



FANTASTIC BEASTS AND HOW TO INTERPRET THEM

A Study of Griffins in the Elite Tombs of the Middle Kingdom



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Abbreviations

AA = Archäologischer Anzeiger

ACE Reports: Australian Centre for Egyptology Reports

AeUL = Ägypten und Levante

ANEG = Ancient Egypt: The History, People and Culture of the Nile Valley

ASAE = Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte

ASE = Archaeological Survey of Egypt (Later known as EES-ASE or EEF-ASE)

ÄSL = Ägyptologische Studien Leipzig

BdE = Bibliothèque d'étude

BES = Bulletin of the Egyptological seminar

BIE = Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte

BIFAO = Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale

BMMA = The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

CENiM = Cahiers Égypte Nilotique et méditerranéenne

CHANE = Culture and History of the Ancient Near East

DAWW = Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Classe

DFIFAO = Documents de Fouilles de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire

EAJRS = Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies

EQAe = Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie

ET = Etudes et Travaux

ERA = Egyptian Research Account

ESAP = Egyptian Studies Association Publication

EVO = Egitto e Vicino Oriente

FSaq = Fouilles à Saqqarah

GOF = Göttinger Orientforschungen, IV. Reihe, Ägypten

JAEl = Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections

JARCE = Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt

JEA = Journal of Egyptian Archaeology

JEOL = Jaarbericht van het Voorazatisch-Egyptisch genootschap "Ex oriente lux"

JNES = Journal of Near Eastern Studies

KSG = Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen

LÄ = Lexikon der Ägyptologie

MÄS = Münchner Ägyptologische Studien

MDAIK = Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo

MIO = Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung
NAWG = Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse
OBO = Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OLA = Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
PAe = Probleme der Ägyptologie
PSBA = Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archeology
SAK = Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur
SAK Bh = Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur - Beihefte
SE = Shire Egyptology
SIE = Studies in Egyptology
TeG = Tuna el-Gebel
TdE = Trabajos de Egiptología
UGAAe = Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ägyptens
WA = Writings from the Ancient World
WdO = Die Welt des Orient
WVDOG = Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft
ZÄS = Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde
ZDMG = Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZPE = Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

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1. Introduction

The griffins of Beni Hasan and Deir al-Barsha are well documented beings whose contexts and iconography have been objects of curiosity for over a century. Discussion surrounding these depictions has been fuelled in the last decade by a number of studies that have touched upon aspects of these creatures both directly and tangentially. The time therefore seems ripe to survey these modern developments alongside the more prominent of their dated counterparts in order to discard unsubstantiated hypotheses and propose new theories in the light of these recent advances. The systematic and detailed approach applied here will start first by analysing the development of the griffin motif from its origins in the Egyptian sphere, through to its use in contemporary objects of the Middle Kingdom. The second chapter shall then study the so-called 'magical knives', an archaeological phenomenon of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period that makes regular use of a griffin motif. Finally, the contexts of the tombs themselves shall be scrutinised in the light of all that is previously discussed. Through these three avenues, the frameworks of these representations should be encapsulated allowing for a comprehensive examination of all their different forms, concluding in a more in-depth idea of how they were understood in antiquity.

Before commencing with such an essay it is important to first define what constitutes a griffin in this text, due to the diverse terminology implemented across the literature.¹ In this work, the term 'griffin' shall be defined as any feline-bodied creature with the head and/or wings of a raptor.² Let it be clarified that whilst a combination of raptor and feline elements are necessary to form this beast, neither the raptor wings nor head are themselves necessary components, nor is a specific species of feline essential.

¹ For example, the creatures on the later discussed pectoral of Mereret have been referred to as griffins (Smith 1958, 112.), sphinxes (Robins 1997, 114.), falcon-headed sphinxes (Andrews 1990, 129.) and hieracosphinxes (Gerke 2014, 25.).

² When Egyptian griffins do possess raptor heads they are generally assumed to represent that of a falcon: Wyatt 2010, 30.; Morgan 2011, 304.

Unlike the more eminent griffins of the Aegean which generally possessed eagle heads (sometimes with a vulture's beak) and leonine bodies,³ Egyptian griffins, especially in the Middle Kingdom, have much more variability. In the five tombs containing griffins at Beni Hasan and Deir al-Barsha alone, four different forms of griffins are present. In light of this, a technical description of each of the different types found at these sites is given here.

Type 1

Location: BH3 (Figures 1-2)

Tomb Owner: Khnumhotep II

Egyptian Name: No name attested in BH3.⁴

Description: This griffin possesses the full head and body of a large feline, likely a cheetah due to its spotted coat (including underbelly) and stripy tail.⁵ On its back is a pair of wings, in between which is the head of an Egyptian person,⁶ which is attached to the back of the griffin and faces the same direction as the animal. The griffin itself has both its head and tail lowered to the ground.

