



The Symbolism of the Ancient Egyptian Sa Sign as a Scarf

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Abstract

The scarf is generally known as a length or square of fabric worn around the neck, head, or shoulders. This article deals with the ancient Egyptian (Sa) sign as a scarf that mainly appeared around the neck of certain deities and sacred animals in specific contexts in some temples and tombs' depictions. It also displays some examples of men wearing this scarf around their chest and waist. It reviews distinctive ancient Egyptian themes, in which this kind of scarf is represented for identifying its origin, forms, colors, function and symbolism. For achieving these goals, the article employs a descriptive analytical approach of the figures wearing the (Sa) sign as a neck scarf in ancient Egyptian scenes either royal or private. The article concludes certain points: the figures that were represented wearing the (Sa) sign as a neck scarf in the ancient Egyptian scenes, the identity of these figures as either human, sacred animals, or deities, the main purposes for wearing a scarf tied in the form of (Sa) sign, and the differences and characteristics of the depicted forms and colors of the (Sa) neck scarf.

I. Introduction

In the ancient Egyptian language various hieroglyphic signs indicated protection and shelter, amongst is the (Sa) sign.¹ It was employed as a protective amulet in ancient Egyptian representations and artifacts;² in jewelry particularly necklaces,³ in invocation inscriptions

¹ Sa sign is V17 or V18 [in Gardiner's Sign List](#).

² One of the interesting examples of the sa amulets is dating back to the Middle Kingdom, 11th dynasty. It was found in Temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahri by MMA excavations between 1922–23. It extends protection to the wearer, whether in life or death; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545150> Accessed 18 Aug. 2022.

usually joined with the nb and ankh signs to express the wish for “all life and protection *s3 ‘nh nb*”. Its form as an amulet offers a protection against powers of evil. It was also represented on artifacts and coffins as a decorative protective sign, in association to certain deities of protection and childbirth like goddess *Taweret* and god Bes when emphasizing their protective duties and natures.⁴ Besides, the form of (Sa) was worn as a scarf by some deities and even humans, as indicated in the various representations for the ancient Egyptians wearing scarves or sashes made of a piece of cloth wrapped around the body or the waist to protect it. The scarves surrounding the necks for protection and also decoration are different types of Egyptian costume that dates back to the Old Kingdom period.⁵

Various suggestions have been offered about the origin and the form of the (Sa) sign. Some thought it represented a rolled-up herdsman’s shelter⁶ or perhaps the papyrus life-preserver used by the Nile’s boatmen.⁷ The hieroglyphic sign appears in two forms. In the Old Kingdom, the lower section of the hieroglyph was undivided, while in the Middle Kingdom, it was usually separated. It was made of a looped cord, which was usually of linen thread or leather.⁸

The (Sa) sign served as a visual representation of the concept of "protection". During the Middle Kingdom, it was engraved on magic wands or batons to increase their efficaciousness.⁹ It appeared on most of the rods and was maybe a standard part of the equipment of a *saw* (a person who created protection charms). The rods and the ivory wands may be especially striking to the eye because they were frequently used by and for women, who would not typically be literate. No spell outlines the precise application of the rods. The magician probably tried to subdue the powerful beings depicted on the rods and transform their might into a protecting force rather than an aggressive one. Some of these animals appeared in symbols in Graeco Egyptian magical papyri around 1500 years later.¹⁰

The (Sa) sign usually had the form of a looped rope knot. The knot in general is a symbol of great importance in the ancient Egyptian texts, where it appeared in the pyramids and coffin texts as well as in the Book of the Dead as a symbol of life, strength, prosperity and authority. In addition, it is related to myths where it appeared as a symbol of the beginning of life in the theories of creation, and in solar myths as the light of the sun and its daily cycle. Because of these reasons, the knot was used in amulets as a symbol of protection and body and life preserver.¹¹

³ One of the examples dating back to the Middle Kingdom is a necklace with Sa amulets of Senebtisi; Oppenheim, A., Arnold, D., Arnold, D., & Yamamoto, K. (2015). *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 241; <https://jstor.org/stable/community.18751758>. Accessed 18 Aug. 2022.

⁴ Remler, P. (2010). *Egyptian mythology, A to Z*. Infobase Publishing.169.

⁵ Ebied, A. (2016). Preserving our Tangible Heritage: Clothing in Ancient Egypt to the Present Day. *International Academic Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management Helwan University, Volume 2, No.2*, 126.

⁶ Wilkinson, R. H. (1992). *Reading Egyptian Art: hieroglyphic guide to ancient Egyptian painting and sculpture*. Thames and Hudson. 197; Watts, E. W., & Girsh, B. (1998). *Art of ancient Egypt: A resource for educators*. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 50.

⁷ Remler 2010. 169.

⁸ Hamid, A., & Sami, D. (2016). Some Remarkable Amulets in Ancient Egyptian Art. *Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality, 13*(4), 11-21.

⁹ Remler 2010, 169.

¹⁰ Pinch, G. (1995). *Magic in ancient Egypt*. MBI Publishing Company, 79.

¹¹ Mahmoud, R. A. A. (2019). The Knot in Examples of Religious Texts. *Shedet, 6*(6), 58.

The article will introduce the (Sa) sign amulet as a wrap-around sash, ribbon, or scarf worn around the neck that is the main subject of the study. The current study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

II. Objectives of the study

1. Identifying the figures who were represented wearing the (Sa) sign as a scarf in the ancient Egyptian scenes.
2. Classifying the figures wearing the (Sa) scarf according to the identity, are they human, sacred animals, or deities?
3. Determining the main purposes for wearing a scarf tied in the form of (Sa) sign.
4. Indicating the differences and characteristics of the depicted forms and colors of the (Sa) scarf, are they the same, or differ according to the identity of the figure who wears the scarf?

