been prompted largely by the hope that these bits of stone or metal would prove to be monuments of ancient religion, and that from them careful scholarship might derive some new information about the various cults practiced in the time of the Empire, particularly the sects or heresies that are called Gnostic. This hope has in the main proved illusory. When strict criteria were applied to the evidence, it was found that the reliable results of earlier investigation had shrunk to a small bulk. In the present chapter an effort will be made to draw together the little that can be safely upheld.

It is well to begin with the amulet type which, more than any other, has led students of these gems to overestimate their importance for the history of religion, and upon which the belief that they are monuments of Gnosticism has been founded. This is, of course, the very common representation of a cock-headed monster with serpent legs, often called Abrasax, or Iao Abrasax. For the time being the Gnostic theory of its origin will be put at one side, and the type will be examined without regard to it. The following characteristics of the type are briefly noted, with apologies for repeating them. The monster faces front, the cock’s head usually turned to the right, sometimes to the left. On most specimens the comb and wattles are clearly indicated. The arms and trunk are human. There is sometimes an indication of a short-sleeved tunic, and the chest, on which the muscles are often strongly marked, in some specimens seems to be armed with a cuirass that closely follows the contours of the body, while in others it is apparently naked. The right hand regularly holds a whip, but — a point which may be significant — the lash does not fall heavily, like the flail whip of Osiris and the Pharaohs, but flies in the air, often over the head of its wielder. The left arm carries a round shield, sometimes seen edgewise, oftener from the inside, the arm holding it out from the body in a natural position; but the outside is sometimes shown, although that would require a rather strained position of the elbow, as the shield seldom interferes with a full view of the torso. There is a military kilt

1 There are rare exceptions; a stone of this type in the British Museum (66054) gives the god a torch in place of a whip, and in a few specimens he holds a sword or dagger: see two amulets published by Blanchet (Bull. arch., 1918, p. 8); also King, Gnostics, Pl. A 2, and Chiffet, Pl. 8, 34, unless, in the latter example, the staff of a whip has been mistaken for a sword.

2 P. E. Newberry (J.E.A 15 [1929], 86–94) argues that the “flail” or “scourge” was originally an instrument used to collect the aromatic gum ladanum.

3 Since the cock-headed god, as will appear later, seems to be a form of a solar deity, it may be that the shield was meant to suggest the disk of the sun; but no evidence bearing upon the point is at hand.
with flaps covering the junction of the trunk with the legs, which are serpents. The treatment of these serpentine limbs varies according to the skill and the caprice of the artist; the better gem cutters rendered the heads of the serpents with some care, and gave the bodies a double coil. In others the snake legs show only a simple outward curve, and the heads are mere knobs.

Of the characteristics that mark this monster one can be explained and dismissed briefly. The military habit is simply another instance of that tendency, which has been noted previously, to clothe divine beings, whatever their national connections, in the costume of a Roman emperor. The shield, however, belongs to the private soldier rather than to the commander. Next, it is a natural conjecture that the serpent legs are derived from the Greek tradition of the giants; the great altar at Pergamon must have fixed this type in the minds of thousands. Still, when we remember that the vast majority of all our magical stones come from Egypt, the prevalence of this snake-footed monster may seem a little surprising. The fancy of Egyptian artists depicted serpents with wings, with human heads, occasionally even with human arms and legs, also serpent’s heads and necks on human bodies, but I have seen no Egyptian work of dynastic times representing a human head, arms, and torso combined with two serpent coils instead of legs. But the Greek type of the snake-footed giant, perhaps already modified by some other influence, seems to have taken root in Syria, a region with which, at many periods of its history, Egypt maintained a close and steady intercourse. Mr. Seyrig has published, with full discussion, a remarkable relief, unfortunately much mutilated, which was carved on a great marble beam over the south portico of the temple of Bel at Palmyra. The subject is a combat between a warrior standing in a chariot and a snake-legged monster. The champion’s bow is drawn to the full length of the arrow, which he is about to shoot, but he has already wounded the monster in the breast, and another arrow in flight is about to pierce its neck. The anguipede demon seems to be female, to judge by the moulding of the bust; the head has been broken away (Pl. XXIII, Fig. 4). At the waist a deep fringe of pendent acanthus leaves conceals the junction of the body to the serpent coils, of which there are five. One of them grasps and strangles a small human figure. A previously published bas-relief from Soueida represents a similar combat, the chief differences being as follows. The warrior is on horseback, not in a chariot; the monster, in this case male and with only two coils, grasps two large stones with which he threatens his opponent; a star marks the attacking archer as divine, and between him and the monster a youthful divinity, apparently the sun-god, of whom only the upper parts are shown, holds between his arms a disk enclosing a twelve-rayed rosette or star.

Mr. Seyrig rightly notes that the idea of a combat with a serpentine or partly serpentine monster is not new to mythology localized in Syria and the neighboring regions, for example, Zeus and Typhon, Perseus and the sea

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4 Lassen, Pls. 172-173.
5 Heart Seyrig in Syria, 15 (1934), 165 ff. and Pl. 20.
6 Ibid., p. 167, fig. 1.
monster, St. George and the dragon. Even though the style of the anguiped on the amulets may owe something to the Pergamene giants, Syrian and Anatolian influences may have kept the idea of a snake-legged monster before the Egyptians of the Roman period.

If, however, the serpentine characteristics belong particularly to hostile demons, it may seem strange that a monster with snake legs should be chosen as the type for protective amulets. This might be explained by the apotropaic value of monstrous forms, among which the Gorgon’s head is the obvious example. On the other hand, serpentine forms are not always confined to dangerous monsters. Over the combat scene that has just been described the Palmeryne sculptor has carved two beings of mixed form who are certainly not allies of the anguiped below, but seem to be favorable genii. One of them, entirely preserved, has the head and trunk of a winged youth and carries a palm leaf. In place of legs this creature has “the body of a fish, rolled in heavy coils like that of a serpent.” In the illustration (Pl. 20) the “fish body” is not easy to distinguish from that of a serpent; but one must accept the judgment of the experts who have closely examined the original. In any case here is a creature, partly human, partly animal, who plays the part of a favorable demon. The example of Kekrops in the myths of Athens comes to mind, but is too remote to serve any purpose here. The Agathodaimon serpents of the later Egyptian religion, often represented with the heads of Sarapis and Isis, are more apposite examples, but they still do not explain the form of the snake-legged god with the cock’s head.

