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From Isis-kite to Nekhbet-vulture and Horus-falcon: Changes in the identification of the bird above Osiris's phallus in temple 'conception of Horus' scenes

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Abstract

'Conception of Horus' scenes in Egyptian temples date at least from Ramesside to Greco-Roman times. This article seeks to establish whether any changes to their composition or interpretation occurred over this long timespan. The main differences noted centre upon the identity of the bird above Osiris's phallus. In the iconic 'conception of Horus' scene in the Ptah-Sokar chapel of the temple of Seti I at Abydos, the central bird – with whom the deceased yet ithyphallic Osiris copulates – is clearly labelled as Isis, and is therefore best understood as a kite. This type of scene is reprised three times in the Osirian roof-chapels at the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, built some 1300 years later. In the first scene at Dendera, the three birds above Osiris (which include two representing Isis and Horus) are collectively referred to as falcons, which does not preclude the central bird again representing Isis. However, in the second scene, the bird above Osiris's phallus is identified as a vulture, and seemingly represents the goddess Nekhbet. In the third scene, the cognate bird is identified as 'the Falcon of Gold' – an epithet of Horus. Compositionally, this third scene is a good match for what remains of the 'conception of Horus' scene in the Osiris suite of Seti's temple at Abydos, raising the possibility that the bird in this much earlier scene might also represent Horus rather than Isis. In contexts such as this, it is possible that the Horus-falcon was seen as the *bꜣ*-bird of Osiris. In sum, the bird in 'conception of Horus' scenes may initially have been identified primarily with Isis, but it seems that it was equally compatible with interpretation as Nekhbet or Horus. Over time, these alternate identities became explicit in what survives of the artistic record.

Keywords

Conception of Horus, impregnation of Isis, ithyphallic, Falcon of Gold, kite, hawk, vulture, *ba*-bird, Osiris Mysteries, Khoiak.

Introduction

In written sources as early as the Pyramid Texts, Isis and Nephthys – the sisters of Osiris – are identified as mourning his death in the form of kites.¹ The term *dr.ty*, ‘the Two Kites’, refers to these two goddesses, or to their human representatives at earthly funerals.² Isis, as Osiris’s wife as well as his sister, bears the epithet *dr.t wr.t*, ‘the Greater Kite’.³

Details of the conception of Horus are scant in early sources, but over time it becomes apparent that: ‘Through her magic Isis revived the sexual member of [the dead] Osiris and became pregnant by him, eventually giving birth to their child, Horus’.⁴ An Eighteenth Dynasty account, the Great Hymn to Osiris on the stele of Amenmose, has Isis in bird form at the time of this revivification, but the precise nature of her magical arousal of Osiris is less than clear.⁵ Drawing on Greco-Roman texts written in Egyptian, Mark Smith’s summary of the event sequence reads: ‘After the murder of her husband, Isis searched for and discovered his corpse, which was then reconstituted through the rites of mummification. By “playing the role of a man” (*ir tzy*), she was able to arouse Osiris and conceive her son Horus by him’.⁶ Perhaps the unexpected masculinisation of Isis (*iri.n=i tzy iw=i m hm.t*, ‘I made myself a man, although I am a woman’)⁷ is a cryptic reference to the fact that she had to stimulate her dead husband’s phallus manually.⁸ For example, the beating of Isis’s wings prior to her momentary union with Osiris could be a euphemistic allusion to the rhythmic hand-movements needed to arouse his member.⁹ If manual arousal was indeed envisaged, it might be an example of Egyptian love of paronomasia (i.e. word-play),¹⁰ for – in transcription, and thus in phonetic value – the word for hand, *dr.t*, is identical to the word for kite, *dr.t*.¹¹ The hand has a long history as a sexual

¹ Hart 2005: 80.

² Faulkner 1988: 323; Hart 2005: 80; Smith 2017: 77; Shalomi-Hen 2017.

³ Faulkner 1988: 323.

⁴ Wilkinson 2003: 146. Early written allusions (e.g. Pyramid Texts, Spells 366, §632, and 518, §1199; Coffin Texts, Spell 148 (CT II 210-11, 217) stress that Isis was impregnated by Osiris, but do not explicitly state that Osiris was dead at the time or that Isis had taken the form of a bird (Yoo 2012: 54-62; Faulkner 2007: 120, 191 and 2015: 125). There are hints of the latter when Pyramid Texts, Spell 417, §741, says of the king, who is the earthly Horus: ‘Your mother Tait [...] lifts you up to the sky in her name of “Kite”. He whom she has found is her Horus; here is your Horus, O Isis’ (Faulkner 2007: 137).

⁵ The Great Hymn to Osiris on the Stele of Amenmose (Louvre C 286) says that, after her brother’s murder, Isis travelled around the country in mourning, ‘she not alighting’ (*n hni.n=s*) until he was found, whereupon she made shade with her feathers and wind/breath with her wings (*ss.t ... iri.t sw.t m sw.wt=s shpr.t t3w m dnh.wy=sy*); see Moret 1930: 741-42 and Lichtheim 1976: 83. The species of bird is not specified.

⁶ Smith 2017: 6.

⁷ From the Ptolemaic papyrus pLouvre I, 3079, column 110, 21-22 (Pries 2011: 228), a passage whose composition probably dates to the New Kingdom (Goyon 1965: 92, 95). A minimalist translation could read ‘I made a man, I being a woman’, but there are precedents which suggest that the expression *iri tzi* does denote the masculinisation of Isis; see references in Smith (2017: 6, n. 20, including Depauw 2003: 54).

⁸ The Great Hymn to Osiris on the stele of Amenmose (cited above) reads: ‘Mighty Isis who protected her brother [...] who] created breath with her wings; who jubilated, joined her brother, raised the weary one’s inertness, received the seed ...’ (Lichtheim 1976: 83). The verb *mmi*, here translated as ‘to join’, usually means to moor a ship, but by extension can mean to marry a partner, rescue the drowning, attach together (and thus reunite pieces), and bury (or prepare for burial) the deceased (Faulkner 1988: 107; Hannig 2006: 356; Moret 1930: 742-43) – all of which may apply here.

⁹ The actual phrase on the stele of Amenmose (Moret 1930: 741), namely *ss.t ... iri.t hn.w mmi.t sn=s*, could also be read slyly as ‘Isis ... who jubilated the mooring-post of her brother’, where ‘who jubilated ...’ is an innuendo-laden gloss of the literal ‘who performed a jubilation of ...’ (Faulkner 1988: 159; Erman and Grapow 1971: II, 493; *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* 2020: <http://aeaw.bbaw.de/ta/servlet/TlaLogin>, *hn.w* [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020]). On Egyptian sexual circumlocutions, see van Rinsveld (2002: 22 and 31-32). Even Plutarch credits Osiris’s erection to Isis’s handiwork: “Isis made a replica of the (male) member to take its place, and consecrated the phallus” (*Moralia* V, Section 18; Babbitt 1936: 47).

¹⁰ Hornung 1982: 67, 150; Hellum 2015.

¹¹ Erman and Grapow 1971: V, 580, 596.

instrument;¹² the designation *dr.t ntr*, ‘God’s hand’ – an epithet of several goddesses and a title borne by some God’s Wives of Amun – refers to the hand that (Re-)Atum used to masturbate in order to bring forth the rest of the Ennead.¹³

Double entendre or not, the artistic record makes it clear that, at least by the late Middle Kingdom, Isis was believed to have become impregnated in the form of a kite or similar raptor. A large basalt statue of the Thirteenth Dynasty, which shows the inert Osiris inseminating Isis in kite-like form, was found in the supposed tomb of Osiris (which is actually the First Dynasty tomb of Djer) at Umm el-Qa’ab in Abydos.¹⁴ As we shall see, the conception of Horus continued to be depicted in this way in at least one (and perhaps two) scenes in the temple of Seti I at Abydos, which date from the early Nineteenth Dynasty. The statue from Umm el-Qa’ab is thought to have been used for cult purposes until at least the Late Period,¹⁵ and – again, as we shall see – similar depictions at Dendera show the persistence of such scenes into Ptolemaic and indeed Roman times. The longevity of the motif should not be surprising; it makes sense for the mother of the falcon-god to have conceived him while embodied as a falcon-like raptor.

As intimated above, wall reliefs depicting the conception of Horus are found in temples at Abydos and Dendera, which date (respectively) from the Ramesside and Greco-Roman periods. These reliefs constitute the premier examples of the genre, the ones that dominate the literature on the topic. The present analysis seeks to establish whether any changes to the composition or interpretation of this scene-type occurred over this long time interval. Since a direct and detailed comparison of such reliefs has not hitherto been undertaken, the paper compares both the iconography and the textual elements of the scenes in search of continuities and innovations. As we shall see, the main differences centre upon the identity of the bird above Osiris’s phallus. Egyptologists seem to take it as self-evident that the bird above Osiris’s erect penis represents Isis, in the form of a female kite or related raptor, who is depicted in the act of copulating with her deceased husband/brother. As we shall see, however, the captions to two of the three ‘conception of Horus’ scenes at Dendera suggest otherwise. One caption seemingly points to the vulture-goddess Nekhbet, a potential equivalent to Isis, while the other appears to identify the bird as Horus himself, the son flying forth from his father’s body. As the Greco-Roman scene in which this last caption appears is a close compositional match for a Ramesside one from which most of the presumptive ‘Isis kite’ (and its identifying caption, if any) is missing, it raises the interesting possibility that identification of this bird as Horus might not be a late innovation – rather, scenes with this composition may long have carried (or been open to) this interpretation.

The discussion will commence with an introduction to the temples that house ‘conception of Horus’ scenes at Abydos and Dendera. Then the scenes themselves will be analysed, focusing on the identity of the bird above Osiris’s phallus. In one of the two Abydos reliefs, this bird is unambiguously identified as Isis. At Dendera, the captions in two scenes point (as mentioned)

¹² Green 2001. On theological rather than etymological grounds, Pinch (2002: 80) comments that Isis revives Osiris’s sexual power ‘just as the Hand Goddess aroused the penis of the creator to create the first life.’ She later points out that, in *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*, Isis again emulates the Hand Goddess when she manually stimulates Horus to emission (Pinch 2002: 82).

¹³ Van Rinsveld 2002: 24; Hart 2005: 41; El Hawary 2016: 12.

¹⁴ Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 32090. See O’Connor 2009: 89-90, including Figure 42. For a colour image online, and audio commentary, see Stop 5 in St. Louis Art Museum (n.d.): <https://www.slam.org/audio/sunken-cities/> [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020]. Concerning this sculpture, Jean-Claude Goyon writes: ‘It is in the form of a kite that Isis conceived...’ (1965: 111, n. 22).

¹⁵ O’Connor 2009: 90, Figure 42.

to its identification as Nekhbet and Horus. Since these scenes are found in the Temple of Hathor, a goddess with whom Isis is substantially syncretised, the possibility that the bird might also be interpreted as Hathor is discussed briefly. Iconographic overlaps of the same bird with the *h3*-bird are then considered; if the bird of interest was considered to be the *h3*-bird of Osiris, it might further explain why it could be identified as Nekhbet (whose imagery overlaps with that of the *h3*-bird) and – especially – as the Horus-falcon, since Horus may be considered a *h3* of Osiris. The possibility that the bird of interest might represent Horus in earlier scenes, including one of the two examined at Abydos, is raised. For completeness, the discussion then includes a short excursus that seeks to explain the unnaturally high positioning of Osiris’s phallus on his torso in many of the ‘conception of Horus’ scenes. By way of conclusion, the paper’s main findings are then reprised and integrated.

As mentioned previously, wall reliefs depicting the conception of Horus are found in temples at Abydos and Dendera. To establish the context of the scenes, we must first turn our attention to the temples; after that, the scenes themselves will be discussed.