III. Methodology

The article applies the descriptive and analytical methodology in the study of the figures wearing the (Sa) sign as a scarf in the ancient Egyptian scenes either royal or private.

IV. Discussion and results

The (Sa) as a Protective Scarf for Men

During the Old Kingdom, the ancient Egyptian boatmen wore a bandoleer like a scarf in the form of (Sa) sign across one shoulder and the torso of the boatmen as in the fishing scene in the 6th Dynasty tomb of Aba No.8 at Deir El Gebrawi (Fig. 1).¹² It appeared also tied beneath the chest (Fig. 2) and sometimes tied like belt around the waist of hippo hunters and fishermen (Fig. 3) as it can be seen in the scenes of the 6th Dynasty tomb of Kagemni at Saqqara.¹³ This later Old Kingdom traditional scene depicts men on small boats while they are hunting hippos with their harpoons and wearing the same (Sa) scarf that was tied around the chest of the fishermen in the same tomb (Fig. 2). This could be seen as a narrow belt and a textile flap that allows for ease of movement and serves as a loincloth to cover their genitalia and prevent embarrassment as they are naked. However, the hostile environment in the marshes that can be seen in the battle between the dangerous animals like crocodiles and hippos could be another reason for wearing this form of (Sa) as a scarf or a belt. It seems to be a tool of the protection against these fierce animals which exists in the marsh, the unorganized environment (or Isfet), where the order required by Ma'at does not reign.¹⁴

The Old Kingdom Egyptian beliefs consider that the hippo, one of the animals of the marsh, was a brutal and uncontrolled menacing power that could cause a return to the original chaos. Besides, the Egyptians believed that it could be a threat to their eternal destiny as it may hinder their journey by the solar boat to the Afterlife. It is unpredictable and dangerous in water so they considered it as a malefic animal associated with the god Seth.¹⁵ Its attacks can be known from the medical recipe for treating hippo bite. They were also damaging the cultivation with their

¹² For more about the tomb see; de Garis Davies, N. (2015). *Tomb of Aba and Smaller Tombs of the Southern Group*. Cambridge University Press.

¹³ For more about the tomb see: von Bissing, F. W. F., Bollacher, M., & Weigall, A. (1905). *Die mastaba des Gemini-kai* (Vol. 1). A. Duncker.

¹⁴ https://www.osirisnet.net/mastabas/kagemni/e_kagemni_02.htm . Accessed 18 Aug. 2022.

¹⁵ It is shown largely on the walls of Greco-Roman temples, such as that at Edfu.

enormous appetite.¹⁶ In addition, a negative symbolic value is known about the male hippo as it could still be submerged for a long time and then go to the surface suddenly to overturn the boat and thus kill its occupants. Although this animal was dangerous and feared by people, it was endowed with positive qualities. The Egyptians had an ambivalent relationship with it. The ancient Egyptians also noticed that the female hippos fiercely protect their young.¹⁷ The dangerous yet protective nature of this animal was maybe the main reason that *Taweret*, a goddess who protects mothers and children, was represented as part hippo.¹⁸ Therefore, it could be suggested that the (Sa) sign held by this goddess was not for the protection of the goddess herself but for activating her maternal protective nature and overcoming her dangerous aspect. Therefore, the reason that the fishermen were wearing the (Sa) scarf or accompanied it on their boats was most likely for the protection against her dangerous aspect. Destroying or controlling this evil power magically was important.



Fig. 1: The fishing scene on the south wall of the 6th Dynasty tomb of Aba No. 8 at Deir El Gebrawi (De Garis Davies, N. (1902). *The Rock Tombs of Deir El Gebrâwi* (Vol. 12). Sold at the offices of the Egypt exploration fund, pl. IV)



Fig. 2: The (Sa) scarf in the tomb of Kagemni

(https://www.osirisnet.net/popupImage.php?img=/mastabas/kagemni/photo/kagemni_tb_1138.jpg&lang=en&sw=1366&sh=768 Accessed 8 Aug. 2022)

¹⁶ A papyrus refers to such a devastated harvest: “the worm took half and the hippopotamus ate the rest”; Erman, A., & Blackman, A. M. (1995). *Ancient Egyptian poetry and prose*. Courier Corporation, 198.

¹⁷ Graves-Brown, C. (2010). Dancing for Hathor: women in ancient Egypt. A&C Black. 63; Ritner, R. K. (1984). A uterine amulet in the oriental institute collection. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 43(3), 209-221.

¹⁸ Capel, A. K., Markoe, G., & Bryan, B. M. (1996). *Mistress of the house, mistress of heaven: women in ancient Egypt*. Hudson Hills, 67.



Fig. 3: The (Sa) as a belt in the tomb of Kagemni

(https://www.osirisnet.net/popupImage.php?img=/mastabas/kagemni/photo/kagemni_tb_1192.jpg&lang=en&sw=1366&sh=768 Accessed 8 Aug. 2022)

Some fishing scenes show the (Sa) scarf among the main equipment accompanied by fishermen as in the tombs of Aba at Deir El Gebrawi (Fig. 4). The reason of accompanying these (Sa) scarves in this context is the protection against hippopotamus which represents the evil power that could attack them. They were may be worn by the fishermen when they were in the risky places of the marshes.