We must next consider the question whether the cock’s head gives evidence bearing upon the origin of this type. It is well known that the domestic fowl was introduced into Greece at too late a period to enter into the myths of the gods, and this is true of Egypt also, though the bird seems to have been known there at least as early as 1500 B.C., and perhaps even earlier. We should look towards some region where the cock had been longer known and was held in higher regard. Persia, because of its greater nearness to India, the home of the domestic fowl, would seem to be the most likely source for any treatment of the cock as a sacred bird or a bird endowed with any special powers; and the religious books of Persia clearly show that it was there regarded as an ally of the powers of light and goodness, and as an enemy to evil and demonic beings. Thus in the Vendidad Ahura Mazda is made to say of the cock: “That bird lifteth up his voice at the mighty dawn (saying), ‘Arise men, laud Best Righteousness, contemn the demons’”; and elsewhere it is said that “the cock is created in opposition to demons and wizards.”

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1 Ibr., pp. 168-169.
2 Ibr., pp. 172-173.
3 The tail of the mutilated genius whose upper parts have been destroyed does seem to end in a fin, though even this is not so clear as might be wished.
4 Howard Carter in JEA 9 (1923), 1-13: C. Picard, Rev. de l’histoire des religions, 95 (1926), 50.
5 Vendidad, Fangard 18, 2, 14 (Darmesteter’s translation in Sacred Books of the East); Bandahsh, 19, 35 (West, in the same series). Compare Zohar (translated by M. Simon), IV, 369 (Wayikra 22 b): the cock calls men to praise God and study the Law; also Ginzeberg, Legends of the Jews, V, 173: the cock drives demons away.
From such passages it would appear that, from a Persian point of view, nothing would be more appropriate for an amulet than a representation of a cock; but it is very unlikely that a Persian would combine parts of a cock with parts of a serpent, which in Persian belief is an evil creature. It is true, as Clark Hopkins has pointed out to me, that a snake seems to be a companion or even a helper of Mithra in a scene depicting his hunting (Excavations at Dura, Seventh and Eighth Seasons, pp. 112 f., Pls. 14, 15; 15). Yet, as in many scenes of activity in the open, a crawling snake may be merely a symbol of the earth. The Ahrimanic character of the reptile was not so far forgotten as to make it a proper ally of Mithra (see Cumont, Monuments, I, 189–190, and especially 192, top).

Bearing in mind that the military costume of the cock-headed monster brings it into Roman imperial times, we must look for some uncritical syncretistic movement which, even though it may have begun at an earlier date, made its impression upon a great number of people during the second and third centuries of our era. Whatever that movement was, it is fairly clear that Judaism had some part in it, for many Persian elements were incorporated in post-exilic Judaism, and through that channel reached Egypt as well as other regions neighboring to Palestine or visited by Jews. Thus the idea of the cock's prophylactic quality may have been transmitted by the Jews. Certainly they contributed another element in the name Iao, which, in the great majority of specimens, is carved on the shield of the anguipede or elsewhere on the amulet. But even if we allow for the gross liberties which magic takes with sacred names, it is surprising to find Iao, evidently an attempt to represent in Greek letters the sacred name of the Hebrew God, applied to a monster with some parts of the cock and the serpent, arrayed in the costume of a Roman soldier. Such a conjunction of apparently irreconcilable elements looks like the deliberate work of some teacher, the leader of a sect, rather than a natural blending of religious symbolism, the result of mutual borrowings among peoples whom political and social changes brought into contact.

It was inevitable that some form of Gnosticism should be suggested as the source that inspired the making of this monstrous type, if for no other reason, because in a quandary men are prone to appeal to the unknown or to what is imperfectly known and sounds mysterious. But remembering the monstrous creatures that appear in apocalyptic visions, such as the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Enoch, and the Revelation of John, one may as reasonably conjecture a Jewish or a Christian origin; for Gnostic apocrypha, not to mention the remains of early Gnostic doctrines, such as those of Valentinus and Basilides, seem to deal very little in just this sort of monstrous imagining.

It is true that the first of the seven archons in the Ophianic system is the

11 This subject is discussed in Oesterley's The Jews and Judaism during the Greek Period, e.g. pp. 92, 266–291.
12 The Hebrew name so represented was not מ"ש but יוה, according to Ganshiniets ("Iao" in PV IX, 659).
lion-headed Ialdabaoth,¹⁴ and in the description of the “outer darkness” in *Pisit Sophia* 126 the twelve archons who rule the halls of punishment have the heads of various animals, the crocodile, cat, dog, snake, etc.; and the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth halls have many archons, each of whom has seven heads — in the tenth the heads are those of dragons, in the eleventh, of cats, in the twelfth, of dogs.¹⁵ But these terrors are simply adaptations of the animal-headed divinities and demons of Egypt. In the second book of Jeû, a “wicked god” is described as having the face of a wild boar, and behind it that of a lion.¹⁶ This last, however, is the only example in this group of writings where I have observed the joining in one monstrous body of parts from two different animals.¹⁷

Before discussing the supposed Gnostic connection of the cock-headed anguipede, there is another aspect of the type that should be considered, namely, its possible relation to some kind of solar religion. The association of the cock with light as against darkness and evil has been noted as a characteristic of Persian beliefs, and, according to Pausanias, the bird was said to be sacred to the sun, whose rising he announces.¹⁸ This idea is elaborated in the manner of the late theosophists by Proclus, in a fragment of his work, *peri tîs kath’ Ἑλληνας ίερατικής τέχνης*, of which it suffices to cite a single sentence:¹⁹

> ἐνεργεστέρα γονὸν ἐκ τῶν ἠλιακῶν συμβόλων εἰς τὸν ἀλεξιτοῦν ἀρρύην· ἐγείροι ἐκ τῶν ἠλιακῶν περιόδων συναίσθησιν καὶ ἑώρων ἤμων τῷ φωστήρι προσέλθῃ τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ λείπον κέντρα τρέπομεν.