Temples containing ‘conception of Horus’ scenes

Abydos

Abydos has a long history as both a royal and a religious centre. In the first place, many early kings were buried in the Predynastic necropolis (Cemetery U) and its Early Dynastic continuation (Cemetery B) at Umm el-Qa’ab.¹⁶ During the Sixth to Eleventh Dynasties, the local Abydene deity Khentamentiu became identified with and subsumed into Osiris, ruler of the dead,¹⁷ and, from the start of the Middle Kingdom, Abydos served as the major cult centre for Osiris.¹⁸ An annual ritual procession, which travelled from Osiris’s temple at the edge of the floodplain to his supposed tomb in Umm el-Qa’ab and back again, re-enacted the attack of Sethian enemies upon Osiris and celebrated the latter’s ultimate victory.¹⁹ Thanks to the importance and popularity of this festival, Abydos became both an enduring pilgrimage site and a desirable burial place for elite individuals.²⁰

In the New Kingdom, Seti I (c.1290-1279 BCE) built a vast and lavishly decorated memorial temple for himself, which was completed by his son, Ramses II (c.1279-1213 BCE).²¹ Adjacent to this, a large cenotaph or ‘empty tomb’ of Osiris was built in a monolithic style that mimics Old Kingdom royal architecture; this structure is now known as the Osireion.²² Ramses then built a memorial temple of his own nearby, as well as a portal temple opposite the time-hallowed Osiris temple. The portal temple now lies in ruins, but the three other Ramesside structures continue to dominate the built landscape of Abydos to the present day.

The temple of Seti I survives almost intact. In the furthest depths of the temple at the (south)western end of the building is the Osiris complex, a transverse suite of richly decorated rooms ‘celebrating Osiris’ “mysteries” (his cycle of death, regeneration and rulership) and their

¹⁶ O’Connor 2009: 137-57.

¹⁷ Smith 2017: 241-42.

¹⁸ Shaw and Nicholson 2008: 13-15; O’Connor 2009: 15-16, 31.

¹⁹ O’Connor 2009: 16.

²⁰ Shaw and Nicholson 2008: 15.

²¹ O’Connor 2009: 16, 43-61. Dates from Schulz 2010.

²² Shaw and Nicholson 2008: 239; O’Connor 2009: 50-51.

relationship to Seti's own posthumous transformation'.²³ The coloured raised reliefs are of exceptionally high quality. A 'conception of Horus' relief appears on the (south)west wall of the central end-chamber at the southern end of the Osiris suite (Room 11),²⁴ but unfortunately the upper part of it is missing. Abutting the southern end of the Osiris suite, but entered from an entirely different part of the temple, is a hall with two end-chapels dedicated to the Memphite deities Ptah-Sokar and Nefertem.²⁵ From Old Kingdom times, Sokar was identified with Osiris and syncretised with Ptah,²⁶ whereas Nefertem is a rejuvenating god of both the lotus-blossom and sunrise who, in addition, was closely associated with Horus.²⁷ David O'Connor explains that: 'The burial chamber in a royal tomb (to which the Osireion is an equivalent) was associated with the "cavern of Sokar" at the heart of the netherworld, and also had scenes celebrating the solar rebirth of the king, an event associated with Nefertem'.²⁸ A second 'conception of Horus' scene adorns the south(east) wall of the Ptah-Sokar chapel. Fortunately, this relief is largely intact.

Rosalie David describes the history of the Osiris cult at Abydos and interprets the iconographic program in the Osiris suite, commenting that: 'The preparatory rites occurred in the First Osiris Hall. Here, (East Wall), the various deities are removed from their shrines to receive offerings from the king [...] and these preparatory stages are reminiscent of the series of rites which were carried out at Denderah'.²⁹ She proposes that the ritual procession then proceeded along the east wall of the second hall and, reaching at the mid-point of its travel the central chapel with the (now fragmentary) 'conception of Horus' scene, began its return journey along the western side of the two halls.

Dendera

Dendera, 100 km to the east of Abydos, is the site of the Greco-Roman temple of Hathor. Above its (inner) hypostyle hall sits a series of Osiris chapels, dedicated to the symbolic protection of Osiris's body and to preparations for its resurrection. As Sylvie Cauville observes: 'Three chapels to the east and three to the west are on the roof of the building; they provide the most interesting scenes from the temple'.³⁰ Terry Wilfong summarises their importance thus:

These chapels are literally covered, inside and outside, with reliefs and inscriptions, including the well-known series of images of the dead Osiris lying on a bier in various stages of reanimation and the extensive text of the mysteries of the month of Khoiak previously studied by E. Chassinat. The Osiris chapels at Dendera present [...] the richest collection of information about Osiris and his cult to survive from ancient Egypt.³¹

As Wilfong has intimated, the 'Mysteries of Osiris' were celebrated in Khoiak, the fourth month of the year, when the Nile inundation was receding; at this time, crops were planted and

²³ O'Connor 2009: 45.

²⁴ David 1981: 149-50; Calverley 1938: Plate 62a. For a plan of the Osiris suite with room numbers, see Calverley 1938: vii.

²⁵ The hall of Ptah-Sokar and Nefertem and its two chapels form part of the temple's annexe, located to the south(east) at the (south)western end of the building; the annexe forms the 'foot' of the L-shaped ground-plan. Entry to the aforementioned hall is from the inner hypostyle hall. O'Connor 2009: 47 (Figure 16), 54.

²⁶ Hart 2005: 149.

²⁷ Hart 2005: 99; Wilkinson 2003: 133-34.

²⁸ O'Connor 2009: 51.

²⁹ David 1981: 146.

³⁰ Cauville 1990: 68. All quotations from Cauville have been translated from French into English by the author.

³¹ Wilfong 1999: 188.

the seeds began to germinate. Between days 12 and 30 of that month,³² the Osirian revivification was re-enacted through rituals performed with the aid of cult statues, whose nature and manipulations are depicted in scenes and text on the Osiris chapels' walls.³³ Throughout Egypt, as Cauville explains, such chapels:

replicate the first temple of Sokar in Memphis and the place where the statuettes are shaped, where they are prepared for eternal life and where they are buried for a period of one year. [... At Dendera, t]he eastern chapels are grouped under the name "House of Life of the Simulacra" (since the statuettes are there made 'alive'); the western group is called the "House of Isis-Shentayt" and it is there – according to the texts – that the work is completed.³⁴

To the eastern chapels belong the hours of the day; to the western ones, those of the night.³⁵ The texts and scenes of the Osiris chapels have been published and analysed in detail by Cauville.³⁶ An engaging account of the festival, with an interpretation of the chapels' decorative program that is accessible to the non-specialist, was recently published by Alison Roberts.³⁷ Within the chapels' iconography, we find no less than three potential 'conception of Horus' scenes: one in the innermost eastern chapel, and two in the innermost western one.

The conception of the Dendera Zodiac on the ceiling of one of the eastern Osiris chapels has been dated to *c.*52 BCE,³⁸ and Cauville speculates that the chapels might have been inaugurated in 47 BCE, when the astronomical conditions for the Osiris procession of 26 Khoiak would have been uniquely favourable.³⁹ However, the temple proper did not enter service until 29 BCE.⁴⁰ Roberts claims that the ritual program of the Osiris chapels reflects the coincidence of Khoiak rites with the southern solstice, a synchronicity caused by the introduction of the Alexandrian calendar in 25 BCE,⁴¹ and thus dates the decoration in the chapels to the 'late first century BCE'.⁴² Others date the inscriptions in the Osiris roof-chapels significantly later, such as *c.*100 CE,⁴³ which is approximately when the temple's northern door was completed.⁴⁴ The roof-chapels sit atop the hypostyle hall, and the famous pronaos that was added in front of this hall was not

³² For the ritual sequence at Dendera and at other sites (or in pJumilhac), see the calendar at University College London 2003: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/ideology/khoiak.html> [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020].

³³ David (1981: 124) observes that: 'The evidence derived from Denderah [...] only gives the stages of preparation for the Mysteries; none of the ceremonies described at Denderah is mentioned by Ikhernofret, who assisted at the Osiris ceremonies at Abydos. Whereas he describes only public events, the Denderah evidence enumerates the rites which the priests carried out beforehand in secret.' Of course, some of the differences may reflect changes in practice over the two millennia that separate the sources; the stele of Ikhernofret (Berlin 1204) dates from the Middle Kingdom and the Dendera inscriptions from the Greco-Roman period. For a translation of the stele, see Simpson 2003; for developments in the Osiris cult over the relevant time interval, see Smith 2017: 271-414.

³⁴ Cauville 1990: 68-69.

³⁵ Roberts 2019: 105.

³⁶ Primary publication of the chapels is Cauville 1997a, and analysis of the scenes and texts can be found in Cauville 1997b.

³⁷ Roberts 2009: 99-125. An accessible translation of the 'Hour Watch' from the eastern chapel – a vigil probably performed at the end of the mummification rites – is currently available as an e-book (Siuda 2017).

³⁸ Priskin 2015.

³⁹ Cauville 1997b: II, 2. Her dating of the chapels' construction is largely consistent with Wilfong (1999), who assigns them to the reign of Ptolemy XII.

⁴⁰ Cauville 1990: 4.

⁴¹ Roberts 2019: 102.

⁴² Roberts, 2019: 103 (legend to Figure 89), 111 (legend to Figure 97) and 123 (legend to Figure 108).

⁴³ University College London 2003: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/ideology/khoiak.html> [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020].

⁴⁴ Cauville 1990: 5.

constructed until the time of Tiberius (14-37 CE).⁴⁵ Accordingly, let us tentatively assign the roof-chapels to *c.*30 CE, as a round number near the middle of the likely date-range for the chapels' completion. This means that some 1300 years (1232-1379 years using the terminal date estimates) separate the 'conception of Horus' scenes at Abydos from those at Dendera.

Paradoxically, the extant portions of the conception scenes at Abydos are much better preserved than the newer (and fully intact) scenes at Dendera. In the first place, the Abydos reliefs are larger, and the carvings are of much finer quality; they are also perfectly clean and well-lit, so that wherever the carving has not been lost, the details are easy to discern. In contrast, the wall scenes in the Osirian chapels at Dendera are quite crudely executed, encrusted with a dark layer of dirt, and very poorly lit.

Despite the visual similarity of the 'conception of Horus' scenes at Abydos and Dendera, their separation in time (*c.*1300 years) is such that one might expect some significant differences in their interpretation. As we shall see, this expectation is fulfilled.

The conception scenes at Abydos

As mentioned above, the conception of Horus is depicted at two locations in the temple of Seti I at Abydos; the first relief is on the (south)west wall of the central end-chamber (Room 11) of the Osiris suite; the second one is on the south(east) wall of the Ptah-Sokar chapel. The two scenes are actually located in chapels that share a portion of common wall. However, the fact that the second scene is in the temple's annexe means that the viewer cannot move directly from one room to the other, but must trace a circuitous path through the two main halls of the Osiris suite and then traverse the long axis of the inner hypostyle hall, followed by the length of the hall dedicated to Ptah-Sokar and Nefertem.

The scene in the Osiris suite was executed in raised relief and then painted (Figure 1, page 8). The upper part of the central scene is now missing (Figure 1a), leaving visible only the tail, outer edge of the left wing and inner tip of the right wing of the bird, with whom the dead Osiris appears to copulate (Figure 1b). Clearly the bird is a raptor, but any caption identifying it further has been lost.

The scene in the Ptah-Sokar chapel, which is also in raised relief, is uncoloured (Figure 2, page 9). Thankfully the carving is well preserved, although (as we shall also find with other scenes) Osiris's erect phallus seems to have been damaged by more recent occupants of the temple, perhaps in a prudish attempt to conceal it. In this scene, three birds are shown; all of them are raptors. Of these, the one at Osiris's head is the avian embodiment of Isis, who also stands beside his head in her usual human form, while the one at Osiris's feet is the embodiment of Horus, who also stands beside his feet in his usual therianthropomorphic form.⁴⁶ The bird beside Isis lacks the distinctive cheek markings of a falcon and may therefore be identified as a kite.⁴⁷ The bird beside Horus has the cheek markings of a falcon – indeed, the pattern on its face and crest match exactly those on the therianthropomorphic Horus standing beside it. Close examination of the head of the third and central bird – the one with which Osiris is copulating – shows that it lacks the falcon markings of Horus but is a good match for the bird with which

⁴⁵ Cauville 1990: 5. Some authors refer to the hypostyle hall and pronaos as the 'inner' and 'outer' hypostyle halls, respectively.