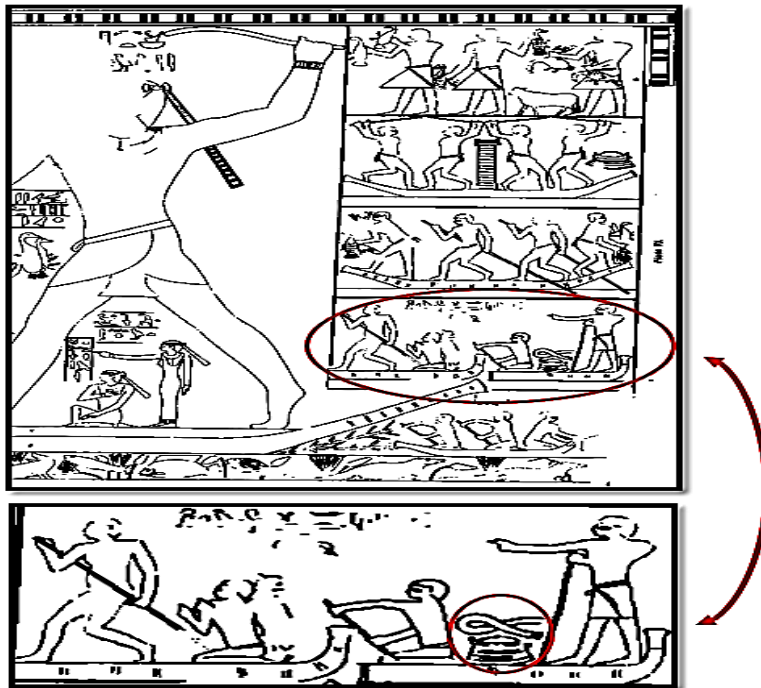


Fig. 4: South wall tomb of Aba No. 8 at Deir El Gebrawi

(De Garis Davies, N. (1902). *The Rock Tombs of Deir El Gebrâwi* (Vol. 12). Sold at the offices of the Egypt exploration fund, pl. V)

The type of protective and at the same time decorative neck scarf is considered as a different type of Egyptian costume that was represented in two statues of Metjetji from the Old Kingdom (late 5th Dynasty to early 6th Dynasty), one is recently preserved at Knsas Museum, while the

other at Brooklyn Museum. The neck scarf here appears with different brilliant colors and falling ends reaching to the waist. It looks like the present style worn by the youth and also similar to the Egyptian tradition of neck scarf worn in Upper Egypt by many people (Fig. 5).¹⁹ A late Period example for the neck scarf is found in a relief in the 26th Dynasty Chapel of Osiris Nebdjefau at Karnak Complex. It appears worn by Sheshonq A, a high steward. It is represented here as a long plain/uncolored sash with unusual asymmetric ends (Fig. 6).²⁰

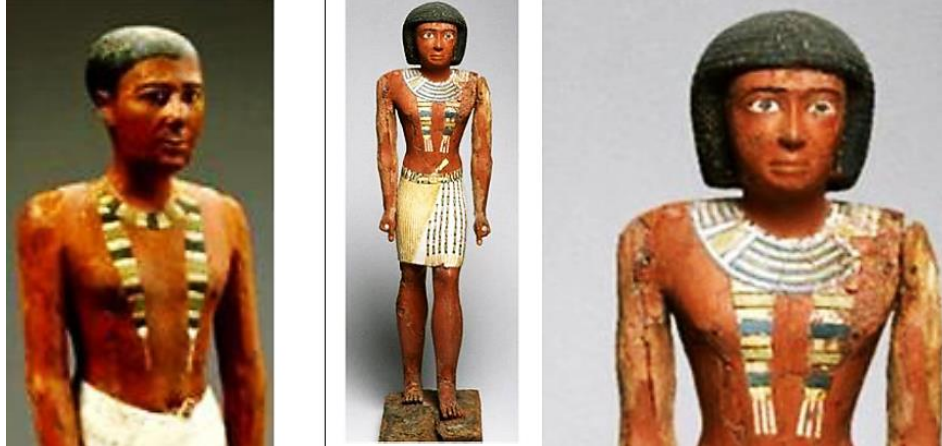


Fig. 5: The neck scarf on two statues of Metjetji; the one to the left is at Knsas Museum, while the right one at Brooklyn Museum.

(Ebied, A. (2016). Preserving our Tangible Heritage: Clothing in Ancient Egypt to the Present Day. *International Academic Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management Helwan University, Volume 2, No.2, 136, Figs. 31, 32*)

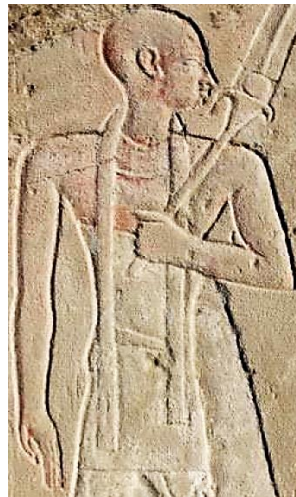


Fig. 6: The neck scarf in the 26th Dynasty relief of Sheshonq A

(Hallmann, A. (2017). Clothing (non-royal), Pharaonic Egypt. *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History, 4, Fig. 7*)

¹⁹ Ebied, A. (2016). Preserving our Tangible Heritage: Clothing in Ancient Egypt to the Present Day. *International Academic Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management Helwan University, Volume 2, No.2, 126, 136, Figs. 31, 32.*

²⁰ Hallmann, A. (2017). Clothing (non-royal), Pharaonic Egypt. *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History, 4, Fig. 7.*

The (Sa) as a Ceremonial Scarf for Deities

1. (Sa) Scarf and God Anubis

Anubis was the terrifying canine god who guarded the cemetery oversaw the mummification of the bodies.²¹ He was represented on coffins and tomb walls, papyrus Books of the Afterlife and as a statue. He was usually shown as a man with the head of a jackal or as a jackal often sitting on the top of a shrine.²² In his form as a seated jackal, Anubis often was shown with a ribbon/sash like a scarf tied around his neck that could link up to domesticated dogs, which were usually shown in a similar fashion wearing collars and leashes.²³ This looped sash like a scarf is a version of the (Sa) sign which symbolized the protection of female deities. Not only Anubis wears this sash, it is also worn at the king's waist and by deities, again symbolizing protective power.²⁴