“The presence in the cock of the tokens of solar affinity is more powerfully manifested. He shows it by his perception of the sun’s revolutions and by singing a hymn to the luminary as it approaches and turns to the other cardinal points.”

In view of this evidence the solar explanation of the cock-headed god is the most natural one. There are other considerations also which tend to confirm the conclusion just reached, particularly the character of the types that are found associated on amulet stones with the cock-headed anguipede. For example, one specimen has as its reverse type Harpocrates seated on the lotus; the young god is unquestionably a solar deity. On another the principal design is Mithra, again a solar deity, slaying the bull; the reverse is the cock-headed god. A third has on the obverse the sun-god in his chariot, on the reverse the anguipede — here a somewhat unusual type, without the Roman tunic and kilt, though armed with whip and shield. On a fourth the reverse type is the lion-headed serpent with radiate head. Still another shows the

¹⁶ Schmida, op. cit., I, 304.
¹⁷ An “archon of darkness” in the Manichaean *Keplalaia* has “five forms in his body corresponding to the mark of the five creatures that are in the five worlds of darkness” (Chap. 27, p. 77, Schmidt-Polonsky).
¹⁸ Paus. 5. 25. 9; cf. also Diog. Laert. 6. 54.
¹⁹ This text was edited by Béres in *Cat. der manuserés alchimiques*, VI, 150, 9–12.
cock-headed god actually driving the chariot of the sun. In this connection
with the sun-god we find the explanation of the fact that the whip carried
by the cock-headed divinity is a true whip, such as was used by charioteers,
not the flail-like whip carried by Osiris and other Egyptian gods. There
is an important exception to the general rule that the cock-headed god
is usually associated with reverse types of solar deities. On several examples
the reverse type is the three-bodied Hecate, with six hands, one pair carrying
whips, another torches, another daggers. The execution of these specimens
seems to point to a later date, when it is likely that the solar meaning of the
anguipede was forgotten. Thus it had become merely an apocryphal device,
and hence proper to be associated with the dread goddess of the infernal
world.

There is still no convincing explanation of the strange junction of cock
and serpent in the same form. The cock seems to be a solar creature, but a
monster with snake legs suggests only the earth-born giants. One very
tenuous line of connection may be mentioned, but only because other re-
sources fail. In the Septuagint version of Psalm 18, 6, the poet says of the
sun, "He shall rejoice as a giant (ἀς γίγας) to run his course." The Hebrew
word which the Septuagint translator rendered "giant" (גיבור) means only
a strong man; but at a time when the Jews used the Greek translation of their
scriptures, and when through some knowledge of Greek art and mythology
the idea of the serpentine giant had become familiar to them, it is possible
that some Jew, attracted by the solar cult, imagined the cock-headed angu-
iped. This, however, is a remote and hazardous guess.

Certain variations from the normal type deserve mention, but such minor
details as the posture of the arms and the arrangement of the serpent coils
may be passed without comment. In two specimens the snake-legged monster
has a human head. On one of these, formerly in the Wyndham Cook col-
collection, now in my possession, that is the only departure from the norm, since
the whip and shield are present as usual. On the other, described by Zoega,
the right hand of the god is open and slightly raised; the left arm holds not
only a shield but a lance also, a detail for which I know no parallel. There
are three branches, possibly of laurel, below the figure. If this aberrant type
is genuine, one might ask, since there is no whip, whether there is any mark
to connect it with the solar divinity. The question is perhaps answered by
noting the position of the right hand, for others have observed that solar
deities are often shown with the right hand outstretched as if to command
the sun to rise.

In several other gems the anguipede has the head of a lion. An excellent
example of this is a haematite or limonite in the Newell collection.

20 The stones just mentioned are as follows, in the order named: King, Gnostics, Pl. B 4; Walkers
Art Gallery, formerly in the Marlborough collection (D. 58), one belonging to my own collection (D. 174);
Lewis Collection, ed. Middleton, p. 89; King, Handbook of Engraved Gems, Pl. 13, 1.
21 This point was observed by Procop-Walter, "Iao and Set," A.R.W. 30 (1933), 39 and 46. n. 4.
23 Museo Borgiano, p. 46, 32.
25 D. 181.
obverse shows the lion-headed monster holding a whip in the right hand, an orb in the left; the solar character of the lion, which is elsewhere manifested in his fusion with Horus, is here shown by the whip and orb. Scattered in the field are the letters of the name Iao. The reverse bears the inscription θεότορηκτα, which, like γιαττορηκτα, is sometimes found with Chnoubis, the serpent with the radiate lion’s head, again a solar divinity. A stone published by Chiflet resembles that just described, but the lion-headed figure carries a sword — at least so Chiflet or his engraver interpreted it. It is not impossible that it is only the staff of a whip, the lash being indistinct. This stone has the reverse inscription γαττορηκτα.

This lion-headed anguipede is clearly in a middle position between the common cock-headed god and the numerous representations of a deity in human form except for the leonine head; and among these there is a particularly interesting group of rock crystal gems on which the lion-headed god carries whip and orb. They have been mentioned before, and it will be necessary to return to them later.

Still another variation confines the nonhuman characteristics to the bird head of the deity, who is man in all his other parts. There are some puzzling features connected with stones of this type, the doubts arising chiefly from the difficulty of determining with certainty just what the lapidary was attempting to represent. In some specimens that are known to me a beak makes it clear that the head is that of a bird, but there is no sign of a comb, and consequently no good reason for calling the figure cock-headed. In one instance it is even doubtful whether the stoneworker intended the head for that of a bird or an animal. A Berlin gem (9861) is described by Max Pieper, who published it, as showing “Dämon mit Hahnenkopf und Menschenbeinen, in den Händen Palmzweig und Geldbeutel.” But the illustration does not convince one that this description is correct, and there is even a possibility that the badly executed head is meant for that of a dog. The figure would then be a Hermaphroditus, with whom the palm branch and either a caduceus or a purse are often associated as attributes. The inscription, Iao, cannot be considered decisive, for it is found associated with many other types.