⁴⁶ The identifications of the two birds are confirmed by Cauville 1997b: II, 119, n. 274.

⁴⁷ And is usually so identified by others, e.g. Van Rinsveld 2002: 70 (legend to Figure 3).

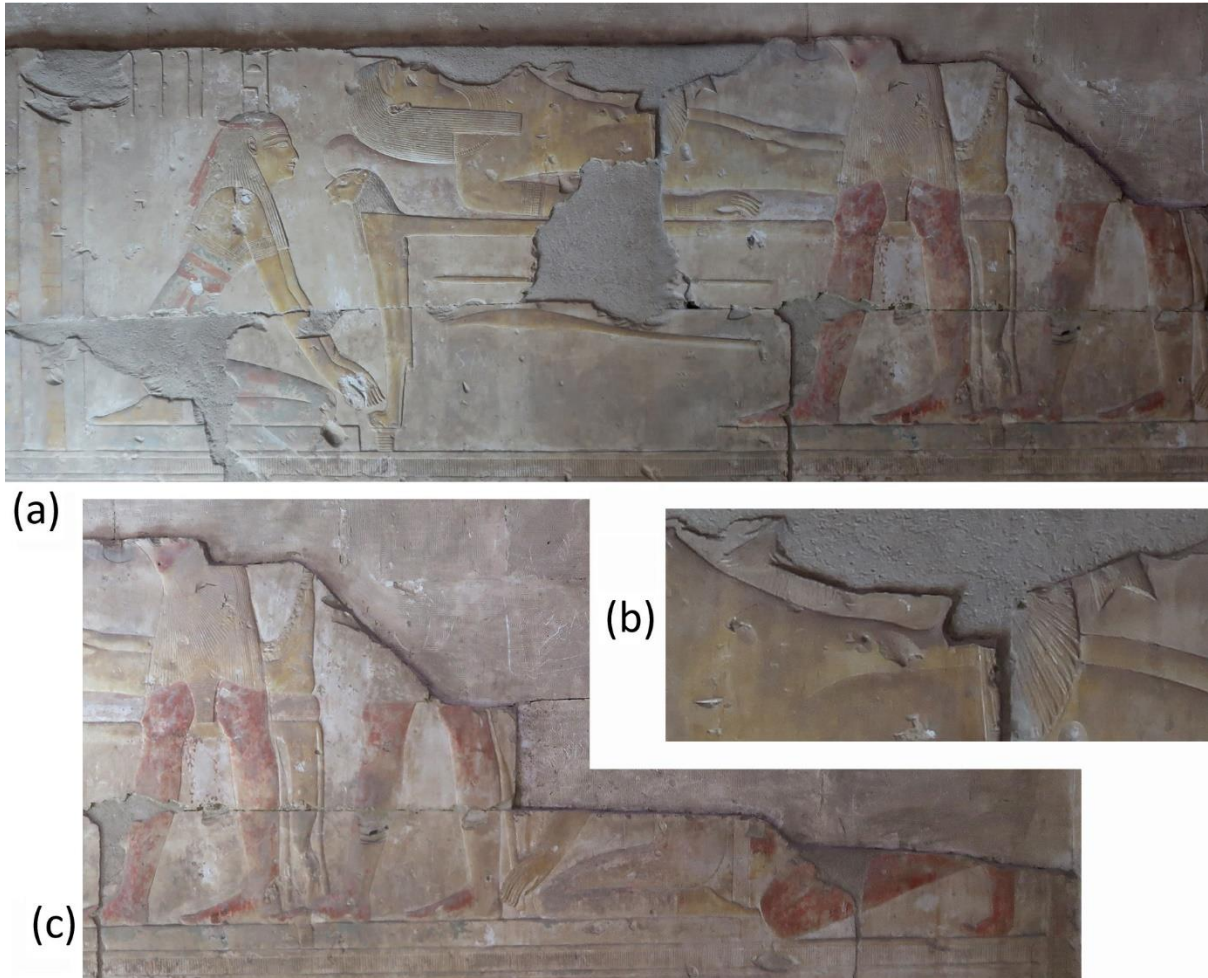


Figure 1 - Abydos, (south)west wall of Room 11 within the Osiris suite in the temple of Seti I. (a) Main portion of what remains of the scene. (b) Enlargement of bird wings and tail from top centre of panel (a). (c) Continuation of (what remains of) the scene to its right-hand boundary. Images (a) and (c) overlap; the two standing males at right in panel (a) are the two standing at left in panel (c). The same level of damage to the relief is evident in the joint Egypt Exploration Society / Oriental Institute report published over 80 years ago (Calverley 1938: Plate 60a).

Isis is identified. The latter identification is confirmed absolutely by the caption *ꜣs.t* – ‘Isis’ – placed immediately in front of the bird.

In O’Connor’s book on Abydos, the Ptah-Sokar chapel scene is reproduced and described:

[T]he murdered, dismembered but reassembled Osiris is shown lying on a bier. His consort, the goddess Isis, descends in the form of a kite onto his erect phallus, which has been defaced. As a result, Isis will give birth to Osiris’ son Horus, who also stands at the foot of the bier, while his mother, Isis, stands at the head. In the atemporal divine world, deities can appear multiple times in the same scene.⁴⁸

In many ways, this is the canonical ‘conception of Horus’ scene to which all similar scenes must be compared.

⁴⁸ O’Connor 2009: 36 (legend to Figure 9).



Figure 2 - Abydos, south(east) wall of the Ptah-Sokar Chapel. Photography by: Flickr contributor kairoinfo4u.

The conception scenes at Dendera

Innermost Eastern Osiris chapel

As mentioned above, the conception of Horus appears to be depicted in three places within the Osirian chapels on the roof of the temple of Hathor at Dendera. The first scene,⁴⁹ which forms part of the third register on the east wall of the innermost room of the eastern chapels (Figure 3, page 10), is in raised relief and clearly recapitulates the scene in the Ptah-Sokar chapel at Abydos.⁵⁰ The poor state of preservation makes it difficult to discern details directly from the modern photograph, so Auguste Mariette's drawing of the scene is also provided here (Figure 4, page 10). Relative to the Abydos image, the orientation of Osiris has been reversed, and thus Isis and Horus (who remain at his head and feet, respectively) have swapped position. However, apart from this, it is clear that the eastern Osiris chapel scene at Dendera and the Ptah-Sokar chapel scene at Abydos are strikingly similar – a fact already noted by Cauville (Figure 5, page 11). Cauville's commentary on the east wall of the Dendera chapel reads:

⁴⁹ The viewing sequence follows that of Cauville (1990: 69, and 1997a, b). The former source takes its cues from the hours of the day and night, as named or depicted on the walls, the connectivity of the rooms/courts, and especially what Cauville (1990: 78) calls 'the logical order of the scenes' as they relate to the stages of the Khoiak festival. Like the path of the sun, the overall progress of the viewer is from east to west. The Dendera 'conception of Horus' scenes discussed in this paper are considered in that order. Although the western chapels were numbered by Cauville (1997a, b) in reverse order relative to Cauville (1990), presumably to mirror the numbering of the eastern chapels, this change has no effect on the ordering of the scenes under discussion. Accordingly, the viewing sequence of the three Dendera scenes considered in this paper not only follows Cauville (1990: 69) but also matches the order of transcription in Cauville (1979a, b).

⁵⁰ The exact scene location is as follows: Eastern chapel, room no. 3, east wall, north-eastern face, third register, twelfth tableau (Cauville 1997a: Plates 106, 135; Cauville 1997b: I, 121).



Figure 3 - Dendera, east wall of the innermost eastern Osiris chapel, temple of Hathor.

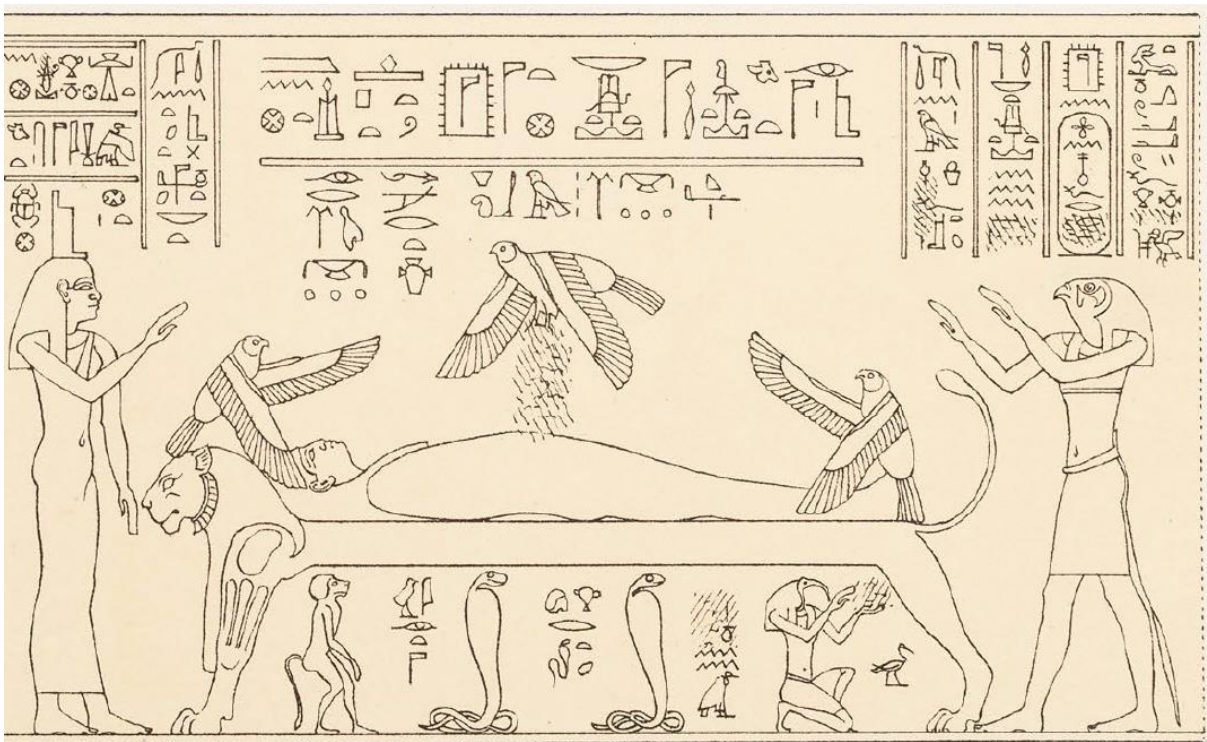


Figure 4 - Dendera, east wall of the innermost eastern Osiris chapel, temple of Hathor. Drawing adapted from Mariette (1873).

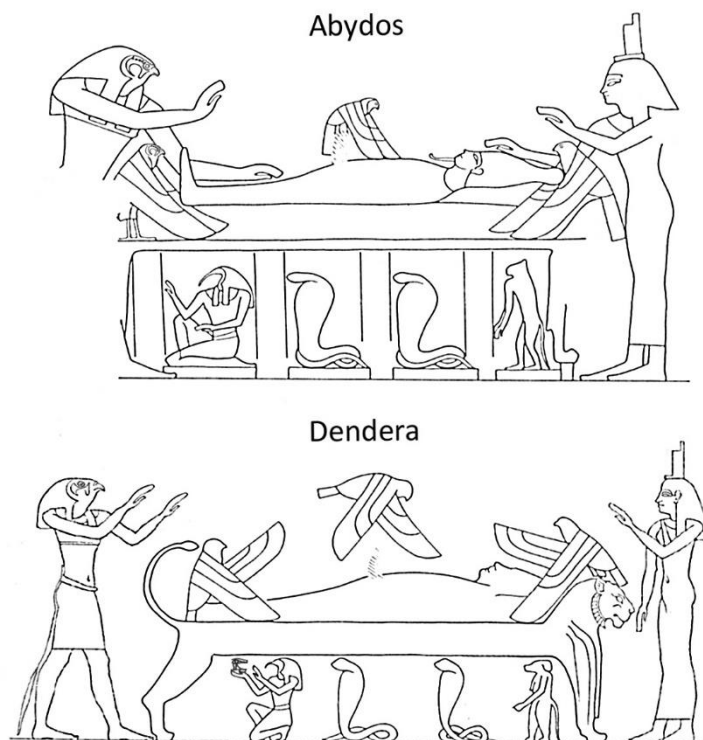


Figure 5 - Direct comparison of the composition of the intact Abydos scene (Figure 2) with that of its Dendera counterpart (Figures 3 and 4). Drawing after Y. Hanafi.

