

## Mouseio Benaki Journal

Vol 4 (2004)



### The Egyptian Golden Ring with Lapis Lazuli Inscribed Scarab at the Benaki Museum. Was it the Property of a Libyan Pharaoh of Dynasty XXII?

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doi: [10.12681/benaki.18245](https://doi.org/10.12681/benaki.18245)

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#### To cite this article:

Maravelia, A.-A. (2018). The Egyptian Golden Ring with Lapis Lazuli Inscribed Scarab at the Benaki Museum. Was it the Property of a Libyan Pharaoh of Dynasty XXII?. *Mouseio Benaki Journal*, 4, 9–14. <https://doi.org/10.12681/benaki.18245>

## The Egyptian Golden Ring with Lapis Lazuli Inscribed Scarab at the Benaki Museum. Was it the Property of a Libyan Pharaoh of Dynasty XXII?

RINGS ARE normally circular bands used to decorate ears, toes, noses, or, most often, fingers. A finger-ring has traditionally been worn for various reasons. It may have a symbolic meaning<sup>1</sup> (as a wedding or a consecration ring); it may identify the wearer or indicate rank or authority (as a signet-ring); it may be thought to have magic powers (as an amuletic ring); or it may be worn merely as an ornament. In ancient Egypt signet-rings<sup>2</sup> bearing carved scarabs<sup>3</sup> (beetles) or engraved hieroglyphs developed from seals carried on cords and were particularly common.<sup>4</sup> The small size of the rings (and of the scarabs) meant that they could 'travel' and 'be travelled', as is evident from the great number of Egyptian rings uncovered around the Mediterranean, in Crete, Cyprus, Phoenicia, Scythia, Sardinia, Meroe, and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

The Benaki Museum premises house a small Egyptian collection<sup>6</sup> with several interesting objects, including a faience group<sup>7</sup> which contains finds dating from the Pharaonic period itself. One of the unique non-faience Egyptian objects at the Museum is a charming small ring bearing a scarab (figs 1 a-c), which is examined in detail in this paper:

*Category:* Finger-ring with revolving scarab mounted as swivel in *funda* (inv. no. B 7335).

*Typology (Ring / Scarab):* Type II [Keel 1995 (n. 4) 106-09] / Type HC.11(13.-26.) [?]-EP.27(15.-27.)-SIDE 27(13.-26.) [Rowe 1936 (n. 4) cited in Keel 1995 (n. 4) 42, 45, 53 (respectively)].

*Date:* TIP, Dynasty XXII, belonging to Sheshonq I or II or to somebody of their retinue.

*Provenance:* Egypt (unspecified details).

*Acquisition:* Donation by Lucas Benaki (April 1969).

*Materials:* Gold and lapis lazuli.

*Weight:* 3.4 gr.

*Colour:* Golden metal *annulus* and lapis blue scarab.

*Dimensions:* H<sub>scarab</sub> = 1.40 cm, L<sub>scarab</sub> = 0.90 cm, W<sub>scarab</sub> = 0.30 cm; D<sub>ring, mean</sub> = 2.20 cm.

*Preservation:* Quite satisfactory. Hieroglyphic inscription in a rather moderate preservation.

*Similar Objects:* MFA 51.59; BM EA 14345 & 57698; Museo Egizio (Firenze), 2790 & 2791; Castellani Collection 335; Newberry (n. 4) 93 & fig. 109; Matouk (n. 4) 128-31, 197-98 & figs 754, 756-58, 770, 772-73; Cagliari 21912; Carthage Museum [1190].

*Technique:* Incision (scarab); hammering (ring).

The object studied is a golden (signet-)ring with a lapis lazuli scarab, which is enclosed in a golden *funda* (in order to protect its edges from possible injuries), and which in turn is mounted as swivel on the (relatively thin) ring by means of perforation threaded with a separate golden wire, the ends of which are tightly wound round the hoop. This type of mounting appears first during Dynasty XIII<sup>8</sup> and continues to be used during the SIP, NK and into the TIP.<sup>9</sup> The hoop of the ring, whose dimensions fit a man's rather than a woman's fingers, is slightly distorted (figs 1 a-c). The *funda* (or bezel) that holds the scarab in place has the shape of a small cartouche<sup>10</sup> and is made of two oval frames, tightly attached one on the other (fig. 1c). The thinner golden perforation wire passes through the scarab (following the longitudinal