A small olive-brown stone, apparently jasper, in the Newell collection is clearer in the essential detail. A figure, entirely human except the head and clothed in a short tunic, stands facing right, the right hand resting on a tall crutch scepter, the pendent left holding an object which may be a garland with hanging ties, or perhaps a variation of the Egyptian sign for protection. The beak is prominent, but the top of the head is smooth and round; the

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26 Compare PGM I, 143-145.
27 The whip, a reminder that Helios is a charioteer, appears as an attribute of the god on stones that cannot be classed as magical, as B. M. Cat. Gems, 1657 (Pl. 22), 1658; in 1663 he holds an orb but no whip, although he is driving his chariot.
28 Pl. 8, 34; also in Gorgauen, Dacyslisthica, II, 364.
29 Mitt. des deutsch. Inst. in Kairo, 5 (1914), 145, Pl. 22.
30 D, 187.
31 Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar, Sign-list, V 17.
bird represented might be a chick, but certainly not a cock. Behind the figure, on the ground, is an eagle with raised wings.

There is an inscription on the reverse, but since it presents no familiar elements it does not help towards the understanding of the type. I do not think that there is any connection between this bird-headed figure and the raven-headed man who appears in the scene of the Mithraic banquet (Dura, Seventh and Eighth Seasons, p. 108, Pl. 18). Nor is there any more reason to connect the bird-headed person on the amulet with the cock-headed anguipede than with Horus, who was represented with a hawk's head in the art of Egypt. In fact, there is little doubt that this Egyptian type is the source of some of the bird-headed figures; the influence is clearly indicated on a stone of which, unfortunately, I can give only an incomplete description, since it has not been published and its present whereabouts are unknown. On the obverse is a muscular male figure facing left, nude except for the Egyptian apron or waistcloth. The head is that of a bird, and the disk above its head shows that it was intended for that of a hawk. In the right hand the god holds a short scepter topped by a hawk which seems to have a small disk over its head. In the left hand he holds the ankh. In the field is the word ḫebrq, on the reverse ḫaqq ḫebrq: The first word on the reverse is a palindrome which has been found elsewhere, though rarely.

A difficult question is raised by several amulets which combine the head of an ass with human arms and trunk and legs ending in coiled serpents. It had been assumed that this represented a combination of the solar divinity, usually shown with a cock's head, and the attribute which in the later days of Egypt marked the wicked god Set-Typhon; for although the ancient animal of Set was certainly not the ass, there is indubitable evidence, from both Egyptian and Greek sources, that from the Saitic period on the god was represented with the head of that animal. Yet the combination of a Typhonic attribute with a solar divinity is surprising, since Set had taken on the character of a god of darkness and evil. In recent years a Russian scholar, A. Procopié-Walter, insisting upon the fundamental opposition of the two types, has questioned the genuineness of some gems which show an ass-headed anguipede, and his doubts seem to be fully sustained, so far as those particular gems are concerned. On the other hand, he recognizes that in the magical

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22 This stone was offered for sale to the University of Michigan some years ago, but, owing to a misunderstanding, passed into other hands before the purchase could be concluded. It is believed to be in private possession in New York or Brooklyn. If the owner were known I should of course have requested permission to publish it. It had seemed permissible to describe it (from a sealing-wax impression) as I have done above, in the hope of discovering its present whereabouts. Perhaps the owner, if he should see the description, will consent to publish it adequately with a much-needed illustration.

23 Notes made in the British Museum several years ago record that I found there two specimens of a cock-headed figure with human legs (56210, 56567), one of which (56210) had feet like those of a bird. Unfortunately, owing to the haste in which these notes were set down, the descriptions of the stones are imperfect, and cannot be completed or amended under present conditions.

24 “Iao und Set,” ARIW 30, 60, n. 2. The stones that Procopié-Walter suspects are these: Southern N 7; Lewis Collection, p. 79, 15 (illustrated in Imhoof-Blumer, Tier- und Pflanzenbilder, Pl. 25, 31); a gem formerly in the Waterlow collection, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Cat. of Rings, No. 146, illustrated in King, Handbook of Engraved Gems, Pl. 12, 3.
papyri names belonging to Set are sometimes brought into close juxtaposition with names proper to the gods of light, the cock-headed divinity, Harpocrates, Helios, etc.; such names are Iao, Sabaoth, Semeseilam, Abrasax. Further, he shows that in the Osiris magical papyrus the name Seth and others associated with that god in the language of magic are inscribed on or beside certain hideous drawings which are intended to represent the cock-headed god. Such confusions, as he rightly explains, grow out of the magician's proneness to claim power over any and all gods and to combine them in such a manner as to suggest equality, or even identity, among deities that properly have nothing in common. Thus magic emphasizes and intensifies the tendency towards syncretism which was already active in the period when the black art was systematically taught.

Although Procopé-Walter's caution was justified, material to which he seems to have had no access gives us reason to think that the incongruous combination of solar and Sethian characteristics did sometimes take place. Adrien Blanchet, a man of great experience in glyphic studies, has published, with positive assurance of their antiquity, two amulets which have as their obverse type an ass-headed demon with snake legs. He wears the military kilt, and carries a whip and a shield, which in these specimens is rectangular, not round or oval, as in all other known specimens. On both stones the shield bears the inscription Iao, with the letters in a vertical column. In both the reverse type is a serpent, which in one case has a pair of conspicuous horns or ears like those of the ass on the obverse. Both stones are square and heavily beveled: the reverse side is little more than one-third the size of the obverse. Though the execution of both gems is crude, the head of the monster can scarcely be other than that of an ass; yet it is to be regretted that the manner of publication did not permit a photographic reproduction of the objects. Blanchet's cuts seem to have been made from line drawings, and they from impressions of the stones.