In chapter 151, Anubis is also represented on the same form seated on a shrine with a flagellum emerging from his back. The scarf around his neck is a stylized form of the (Sa) sign which always means "protection", more specifically the magical protection. The word "sa" in its meaning "protection" had been mentioned many times in different chapters in the Book of the Dead.²⁵

The New Kingdom scenes of god Anubis, as a complete jackal recumbent over his shrine or standing before the boat of god Ra in funerary contexts (Table 1), show the (Sa) scarf of the god in different colors. It was represented in different colors but it was mostly in red that can be noticed in some royal and private tombs such as the 19th Dynasty tombs of king Siptah KV 47, Queen Nefertari, Inerkhau (TT359), Roy (TT255), the 20th Dynasty tomb of king Ramesses III, and others. It appeared also in the blue color as in the 18th Dynasty tomb of Sennefer (TT96) and in the white color as in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Pashedu (TT3). The use of the red color could be read because of its two extremes symbolism: Life and victory as well as anger and fire.²⁶ In Chapter 156 of the Book of the Dead, the red jasper tyet amulet was placed at the neck of a mummy. According to the text the red blood will be the protection of [the mummy's] body and that the amulet will drive away whoever would commit a crime against him.²⁷ The usual red (Sa)

²¹ For more details on Anubis and his roles as a guide and embalmer see Newell, C. (2014). *The significance of Anubis as seen in coffin texts* (Doctoral dissertation, Macquarie University).

²² Pinch, G. (2004). *Egyptian mythology: A guide to the gods, goddesses, and traditions of ancient Egypt*. Oxford University Press, USA. 104.

²³ Gerber, D. (2020). *An iconographic investigation of the attributes and functions of Ancient Egyptian canine deities and their relation to death* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria), 79.

²⁴ Smith, M. (n.d.). Secrets of the Afterlife – Anubis. Western Australia Museum. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from <http://museum.wa.gov.au/whats-on/afterlife/curators-introduction/anubis>.

²⁵ Andrews, C., & Wasserman, J. (2008). *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day-The Complete Papyrus of Ani Featuring Integrated Text and Full-Color Images*. Chronicle Books, p. 168.

²⁶ In the folk ancient Egyptian language doing red work means being angry and victorious; Schenkel, W. (2007). Color terms in ancient Egyptian and Coptic. In Robert, E., et al. (Hg.), *Anthropology of color. Interdisciplinary multilevel modeling*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia. S. 211-228. Available from: https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeumdok/1577/1/Schenkel_Color_terms_2007.pdf; Erman, Adolf & Hermann Grapow (1926-1963). *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*. III, Leipzig: Hinrichs, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag. 151,1-2.

²⁷ Goelet, Jr., Ogdin; Faulkner, Raymond O.; Andrews, Carol A. R.; Gunther, J. Daniel; Wasserman, James (2015). *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going forth by Day, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. Chronicle Books. pl. 32-B.

scarf would function as a magical tool of protection on the same. It is like a sign that Anubis is protective rather than dangerous.

The form of the (Sa) scarves on the different depictions vary slightly in its length, width and ends. This seems to depend on the artist vision. The (Sa) scarf was also depicted sometimes tied around the neck of Anubis as in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Siptah while on some other tombs like tomb of king Ramesses III and the tomb of his son Khaemwaset the (Sa) scarf was not tied and left free. Being tied or not, the (Sa) sign seems to function for the same reasons of magical protection. It could be supposed that some artists wanted to change its form for extinguishing their personal artistic touch and it was not for a dogmatic reason.

Table 1: Figures of god Anubis as a seated jackal wearing the (Sa) neck scarf in the funerary scenes of the New Kingdom tombs.




Figure	Description	Source
	Statue of the Jackal god Anubis was discovered in the 18 th Dynasty tomb of king Tutankhamun KV 62.	Salvador, R.B. (2016). The overwatching eye of Horus. <i>Journal of Geek Studies</i> , 3(2), 6, Fig. 5A.
	The Jackal god in the 18 th Dynasty tomb of Sennefer, TT96.	https://www.osirisnet.net/popupImage.php?img=/tombes/nobles/sennefer/photo/snnfr_lc_bc_ewdw_01.jpg&lang=en&sw=1280&sh=1024 , Accessed 13 Aug. 2022.
	The Jackal god in the 19 th Dynasty tomb of king Siptah KV 47.	KMT, Volume 9, Number 2, 1998, 52.

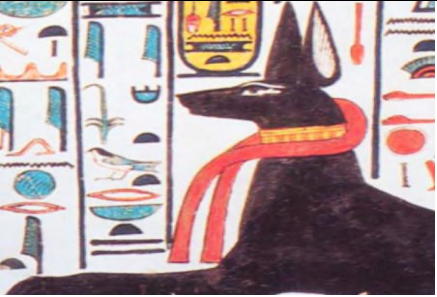





Figure	Description	Source
	<p>The jackal god in the lower west side of the descending corridor in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Queen Nefertari.</p>	<p>McDonald, J. K. (1996). <i>House of eternity: the tomb of Nefertari</i>. Getty Publications, 88.</p>
	<p>The jackal god in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Pashedu No. 3 at Deir al-Madina.</p>	<p>https://www.pinterest.it/pin/413979390726999530/, Accessed 18 September 2022.</p>
	<p>Anubis in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Roy TT 255.</p>	<p>Shehab, N. F. A. (2017). Xkr (Kheker) frieze in ancient Egypt. <i>Journal of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists</i>, 2(2), 156, Fig. 16.</p>
	<p>The jackal god in the 20th Dynasty tomb of Khaemwaset, a son of Ramesses II.</p>	<p>https://www.heritage-print.com/wall-painting-tomb-khaemwaset-son-ramses-ii-15063262.html, Accessed 13 September 2022.</p>

Figure	Description	Source
	Anubis as a recumbent jackal in the Papyrus of Ani.	Faulkner, R. O. (1994). The Egyptian Book of the Dead The Book of Going Forth by Day Being the Papyrus of Ani (Royal Scribe of the Divine Offerings), San Francisco, pl. 33.
	Anubis in the 20 th Dynasty tomb of king Ramesses III KV 11.	http://drivingclockwise.com/egypt/2003/02/14/kv11-tomb-of-ramesses-iii/2/ , Accessed 18 September 2022.