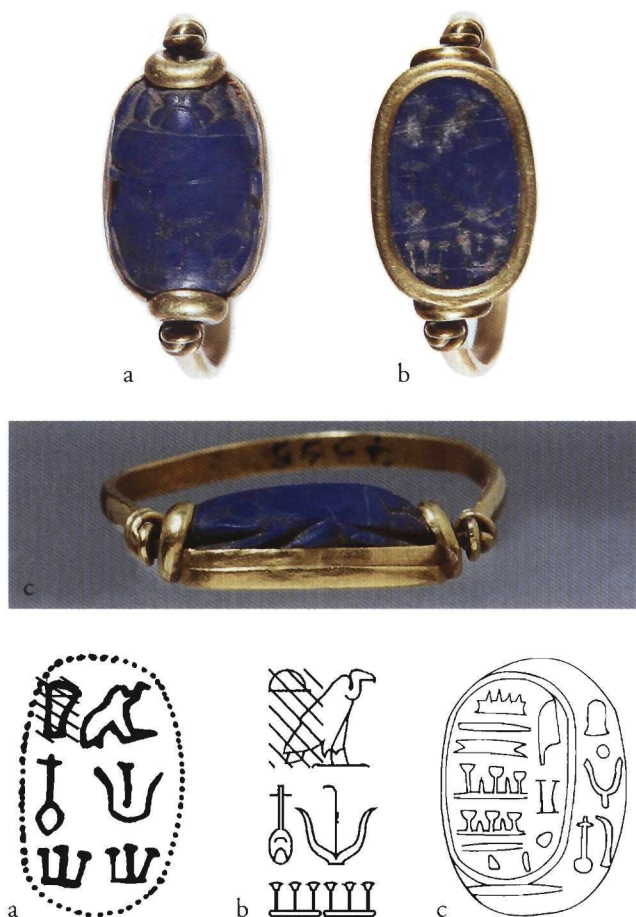


Fig. 1 a, b, c. (a) The scarab on the ring B 7335, (b) the inscription on the sphragistic surface of the scarab on the same ring, (c) the same ring in profile (photos: K. Manolis).

Fig. 2 a, b, c. (a) Linear drawing of the inscription on the scarab of the ring B 7335, (b) idealized drawing of the inscription on the scarab by the author, (c) linear drawing of the inscription on the scarab of the similar ring MFA 51.59 (after: E. L. B. Terrace, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery in the Horace L. Mayer Collection*, *AJA* 67/3 [1963] pl. 58 figs 18-19) (drawings: author and K. Mavragani).

axis) by means of two holes/openings at both ends of the scarab, which are perimetrically covered by two small circular annulets, thus giving it a neater appearance. The scarab carries an incised short hieroglyphic inscription on the sphragistic surface (lower side), while on the upper side the solar creature is depicted in detail, showing clearly all its anatomical details: head, eyes, plates, *vertex*, *clypeus*, forelegs, *prothorax*, *elytra* and suture (denot-

ed by shallow incisions), the middle and hind legs.<sup>11</sup>

It has been argued that the *šn*-ring is related to the eternity god, whose notched palm-branch sign (symbolising «years») forms the base;<sup>12</sup> in this aspect the scarab, engraved and «protected» by the oval *funda*, is related not only to eternity and royal protection, but also to the idea of resurrection and eternal life. Hence, a scarab-ring would be the perfect bearer of this particular symbolism. This gives us a first hint as to the ring's possible owner, whose identity will be founded on the study of its hieroglyphic inscription. In fact this object is not a signet-ring<sup>13</sup> [anc. Eg.: *h̄tm*, *db̄(w)t*; Copt.: *ṮḖḖḖ*, *ṮḖḖ*] *per se*, but rather a bezel-ring of amuletic character, bearing a New Year's inscription for prosperity. This object clearly evokes a double protection for the bearer: the oval cartouche, protectively enclosing a king's name; and the solar regeneration symbolism, relevant also to the beginning of a happy New Year.<sup>14</sup> The inscription on the sphragistic surface of the scarab apparently goes like this: *Mwt wp rnpt nfr š3š3<nk>* [= (May) *Mūt open a happy New Year*<sup>15</sup> (for the Pharaoh) *Shesho<nq>!*]. At this point, we have to consider two questions: (i) is this the actual inscription or not, as the partially damaged surface of the back of the scarab renders the reading of the last line somewhat problematic; (ii) if this is the actual inscription, then do we have any clues as to which of the most important pharaohs of Dynasty XXII with this name<sup>16</sup> it refers?

