

	Object:	Scorpion, so called magical gem
	Museum:	Museum August Kestner Trammplatz 3 30159 Hannover (0511) 168-42730 museen- kulturgeschichte@hannover- stadt.de
	Collection:	Ancient Cultures, Gemmen, Kameen und Glaspasten. Die Sammlung geschnittener Steine
	Inventory number:	K 1525

Description

During the Roman Imperial period in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, probably from Alexandria in Egypt, a special group of recessed cut (semi-precious) stones became widespread. Because of their images and function, they are called 'magical' gems and, in keeping with their amulet character, are worn in a small pouch around the neck or sewn into the hem of the garment on the body. An unmistakable sign of their use as amulets is the positive carving of the image and/or text on the stone.

These stones were supposed to give their wearers power over people and demons, protect them from harm and heal illnesses. The magically effective motifs used were often of Egyptian origin, while the inscriptions often found on these gems were written in Greek, which was considered the language of magic.

The scorpion was such an effective motif. It belonged to the twelve signs of the zodiac (Zodia), which also played an important role in the medical-magical field. According to their cosmic arrangement, limbs and organs of the human body were also assigned to these zodia. They were supposed to have a special effect on these and strengthen well-being, like the scorpion in the area of the sexual organs, especially in the case of sexual disorders. But it could also, quite simply, be used as a repellent against scorpion stings. Typical for the zodiac sign scorpion on magical gems was the use of yellowish stones, mostly jasper. (AVS)

Former collection August Kestner, Rome

Detailed description

Vs: Sechsfüßiger Skorpion in Aufsicht. - Rs: dreizeilige Beschriftung (pos.). - Beiderseits flach, Kante zur Vs. abgeschrägt. Poliert.

Basic data

Material/Technique:	Jasper / carved
Measurements:	Height: 0.9 cm, width: 0.62 cm

Events

Created	When	2.-3. century CE
	Who	
	Where	Mediterranean Basin
Collected	When	
	Who	August Kestner (1777-1853)
	Where	Rome

Keywords

- Skorpion
- amulet
- magic

Literature

- Schlüter, Margildis - Platz-Horster, Gertrud (1975): Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen IV. Hannover, Kestner Museum, Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe. Wiesbaden, 312 Nr. 1717, Taf. 226
- Siebert, Anne Viola (2007): Das Übel mit Steinen bekämpfen. Seybold, Silke (Hrsg.), All about Evil. Das Böse. Katalog der Ausstellung in Bremen 2007/08 (Mainz 2007), 156