Blanchet's conclusion about these gems is stated with due caution as follows: "Nous sommes donc autorisés à supposer provisoirement que ces intailles portent des symboles qui servaient de signes de reconnaissance aux Ophiotes et peut-être aux Séthiens." He had pointed out in the course of his article that, according to Origen's account of the Ophian Gnostics, the seventh of the demon archons has the form, or at least the head, of an ass, and is called Onoel or Thartharaoth; and the prominence of the serpent

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38 P. Oslo. I, Pls. 1 and 2.
39 Ibid., pp. 67 f.
42 CRAL, 1920, pp. 147-156.
43 This is inferred from the circumstance that in Blanchet's cuts the shield is held on the right arm of the god, the whip in the left hand. The great majority of amulets were cut with a design which was not intended to be used as a seal, and the normal relations of right and left are therefore preserved. It is true that such exceptions as occur are found chiefly among stones bearing the design of the cock-headed god with serpent legs, and it is possible that Blanchet's stones were cut seal fashion. It is unfortunately not clear whether he describes the design from the stone or from an impression of it.
44 Blanchet, op. cit., p. 156.
45 Origen, Contra Celsum 6, 30 (p. 100, 15-22, ed. Koetschau).
is due to their theory that the serpent of Eden was the friend of man, whence the sect (οἱ τὰ τοῦ δὲ τῶν τῆς ἐκλογῆς θαυματουργῶν) were called Ophianoi. The presence of the serpent alone could prove little or nothing, for, not to mention the lion-headed Chnoubis, other serpents are often inscribed on magical amulets. The serpent, whether in the radiate lion-headed form or otherwise, is occasionally a reverse type associated with the cock-headed god. It may be safer simply to assume that an ass-headed demon, possibly of Sethian origin, has here been arbitrarily combined with the solar divinity who is normally represented with the head of a cock. The presence of the name Iao on the shields seems to support this view; for if the ass-headed figure were meant to represent Onoe, the inscription would be ill placed, Iao occupying a different position in this system and having no connection with Onoe.  

Mention should also be made of an oval lead tessera inscribed Abrasax on the obverse and bearing on the reverse a design thus described by the editors: “Personnage anguipède à la tête d’onagre, à gauche, la main droite levée, la main gauche avancée accostée des lettres Ιαω au milieu et ω en bas.”

There is more evidence that the name of Set or Seth, and magical names belonging to him, sometimes occur in close association with the solar divinity and may indicate a tendency to identify the two. A carnelian found at Carthage shows on the obverse a crudely cut anguiped with the usual cock’s head, and on the reverse the inscription θουβαρα Ιαω ω εφθη. The first word looks like a shortened form of a palindrome θουβαραραθαθ, but may be an imperfect copying of the magical name θουβαραραθαθ; Iao is the name commonly associated with the cock-headed deity, and in ω εφθη(θ) we have words that are almost certainly specific epithets of Set; they are not ordinarily found except in connection with that name.

Something similar happens in connection with another solar type, namely, the god with the radiate lion’s head. In a previous connection (p. 19) mention was made of an interesting series of five rock crystals, on which a lion-headed god seems to be addressed by the name of Set.

Returning now to the cock-headed god, we have seen that in all the variations upon the type his solar character is beyond question. Further, the association with him of other types that must be regarded as solar—Harpocrates on his lotus, the radiate lion-headed god, the Chnoubis snake

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43 Ibid., 6, 28 (p. 98, 14). 44 Ibid., 6, 31 (p. 101, 11 ff.).
46 Bull. arch., 1918, p. cxviii; reported by Héron de Villefosse for P. Delattre.
47 The word is engraved on the reverse of a scarab published by Barry, Ann. du server., 7 (1960), 247, No. 7.
48 Cf. τὸν θεὸν τῶν τῆς πολυγενεσίας θαυματουργῶν, invoked on a Carthaginian curse tablet (Ad- dullent, Defix. Tab., 242, 18); also θουβαραθαθ on the reverse of a panteos amulet (Chabouillet 2179), and θουβαραραθαθ among other magical names on a British Museum amulet (56223).
49 Cf. PGM XIV, 20–245 Karl Wescoat, Ephemeris Graecata, p. 25, Nos. 232, 253, 233. The final θ of εφθη is dropped in the gem inscription, just as one occasionally finds ηβαου.
50 These stones are listed on page 19, n. 53 above. The name Ιαω seems to occur also on a celts with a magical design and inscription published by J. H. Iliffe, AIFA 55 (1931), 1–6; the figure is the panteos. The eelt belongs to the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology (Pl. XXV, Fig 8).
with the radiate lion head, not to mention Helios himself — all these suggest that many, probably a majority, of the extant Graeco-Egyptian amulets express one aspect of a syncretistic solar religion which had gained a powerful hold upon those who accepted it. The devotion of such worshipers tended to become exclusive by the progressive transformation of other deities into phases of the sun-god or subordinate ministers to him. Sun worship was an important part of Egyptian religion from its beginnings, and its prominence in the religions of Persia, Babylonia, and Syria needs no illustration. Aurelian’s establishment of the sun worship in Rome (274 A.D.) doubtless strengthened the movement, though it did not initiate it. In the minds of philosophers it approached monotheism, as Julian and Macrobius show. But monotheism did not fit the minds of believers in magic; their attitude to the solar religion was preferential, but did not, and could not, deny recognition to other gods and other powers.

The exact origin and the reason for the popularity of the cock-headed type still remain obscure. We have seen reason to suspect Persian and Syrian influence in its composition, but new sources of information would be most welcome.