Let us examine first of all what is certain about the inscription. It is typical of a New Year's object, beginning with an evocation to *Mūt*,<sup>17</sup> the goddess of Thebes, consort of *Amūn* and mother of *Khonsū*, to offer a happy New Year to the person whose name is in question. Let us call this name *N*. It seems very probable that the reading of the two identical hieroglyphic signs in the lower row is as shown above: *š3-š3*. However, supposing that this is not the case, what alternative readings of these signs (if any) do we have? A hypothetical rendering could well be: *Mwt wp rnpt nfr š3<ʿ>{š3}* [= *May (Mut) open a happy New Year's beginning*]. If so, the word *š3ʿ* (= *beginning*)<sup>18</sup> would present a rather peculiar orthography, which implies that the scribe has made two mistakes simultaneously – even without taking the anomalous syntax into account – by writing it erroneously and by repeating a similar sign *š3* after the first.<sup>19</sup> This seems a quite impossible speculation and accordingly should be



rejected. Furthermore, we cannot consider N as being either the word  $\text{š3}$  (= *ordain, predestine*)<sup>20</sup> twice repeated, or the word  $\text{š3(s)}$  (= *travel*)<sup>21</sup> twice repeated, since the context of the New Year's wish would not justify something like this. Nor can we consider the two signs as being a repetition of the group  $\text{hm-k3}$  (= *k3-priest*),<sup>22</sup> no matter how much they resemble this sign, since the meaning would again not fit the context [namely: *Mut, happy New Year's Day; (to the) k3-priest, k3-priest*]. Similarly, we must exclude the possibility that the word is a person's (commoner's) name, since no similar entry is found in Ranke's work.<sup>23</sup> Finally, any cryptographic<sup>24</sup> context in this particular inscription must also be excluded. Thus, it seems that the only possible rendering of the inscription is indeed that given in the previous paragraph.

It is almost certain that N =  $\text{š3š3}$ , and highly probable that N =  $\text{š3š3} < n\dot{k} >$ , referring to the royal name *Sheshonq*. Now we have to discuss to which of the three pharaohs with the same *prenomen*<sup>25</sup> it belongs. In certain instances the name of Sheshonq II is written simply as  $\text{š3š3}$ , without the final two hieroglyphic signs, using this 'minimal' orthography.<sup>26</sup> However, there are some scarabs of Sheshonq I where the name of the king is also written merely as  $\text{š3š3}$ , omitting the final two signs.<sup>27</sup> As for Sheshonq III, the known concomitant scarabs, to the best of our knowledge, show his full name.<sup>28</sup> Thus the ring appears to name either Sheshonq I or Sheshonq II, though which of them cannot be decided with absolute certainty. Last but not least, stylistic reasons<sup>29</sup> imply that it is probably a ring of the Libyan Dynasty. The scarab and its basic anatomical lines are rendered in a particular manner which is reminiscent of the TIP style (cf. also a similar ring; MFA 51.59, already referred to).<sup>30</sup> Additionally, comparison of the scarab with another, also made of lapis lazuli but this time set on a golden bracelet of Sheshonq II which imitates a swivel finger-ring,<sup>31</sup> corroborates this evidence. The ring examined here, bearing a royal name, is made of gold and has a finely worked inscribed scarab; however, it is not particularly opulent and it is not made of massive solid gold. It may perhaps have belonged to either Sheshonq I or Sheshonq II, but it seems safer to surmise that it was probably given by the king as a reward to one of his officers or priests. Table 1 shows some interesting parallels to this finger-ring.<sup>32</sup>

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## NOTES

\*May I thank Prof. Dr Angelos Delivorrias, director of the Benaki Museum, together with the Museum staff, for permitting and encouraging the study and publication of this ring, as well as of the faience collection. Warm thanks for various pieces of information and some bibliographical references are also due to: Dr D. Sweeney (Tel Aviv University), Dr B. Brandl (Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem), Dr N. Guilhou (Université Montpellier III); Mr Ch. Naunton, M. Phil. (The Egypt Exploration Society, London); Prof. Dr E. Cruz-Uribe (Department of History, Northern Arizona University).