The two tableaux of the northern face portraying Harsiesis and Harendotes reproduce Abydene scenes: in the small Chamber of Ptah-Sokar in the Temple of Seti I, two mummified Osirises are placed opposite each other; the iconography – including the figurines placed under the bed (monkey, uraeus, Thoth, and the four sons of Horus) – is absolutely similar.⁵¹

Of Cauville's 'two tableaux', only the Harendotes one is relevant to this paper; the other (like its Abydene counterpart) contains no suitably positioned birds and need not concern us. In the Dendera scene of interest (Figures 3 and 4), once again we may safely assume that the bird next to Isis is her kite form and the bird next to Horus is his falcon form. The identity of the central bird, which no longer contacts Osiris's phallus but hovers above it, is less certain. The state of preservation and accumulation of dirt precludes the use of facial markings – if any were ever provided – to distinguish kite from falcon. A single caption directly above the central bird refers to the birds in the plural, and thus presumably applies to all three: *bik. w m nbw*, 'Falcons (rendered) in Gold'.⁵² The word *bik* commences with Gardiner glyph R7 above S46,⁵³ a sign-pair used to mean that a material falcon is intended – an actual bird.⁵⁴ However, the caption

⁵¹ Cauville 1997b: II, 119.

⁵² Cauville 1997b: I, 121.

⁵³ For the latter glyph, see Nederhof 2016: <https://mjn.host.cs.st-andrews.ac.uk/egyptian/unicode/tablemain.html> [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020]. R7 has no phonetic value (however, see next footnote); that of S46 is *k*, so perhaps it is a phonetic complement for the last consonant of *bik*.

⁵⁴ Erman and Grapow (1971: I, 444.13) shows the original form, where W10* is used instead of the visually similar R7. When adjacent to certain bird/animal signs, W10* had the phonetic value of *bʒ*. Over time, R7 replaced W10* (Gardiner 1957: 501, 528). Erman and Grapow (1971: I, 444.13) also shows that glyph W11 can be used instead of S46, although this is not seen in the Dendera captions under consideration. The augmentation of *bik* with one or both of these signs (i.e., W10*/R7 and W11/S46) is also found in some writings of *Hr pʒ bik*

concludes with the stipulation *ḳꜣ 1*, ‘length 1 (cubit)’, albeit read from the opposite direction; from similar details provided for other deities and objects depicted in the scenes in this room, it is clear that such measurements are those of cult statues.⁵⁵

The measurement’s reading direction prompted Cauville to remove it from the birds’ caption and prefix it to a distant block of text positioned above Osiris’s head,⁵⁶ which reads: *ḥ.t mr.t ir.t r ḥḏ.t m nbw* (with glyph W23 between the second and third words), probably intending *ḥ.t mrḥ.t ir.ty ḥḏ.t m nbw*, ‘coated wood, eyes and White Crown in gold’.⁵⁷ Mention of the White Crown makes it clear that this text refers to the figure of Osiris. The presence of this crown (which we cannot see, as it is obscured by the wing of the Isis-kite) constitutes another point of similarity with the scene in the Ptah-Sokar chapel at Abydos. Since it applies to Osiris, Cauville has (sensibly) appended this textual description of the Osirian cult image to the banner above the whole scene, which reads: ‘Osiris, Foremost of the Westerners, the great god, Lord of Abydos, the divine god, who rests in Dendera’.⁵⁸ Horus, too, is here given an Abydene identity; his caption begins: ‘Words spoken by Harendotes, son of Isis, the great god, Lord of Abydos...’.⁵⁹ By way of these texts, the form of Osiris depicted here is directly linked with Abydos, augmenting the visual parallel already discussed above (Figure 5). Other stages in the resurrection of Osiris shown in the Dendera chapels are linked specifically – via each scene’s composition and text captions – to other sites participating in his cult, such as Busiris and Thebes.⁶⁰

The identity of the central bird in the Dendera scene remains uncertain, but analogy with the prototype image at Abydos would suggest that it is the Isis-kite. Guidebooks for visitors to Dendera typically admit no doubts about this.⁶¹ In the hieroglyphic caption above the birds, they are referred to collectively as ‘falcons’, but a kite can be regarded as a type of falcon.⁶² There are instances at Dendera where the distinction between falcon and kite is blurred; for example, Horus Behdety (Horus of Edfu) is described in one accolade both as *bik ntr.y*, ‘the divine falcon’ and as *ḏr.ty wr pḥty*, ‘the kite, great of strength’.⁶³ Indeed, Cauville reports several depictions or descriptions of cult statues at Dendera where Isis appears as a female falcon.⁶⁴ The grammar of the eastern Osiris chapel caption leaves open the possibility that the central bird is female; *bik* is a masculine noun, but in a mixed-sex group of falcons the masculine plural would be used.

(‘Horus the falcon’), *bik.t ntr.t* (‘divine female falcon’) and *bik* as a temple-barque or royal barque (Erman and Grapow 1971: I, 444.18, 445.12, 445.14-16).

⁵⁵ Captions in the crypts also follow the same convention (Cauville 1987).

⁵⁶ The recipient text-block is positioned between the Isis kite and the central bird. Its glyphs have the same orientation as the transposed measurement, but the birds’ caption separates them in a way that argues strongly against conflating them, even if 1 cubit is the typical length of an Osiris statue at Dendera (Raven 1998: 237).

⁵⁷ Cauville 1997b: I, 121.

⁵⁸ Cauville 1997b: I, 121.

⁵⁹ Cauville 1997b: I, 121 and II, 121.

⁶⁰ Cauville 1997b: II, 113 (Figure 5) and 199 (Figure 13).

⁶¹ Such as Weeks 2005: 534.

⁶² *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae*, the online successor to the *Wörterbuch* (Erman and Grapow 1971), translates *ḏr.t* as ‘kite; falcon’; *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* 2020: <http://aeaw.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin> [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020]. As Shalomi-Hen (2017: 375-76) observes of Isis and Horus: ‘Had the exact species been of any significance, a kite would not have begotten a falcon.’

⁶³ Shonkwiler 2014: 56, n. 273. For *ḏr.ty* as a single kite (especially Horus) as well as the Two Kites (i.e., Isis and Nephthys), see Erman and Grapow 1971: V, 597.

⁶⁴ Cauville 1987: 88-89.

Innermost Western Osiris chapel: East wall

Two variants of the ‘conception of Horus’ scene appear in the innermost room of the western Osiris chapels at Dendera, whose reliefs are seemingly intended to follow immediately after those of the innermost Eastern chapel discussed above.⁶⁵ One is on the east wall (Figure 6a, page 13),⁶⁶ the other on the west wall (Figure 8, page 15).⁶⁷ Once again, Mariette’s drawings of the scenes are also provided for clarity (Figures 7 and 9, pages 14 and 15, respectively). Both scenes are executed in sunken relief; as with the scene in the eastern chapel, the state of preservation and accumulation of dirt precludes the use of facial markings – if there were any – to distinguish kite from falcon.

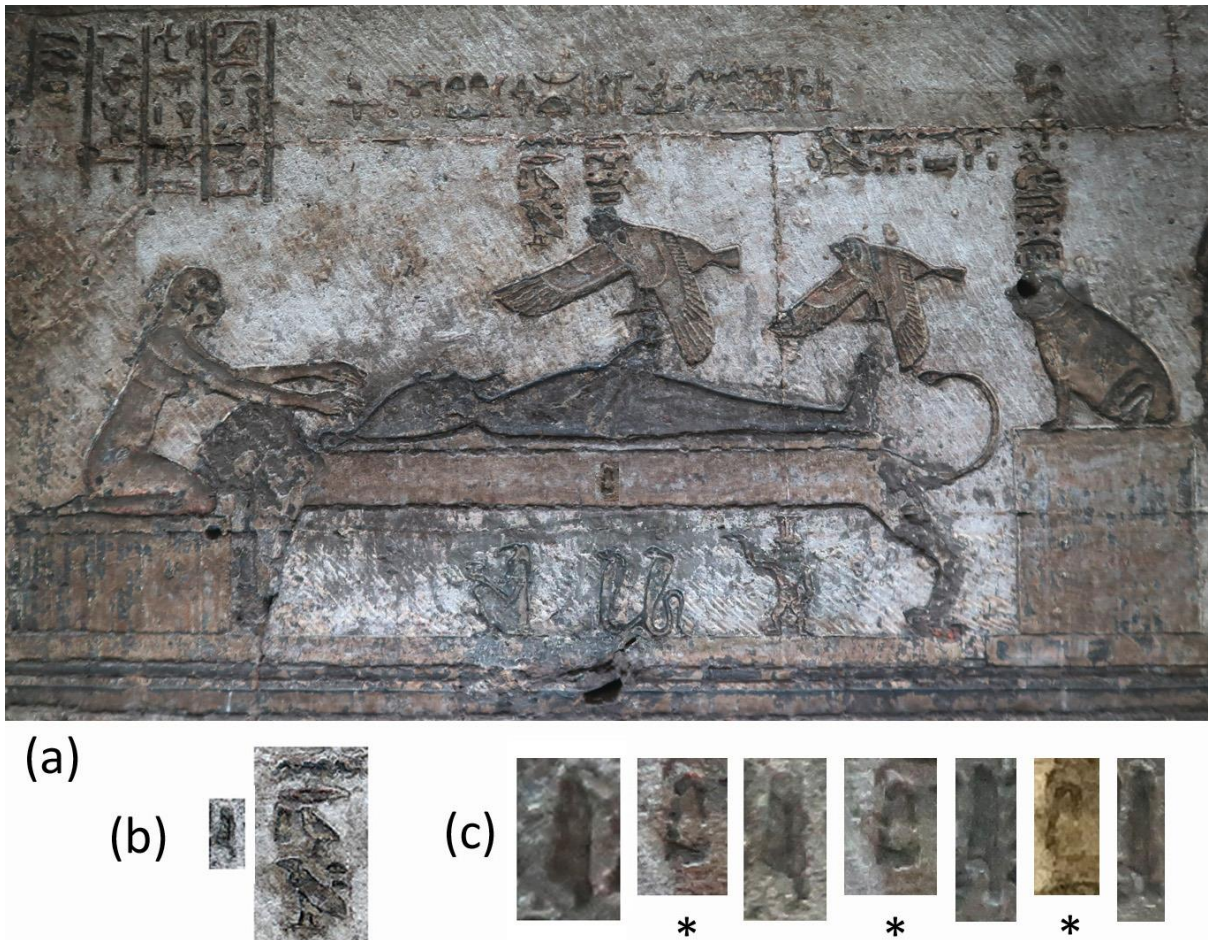


Figure 6 - Dendera, east wall of the innermost western Osiris chapel, Temple of Hathor. (a) Complete scene. (b) The caption *nr.t* ('vulture') with the supposed *yodh* (right-hand glyph group) is here juxtaposed with the closest genuine *yodh* (left-hand glyph, taken from the Hathor caption and reversed to match the orientation of the glyphs in *nr.t*). Components are taken from the same photo and shown at the same scale. (c) Enlargements of several proximal *yodh* glyphs (filled/ribbed), alongside independent images of the glyph in *nr.t* (unfilled/unribbed), the latter being marked with asterisks.

⁶⁵ In the viewing sequence of Cauville (1990: 69); see especially p.78 for her comments on the transition from the eastern to western chapels. Alison Roberts notes the omission of the last three hours of the day from the eastern chapels (2009: 113).

⁶⁶ Western chapel, room no. 3, east wall, eastern face, second register, third tableau; Cauville 1997a: Plates 253 and 276; Cauville 1997b: I, 228.

⁶⁷ Western chapel, room no. 3, west wall, western face, second register, third tableau; Cauville 1997a: Plates 257 and 280; Cauville 1997b: I, 230.