Other later fine examples for the same models of the New Kingdom figures of the jackal god wearing the usual red (Sa) neck scarf could be found in the funerary scenes on the inner sides of the Third Intermediate Period sarcophagi and coffins, such as the late 21st Dynasty coffin of Nesykhonsu, the "Lady of the House" and the "Singer of the Choir of Mut the Great" (Fig. 7).²⁸



Fig. 7: Figures of the jackal god wearing the usual red (Sa) neck scarf in the late 21st Dynasty coffin of lady Nesykhonsu

(<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1914.714.a#>, Accessed 18 September 2022)

²⁸ <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1914.714.a#>, Accessed 18 September 2022.

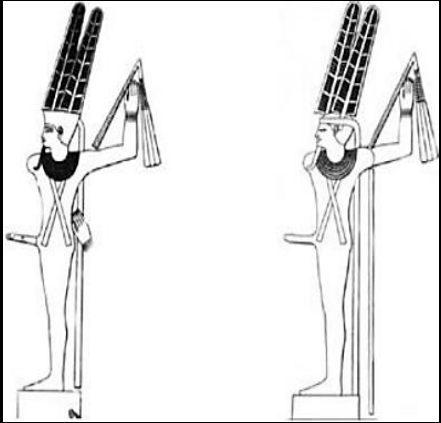
2. (Sa) Scarf and God Amun/ Amun-Min

There are different representations of god Amun in the White Chapel at Karnak either in human body, or in mummy-form. Some of the mummy-form figures of the god are represented in the Ithyphallic pose (Fig. 8). The god, in his image as a mummy form human figure having an erected phallus, appeared wearing the (Sa) scarf around the neck beneath the wide collar.²⁹

It is worthy to mention that the ithyphallic pose of god Amun was originally acquired from god Min, a much older fertility god had many roles in ancient Egyptian life and religion.³⁰ This pose in the divine realm was considered to be a symbol of creation, self-regeneration, and resurrection.³¹

The relation between Amun and Min dates back to the Middle Kingdom when scenes represent Amun in the form of the ithyphallic Min. Much of the evidence for such sacred relation, however, is known from the New Kingdom on. Both gods were linked to the two sacred animals the ram and the bull that were believed to be symbols of virility. The composite god Amun-Min was titled as Kamutef “the Bull of his mother”.³²

God Min and Amun-Min later occasionally wears a red ribbon (Sa) that may represent the sexual power and protection.




Figure	Description	Source
	<p>Fig.8: Different representations of god Amun/Amun-Min in Ithyphallic pose from the White Chapel at Karnak Complex.</p>	<p>Melkebeek, Bert. (2020). A Life-Size Granodiorite Head of the Ancient Egyptian Fertility God Min, 11, fig. 4.</p>

²⁹Melkebeek, Bert. (2020). A Life-Size Granodiorite Head of the Ancient Egyptian Fertility God Min, 11, fig. 4.


³⁰Bunson, M. (2014). Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt. Infobase Publishing, 248; Ragueh, C. (2014). 'Min' Guardian of the Desert. *Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality*, 11(2), 43-52.

³¹Robins, G. (2007). "Male Bodies and the Construction of Masculinity in New Kingdom Egyptian Art", In *Servant of Mut*, Leiden, and the Netherlands: Brill, 208.

³²Yoo, Sung Hwan, Patterns of Ancient Egyptian Child Deities, A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Egyptology and Ancient Western Asian Studies at Brown University, Providence, Rhodes Island, 2012, 35.


Figure	Description	Source
	<p>Fig.9: Repeated figures for god Amun/ Amun-Min wearing the (Sa) neck scarf in most of the scenes of the black and red chapels of Queen Hatshepsut at Karnak Complex.³³</p>	<p>Photographed by the Researcher.</p>
	<p>Fig.10: God Amun/ Amun-Min wearing the (Sa) neck scarf on one of the blocks in the Open air Museum at Karnak Complex.</p>	<p>Photographed by the Researcher.</p>
	<p>Fig.11: Limestone block painted with Relief of Amun-Min from the Temple of Thutmose III at Deir el-Bahri, currently preserved among the Collection of the Luxor Museum.</p>	<p>https://www.worldhistory.org/image/12847/amun-min/. Accessed 6 Aug. 2022.</p>

³³ For more details on such scenes see Belal, O., Awad, M. A. E. R., shawky El-Bassiouny, K., & El-Abidine, A. A. Z. (2022). The western wall of Hatshepsut's red chapel sanctuary at Karnak temples "Archaeological study". *The Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Arts Tanta University, Issue 48*, 93-133.