Why, then, was this particular solar type so long regarded as Gnostic? The reason seems to be simply because the word Abrasax occurs on a great many amulets representing the cock-headed anguipede, and also appears in the Basilidian system as it is described by Irenaeus and Hippolytus. For our purpose it makes little difference whether their accounts of it fairly represent the ideas of Basilides himself or whether, as seems more likely, the two church fathers supposed later doctrines of the Basilidian school to have originated with its founder. Irenaeus and Hippolytus agree in saying that the Basilidians hold that there are 365 heavens, and that the ruler (princeps, μέγες άρχων) of them is Abrasax. These heavens, according to Irenaeus, were created in successive stages by angelic powers themselves sprung from Sophia and Dynamis, who are fifth in descent from the “unborn Father.” In view of the complexity of the system, which cannot here be illustrated in detail, it can hardly be said that this ruler of the 365 heavens occupies a dominating position in it, and later writers, such as Jerome and the author of the little treatise Adversus omnes haereses, ascribed to Tertullian, are scarcely within their rights when they call “Abrasax” the highest god, or the all-powerful god, in the system of Basilides. The chief ruler of the 365 heavens has been supposed to represent the sun. If this is true, the point is still of little importance, so far as Basilidium Gnosticism is concerned, for it is clear that the Basilidians were more concerned with a scheme of spiritual illumination and elevation of the soul to higher spheres than with a cosmology.
for the material universe. It is even possible that this idea of the 365 heavens and their ruler was borrowed from the theories of astrologers and magicians. Irenæus’ concluding words may be taken to strengthen that possibility: "Trecentorum autem sexaginta quinque coelorum locales positiones distributed similiter ut mathematici. Illorum enim theorematum accipientes in suum characterem doctrinae transtulerunt: esse autem principem illorum, Αβραασ, et propter hoc CCLXXV numeros habere in se."

Thus it would appear that the name Abrasax, with its isopsephic significance as corresponding to the number of days in the year, may be no invention of Basilides, nor indeed of any other Gnostic teacher, but may have been invented by some astrologer as a mystic reminder of the period of the sacred sun. But if, as seems certain, its significance is solar, there is no reason to consider it a name for the cock-headed god and him only. It is to be found in connection with several other types also, and may be regarded as a word of power rather than a proper name. Now if the word Abrasax is not necessarily Gnostic, and if it is not a proper name for the cock-headed anguipede, that type has no claim to be considered Gnostic in any sense except, perhaps, that careless use of the word, unfortunately too common even among scholars, to describe secret magical lore. The reports of Gnostic doctrine have comparatively little to say about monstrous demons or aeons, and they are least of all to be expected in the system of Basilides, who seems to stand out as a man of elevated mind and character; and if the cock-headed anguipede had really played an important part in that or any other Gnostic mythology we should expect, and with good reason, to be told more about it by Christian writers.

Some careful students, recognizing that Abrasax cannot be regarded as the proper name of the cock-headed god, have called him Iao, with a show of reason, since that name is inscribed on the god’s shield in the great majority of the known specimens; further, the associations of the name in Semitic religion are such that it might naturally be borrowed for a powerful and important deity. But it is to be remembered that a shield inscription, like a shield device, may be primarily apotropaic in its intention; it may be a word charged with magical power, but not necessarily a name belonging to the holder of the shield. Furthermore, Iao is inscribed on a great variety of

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54 1, 19, 4.
55 In a love charm in PGM IV, 330 f., directions are given for binding a lead tablet, on which a deitico has been inscribed, with 365 knots, the operation to be accompanied with the words αβραασ κατάφυς. Some name (Abrasax or Mithras), whose number is 365, is apparently invoked in an inscription on a small altar found at Herek in Ptolemais (Cumont, REG 15, 1907, 313)
56 The isopsephic equivalence of Abrasax and Mithras (written Melprass), another solar figure, was noted by Jerome, Com. in Amos 3 (PL 35, 1018). Augustine (De beati. 4, PL 42, 56) seems to regard abrasax as a word of power rather than the personal name of a god or seer: "(Basilides) ... hoc distabat a Simonians, quod trecentos sexaginta quinque cælos esse dictavit, quo numero dieum annus includitur. Unde eiam quasi sanctum nomen commendabat, quod eas αβραασ, cuius sominis litterae secundum Graecam suspituationem sundum numerum complevet.
57 The words of Tertullian in Apol. 16 cannot be fairly interpreted as referring to the cock-headed god.
He has in mind various figures of Greek and Egyptian mythology that combine bestial and human characteristics, such as Anubis, Ammon, Pan, the satyrs, the giant, Hermes with wings on his feet, etc.
magical designs, many of which have no easily imaginable connection with the cock-headed anguipede, while others are perhaps related, but only because they represent solar deities. I have noted more than twenty-five examples of the kind, and am sure that the number could be considerably increased. These facts seem to confirm in a striking manner the opinion expressed by Ganschietz, which is worth quoting:

"Iao war für den Magier nicht Gott sondern Name. Der Name war eine Dynamis; er bedeutete nichts für das religiöse Leben des Magiers, er schuf keine religiösen und ethischen Werte, er war Besitz und machte ihn reich; also ein äusserlicher, kein innerlicher Zuwachs, wie es doch jede Religion ist oder sein soll." 19

If, then, we put aside traditional prepossessions, we must agree that we know much less about the cock-headed god with snake legs than older investigators have assumed. The names Iao, Abrasax, which were supposed to belong to him are words of power often found associated with other types, and the most that can be affirmed about them is that they may belong to a syncretistic deity who includes among his manifestations the cock-headed god, and many others also. This deity seems to have solar attributes; and there is no reason to believe that the conception originated in Gnostic circles. The apparently non-Egyptian origin of the cock-headed type is in itself an argument against any Gnostic connection, for Gnosticism seems to have developed in Egypt. Persian influence in the formation of the type may be suspected because of the cock's head; but this influence probably came by way of Babylon and Palestine. The triune monstrosity of the type is of a kind that is foreign to Egypt, and is less likely to have arisen through a spontaneous syncretism than to have been imagined, or deliberately invented, by a single teacher or a compact school of theosophists, whom some may prefer to call Hellenized magi or pagan "gnostics." Of such a teacher, or school, however, nothing is known. If the cock-headed god is really a deliberate invention, it may be significant that pious acclamations and personal petitions are not often inscribed on amulets bearing his image, common as they are. The time-honored gods of Egypt may have seemed nearer to the people and more sympathetic to their needs. But too much importance should not be attached to this observation; a complete survey of all existing amulets, were such a survey possible, might modify or contradict it.