Type 2

Location: BH15 and BH17 (Figures 3-6)

Tomb Owners: Baqet III and Khety (respectively)

Egyptian Name: *sfr* (attested in both tombs)

Description: This griffin possesses the head of a falcon and the body of a large feline with wings located on the centre of its back. In both scenes its head is raised, and its tail is lowered. Morenz claims that the front legs of this griffin (based on the depiction in BH15) end in bull's hooves as opposed to the back legs which conclude in lion's paws.⁷ There seems however to be no evidence in support of this, with both the concave curvature of the ankles and the lack of differentiation between the skin of the legs and the keratin hooves suggesting that this is not in fact the case. Morenz may have been interpreting the

³ Judas 2015, 123.

⁴ Though its name is depicted elsewhere (Voss 1999, 390-398.) there is some disagreement over its reading (as discussed in the second chapter)

⁵ Castel 2002, 19.

⁶ Altenmüller 2013b, 15.

⁷ Morenz 2002, 24.

overhanging digits above the paws as dew claws thus leading him to this conclusion, however they are more likely carpal pads which are not uncommonly depicted on the front legs of large felines in Egyptian art.⁸

Type 3

Location: BH17 and Barsha 4 (Figures 7-9)

Tomb Owners: Khety and Nehri I (respectively)

Egyptian Name: *s3wg(.t)* / *s3g.t* (attested in BH17 and Barsha 4 respectively)

Description: The depiction of this griffin at Beni Hasan has the head of a bird, the body of a feline and no visible wings.⁹ The underside of the belly is covered in numerous teats and the outwardly erect tail concludes in a lotus flower. There is a checker patterned collar around its neck with a thin line (leash?) attached to it. The colouring of the animal is yellow on all four paws, the forelegs, chest and head, and blue from the back of the forelegs to the end of the tail. On the upper part of the griffin the blue overlaps the collar, continuing until the start of the head, a detail that possibly hints at the representation of a cloth draped over the animal. A pattern of vertical and horizontal lines, decorates the side of the animal's body starting in-line with the forelegs, possibly also hinting at the presence of some form of clothing. At Barsha, only the head and start of the neck remains,¹⁰ however despite this, one clear difference is visible, with the Barsha version possessing a pair of pointy ears.¹¹

Type 4

Location: Barsha 5 (Figure 10)

Tomb Owner: Ahanakht I

Egyptian Name: *tštš* (attested in tomb)

Description: This griffin possesses the head of a falcon and the body of a large feline with wings located on the centre of its back. The griffin has a raised head, a mark along its

⁸ See for example: Kanawati and Woods 2010, photo 39.

⁹ Morenz also suggested that the front legs of this griffin ended in hooves (Morenz 2002, 24-25.) though this observation can be rejected for the same reasons mentioned above.

¹⁰ Unfortunately, this block no longer exists meaning that the only records of this creature come from early travelers and the facsimile from Newberry's "El Bersheh II" (Figure 9).

¹¹ It seems also to have a collar without the protruding point / leash however this is hard to confirm from the facsimile

neckline, it wears some form of feathered headdress and the tail is erect and curved towards the wings.

Finally, it is worth noting that most sources agree that the Egyptians considered griffins to be 'real' animals which existed not only in the realm of the gods but also had a presence on earth, living in the desert, hunting and being hunted like any other desert fauna.¹² The strongest evidence for this however comes from historical accounts which date to millennia after the periods dealt with in this thesis.¹³ Some argue that depictions of griffins in and among existent fauna which occur from the earliest times right through to the end of the Egyptian civilisation supports this conclusion with respect to earlier periods.¹⁴ However, the examples quoted for this argument are typically exclusively religious / iconographical and so are not aimed at preserving truth. In fact, composite entities are among the foremost characteristics used to denote the supernatural world.¹⁵ Following this, whilst the claim that Egyptians believed in fantastical animals is not being refuted here, it is neither assumed within the essay without concrete proof of its accuracy.

¹² For example: Barta 1973-74, 348.; Gerke 2014, 130-104.

¹³ See the demotic story of a griffin wreaking havoc on an Egyptian army by the Red Sea (Quack 2005, 52.) or St. Anthony's encounter with griffins in the Eastern Desert (Keimer 1944, 144.)

¹⁴ For example: Quack 2010, 349.

¹⁵ Hornung 1983, 109-110.

2. Overview and Development

The purpose of this first chapter is to give a general overview of the griffin's artistic usage leading up to its presence at Beni Hasan and Deir al-Barsha. Given the extensive period of time over which Egyptian civilisation thrived, the iconography attached to different figures often transformed and evolved over different periods. Griffins are no exception to this pattern, with various nuances in their meaning appearing and disappearing since their early arrival in the Pre-dynastic period, although other symbolic elements seemingly remained constant over time. This chapter discusses the origins of these animals within the artistic sphere of Egypt, before following the progression of their development into the Middle Kingdom. This is done so that one may both: understand how certain griffins attained their meanings, and, at the conclusion of this thesis, cement the iconographical nuances of Middle kingdom griffins into the story of their development over time.