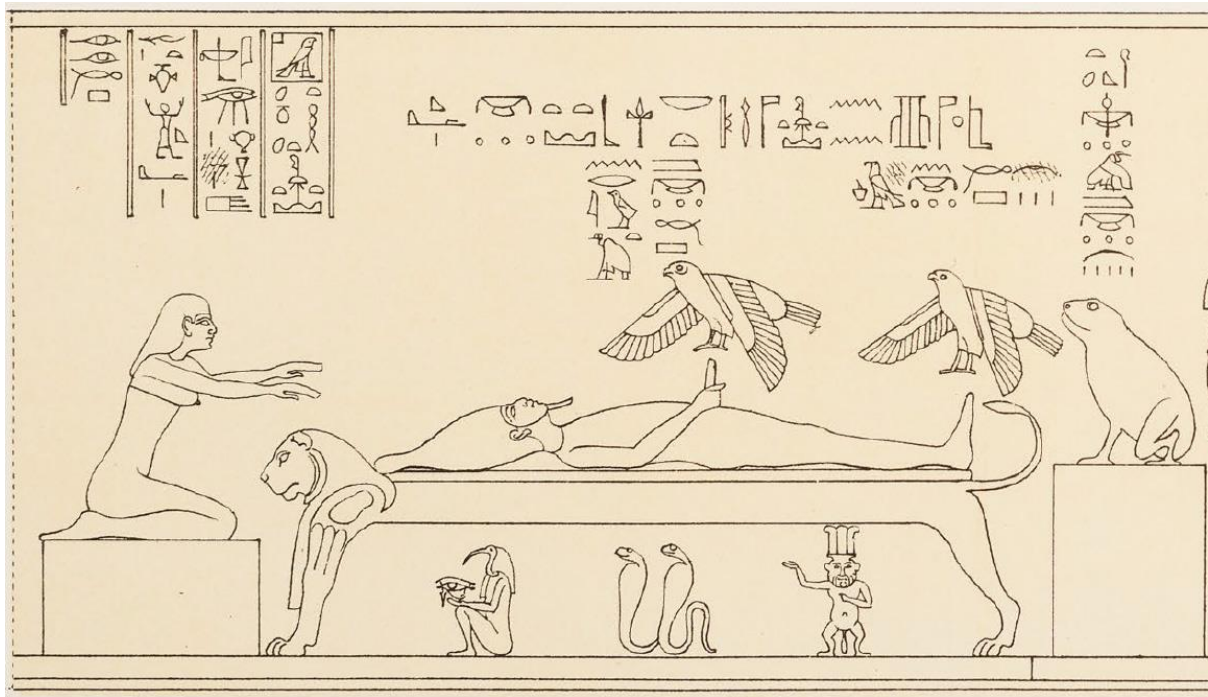


Figure 7 - Dendera, east wall of the innermost western Osiris chapel, Temple of Hathor. Drawing by Mariette (1873).

The scene on the east wall (Figures 6a and 7) carries a caption which again links the scene with Abydos: ‘Osiris, Foremost of the Westerners, the great god, Lord of the Horizon of the East / Abydos’.⁶⁸ It concludes with details of the cult statue as ‘Gold, length 1 (cubit)’. Flanking the supine Osiris are Hathor, at his head, and Heket, at his feet. Hathor is captioned as ‘mourning for her brother’.⁶⁹ Measurements and compositions are also specified for both of these female statues. Two raptors appear in the scene, one over Osiris’s feet – the position usually occupied by the Horus falcon – and the other directly over Osiris’s phallus, although perhaps too high to contact it. The former bird is captioned *bik n(.y) nbw mh šsp 3*, ‘Falcon of Gold, inlaid, (length) 3 palms’.⁷⁰ This is (justifiably) understood by Cauville to mean Horus, whose epithet is *bik n(.y) nbw*, ‘the Falcon of Gold’.⁷¹ The epithet is used of Horus Behdety in other texts at Dendera.⁷²

From all of the foregoing discussion, one would expect the caption over the central bird to identify it as the Isis-kite; indeed, the bird is so identified by Marco Zecchi.⁷³ Surprisingly, however, its caption reads *nr.t m nbw mh*, ‘(female) vulture (rendered) in gold, inlaid’.⁷⁴ The large vulture determinative specifies unequivocally the nature of the bird. Beyond this, we should note the presence of a glyph that was recorded by both Mariette (Figure 7) and Cauville

⁶⁸ Cauville 1997b: I, 228; for the identification of the ‘Horizon of the East’ with the temple at Abydos, see Cauville (1997b: II, 201 n. 409) and Zecchi 2019: 136.

⁶⁹ Cauville 1997b: I, 228.

⁷⁰ Cauville 1997b: I, 228.

⁷¹ Cauville 1997b: III, 151 (locus 420,7); for the epithet, see Allen 2010: 67.

⁷² For instances in the Osirian chapels themselves, see Cauville (1997b: I, 222, 224); for other examples at Dendera, see Shonkwiler (2014: 56 n. 273).

⁷³ Zecchi 2019: 137.

⁷⁴ Cauville 1997b: I, 228; Erman and Grapow 1971: II, 277 for *nr.t*. A less likely or supplementary reading could take the first word as *nrw.t*, ‘fear, dread, awe’ (Erman and Grapow 1971: II, 278.13).



Figure 8 - Dendera, west wall of the innermost western Osiris chapel, Temple of Hathor.

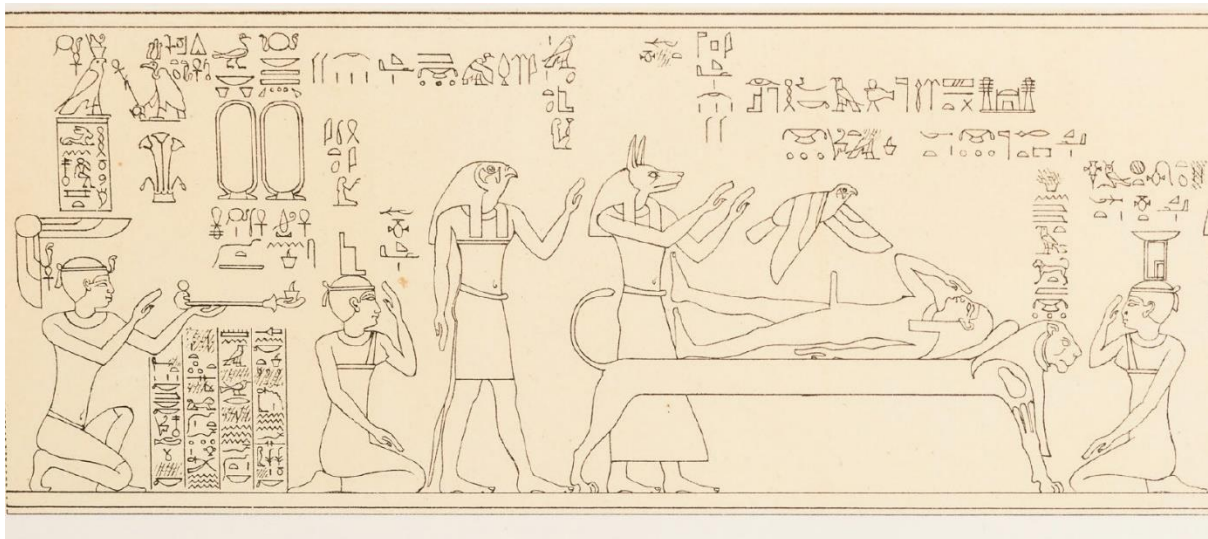


Figure 9 - Dendera, west wall of the innermost western Osiris chapel, Temple of Hathor. Drawing by Mariette (1873).

as a *yodh* (M17), since a *yodh* can appear in this position within *nr.t*.⁷⁵ However, the glyph in the caption has the wrong shape for a *yodh* and lacks both the filling/ribbing and stem of the reed (Figure 6b, c); it looks more like S1, the White Crown of Upper Egypt, suggestively positioned above the head of the vulture determinative.⁷⁶ This non-standard orthography hints strongly at an identification of the bird as the vulture goddess Nekhbet, the emblem of Upper Egypt, who in sources as early as the Pyramid Texts was referred to as ‘the White Crown’.⁷⁷ Perhaps this identification was made in the Dendera scene because a vulture wielding a *shen*-ring – the canonical image of Nekhbet – is sometimes shown overflying the deceased’s mummy

⁷⁵ Mariette-Bey 1873: Plate 88c, d (‘North, room no. 3’); Cauville 1997b: III, 272 (locus 420,6); Erman and Grapow 1971: II, 277.

⁷⁶ At the very least it is highly ambiguous, as if to encompass both possibilities.

⁷⁷ Hart 2005: 102; e.g. Pyramid Texts, Spell 468, §900 (Faulkner 2007: 157). Mut, the other vulture-associated goddess who would be a candidate mother for Horus, is usually depicted either as a human or as a lioness (or as a mixture of both); Hart 2005: 97-98.

in funerary papyri illustrated with vignettes from the *Book of the Dead*.⁷⁸ Moreover, a role for this mother-goddess as the mother of Horus is not without precedent; the Pyramid Texts also allude to Nekhbet as the mother of the king, who is of course the earthly Horus.⁷⁹

Interestingly, the vulture was believed to reproduce by parthenogenesis, meaning that the female bird took upon itself the role of the male – an ability that resonates with the cryptic *iri tꜣy*, ‘playing the role of a man’, attested of Isis in the conception of Horus, as mentioned in the Introduction.⁸⁰ The bird depicted in the relief, of course, looks like a kite or falcon rather than a vulture.

Cauville’s commentary avoids any discussion of the vulturine identification of the bird above Osiris’s phallus, which is unexpected insofar as Isis is hardly ever referred to as a vulture.⁸¹ In translation, her commentary on the east wall reads: ‘The first tableau, on the eastern face, is similar to that in the East chapel no. 3 [= our Figures 3 and 4] in which the iconography is modelled on that in the Temple of Seti. [...] Osiris, for his part, is always represented mummified and with a White Crown, the female bird and his heir flying above him’.⁸² The two birds referred to in the second sentence are obviously the ‘vulture’ and the ‘Falcon of Gold’, respectively. The captioning of the Isis-raptor as a vulture, and specifically as Nekhbet (as proposed above), becomes more understandable when one considers that, during the New Kingdom, Isis and Nephthys assimilated some of the iconography of Nekhbet and Wadjet, respectively.⁸³

Innermost Western Osiris chapel: West wall

The third and final scene of interest is a large tableau on the west wall of the same room (Figures 8 and 9), which carries the caption ‘Osiris-*hemag*, the great god in the (place of) secrecy/mystery. Wood of gold, divine precious material; length 1 (cubit)’.⁸⁴ *Hemag* means ‘enveloped’ and/or ‘adorned’, and refers to the surrounding of the mummy with amulets and precious metals or stones at the final stage of embalming in order to stimulate rebirth.⁸⁵ The initial reawakening of the deceased is symbolised by him raising a hand to his head.⁸⁶ In the Dendera scene, the double *djed*-pillar and *per-nu* icons within the determinative of the ‘place of secrecy/mystery’ suggest Busiris in Lower Egypt as the geographic referent for this form of Osiris,⁸⁷ but Cauville assigns it as ‘Osiris-*hemag* of Dendera’.⁸⁸ Either way, this scene differs from the preceding two by lacking any textual reference to Abydos.⁸⁹ Isis (captioned by the

⁷⁸ Such as Spell 89 in the Papyrus of Nesitanebtasheru (the ‘Greenfield Papyrus’, British Museum EA 10554/28), illustrated in Faulkner 1985: 116. The Nekhbet/mummy nexus will be developed below in the section titled ‘The *hꜣ*-bird’. A more recent drawing of the Dendera scene than Mariette’s (Figure 7) confirms that the bird above Osiris’s phallus does not clutch a *shen*-ring (Cauville 1997a: Plate 237).

⁷⁹ Hart 2005: 101; e.g. Pyramid Texts, Spell 412, §729 (Faulkner 2007: 135).