A remarkable gem in the Brummer collection deserves special attention as one of the few relics of Gnosticism to be found among the objects examined in this book (D. 188). The stone is an oval pendant of green jasper clouded with red. On the obverse a lion-headed god, clothed only in the Egyptian apron, stands to left, his right hand holding a tall staff, his left a situla. At the right edge, reading downward, is the name IaβdBaaw, at the left Aafmλ;

18 Among the published examples the following may be cited: King, Gnostics, Pl. C, 2, 5, G, 5, J, 1; Snodgrass No. 59, 59, 62; de Ridder, 3445, 3445, 3458; Pietro, Amuleti, Pl. 21, 135 p, 11; Pl. 22, 135 p, w; Mastro Borghese, p. 474, 20, 478, 43; Pieper, Mit. des deut. Inst. in Kairo, 5, 144, No. 9807, Pl. 22.
19 Article "Iao" in PW IX, 715.
the first alpha is directly over the top of the staff and at first glance might be taken for an ornament belonging to it.

The reverse is fully occupied by the inscription Iao Σαβαοθ Αδωνai Ελωαί Ωρεος Λαταφεος; the last two names should be read Ωρεος Λαταφεος. The names Iao, Sabaoth, Adonai, Eloai belong to the God of the Hebrews. Iao Sabaoth represents "JHVH (Jahveh) of hosts"; but in Gnostic and magical texts Sabaoth is often treated, not as a modifier of Jahveh, but as the name of an independent being. Adonai is "Lord"; Eloai represents Elohim, God. Iao and Sabaoth occur both together and separately on many scores of magical amulets. Adonai is often added to those two, but stones with all four names are not common. The presence of any or all four of them might indicate a background of Jewish influence, but would not suffice to prove a Gnostic origin.

The case is different when we consider the last two names on the reverse. If we take the name Ialdabaoth from the obverse and count it in with the reverse inscription — temporarily disregarding Ia — we have the complete series of seven demon archons to whom the accounts of Irenaeus and Origen assign an important place in the mythology of the Ophite Gnostics — Ialdabaoth, Iao, Sabaoth, Adonai, Eloai, Horaios (Oreus in Irenaeus), Astaphaioi.60

An adequate account of the origin and the functions of these archons would carry us beyond the limits that can be allowed for the discussion of a single object.61 In as few words as possible, the genealogy is as follows. The Highest God (First Man), together with his first emanation, the Son (Second Man), generated by their illumination Christ, the Light (Third Man) from the Holy Spirit, here conceived to be feminine, the First Woman. At the generation of Christ the Mother could not contain the whole body of light, part of which therefore descended into the region of matter, and there, taking on a body, was known as Prounikos or Sophia. Before her ultimate return to the primal Light, Sophia brought forth a son. That was Ialdabaoth, who became the creative principle of the world, and gave rise in successive generations to the other six archons, each of whom created a heaven in which he dwelt.

The Ia at the top of the reverse is perhaps best taken as another form of Iao, related to it as Jah (Psalm 68, 4) is to Jahveh. Yet it is to be remembered that in magical papyri and inscriptions Iao is often imbedded among other vowel groups, Ia, Iae, Eai, etc. It is also possible that in this particular location Ia is merely a mnemonic abbreviation for Ialdabaoth, made necessary by the narrow space at the top of the oval.

As to the design on the obverse, it is to be noted that Origen, whose account of the seven archons agrees with that of Irenaeus, except that he gives

60 Iren. Adv. haer. 1, 28, 1–8 (ed. Harvey); the seven archons in § 2 ad fin., 3; Origen Contra Celsum 5, 24–38, the seven archons, 50–52.
61 For succinct accounts of the Ophite heresies see Liechthennan, article "Ophiten," in Herzog-Hauck, Protes. Realencyklopadie; and Bornkamm, article "Ophiten," in PWB XVIII, 1.
Astaphaioi the fifth instead of the seventh place, describes Ialdabaoth as λεοντοειθής. The context shows that he means λέωντος πρόσωπον ἔχων, "lion-faced." 63

The lion-headed demon may therefore be accepted as Ialdabaoth; yet without that name there would be nothing to mark the figure as Gnostic. Of the many lion-headed figures that occur on magical amulets, I know of no other that can be safely called Gnostic. Their radiate heads, sometimes further adorned with a disk, indicate that they are either solar deities, probably aspects of the sun-god Horus, or else subsidiary solar demons. Among their attributes staff and situla appear, but so do swords, caduceus, scepters of various forms, orb, and whip. It is evident that the Ophite Gnostics did not invent the type of the Brummer gem, but took it over from Egyptian paganism.

The name Αριελ remains to be explained. The doubling of the alpha may have been due to the lapidary's carelessness, or he may have repeated it on purpose, because he saw that he had placed the first alpha too near the tip of the staff held by Ialdabaoth. There is no other instance of a doubled alpha in the Greek and Coptic passages where the word occurs, nor is there in the Hebrew original an internal guttural, which would account for two alphas with intervening hiatus, as in Aaron. The name Ariel does not occur in the Ophite tradition reported by Irenæus and Origen. In Hippolytus' account of the Peratai, another branch of anonymous Gnosticism, Ariel is the third archon of the winds," 64 and in the Coptic Gnostic work Pistis Sophia the name is given to a demon of punishment in Amente, the Egyptian Hades. 65 In the gold magical lamina of Athens it is simply an angel name, grouped with Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, and a few others. 66 Ialdabaoth also plays a different part in Coptic writings from that assigned him in the Ophite system. In one passage of Pistis Sophia he is a lion-faced archon of Chaos, 67 in several others he is an avenging demon like Ariel. 68 In the Second Book of Enoch he is an archon of the third Aeon, one of a series before all of whom the soul must pass in its way to salvation. 69