Figure	Description	Source
	<p>Fig. 12: A representation of god Amun-Min on a funerary papyrus with vignettes from the Book of the Dead, named "Fragment of a papyrus with an embalmment scene". The papyrus dates back to the Late Period and is currently preserved in Pushkin Museum, inv. I. 1b 23.</p>	<p>Lavrentyeva, N. V. (2021). A Papyrus Fragment with an Embalmment Scene from the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. <i>CIPEG Journal: Ancient Egyptian & Sudanese Collections and Museums</i>, (5), 114, Fig. 1.</p>



3. (Sa) Scarf and God Ptah

God Ptah, the creator god who created the world with the help of his mind and utterance,³⁴ was usually represented in the ancient Egyptian scenes as a mummified human figure standing or enthroned holding a composite scepter of the symbols of stability, life, and omnipotence.³⁵ His neck and chest were adorned with the wide wesekh collar and in most of the scenes the (Sa) neck scarf is seen beneath the collar as a magical protective amulet. It was painted in dark or light red. (Figs. 13-15)

Figure	Description	Source
	<p>Fig. 13: the enthroned mummy-form figure of god Ptah on the right wall of the burial chamber in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Pashedu No. 3 at Deir el-Medina.</p>	<p>https://deirelmedinaegypt.wixsite.com/home/tt-3, Accessed 14 Aug. 2022.</p>

³⁴ Ignatov, S. (2004). Word and Image in Ancient Egypt. *The Journal of Egyptological Studies*, (1), 1.

³⁵ Holland, G. S. (2009). *Gods in the Desert: Religions of the Ancient Near East*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 35.

Figure	Description	Source
	<p>Fig. 14: A relief of god Ptah in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Nefertari at the Valley of Queens.</p>	<p>Kairoinfo4u, "Relief of Ptah, Tomb of Nefertari", World History Encyclopedia, Last modified September 04, 2020. https://www.worldhistory.org/image/12667/relief-of-ptah-tomb-of-nefertari/.</p>
	<p>Fig. 15: A relief of god Ptah in the 20th Dynasty tomb of Ramesses V/VI KV 9.</p>	<p>Photographed by the Researcher.</p>

4. (Sa) Scarf and God Osiris

God Osiris was represented in several scenes in his usual image mummy-form wearing the (Sa) sign as a neck scarf beneath the wide collar of goddess Isis (wesekh collar), for example the offering scenes in the sanctuary of god Osiris in the 19th Dynasty temple of king Seti I at Abydos. In (fig.16) king Seti I appears to the left of the offering scene presenting the (Sa) sign as an offering to god Osiris, the enthroned god, who appears wearing just the wide collar around the neck and his arms are crossed on the chest. To the right of the scene the god appears wearing the presented offering the (Sa) sign as a neck scarf beneath the wide collar but this time his arms are not crossed on the chest.



Fig.16: King Seti I presenting the (Sa) scarf to god Osiris in his sanctuary at the temple of Abydos (Photographed by the Researcher)

God Osiris together with god Anubis as mummy-form figures in a standing posture and wearing the (Sa) neck scarf beneath the wide wesekh collar, are depicted on an 18th Dynasty religious limestone pyramidal stela (Fig. 17).³⁶ Another example for god Anubis, but in enthroned posture, dates back to the Third Intermediate Period the 21st Dynasty, is the offering scene painted on the inner side of the coffin of Bakenmut (Fig. 18).³⁷



Fig. 17: Figures of gods Osiris and Anubis on an 18th Dynasty religious limestone pyramidal stela; Fig. 18: an enthroned figure of god Anubis painted on inner side of the 21st Dynasty coffin of Bakenmut. (Αντωνιάδου, X. (2017). Anubis: the god's manifestation in the iconographical and literary sources of the Pharaonic Period, Rhodes: the University of Aegean, figs. 44, 46)

³⁶ Christina, A. (2018). Anubis: the god's manifestation in the iconographical and literary sources of the Pharaonic Period, Rhodes: the University of Aegean, 49, Fig. 44.

³⁷ Ibid, 50, Fig. 46.


5. (Sa) Scarf and the Four Sons of Horus

The embalming scenes of god Anubis and the deceased particularly on the coffins and cartonnage of the Late Period always depict the four sons of Horus among the main imaginary of the funeral context (Fig. 19). They were represented mummy-form and standing either on each side of the embalming bed behind or before goddesses Isis and Nephthys, or beneath the bed. They usually wear and hold the red (Sa) sign (a looped cord knot) as a symbol of magical protection for the deceased, for example a Late Period fragment of a cartonnage mummy-cover (Fig. 20) represents in the upper scene the four sons of Horus as mummy-form figures standing in pairs behind the two mourners the goddesses Isis and Nephthys, who are seen on either side of the embalming bed of the deceased. Each one of the four gods is seen wearing the red (Sa) sign as a neck scarf and at the same time holding it in front of him. The lower scene shows two standing figures of the sons of Horus, facing the inscription containing the name of the deceased Nesy-Khonsu.³⁸ The (Sa) sign here appears, as in the upper scene, around the neck beneath the wide wesekh collar and being held in the hands in front and along the body but uncolored. Several paragraphs of the Coffin Texts show the role of such Knot in protecting the deceased from evil and any danger that he might face in the netherworld, for example Spell 50 (CT I 225):³⁹



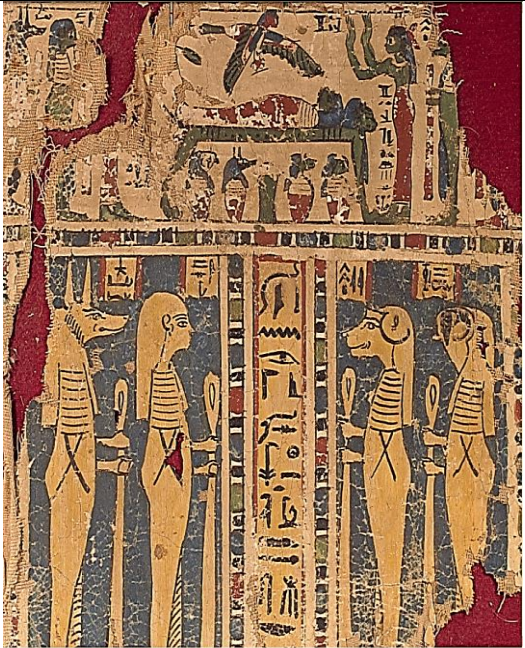
smn b3.k m ddt ts hk3.(k)//// s3.(k)////rdi s3.k m-hnw ht-ntr

“Your soul is established in Djedu, and you have knotted together your magic and protection about you, your protection in the Sacred Booth”.