1. See J. Chevalier – A. Gheerbrant, *Dictionary of Symbols* (UK 1996<sup>4</sup>) 805ff; G. F. Kunz, *Rings for the Finger* (New York-Philadelphia 1978<sup>2</sup>).

2. For the symbolism of rings (evoking endless cycles of eternity) in the ancient Egyptian context, see M. Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London 1986<sup>4</sup>) 101; R. H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting*

and Sculpture (London 1992) 192-93 (cf. also [*op. cit.*] 194-95). On ancient Egyptian jewellery in general, see C. Andrews, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery* (London 1990); for finger-rings, cf. 163-69; *id.*, in: H. Tait (ed.), *Seven Thousand Years of Jewellery* (London 1986) 33-36, 42-47; C. Aldred, *Jewels of the Pharaohs* (London 1971); A. Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery* (London 1971); M. Vilímková et al., *Egyptian Jewellery* (London 1969).

3. For the symbolism of scarabs (*scarabeus sacer* L.), see LÄV (1984) 967-81 s.v. Skarabäus; J. Ward, *The Sacred Beetle: A Popular Treatise on Egyptian Scarabs in Art and History* (London 1902); C. Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt* (London 1994) 50-59; for their funerary use, see M. Malaise, *Les Scarabées de cœur dans l'Égypte ancienne* (Bruxelles 1978); A.-A. Maravelia, *Η μαγεία στην αρχαία Αίγυπτο: Μεταφυσική πεμπτονσία της χώρας των θεών* (Athens 2003) 72-74.

4. See, for instance, P. A. Newberry, *Egyptian Antiquities: Scarabs. An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian Seals and*

*Signet Rings* (London 1906) 62ff. For scarabs, see also W. M. F. Petrie, *Scarabs and Cylinders with Names, Illustrated by the Egyptian Collection in University College I-III* (London 1917); *id.*, *Buttons and Design Scarabs* (London 1925); *id.*, *Amulets* (Warminster 1972<sup>2</sup>) 23-24 pls VII-IX; *id.*, *Historical Scarabs: A Series of Drawings from the Principal Collections* (New York 1974<sup>3</sup>); C. Blankenberg-van Delden, *The Large Commemorative Scarabs of Amenhotep III* (Leiden 1969); B. Jaeger, *Essai de classification et datation des scarabées Menkheperre* (Fribourg 1982); *id.*, *Les scarabées à noms royaux du Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna* (Bologna 1993); F. S. Matouk, *Corpus du Scarabée égyptien: I. Les scarabées royaux; II. Analyse thématique* (Beyrouth 1971-1977); A. Rowe, *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum* (Cairo 1936); H. R. Hall, *Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, &c., in the British Museum: I. Scarabs* (London 1913); *id.*, *Scarabs* (London 1929); E. Hornung – E. Stählin, *Skarabäen und andere Siegelamulette aus Basler Sammlungen* (Mainz 1976); W. A. Ward – O. Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals I-II* (UK 1978-1984); G. T. Martin, *Scarabs, Cylinders and Other Ancient Egyptian Seals* (Warminster 1985); for scarabs and rings with scarabs, see also O. Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel – Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Einleitung* (Freiburg-Göttingen 1995); *id.*, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel – Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Katalog Band I: Von Tell Abu Farag bis 'Atlit* (Freiburg-Göttingen 1997).

5. See, for instance, F. H. Marshall, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman in the Departments of Anti-quitities, British Museum* (London 1907<sup>1</sup>; 1968<sup>2</sup>); E. D. Reeder, *Scythian Gold* (New York 1999); K.-H. Priese, *The Gold of Meroe* (Mainz 1993); D. Sweeney, A Lion-Hunt Scarab and Other Egyptian Objects from the Late Bronze Fortress at Jaffa, *Tel Aviv* 30 (2003) 54-65; A. Karetsou (ed.), *Krete-Agyptos: Cultural Links through Three Millennia: Catalogue* (Herakleion 2000) 304 ff; N. C. Stambolidis (ed.), *Sea Routes ... From Sidon to Huelva: Interconnections in the Mediterranean, 16th-6th c. B.C.* (Athens 2003) 578-85.