2.1 Origins

The first proto-forms of the griffin in Egypt are found on a series of knife handles (Figures 11-13)¹⁶ and the 'Two Dog Palette' (Figure 14)¹⁷ which were excavated at Hierakonpolis and Abydos and date to the Naqada II-III periods. All these figures share the same basic features of representation with: a quadrupedal body displayed in profile, a bird-like head, and wings attached to the centre of the back drawn from a 'bird's-eye view' perspective. The only real difference in the physical attributes of the creatures are the patterns that decorate parts of their bodies, and the forelegs of the Gebel Tarif griffin which end in bird-like talons rather than feline paws.¹⁸ In terms of their wider contexts, the similarities seem to continue, with each scene depicting the griffins as aggressors, stalking or attacking various forms of wild

¹⁶ The Gebel Tarif Knife handle (Ciałowicz 1992, 256-257.), an ivory knife handle from Hierakonpolis (Adams and Ciałowicz 1997, 53.) and the handle from U-127 at Abydos (Dreyer 1999, 209.)

¹⁷ For the original report see: Quibell and Green 1902, 41. For an up to date technical description see: McNamara 2018, 33-34.

¹⁸ Ciałowicz 2012, 86. The ivory handle from Hierakonpolis may also show the griffin carrying a snake in its mouth, a feature that is also seen on some of the later magical knives: Ciałowicz 2012, 85.

game whether it be bird, goat or antelope.¹⁹ There is a noticeable difference in the layout of these artefacts with the knife scenes being more ‘structured’ compared to the chaotic palette, though this is likely due to the limited surface area which the knife handles offer.²⁰ Finally, it is clear that these objects existed for an elite audience with the fine materials and intricate composition alluding to artistic, likely propagandistic and potentially ritualistic usage. As the ability to own one of these knives would have been a status marker in and of itself, the symbolism on them should be understood to reflect elitist ideologies.²¹

The meaning of these scenes can be gleaned by tracing the artistic origins of these animals which, though they are still somewhat debated,²² were likely adopted from Mesopotamian tradition during the Pre-dynastic Period.²³ Seal impressions from Susa and Sumer contain many of the earliest versions of figures and motifs that later materialize in the Egyptian record such as the serpopard, the “Tamer of Animals” scene, and the griffin (Figures 15-16).²⁴ A common theme for these seal impressions is to show a heroic figure, depicted as either a human or ‘great animal’, dominating animals around him which is often taken as a metaphor for the hero subduing or vanquishing his enemies.²⁵ In the Mesopotamian examples this figure is sometimes taken to be a prototype of the later mythical character of Gilgamesh,²⁶ however in Egypt, the rulers were already fulfilling this function as semi-divine figures.²⁷ Due to the almost certainly uncoincidental similarities between these scenes it has been posited that the same function is being served in the Egyptian examples, though with

¹⁹ Seemingly an Ibex on the Gebel Tarif example, Unknown on the Ivory handle, a large bird (ostrich(?): Ciałowicz 2012, 86.) on the Abydos handle, and a gazelle on the Oxford palette.

²⁰ It is possible that on the palette (where the space was available to do so) the chaotic layout of prey represented the chaos which the fantastical animals had to control and bring to order (as is discussed in the next paragraph).

²¹ It is known that items such as cosmetic palettes, combs and knives were “central components of social display in the Nile Valley since Neolithic times” Wengrow 2014, 54.

²² For example Barta 1973-74, 337. Claims that griffins are without a doubt Egyptian in origin, whereas Smith 1992, 235. argues that the comparative chronology of prehistoric periods of ancient Egypt and Iran put the Mesopotamian seals “earlier in origin” than the Egyptian palettes and knives.

²³ Wengrow 2014, 62.

²⁴ The similarities in these depictions have been realised and commented on by various scholars over the last century: Boehmer 1974, 496.

²⁵ Smith 1992, 235-237.; The adoption of Animal guises is due to animals at this time being seen as “the most powerful and efficacious beings, far superior to men in all their capacities.” Hornung 1983, 105.

²⁶ Smith 1992, 235. Whilst this particular hypothesis is not always accepted, it is possible that rituals depicted in the seals of this time did inspire some of the scenes in the later myth: Frankfort 1939, 19.

²⁷ Hassan 1992, 316.

the ruler as the heroic figure who is being represented.²⁸ Thus we can interpret the earliest Egyptian griffins as zoomorphic representations of rulers whose power and strength allows them to dominate their enemies and maintain order within Egypt.