⁸⁰ For belief in vulture parthogenesis, see El Hawary 2016: 11-12.

⁸¹ Scalf (2012: 34, Table 2.1) lists only the kite, falcon, kestrel and swallow as her avian forms.

⁸² Cauville 1997b: II, 201.

⁸³ Münster 1968: 113-14; Russmann 2009: 271.

⁸⁴ Cauville 1997b: I, 230.

⁸⁵ Zecchi 1996: Chapter 1; Zecchi 2019: 91.

⁸⁶ Zecchi 2019: 98, 102.

⁸⁷ See Faulkner 1988: 325 for the orthography of Busiris (*Dd.w*). Osiris of Busiris is well represented in this room; Cauville 1997b: II, 200.

⁸⁸ Cauville 1997b: II, 202.

⁸⁹ Below, we shall see that this scene probably does recapitulate one of the Abydos scenes discussed earlier. Although here assigned by Cauville to Dendera, Osiris-*hemag* was not a local form of the god originally attached to one specific cult centre (Zecchi 1996).

name *Šntꜣy.t*, i.e., Shentayt or ‘the Widow’⁹⁰ now kneels beside a standing Horus (captioned *Hr-sꜣ-ꜣs.t*, Harsiesis) at Osiris’s feet, while Nephthys (captioned *Mr-ht-s*, Merkhetes)⁹¹ kneels behind the head of his bed. A standing Anubis ministers over Osiris’s body, which, in contrast to expectations set up by the term *hemag*, is naked.⁹² Judging from the hand that he has raised to his head, Osiris is beginning to revive. He is also ithyphallic, another characteristic of the Osiris-*hemag* form.⁹³ A single bird is shown, flying or hovering above Osiris’s phallus, of which Marco Zecchi writes: ‘Isis flies above in the guise of a hawk called ‘the falcon of gold’ (*bik n nbw*), extending the *ankh*-sign toward the erect member of the god.’⁹⁴

The detail of the *ankh* was overlooked in Mariette’s drawing (Figure 9). It is difficult to discern in photographs (Figure 8) because it is small and positioned directly on top of the phallus, appearing essentially as an extension of it. However, its presence is confirmed by Cauville’s modern drawing of the scene.⁹⁵ The tiny *ankh* most likely symbolises the transmission of life by the seed of Osiris. As we have seen, Zecchi identifies the bird atop the phallus as the Isis-raptor, thereby remaining consistent with the conventional understanding of earlier scenes of this type. For example, in the sanctuary of Hibis temple in el-Kharga Oasis, there is a double representation of Osiris-*hemag* from the Twenty-Seventh Dynasty; in both of the Hibis scenes, it is presumed that it is: ‘Isis, in the guise of a hawk, [who] hovers above the god’s member.’⁹⁶ In neither of these scenes does the bird grasp an *ankh*; rather, one bird seems to be alighting on Osiris’s erect penis and the other has landed on his groin.

The foregoing considerations provide good grounds for considering the Dendera and Hibis Osiris-*hemag* scenes as members of the ‘conception of Horus’ genre that we first examined at Abydos and then found reprised at Dendera. However, as already mentioned by Zecchi, the text caption to the ‘Isis-raptor’ identifies this bird as *bik n(.y) nbw*, ‘the Falcon of Gold’. Since *bik* is a masculine noun, this bird is male; a female falcon would be *bik.t*. There is no specification of material or size for a cult effigy, and – as before – the orthography of *bik* is augmented by glyphs R7 and S46, indicating that a real falcon is intended.⁹⁷ In contrast to Zecchi, Cauville takes the phrase *bik n(.y) nbw* to indicate that the bird is the Horus-falcon, just as she did for the same caption on the east wall of the chapel (see above).⁹⁸ While it could be argued that the switch to a male raptor reflects Isis ‘playing the role of a man’ in the conception of Horus (as mentioned in the Introduction), the designation of the bird as the ‘Falcon of Gold’ really leaves no choice but to identify it as Horus.⁹⁹ As intimated above, this designation is identical to the one applied to the raptor in the canonical Horus-falcon position (i.e., over Osiris’s feet) in Figures 6 and 7. The identification seems even more likely in this case because, in the indirect genitive, *n(.y)*, the usual glyph for *n* (N35) is eschewed in favour of S3, the Red Crown of Lower Egypt, which is typically reserved for royal contexts; Horus,

⁹⁰ Cauville 1997b: I, 230; Erman and Grapow 1971: IV, 518; Cauville 1981.

⁹¹ Cauville 1997b: I, 230; Cauville 1981.

⁹² Zecchi (2019: 102-4) explains that this is always the case for depictions of Osiris-*hemag*.

⁹³ Zecchi 2019: 99.

⁹⁴ Zecchi 2019: 102.

⁹⁵ Cauville 1997a: Plates 239, 257.

⁹⁶ Zecchi 2019: 98.

⁹⁷ Erman and Grapow 1971: I, 444. As we saw when discussing the west wall of the western Osiris chapel at Dendera, it can be applied to the Horus-falcon.

⁹⁸ Cauville 1997b: III, 151 (locus 420,7).

⁹⁹ Regarding this particular switch in gender and identity, it is interesting to note a relief on the north(west) wall of the Ptah-Sokar chapel in the Seti I temple at Abydos which depicts two falcon statues, ‘Horus who-is-in-his-barque’ and ‘Isis who-is-in-his-barque’ (Eaton 2006: 82). Eaton (2006: 82, n. 30) suggests that the use of the masculine pronoun for Isis here is no mistake, as ‘this particular image of Isis formed a pair with the image of Horus.’

of course, is identified with both the king and Lower Egypt.¹⁰⁰ Cauville's commentary on this scene reads 'Osiris is mummified by Anubis; his heir is represented twice: as a falcon (*Bik-n-Nbwt*) issued from the phallus, which becomes in a second instance Harsiesis, the falcon-headed god'.¹⁰¹ As envisaged above, the tiny *ankh* seized by the bird atop the phallus most likely symbolises the life given to Horus via his father's emission.

Curiously, the composition of the Dendera Osiris-*hemag* scene most closely resembles that of the fragmentary scene in the Osiris suite at Abydos. Admittedly, the upper portion of the latter is missing, so there could be key differences, but from what we can see the two scenes look very similar. In each, Osiris is uncrowned and is naked rather than mummiform; he wears a broad collar, and both of his legs are visible (Figures 1a, 8, and 9). In each, Nephthys kneels at his head and two male figures stand at his feet (Figures 1a, 8, and 9); behind the standing males is a kneeling female, and behind her is a kneeling male (Figures 1b, 8, and 9). In the Abydos scene, David identifies the second standing male and the kneeling woman as a god and goddess, respectively; in the Dendera scene, we see that the cognate figures are Horus and Isis, respectively. In both scenes, the bull-tail of the god/Horus can be seen. The kneeling man, who in the Abydos scene is not identified as a god by David, is the king in the Dendera scene. In both scenes, a single bird is present¹⁰² – a raptor, which has alighted on Osiris's phallus (Figures 1a, b) or is hovering directly above it (Figures 8 and 9). Moreover, without considering the overlap in Osiris's retinue, Zecchi has identified the Osiris figure in the Abydos scene as lying 'with one arm raised towards his face and the other at his side', the distinctive posture of Osiris-*hemag*, his form in the Dendera scene.¹⁰³

These parallels raise an intriguing question: what if the assignation of the bird in the Dendera Osiris-*hemag* scene (Figures 8 and 9) as Horus is not a later change in meaning, but the identity always held by the bird in such a tableau? In that case, the fragmentary bird in the highly congruous Osiris suite scene (Figures 1a, b) should be interpreted as a Horus-falcon emerging from Osiris's phallus.¹⁰⁴ At the very least, the Egyptians' 'enormous flexibility in allowing non-harmonized parallel truths' should oblige us to consider that the bird may have been open to such an identification, perhaps as one of several possibilities.¹⁰⁵ Yet, based on the compositionally different scene in the Ptah-Sokar chapel at Abydos (Figure 2), the bird in the Osiris suite relief is invariably identified as Isis. David writes that the Osiris suite scene 'appears to represent the Conception of Horus; Osiris lies on a bier and Isis, in the form of a hawk, hovers above the dead king'.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, O'Connor describes the scene thus: 'Osiris is shown inert on a bier, yet sexually aroused and impregnating Isis, who hovers above him in the form of a bird'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ For example, in the opening section of the Memphite Theology, line 8 states that: 'Geb made Horus king of Lower Egypt in the land of Lower Egypt' (Lichtheim 1973: 52).

¹⁰¹ Cauville 1997b: II, 202.

¹⁰² We cannot be certain that one or more birds are not present in the lost upper part of the Abydos scene, but there is no trace of them in the expected places, i.e. perched at, or in a low hover over, his head and feet.

¹⁰³ Zecchi 2019: 105.

¹⁰⁴ On this basis, the Dendera scene might better be viewed as an Abydos-anchored composition rather than a Dendera-anchored one (as assigned by Cauville 1997b: I, 230 and II, 202) or a Busiris-anchored one (as suggested earlier in this subsection).

¹⁰⁵ Wendrich 2010: 4. Similarly, Hornung 1992: 13, 14, 82.

¹⁰⁶ David 1981: 149.

¹⁰⁷ O'Connor 2009: 55.

The next two sections examine additional issues that relate to the identification of the bird above Osiris's phallus as a deity other than Isis, and especially why it might be construed as the Horus-falcon.

The female falcon

In one of the three Dendera captions considered here, Mariette thought that the word for falcon carried the feminine suffix, .t (Figure 9).¹⁰⁸ In another, a damaged spot hinted at the same possibility (Figure 7). Perhaps Mariette had in mind the 'female falcon', attested twice in the Osirian chapels of Dendera, who in fact is Hathor – the goddess to whom the entire temple is dedicated.¹⁰⁹ Falcon statues of Hathor are depicted and/or described in no less than three rooms of the crypt at Dendera.¹¹⁰ Moreover, Hathor of Dendera is the mother of *Hr.w-sm3-t3.wy*, Horus who Unites the two Lands (Harsomtus),¹¹¹ and thus could well serve as an Isis-equivalent bird above Osiris's phallus.¹¹² Even the golden nature of the bird is consistent with this identification, for one of the commonest epithets of Hathor is 'the Golden One'.¹¹³

However, it is evident from modern photographs (e.g., Figures 6a and 8) and Cauville's transcriptions that the orthography of *bik* does not incorporate the feminine .t suffix.¹¹⁴ Rather, Mariette has misidentified the uncommon glyph S46 as the common uniliteral, X1 (*t*).¹¹⁵ By way of further proof, we should note that both mentions of Hathor as the 'feminine falcon' in the Osirian chapels' texts represent *bik.t* using quite different orthography to that conjectured by Mariette – they use the logogram of a human-headed bird followed by the uniliteral suffix (X1) and the egg glyph (H8).¹¹⁶ The logogram is derived from Gardiner glyph G53, the sign for the *b3*-bird.¹¹⁷

The *b3*-bird

Mention of the *b3*-bird invites one final consideration. A review of all of the Dendera captions considered here reveals that the word *bik* invariably commences with the Gardiner sign R7, for reasons already given. This glyph is normally a logogram or determinative for *sntr*, 'incense', but when it is followed by a bird glyph it usually denotes the *b3* or 'soul'.¹¹⁸ In two of the three Dendera captions (Figures 6-9), R7 is followed directly by the falcon glyph, G5, and thus – while overtly indicating a real falcon above Osiris's body – it could additionally hint at the *b3*.¹¹⁹ In addition, the supplementary glyph S46 – a 'covering for head and neck'¹²⁰ that resembles the short human wig worn by a male *b3*-bird – is placed directly behind the head of

¹⁰⁸ Mariette-Bey 1873: Plate 90k, l ('North, room no. 3').

¹⁰⁹ Cauville 1997b: III, 151 (locus 158,2 and 242,8); Richter 2016: 186, n. 716).

¹¹⁰ Cauville 1987: 76-77; Richter 2016: 186, n. 716).

¹¹¹ Cauville 1990: 91, 99, 101; Shonkwiler 2014: 56, n. 275.