6. See, for instance, A.-A. Maravelia, Two Faience Shabtris from the Egyptian Collection at the Benaki Museum, *Museio Benaki* 2 (2002) 19-24 n. 1-4.

7. See n. 6 and A.-A. Maravelia, Ancient Egyptian Inscribed Faience Objects from the Benaki Museum in Athens, 1, *JNES* 61/2 (2002) 81-109.

8. See Newberry (n. 4) 93.

9. See for example a similar ring of Sheshonq III (MFA # 51.59) in: E. L. B. Terrace, Ancient Egyptian Jewellery in the Horace L. Mayer Collection, *AJA* 67 (1963) 274 pl. 58: figs 18-19.

10. On the (solar/cosmic and protective/encircling) symbolism of royal cartouches, see Wilkinson (n. 2) 194-95 and Lurker (n. 2) 38-39; *EG*, 74.

11. For a detailed entomological description of the insect,

cf. Keel, *Corpus* 1995 (n. 4) 20ff.

12. See Wilkinson (n. 2) 193.

13. See, for instance, *Wb.* III, 350 ff & *Wb.* V, 566; *CD*, 199, 322.

14. Among the inscribed faience objects at the Benaki Museum is a New Year's jar, already published by the author (see Maravelia [n. 7] 87-88 figs 2 a-c), bearing an inscription mentioning Amün and the New Year's festival. On the importance of New Year's Day to the ancient Egyptian mind, cf. also the reference to the New Year and the heliacal rising of Sirius/Sōthis in the context of ancient Egyptian Love Poems (see e.g. A.-A. Maravelia, *ptri.st mi Spdt ḥ'y m-ḥ3t rnpt nfrt*: Astronomical and Cosmovisional Elements in the Corpus of Ancient Egyptian Love Poems, *Lingua Aegyptia* 11 [2003] 79-112; *pChester Beatty I*, v, C1, 1-2). For the expression *rnpt nfr*, in opposition to *rnpt g3b* (cf. *pAnastasi IV*), see P. Germond, *Les invocations à la bonne année au temple d'Edfou* (= *Aegyptiaca Helvetica* 11, Genève 1986) 79-80.

15. On some faience rings with New Year's Day wishes, dating from the LP, see B. Latellier, Un souhait de bonne année en faveur d'une reine kouchite, *RdE* 29 (1977) 43-52 pl. 1; L. Török, *Meroe City: An Ancient African Capital* (London 1997) 239-40: Inscr. 56a-56d; fig. 122: Inscr. 56a-56d.

16. Of the Libyan Dynasty XXII, we know three important Pharaohs with this *nomen*: Sheshonq I [945-924 BCE] = (*Hd ḥpr R<sup>c</sup>, Stp n R<sup>c</sup>*) (*Šš3nk, Mry Imn*); Sheshonq II [c. 890?-883 BCE] = (*Hk3 ḥpr R<sup>c</sup>, Stp n R<sup>c</sup>*) (*Šš3<nk>, Mry Imn*); Sheshonq III [835-783 BCE] = (*Wsr M3't R<sup>c</sup>, Stp n R<sup>c</sup>*) (*Šš3nk, Mry Imn*). On this, see A.-A. Maravelia, Χρονολογικό μνημόνιο της αρχαίας αιγυπτιακής ιστορίας και των φαραωνικών δυναστειών / Η περίπτωση του φλαμινιανού οβελίσκου, *Παρθενός* 45 (2003) 201-36, esp. 216. For a detailed history of the TIP and the «Sheshonqide» kings, see K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100-650 BC)* (Warminster 1986<sup>2</sup>) 287-359, 575-76. We discard the possibility that the ring under study may date from a slightly later era, e.g. that of Sheshonq V [773-735 BCE] = (*3h ḥpr R<sup>c</sup>*) (*Šš3nk*). According to Kitchen ([*op. cit.*] 88), there is some doubt on the existence of Sheshonq IV [c. 783-777 BCE] = (*Wsr M3't R<sup>c</sup>, Mry Imn*) (*Šš3nk*); additionally ([*op. cit.*] 354-55 n. 639), supposed scarabs of Sheshonq V from Palestine are probably not explicitly his.