Figure	Description	Source
	<p>Fig.19: the four sons of Horus on a Late Period funerary papyrus with vignettes from the Book of the Dead, named "Fragment of a papyrus with an embalming scene."</p>	<p>Lavrentyeva, N. V. (2021). A Papyrus Fragment with an Embalming Scene from the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. <i>CIPEG Journal: Ancient Egyptian & Sudanese Collections and Museums</i>, (5), 114, Fig. 1.</p>

³⁸ Lavrentyeva, N. V. (2021). A Papyrus Fragment with an Embalming Scene from the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. *CIPEG Journal: Ancient Egyptian & Sudanese Collections and Museums*, (5), 118, Fig. 2.

³⁹ Mahmoud, R. A. A. (2019). The Knot in Examples of Religious Texts. *Shedet*, 6(6), 63.

Figure	Description	Source
	<p>Fig.20: the four sons of Horus on a Late Period cartonnage mummy-cover (Pushkin Museum, inv I. 1a 864).</p>	<p>Lavrentyeva, N. V. (2021). A Papyrus Fragment with an Embalming Scene from the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. <i>CIPEG Journal: Ancient Egyptian & Sudanese Collections and Museums</i>, (5), 118, Fig. 2.</p>

There is an example for a New Kingdom canopic jar stopper in the shape of the canine head of god Duamutef, one of the four sons of Horus, was originally preserved in the Egyptian Museum at Cairo then was moved to the Louvre Museum. The head of the god was completely colored in black wearing a red thin (Sa) neck scarf similar to the depiction of the god Anubis in the seated jackal form (Fig. 21).⁴⁰



Fig. 21: A New Kingdom canopic jar stopper in the shape of the canine head of god Duamutef. (Gerber, D. (2020). *An iconographic investigation of the attributes and functions of Ancient Egyptian canine deities and their relation to death* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria), 87, Fig. 52)

⁴⁰ Gerber, D. (2020). *An iconographic investigation of the attributes and functions of Ancient Egyptian canine deities and their relation to death* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria), 87, Fig. 52.

6. (Sa) Scarf and Deities of the Netherworld

The twelfth hour in the Book of the Underworld (Fig. 22) shows the dead form of god Ra, the sun god, at the end of the day as a mummy wearing the (Sa) neck scarf that emerged from the serpent of the night and lying on the lower part of the curvature at the eastern end of the Underworld. The (Sa) scarf here played as an amulet and life preserver for the dead god until his rebirth and rising at the morning as a scarab thrusting the solar disc of the new day and being received by god Shu.⁴¹

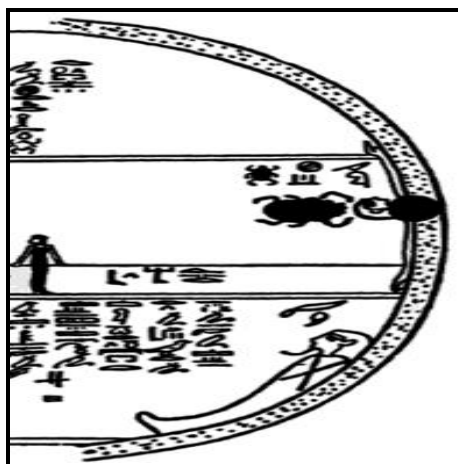


Fig. 22: The dead sun god as a mummy wearing the (sa) neck scarf
(Budge, E. W. (1988). From fetish to God in ancient Egypt. Courier Corporation, 367)

The four sab-jackals, the “bas of the westerners”, which tow the barque of god Ra in the underworld toward the moment of sunrise, were usually depicted in the Book of the dead wearing a red (Sa) neck scarf as a symbol of protection, guarding, and guiding the sacred barque of the god in the Netherworld, as in the 20th Dynasty tomb of Inerkhau TT359 (Fig. 23).⁴²



Fig. 23: Four black jackals wearing four red (sa) scarves around their necks in the 20th Dynasty tomb of Inerkhau TT359.

(https://www.osirisnet.net/popupImage.php?img=/tombes/artisans/inerkhaou359/photo/inerkhaou_unidia-bs_39557.jpg&lang=en&sw=1280&sh=1024, Accessed 13 Aug. 2022)

⁴¹ Budge, E. W. (1988). From fetish to God in ancient Egypt. Courier Corporation, 367.

⁴² Roberson, J. A. (2020). The ‘Jackal Hymn of the West’ in the Book of the Night. *Enigmatic Writing in the Egyptian New Kingdom: Revealing, Transforming, and Display in Egyptian Hieroglyphs. Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde Beiheft 12/1*, 149-193;
(https://www.osirisnet.net/popupImage.php?img=/tombes/artisans/inerkhaou359/photo/inerkhaou_unidia-bs_39557.jpg&lang=en&sw=1280&sh=1024, Accessed 13 Aug. 2022.

The late period Hypocephalus, religious pillow placed between the head of the mummy of the deceased and the funerary headrest, was mainly decorated with mysterious shapes for the creator god Ra protecting the deceased in the afterlife. The creator god is usually shown in the central scene as a seated mummified deity with two or four ram's heads and his neck and chest, in most of the scenes, is adorned with the (Sa) scarf beneath the wide wesekh collar (Fig. 24).⁴³ The (Sa) neck scarf of the creator god seems to be functioned here as a magical protective amulet and life preserver, whose force and effect would be transmitted to the deceased associated with the sun god Ra to ensure his resurrection and rebirth in the netherworld.



