

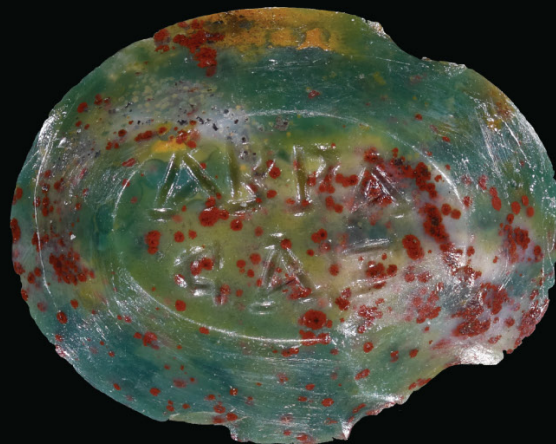
Abrasax is commonly depicted as a cock-headed, snake-legged deity with a human torso in armour, holding a shield in one hand and a whip in the other. The shield is commonly inscribed with the divine name Iaō. This depiction is commonly referred to in modern scholarship as "Anguipede" and interpreted as symbolising the very sum and totality of the Universe, based on the multiple different aspects reflected in the iconographical elements. Fundamentally, the visual representation of "Abrasax" is a puzzle consisting of pieces which all symbolize individual aspects of the beliefs outlined and shared by Basilides.

# Abrasax

Heliotrope, 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> century, findspot unknown

Abrasax is one of the youngest deities in Graeco-Egyptian magic, he has no Egyptian, Greek, Jewish, or other roots in older religious beliefs.

According to rather sparse ancient literary sources, a man called Basilides created the word Abrasax and assigned it to the highest divine being. Basilides lived and taught during the second century in Egypt. Only fragments of his teachings are preserved, and only in refutations, for example in Clement of Alexandria's "Stromateis" and in accounts by Irenaeus of Lyon and Hippolytus. Basilides processed various Persian, Christian-Jewish, and Platonic traditions into a new world view and a new history of creation. In very short, his doctrine comprises 365 spirit realms, and all of their powers and everything they are is incorporated in the word Abrasax, because Abrasax - written in Greek letters - has the numerical value 365. The fact that Basilides' choice of word is based on the Greek alphabet - despite all of the different cultural and religious backgrounds his doctrine draws from - illustrates the deeply rooted ancient belief in the power of the alphabet, the letters, and their combination into words, far beyond being mere tools of human communication.



The numerical value of the seven Greek letters of the name Abrasax is 365, the number of days of the year:

A = 1  
B = 2  
R = 100  
A = 1  
S = 200  
A = 1  
X = 60