17. For Mūt, see Lurker (n. 2) 82-83; H. te Velde, Towards a Minimal Definition of the Goddess Mut, *JEOL* 8/26 (1979-1980) 3-9. In other objects different deities are invoked, e.g. in the Benaki Museum New Year's jar (B18.258), for which see Maravelia (n. 7) 87-88, figs 2a-c, where Amün is named. Returning to Mūt, we must add that her name is met in some scarabs: see, for instance, Petrie, *Buttons* (n. 4) 12, 21, 23, 28, pls. IX: # 318, XII: # 700, XIII: # 796, 798, XV: # 1046, 1046<sup>A</sup>.

18. See *Wb.* IV, 406ff; *CD*, 261.

19. The basic archetype for this very ancient sign (already met in the *PT*) is M8 (see *EG*, 480); in the context of this

ring it is rather M8J (less possibly M8H or M8L); cf. N. Grimal – J. Hallof – D. van der Plas et al. (eds), *Hieroglyphica: Sign List* (Utrecht-Paris 2000) 1 M-1.

20. Cf. *Wb.* IV, 402; *CD*, 260.

21. Cf. *Wb.* IV, 412; *CD*, 260.

22. Cf. *Wb.* III, 90; *CD*, 169. Further similarly written words exist, but their meaning does not fit the context (cf. e.g. *CD*, 261:  $\text{ḥ}3\text{ḥ}3\text{t}$  = necklace; *CTIV*, § 384a:  $\text{ḥ}3\text{s}$  = escape; *CTVII*, § 397u:  $\text{ḥ}3\text{ḥ}3$  = a snake species; & c.). See also *Wb.* IV, 413-14.

23. See H. Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen I-III* (Hamburg 1932-1977). There is only a simple form  $\text{ḥ}3$ , with sign  $\text{hn}$  (M2) as taxogram, dating from the NK (cf. [*op. cit.*] I, 12).

24. For some cryptographic inscriptions, see F. Crevatin, *Minor Egyptian Inscriptions (mainly Cryptographic)*, *GM* 195 (2003) 17-19.

25. See n. 16, *supra*. This name corresponds to the Hellenic na-mes  $\Sigma\epsilon\sigma\omega\gamma\chi\iota\varsigma/\Sigma\epsilon\sigma\omega\gamma\chi\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  of Manethōn.

26. Cf. J. von Beckerath, *Handbuch der Ägyptischen Königsnamen* (München 1984) 186; S. Quirke, *Who were the Pharaohs: A History of their Names with a List of Cartouches* (London 1990) 68; Maravelia (n. 16) 215-17. See also Petrie, *Scarabs* (n. 4) 1ff. pl. L: 22.5.

27. See Matouk (n. 4) 128-29, 197, # 754, 756-58. There is another scarab, bearing a New Year's wish for Karáma ( $K3-R^c-m^c$ ), the wife of Sheshonq II, where the name of the hereditary prince Sheshonq is fully written (see [*op. cit.*] 131, 198: # 770; Newberry [n. 4] pl. XL,8]:  $wp Pth rnpt nfr n (i) r(y) - p^c \{t\} \text{ḥ}3\text{ḥ}3\text{nk}, m3^c-hrw mwt K3-R^c-m^c$  [= (May) *Ptah open a happy year for (the) hereditary Prince Sheshonq*,

*justified <by his> mother Karáma*]. See, finally, M.-A. Bonhême, *Les noms royaux dans l'Égypte de la Troisième Période Intermédiaire* (Le Caire 1987) 124; *id.*, *Les Chechonquides: Qui, combien?*, *BSFE* 134 (1995) 53-54.

28. See Terrace (n. 9) 274 pl. 58: figs 19-20; Matouk (n. 4) 131, 198 # 772-73. Cf. also Petrie, *Scarabs* (n. 4) *passim* pl. L: 22.7. See, however, Bonhême (n. 27) 124 (for a few instances of the 'minimal' orthography, though not on scarabs). The same holds for Sheshonq V (*op. cit.* 139) and Sheshonq VI, whose existence is dubious (see Kitchen [n. 16] 87, 88).

29. On the dating and stylistic criteria for scarabs and rings, see Ward – Tufnell I (n. 4) 20-35; Keel, *Corpus* 1995 (n. 4) 39-61, 106-09.

30. See Terrace (n. 9) 274, pl. 58: figs 18-20. The inscription on that ring goes like this: *Mry-Imn, ḥ3ḥ3nk, z3 B3stt; Imn-R<sup>c</sup> wp rnpt nfr* [= (The) *beloved of Amūn, Sheshonq, (the) son of Bastet; (may) Amūn-Rē' open a happy year (to the king)*].