¹¹² Isis and Hathor are extensively syncretised; Wilkinson 2003: 146.

¹¹³ Bleeker 1973: 25-26; Richter 2016: 33, 128, 273.

¹¹⁴ Cauville 1997b: I, 228 and 230; III, 151.

¹¹⁵ The indirect genitive should also change from *n(.y)* to *n.t* if *bik* were to become *bik.t*, although this nicety might not be made explicit.

¹¹⁶ Cauville 1997b: III, 151.

¹¹⁷ Richter 2016: 186.

¹¹⁸ Gardiner 1957: 501.

¹¹⁹ The use of R7 as a prefix to the *b3*-bird glyph was a New Kingdom practice that probably would have been seen as archaic by the time that the Osirian chapels at Dendera were decorated, given that none of the writings of the word *b3* in the chapels' texts show this feature; Cauville 1997b: III, 143.

¹²⁰ Nederhof 2016: <https://mjn.host.cs.st-andrews.ac.uk/egyptian/unicode/tablemain.html> [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020].

the falcon glyph, G5. The possibility of an allusion to the *bꜣ* is interesting because, like the kite/falcon in a ‘conception of Horus’ scene, the *bꜣ*-bird is a falcon-like entity that hovers over and alights upon a supine corpse, in this case the mummy of its owner.¹²¹ The visual parallels of these scenes can be quite provocative – compare, for example, Figure 10 (page 20) with Figure 2. There is textual evidence, too, that links the Horus-falcon with the *bꜣ*. In Spell 78 of the *Book of the Dead*, ‘Horus announces to Osiris that he will send the deceased as a messenger in his own falcon form: “[...] for my appearance is his appearance”’, to which the messenger later replies: ‘I have performed what was ordered because Horus endowed me with his *ba*.’¹²²

Clearly neither the Isis-kite nor the Nekhbet-vulture could ever qualify as the *bꜣ*-bird of Osiris, but could the Horus-falcons of Figures 6-9 be seen in this light? For both, the word *bik* commences with R7-G5-S46, as just described. Moreover, a connection between this bird and the *bꜣ* may have theological merit. As Louis Žabkar explains, ‘By means of the Ba, a god communicates himself to other beings and is manifested in them. Through the Ba, a god is manifested in various entities. [e.g.,] 1. A god is manifested in another god’.¹²³ The concept of Horus as a *bꜣ* is attested in sources as early as the Pyramid texts.¹²⁴

More specifically, since ‘Amun-Re is the “august Ba of Osiris” hovering over the body of Osiris’ and ‘Horus of dappled plumage is the Ba of Re’,¹²⁵ it would appear that Horus can be considered a *bꜣ* of Osiris.¹²⁶ Indeed, Žabkar goes on to cite an example that, while indirect, appears to confirm this.¹²⁷ Moreover, from the underworld encounter of Re with Osiris, the



Figure 10 - *Book of the Dead* vignette: Papyrus of Nakht, sheet 14, recto, top left; British Museum EA 10471,14.

¹²¹ For example, as depicted in Spell 89 of the Papyrus of Ani (British Museum EA 10470/17), illustrated in Faulkner 1985: 87.

¹²² Scalf 2012: 35; Faulkner 1985: 75-76.

¹²³ Žabkar 1968: 12.

¹²⁴ Žabkar 1968: 8. For example, Pyramid Texts, Spell 456, §854 (Faulkner 2007: 152), and Spell 573, §1478 (Faulkner 2007: 228). Note that Faulkner translates *bꜣ* as ‘soul’.

¹²⁵ Žabkar 1968: 12. He later (p.14) adds that: ‘The living falcon at Edfu, the sacred animal of Harakhti, is the “Ba of Re” or the “living Ba of Re.”’

¹²⁶ More strictly, the quotations indicate that Horus is the *bꜣ* of the *bꜣ* of Osiris.

¹²⁷ ‘When the Ba of Re and the Ba of Osiris met at Mendes, they embraced and became the One-who-has-two-Bas’; this entity ‘dwells in his twin progeny, who may be the Ba of Re and the Ba of Osiris, [...] or Horus-who-saved-his-father and Horus-with-no-eyes-in-his-forehead’. Žabkar 1968: 12, based on Coffin Texts, Spell 335 (CT IV 276-80) and the cognate passage in the *Book of the Dead*, Spell 17, and other examples.

Ramesseid *Book of the Earth* shows Re – the *bꜣ* of Osiris – being reborn directly from Osiris’s corpse as the falcon-headed Horus.¹²⁸ Roberts says of this scene that: ‘Horus the Behdedite is seen rising forth from Osiris’s body, his birth a revelation of his father as a fully-functioning *Ba*’,¹²⁹ with the falcon-god ‘making manifest his father’s regenerative *Ba*-power’.¹³⁰

The earlier reference to the ‘august *Ba* of Osiris’ comes from the Ptolemaic Opet Temple at Karnak; in its full form, this text is yet more revealing: ‘Amun-Re, the noble *bꜣ* of Osiris, who rests upon his corpse in the place of his begetting, who arises from his body as the falcon with dappled plumage,’ this last expression clearly referring to Horus.¹³¹ An accompanying relief at Opet (Figure 11, page 22) portrays the bird hovering over Osiris (whose pose mirrors that of the Osiris-*hemag* shown in Figures 8 and 9) as a human-headed composite similar to the typical *bꜣ*-bird of a human, but with the face, beard and crown of Amun. However, in a telling cross-over with the caption of the central bird in Figures 6 and 7, the bird’s body has the rounded shape of a vulture, and the wings too look like those of Nekhbet. The vulturine nature of the Opet *bꜣ*-bird is in fact far from unique; over time, there seems to have been a progressive compounding of the Nekhbet vulture (which usually overflies a royal figure) with the *bꜣ*-bird (which usually overflies its owner’s mummy), prompted by the fact that both typically carry *shen*-rings in their claws.¹³² In a reflection of the reviving Osiris, the bird in the Opet scene is also ithyphallic; this further identifies it with ‘the great *Ba* of Osiris, by means of which the gods have commanded him to copulate’.¹³³ But we should also note that Horus Behdety is twice shown in a scene at Hibis as a falcon with an erect phallus and wearing an Amun-like crown with two tall plumes, and that he is depicted several times at Dendera as an ithyphallic falcon with similar crowns.¹³⁴ In terms of iconography, it is clear that the *bꜣ* of Osiris can have considerable overlap with depictions of Horus Behdety, the husband of Hathor of Dendera, in Late Period and Ptolemaic temples.

Even when considered in the most general terms, the proposal that Horus might be considered a *bꜣ* of Osiris seems robust. If the sun-god, Amun-Re, is deemed to be the *bꜣ* of Osiris, then Horus – who as Harakhty, Behdety and Harmachis is identified with the sun-god¹³⁵ – should also be able to serve as the *bꜣ* of Osiris. And if a *bꜣ* is the means whereby a god communicates, manifests and projects himself to other beings, including humans, then Horus – whose earthly manifestation is the king – is in every sense the *bꜣ* of Osiris.¹³⁶

¹²⁸ Mark Smith 2017: 501; Roberson 2012: 172-173 (Figure 5.14).

¹²⁹ Roberts 2009: 169.

¹³⁰ Roberts 2009: 169 (legend to Figure 147). See also Roberts 2000: 78 and Plate 62.

¹³¹ Smith 2017: 500, 501. The adjective that Žabkar (1968: 12) translated as ‘august’ is translated by Smith as ‘noble’.

¹³² A Middle Kingdom lapis lazuli amulet (British Museum EA 57792) has the body of a vulture but the head of a man, but who/what it signifies is unclear. In the Eighteenth/Nineteenth Dynasty funerary papyri of Ani and Khari, some *bꜣ*-bird depictions already show a somewhat rounded body and short vulture-like tail (Faulkner 1985: 87, 90-91). A Ptolemaic relief in the Egyptian Museum of Barcelona shows a human-headed *bꜣ*-bird with a fully vulture-like body and tail, and a *shen*-ring in its claws, flying over the mummy of the tomb-owner; Attia 2015: https://www.flickr.com/photos/130870_040871/24639280883/in/photostream/ [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020].

¹³³ Coffin Texts, Spells 94 (CT II, 67) and 96 (CT II 77-81); Žabkar 1968: 95, 102.

¹³⁴ Shonkwiler 2014: 55-56.

¹³⁵ Hart 2005: 74-75.

¹³⁶ Allen 2001: 161. As might be expected, sonship (genealogical projection) seems to correlate with *bꜣ*-ship (spiritual projection). In this scheme, since the king is the son of Re (Žabkar 1968: 51), and the king is Horus (Žabkar 1968: 51), then the *bꜣ* of Re should be Horus – as indeed it is (Žabkar 1968: 12). Similarly, since Horus is the son of Osiris, and Horus acts on behalf of his dead father, then Horus can also be considered the *bꜣ* of Osiris.



Figure 11 - Karnak, north chapel of the Opet Temple. The cartouches above the king (far left, not shown here) appear to be those of Ptolemy VIII Physcon. Photography by: Flickr contributor kairoinfo4u.

Whether any consideration of the *b3*-bird informed the change in identification of the bird over Osiris's phallus from Isis-kite (Figures 2-4) to Horus-falcon (Figures 8 and 9) must remain unproven, although from the foregoing observations it seems likely. Either way, the caption in the latter scene makes clear that the semiotic shift did occur. And, *b3*-bird or not, the Ramesside and Ptolemaic instances cited in this section portray Horus as emerging or arising from the body of Osiris, either as a hawk-headed human or as 'the falcon of dappled plumage'. In so doing, they set important precedents for the identification of the raptor in the third of the Dendera scenes (Figures 8 and 9) as the Horus-falcon.

Phallus or omphalos?

In passing, one additional issue should be mentioned for completeness. The astute viewer cannot fail to have noticed that in Figure 11, and even in some of the Dendera scenes, Osiris's phallus is placed unnaturally high on his torso. This feature dates back at least to the Ramesside period – three examples are the ithyphallic standing Osiris from the fifth section of the Book of Caverns in the tomb of Ramses VI (Figure 12a, page 23),¹³⁷ the similarly- disposed central deity in a 'Birth of the Hours' scene in the same tomb (Figure 12b, page 23),¹³⁸ and the Osiride

¹³⁷ Hornung 1999: 88-89, including Figure 45 (image is from the tomb of Ramses VI, not Ramses IV as claimed).

¹³⁸ Roberson 2012: 181.