Fig. 24: Examples of late period Hypocephalus showing the (Sa) neck scarf worn by mysterious shapes for the creator god Ra

(Weshahy, E., & Omran, R. (2014). Hypocephalus in Ancient Egyptian Religion. *Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality*, 11(3), 20, 25, Figs. 21, 38)

The Funerary Papyrus (Amduat) of the Chantress of Amun "Nauny" (Fig. 25) that dates back to the Third Intermediate period and is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art 30.3.32 shows a group of 40 mummy form deities standing behind each other in a single horizontal row. Above their heads are inscribed their names or emblems. Between each divine name and emblem is written alternatively and repeatedly about 19 times the text "the Osiris Nauny, true of voice". 20 of the deities are represented with human heads and appears wearing a red (sa) sign beneath the wide collar surrounding the shoulders and chest.⁴⁴ Here the (Sa) seems to symbolize the magical protection against the dangerous residents and deities in the netherworld.

⁴³ Hypocephalus is an unusual religious pillow that has a solar significance associated the deceased with the sun god Ra in the netherworld. Weshahy, E., & Omran, R. (2014). Hypocephalus in Ancient Egyptian Religion. *Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality*, 11(3), 1-28.

⁴⁴Ritner, R. (2022). Confronting and Uniting with Divinity in Ancient Egypt. *Conceptualising Divine Unions in the Greek and Near Eastern Worlds*, Brill, 85, Fig. 3.1; the papyrus dates back to the Third Intermediate Period, 21st Dynasty, reign of king Psusennes I. It was originally found in the tomb of Meritamun TT 358, folded 8 times within the wrappings across the knees of the mummy of Nauny (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545191>. Accessed 9 Aug. 2022).



Fig. 25: The Funerary Papyrus of the Chantress of Amun Nauny
(<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545191>, Accessed 9 Aug. 2022)

The funerary scenes depicted on the outer and inner sides of the Third Intermediate Period sarcophagi and coffins usually show a variety of deities standing in mummy-form and wearing the usual red (Sa) neck scarf either tied or with its ends left free, as in the 21st Dynasty sarcophagus of Neshkons (Fig. 26).⁴⁵



Fig. 26: A variety of deities wearing the usual red (Sa) neck scarf in the 21st Dynasty sarcophagus of Neshkons.

(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/samuel-merrin/5931260755/in/photostream/>, Accessed 18 September 2022)

⁴⁵ <https://www.flickr.com/photos/samuel-merrin/5931260755/in/photostream/>, Accessed 18 September 2022.

V. Conclusion

- The (Sa) as a protective scarf was early worn by boatmen in the context of daily life scenes during the Old Kingdom period. Later, during the New Kingdom and Late Period the (Sa) neck scarf was worn by sacred animals and deities in the context of offering and funerary scenes. Its main function was as an amulet for magical protection and life preserver for its wearer.
- The following table expresses the figures wearing the (Sa) neck scarf according to their identity; human, sacred animals, or deities, as well as the different forms and colors of the scarf.

The Identity of the wearer		The form of the scarf	The color of the scarf
Human	Boatmen	A ribbon worn across one shoulder and the torso of the boatmen, or tied around the chest.	Left plain and uncolored.
Sacred animal	the jackal of god Anubis	A ribbon tied with its ends in ankh or ansate cross form or not tied and left free.	Mainly red, and sometimes blue or white.
Gods in mummy-form	Amun/Amun-Min	Thin ribbon/sash/streamer tied with its ends in ankh or ansate cross form.	Usually dark or light red, and sometimes left plain and uncolored.
	Ptah		
	Osiris		
	Anubis		
	The four sons of Horus		
	Gods of Netherworld		

- The fishermen wore the (Sa) scarf or accompanied it on their boats as a tool of protection against the fierce animals that exist in the marsh, as well as protection against the dangerous aspect of the hippopotami, as destroying or controlling this evil power magically was important.
- The only sacred animal that appeared in both scenes and statuary wearing the (Sa) sign tied as a neck scarf was the jackal, the sacred animal of god Anubis, although the god in his other image as a human body with a head of a jackal, has never been shown wearing the (Sa).
- The (Sa) neck scarf of Anubis as a jackal appears either tied with its ends in ankh or ansate cross form or not tied and left free. The (Sa) usually appears surrounding a tight collar decorated the neck of the jackal.
- The (Sa) neck scarf of the jackal god Anubis appeared in different colors, red, blue, and white, but it was mostly in red that can be noticed in some royal and private tombs. The usual red (Sa) scarf functions as a magical tool of protection on the same like the red jasper tyet amulet that was placed at the neck of a mummy. It is like a sign that Anubis is protective rather than dangerous.
- The deities who appear in the scenes wearing the (Sa) as a neck scarf are gods not goddesses. They are gods: Amun/ Amun-Min, Ptah, Osiris, Anubis, the four sons of Horus, and certain gods of the netherworld. They are always represented in mummy-form either standing or enthroned. The (Sa) always appears as a ribbon tied around the neck and its ends dangling crosswise beneath the wide (wesekh) collar of goddess Isis on the chest. It seems that the cross form of the two ends of the (Sa) scarf is used as an alternative for the Osirian attitude of the crossed arms on the chest of the mummified body in its sacred protective function.

- In all cases the main purpose for wearing the (Sa) neck scarf is magical protection and life preserver as the word “Sa” in its meaning “protection” had been mentioned many times in different chapters in the Book of the Dead. The red (Sa) neck scarf when worn by gods Min, Amun/Amun-Min in the Ithyphallic pose, the pose of creation, self-regeneration, and resurrection, it may symbolize the sexual power and protection. When worn by the creator gods like Ra and Ptah, it functions as an amulet for magical protection and life preserver for the sacred rebirth of the god. The (Sa) neck scarf of Osiris, the four sons of Horus, and the gods of the Netherworld serves also as an amulet of life preserver, whose force and effect would be transmitted to the deceased to protect him from evil and any danger that he might face in the Netherworld.

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