31. For this exquisite piece from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (JE 72189), see Andrews, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery* (n. 2) 148 fig. 130.

32. For more parallels, see Reeder (n. 5) 171 # 60; 217 # 98; Hall, *Scarabs* (n. 4) 2 and # 2-3, pls II # 2-3, pl. III: # 2936, 4917; Stampolidis (n. 5) 584 and # 1190, for the ring from the National Carthage Museum with no inventory number (together with additional relevant bibliography); the CD-Rom by D. van der Plas (ed.), *Egyptian Treasures in Europe. I: 1.000 Highlights* (Utrecht 1999), for the rings 2790 and 2791 of the Archaeological Museum in Florence; Marshall (n. 5) xxxviii (for two bezel-rings with scarabs, namely 1004 & 1007), 60 (for ring 335 of the Castellani Collection).

## AMANTA-ΑΛΙΚΗ ΜΑΡΑΒΕΛΙΑ

Ήταν ο χρυσός δακτύλιος με ενεπίγραφο σκαραβαίο από λαζουρίτη του Μουσείου Μπενάκη προσωπικό αντικείμενο Λίβου Φαραώ της 22ης Δυναστείας;

Στο Μουσείο Μπενάκη φυλάσσεται ένας χρυσός δακτύλιος με περιστρεφόμενη σφενδόνη και ενεπίγραφο σκαραβαίο από λαζουρίτη. Ο σκαραβαίος περικλείεται από πλαίσιο (*funda*) σε ελλειψοειδές σχήμα φαραωνικής δέλτου και είναι προσδεδμεμένος στον δακτύλιο με λεπτό μεταλλικό σύρμα που διαπερνά τον κάθετο άξονά του. Κατά πάσα πιθανότητα το αντικείμενο αυτό, το οποίο φέρει χαρακτηριστική ευχή για το Νέο Έτος ( $wp rnpt nfr$ ), χρονολογείται από την 22η Δυ-

ναστεία, ενώ μπορεί να ανήκε, είτε στον Φαραώ Σέσωγχι I (945-924 ΠΚΕ), είτε στον Φαραώ Σέσωγχι II (περ. 890;-883 ΠΚΕ). Υποθέτουμε ότι το πιθανότερο είναι πως ήταν δώρο ενός από τους δύο αυτούς φαραώ προς κάποιον υπήκοό τους (αξιωματούχο ή ιερέα). Η ευχή αναφέρεται στη θεά Μουτ (σύζυγο του Άμμωνα), την οποία επικαλείται ούτως ώστε να χαρίσει στον Σέσωγχι ευτυχισμένη (πρωτο)χρονιά. Στην εργασία αυτή μελετάται ακροθιγώς η επιγραφή και αποκλείονται

συγκεκριμένες πιθανές αποδόσεις της (εξαιτίας των δυσανάγνωστων ιερογλυφικών στην τελευταία γραμμή της), ενώ ταυτόχρονα δίνεται πλήρης περιγραφή του σφυρήλατου δακτυλίου. Η χρήση του δακτυλίου εν είδει περιάπτου ευημερίας και προστασίας θα χάριζε στον κάτοχο (πρεσβείαις της Μουτ) ευτυχία και ευμάρεια για τη νέα χρονιά. Ο σκαραβαίος, ηλιακό σύμβολο αναγέννησης και ανάστασης, κατείχε στη σκέψη των Αιγυπτίων εξέχουσα θέση ως αρχέτυπο. Δακτύλιοι

όπως αυτός, αλλά και απειράριθμοι σκαραβαίοι, έχουν εντοπισθεί σε πολλά σημεία ανά τη λεκάνη της Μεσογείου, γεγονός που καταδεικνύει τη φήμη των αιγυπτιακών περιάπτων κατά την αρχαιότητα. Το συγκεκριμένο αντικείμενο φέρει εγχάρακτη επιγραφή στην οποία το όνομα *Σέσωγχις* δεν είναι γραμμένο εξολοκλήρου (απουσιάζουν τα δύο τελευταία ιερογλυφικά), γεγονός σύνηθες, τόσο για τον Φαραώ Σέσωγχι Ι, όσο και για τον Σέσωγχι ΙΙ.