Despite these different uses of the names Ialdabaoth and Ariel, there is no reason to think that the amulet shows a confusion of two systems. The presence of the name Ariel in conjunction with Ialdabaoth can be best explained by its Hebrew meaning, which, according to some authorities, is "Lion of God." 70 It seems most likely, therefore, that Ariel is here only a

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63 Contra Celsum 5, 31 (p. 101, 22, ed. Koetschau). The name Adanaos seems to have been omitted accidentally from the list in 31, but it appears in 32 between Sabaoh and Elaioth; see Koetschau's note on p. 101, 21.
64 Contra Celsum 5, 30 (p. 100, 5–12; p. 101, 11).
65 Hippolytus Elenchus, 5, 14, 5 (p. 109, 13).
67 IG IX, 2, No. 232, 27, 29.
68 E.g. p. 166, 15, 21.
70 See W. Gesenius, Hebr. Handwörterbuch, sub voce. There are, however, other interpretations. In Ezekiel 43, 15, it is "altar hearth," and Jastrow, Dict. of Targumim and Talmud, renders it "Divine Light," apparently with special reference to Isaiah 29, 1.
secondary name or epithet of Ialdabaoth. It should be observed, however, that Origen's authority, which gives the archons a set of angel names in addition to the seven that appear on the amulet, assigns to Ialdabaoth not Ariel, but Michael, as his second name.\footnote{Contra Celsum 6, 50 (p. 100, 8). The Brammer amulet has been discussed previously at somewhat greater length in }{\textit{Herpetia}}, Supplement VIII, pp. 43–46.

It may seem strange that the Gnostic systems have left so few certain traces upon the amulets when we find that some of those systems made use of ideas and mythological data which are by no means alien to the magical stones. In the first volume of \textit{Studia Hellenistica (Een onbekend Gnostisch Systeem)}, Louvain, 1942), A. Torhout holds that a Gnostic system based upon an Alexandrian Isis theology, and itself a source of the Valentinian gnosis, can be discerned in certain parts of Plutarch's \textit{Isis and Osiris}. A mythological datum of prime importance for the exponents of this Gnostic doctrine is the birth of Harpocrates as a feeble premature infant (358 E, 377 C). Now Isis and Harpocrates appear together on many magical amulets, the child Harpocrates is seen alone on still more, and on a few, such as D. 34–35, representing Isis supporting the head of the young god, there may be a suggestion that Harpocrates is the weakling of Plutarch's narrative. Yet not one of all these stones shows by its inscription that it is a product of a Gnostic sect. In the absence of such evidence, they may all be considered as in the direct tradition of Egyptian paganism, diluted, it is true, by the use of the Greek alphabet, by a Hellenized glyptic style, and by the use of non-Egyptian magical words, often of Semitic origin.

Still more recently A. Dupont-Sommer has developed, in connection with an unpublished Aramaic lamella, the evidence for a Gnostic doctrine of the letter waw (\textit{La Doctrine gnostique de la lettre waw}, [Paris, 1946] in \textit{Bibl. archéol. et hist.}, 41). He connects the mystical interpretation of the sixth Hebrew letter (symbol of Christ) with the Marcosian heresy, and ultimately with a Syrian Ophite sect. That letter, of course, is wanting in the later Greek alphabet; but one might expect that the mystical interpretation which extended to the whole Hebrew alphabet would have been adapted to the Greek. Yet on the amulets no single letters seem to be picked out to occupy a place of mystic significance. The seven vowels are constantly used, as magically potent, in various permutations, and in such forms as the pyramid and the pterygona. They are also given an astrological meaning when a star, representing a planet, accompanies each of the seven. Furthermore, the numerical meaning of the Greek letters is exploited for magical purposes on the amulets as in the magical papyri (words whose isopsephic equivalents amount to a significant number; see \textit{JEA} 16, 6–9). All this, however, has nothing to do with Gnosticism. The occasional juxtaposition of alpha and omega is probably due to the influence of orthodox Christianity, even if it derives ultimately from Hellenistic alphabetic symbolism.

It is safe to conclude that purveyors of magical objects knew little of the Gnostic systems, and were not deeply impressed with their value in providing
sanctions for magical practice; the older national religions were deemed more effective for that purpose. Despite the wide dispersion of its monuments, Mithraism left traces upon comparatively few out of the great number of magical stones, perhaps because the cult was propagated chiefly through military groups, but more probably because women were excluded from its mysteries. The variety of solar syncretism that developed the cock-headed god did, it is true, leave its mark on hundreds of magical amulets, and their number and their strange designs led modern inquirers to assign a disproportionate importance to them; but it is to be remembered that the solar religion, even in its bizarre varieties, was derived from popular cults. Magic, appealing to the lower classes more strongly than to educated circles, sought its allies in the beliefs of the masses; and it was natural that the popular religions of Egypt and Greece, and in time Christianity also, should be drawn upon more than theological systems that appealed chiefly to intellectual groups. The influence of magical ideas upon decadent Gnosticism, as indicated by the use of magical abracadabras in the Pistis Sophia, is more important than the influence of Gnostic theology upon ordinary magical practice.  

(Supplementary.) There is a certain resemblance between the rare human-headed anguipede shown on my amulet, D. 186 (cf. p. 128), and Sammanus, the Roman god of nocturnal lightning. The only connection seems to be that both have borrowed the Greek idea of the serpent-legged giants. Sammanus carries a thunderbolt, while the anguipede of the amulet seems never to have this attribute. For Sammanus see L. Carrai, "Sammanus," Römische Mitteilungen, 49 (1934), 133-245, with Pl. 18; also the Utrech dissertation of H. H. Diephuis, Naturkräfte und ihre Verehrung in der altrömischen Religion, 1941, 141 ff. and frontispiece.