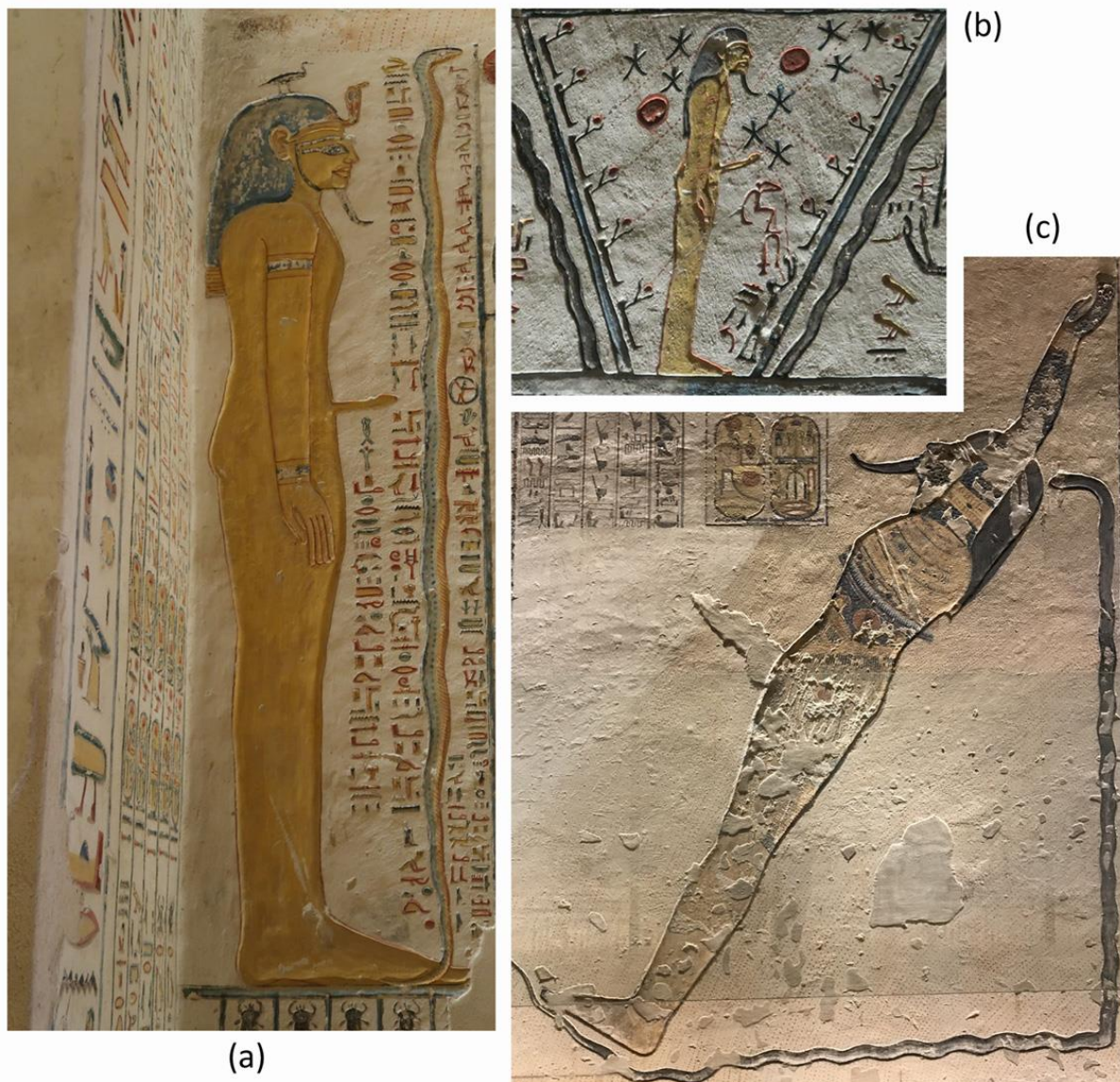


Figure 12 - Three examples of phallus/omphalos equivalence from scenes in royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. (a) Ithyphallic Osiris, fifth section of the Book of Caverns; right-hand wall of well-chamber, tomb of Ramses VI. (b) Birth of the Hours, right-hand wall of the burial chamber of Ramses VI. (c) Osiride king, right-hand wall, third corridor of the tomb of Ramses IX.

king on the Enigmatic Wall in the tomb of Ramses IX (Figure 12c, page 23).¹³⁹ The phenomenon does not seem to have attracted much academic comment; for example, it is not mentioned in Bernard van Rinsveld's detailed analysis of phallic imagery.¹⁴⁰ The most likely explanation is that, notwithstanding the contribution of Isis to the god's revivification after his murder, 'The phallus sited at the umbilical cord symbolises Osiris's power of self-renewal'.¹⁴¹ Physical expressions of this kind long predate New Kingdom concepts of self-begetting deities

¹³⁹ Darnell 2004: Plate 36. The displacement is even more pronounced in his Plate 41, which shows the corresponding scene from the Papyrus of Heruben.

¹⁴⁰ Van Rinsveld 2002.

¹⁴¹ West 1993: 86, Figure A and legend thereto.

such as Amun-ka-mutef ('Amun, Bull of His Mother');¹⁴² for instance, a Predynastic male power-figure wears a penis-sheath that terminates by entering his navel.¹⁴³

Conclusions

When sculpture is included, the representations of the conception of Horus considered in this paper span the Thirteenth Dynasty to Greco-Roman times. There are undoubtedly other candidates that have not been mentioned, but the ones discussed here are the ones most often cited in the literature. The representations in temples, which take the form of wall reliefs, date from the Ramesside period to Greco-Roman times. This article set out to establish whether changes to the composition or interpretation of wall scenes that conform to the 'conception of Horus' template occurred over this long timespan. The main differences that were detected relate to the identity of the bird above Osiris's phallus, as follows.

In the Ramesside relief in the Ptah-Sokar chapel within the temple of Seti I at Abydos (Figure 2), the bird of interest is unambiguously identified as Isis. In the Osiris chapels atop the Greco-Roman temple of Hathor at Dendera, the caption in the first scene considered (Figures 3 and 4) is compatible with the cognate bird again representing Isis. However, the captions in the second and third scenes (Figures 6-9) point to its identification as the Nekhbet-vulture and Horus-falcon, respectively. The former identification is consistent with the fact that, during the New Kingdom, Isis had to some extent assimilated the iconography of Nekhbet. In addition, the bird of interest acts in certain respects like a *b3*-bird; if in fact it was considered to be the *b3*-bird of Osiris, this might further explain why it could be identified as Nekhbet (whose iconography overlaps with that of the *b3*-bird) and – especially – as the Horus-falcon, since Horus may be considered a *b3* of Osiris. In sum, the study set out to compare 'conception of Horus' scenes of very different dates, found important interpretational differences between them, and suggested likely explanations for those changes. Potential implications were also explored, such as the possibility that, in some Ramesside scenes (e.g. Figure 1), the bird of interest might have been intended to represent Horus rather than, or as well as, Isis.

Despite the importance of the Osiris chapels at Dendera, little attention seems to have been paid to the captions above the birds in the three scenes that conform to the 'conception of Horus' template. Cauville's text edition presents the transcriptions and translations, with no comment on their implications or significance. The received wisdom amongst Egyptologists, which no doubt takes its lead from the largely intact scene in the Ptah-Sokar chapel at Abydos (Figure 2), is that the bird above Osiris's erect penis is invariably Isis in the form of a female kite or related raptor, such as a female falcon or hawk, who is being (or is about to be, or has just been) inseminated by the slain god. For example, Richard Wilkinson includes the second Dendera scene (Figure 6a) as a colour plate in his *Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. Notwithstanding the hieroglyphic caption identifying the bird above Osiris's phallus as a vulture, most likely Nekhbet, his figure legend reads: 'The conception of Horus by Isis in the form of a hawk flying above the deceased Osiris'.¹⁴⁴ Likewise, Rosalie David, speaking collectively of the reliefs in the Dendera Osiris chapels, merely says: 'Isis, in the guise of a bird, is shown conceiving Horus by the dead Osiris'.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Hart 2005: 21.

¹⁴³ Naqada I ivory statue from Grave H.29, el-Mahasna, now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo; Ayrton and Loat 1911: Plate XI, 1; also Ordynat 2018: 78 (Object 17) and 93 (Figure 10).

¹⁴⁴ Wilkinson 2003: 147.

¹⁴⁵ David 1981: 124.

By way of conclusion, let us reprise the key points of the study in some detail with a view to contextualising and integrating the findings. In the temple scenes considered here, the total number of birds ranges from three (Figures 2-4) to two (Figures 6 and 7) to one (Figures 1, 8 and 9). In the largely intact Ramesside scene at Abydos (Figure 2), the central bird, which has alighted on Osiris's phallus, is clearly Isis in the form of a female raptor; given Isis's long-standing identification as 'the Greater Kite', this bird is best understood as a kite (*dr.t*, a feminine noun). The cognate bird in each of the Greco-Roman scenes at Dendera is positioned somewhat higher, i.e., above Osiris's phallus but not contacting it directly. In the first scene at Dendera, which is located in the innermost eastern Osiris chapel (Figures 3 and 4), the central bird and two others are classed collectively as *bik.w*, falcons. *Bik* is a masculine noun, but the central bird could still be a female kite/falcon/hawk; for a group containing both males and females, the masculine plural would be chosen, and the other birds present encompass both sexes.

In the next Dendera scene (Figures 6 and 7), located in the innermost western Osiris chapel, the identification of the bird above the phallus as a vulture (*nr.t*, a feminine noun) affords a shift in species while maintaining the original concept of an avian mother for Osiris's son. The shift is also conservative insofar as the identity of Isis and Nekhbet had, by this stage, developed some overlap. The third scene (Figures 8 and 9), which is located in the same room, switches both the species and sex of the bird to *bik*, a male falcon, thereby transforming it from the mother into the son – it is captioned *bik n(.y) nbw*, which is a well-known epithet of Horus. But perhaps the bird in this room has been identified both as a falcon and a vulture because it represents not just Horus but also the *bꜣ*-bird of Osiris, a composite entity (Figure 11) that – even for deceased humans – often combines the attributes of both bird species. Either way, the third scene at Dendera (Figures 8 and 9) provides the closest compositional match for the fragmentary Ramesside scene in the Osiris suite at Abydos (Figure 1). This begs the question of whether the bird in this earlier scene might not also represent Horus rather than Isis, or at least raises the possibility that it was amenable to both identifications.

From the outset, the bird above Osiris's phallus in temple 'conception of Horus' scenes may have been identified primarily with Isis, but it seems that it was also compatible with interpretation as Nekhbet or Horus. Perhaps these alternate identities became more prominent over time, or perhaps chance saw them become more explicit in what survives of the artistic record. Further evidence may yet emerge which relates the bird to other deities, amongst whom Hathor would be the most likely candidate. Of course, pluralistic interpretations – in the case of such scenes, the ability to identify the same bird as an Isis-kite, a Nekhbet-vulture and a Horus-falcon – are very much in keeping with the Egyptians' penchant for flexible 'both/and' thinking and their well-known ability to entertain multiple parallel truths.

Figures

Figure 1. Abydos, (south)west wall of Room 11 in the Osiris suite within the temple of Seti I. Photography by: Lloyd Graham, February 2020.

Figure 2. Abydos, south(east) wall of the Ptah-Sokar Chapel. Image ‘Abydos, Temple of Seti I, Chapel of Sokar Osiris’ by Flickr contributor kairoinfo4u, February 2014, reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/manna4u/15083469149> [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020].

Figure 3. Dendera, east wall of the innermost eastern Osiris chapel, temple of Hathor. Photography by: Lloyd Graham, January 2018.

Figure 4. Dendera, east wall of the innermost eastern Osiris chapel, temple of Hathor. Drawing by Mariette-Bey (1873: Plate 70g,h; ‘South, room no. 3’). In this version, the head of the Horus figure (at right, standing) has been corrected from frog to falcon; it is clear from the hieroglyphic caption that the figure is Harendotes (Cauville 1997b: II, 120, Figure 6).

Figure 5. Direct comparison of the composition of the intact Abydos scene (Figure 2) with that of its Dendera counterpart (Figures 3 and 4). Redrawn from a similar comparison by Y. Hanafi, published by Cauville (1997b: II, 120; lower half of Figure 6). In the version used here, the Dendera scene has been reversed; also, its Osiris figure wears the White Crown, as its presence is indicated by the hieroglyphic caption.

Figure 6. Dendera, east wall of the innermost western Osiris chapel, Temple of Hathor. Photography by: Lloyd Graham, January 2018 and February 2020.

Figure 7. Dendera, east wall of the innermost western Osiris chapel, Temple of Hathor. Drawing by Mariette-Bey (1873: Plate 88c, d; ‘North, room no. 3’).

Figure 8. Dendera, west wall of the innermost western Osiris chapel, Temple of Hathor. Photography by: Lloyd Graham, February 2020.

Figure 9. Dendera, west wall of the innermost western Osiris chapel, Temple of Hathor. Drawing by Mariette-Bey (1873: Plate 90k, l; ‘North, room no. 3’).

Figure 10. *Book of the Dead* vignette: Papyrus of Nakht, sheet 14, *recto*, top left; British Museum EA 10471,14. Image AN793628001, © Trustees of the British Museum; detail (reversed to match the position of Osiris in Figure 2) reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=793628001&objectId=113278&partId=1 [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020].

Figure 11. Karnak, Opet Temple, north chapel. Cropped version of image ‘Karnak: Opet Temple North Chapel’ by Flickr contributor kairoinfo4u, July 2018, reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/manna4u/43459344492> [Last Accessed: 6 April 2020].

Figure 12. Three examples of phallus/omphalos equivalence from scenes in royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Photography by: Lloyd Graham, January 2018 and February 2020.

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