2.2 Old Kingdom

At the end of the Pre-dynastic Period a suppression of foreign motifs relating to kingship occurred in favour of those of local origin.²⁹ It is perhaps due to this that the griffin disappears from the Egyptian record for 600-800 years, reappearing only in the fifth³⁰ dynasty.³¹ The most intact of these depictions comes from the outside north wall of Sahure's valley temple at Abusir (Figure 17). In the time between the early depictions and those of the Old Kingdom, the griffin developed from its proto-form into a much more recognisable creature. The body is more detailed in representing that of a great feline and the wings have moved from an open position to being folded along the back, with more definition given to the individual feathers. Though the head is unfortunately lost, Borchardt argues that it was likely to have been that of a falcon due to comparative similarities with a complete griffin found on an ostrakon at the sun-temple of Neuserre at Abu-Ghorab.³² This ostrakon however has since been dated to the Late Period making it by no means contemporary with the griffins of any of these kings. Nevertheless, Barta believes that the similar stylistic features of this ostrakon prove it to be a viable blueprint for the Old Kingdom depictions regardless.³³ Though this argument alone seems inconclusive, a better one can be formed through a comparison with the scene from the causeway of Pepi II. Though Pepi II's reliefs are far more fragmentary and damaged they clearly show two different kinds of

²⁸ Smith 1992, 235.

²⁹ Wilkinson 2000, 28-29.

³⁰ One griffin like figure is known from the fourth dynasty, found as graffiti carved into a rock at Dakhla Oasis, however this sheds no light on interpretation and shall be passed over for the purposes of this thesis: Kuhlmann 2005, 285.

³¹ Chronology based on: Shaw 2000, 481-482. Depictions can be found from the Valley temple of Sahure and the causeway of Neuserre at Abusir (Borchardt 1910, 8.; Borchardt 1907, 46.) and the causeway of Pepi II at Saqqara-south (Jéquier 1940, 11.) though in the latter two cases only the lower part is preserved. A griffin is also possibly present in a relief of the season *ꜥḥ.t* from the sun-temple of Neuserre at Abu Ghorab, however it is hard to be certain of this due to damage to the scene (Edel 1963, fig. 14.).

³² Borchardt 1913a, 22.

³³ Barta 1973-74, 339, 346. Also discussed in Brunner-Traut 1956, 90. and Eggebrecht 1969, 70.

beast, sphinxes and griffins, which are distinguishable from one another through certain artistic elements such as the shape of the wings / feathered-shrouds on their backs.³⁴ This example from the causeway of Sahure stylistically matches the examples of Pepi II's griffins almost perfectly and as such, by comparison, there is little doubt as to their original composition.

In Sahure's scene, the griffin is depicted trampling a Libyan, Asiatic and Puntite foe in a striding position with accompanying text that reads:

Text between the back and the tail:

nb t3wy s3h-w(i)-r^c di(.w) ʿnh w3s nb Dhwtj nb iwntyw Spdw nb h3sw.t ptpt sniⁱw

Lord of the two lands 'Sahure' who is given all life and dominion. Thoth, lord of the *iwntyw*.³⁵ Soped, lord of the foreign lands, who tramples the foreigners.³⁶

Surrounding text:

*Hr tm3-^c ir m ʿ(wy)=f(y) nb t3wy di(.w) ʿnh dd nb snb nb 3w.t-ib nb.t wn=f hn.t(.y)
k3w ʿnhw d.t*

Horus strong of arm, who acts with his two arms, lord of the two lands who is given all life and stability, all health and all joy, he exists as the foremost of the kas and the ones who live, forever.

From these passages we can see a clear connection between the griffin and four royal / divine figures: The king, Thoth, Soped and Horus. Borchardt's original interpretation understands the griffin as another means by which the king is depicted.³⁷ He argues that this is part of the development of the king being portrayed by great animals with the lion and

³⁴ Jéquier 1940, 22. See also plates 15-18.

³⁵ Nomads of the Sinai

³⁶ For a discussion on *snⁱw* as foreigners see: Sethe 1913, 80. Or more extensively in Shalomi-Hen 2006, 90-94.

³⁷ Borchardt 1913a, 21-23.

the bull as its predecessors.³⁸ This is however a contested view as some have argued that whilst the sphinx acts as a representation of the king with very little dispute, when this androcephalic form passes into the theriomorphic griffin, the changing of the heads symbolises that the new form depicts a deity connected with the species of the new head.³⁹ One would be inclined to accept the latter argument from at least the Old Kingdom onwards, to the degree that if the griffin does portray the king, it is with relation to another god also. Certainly in the case of the causeway of Pepi II, it would seem redundant to put so much effort into differentiating the sphinxes and griffins if they did not have any variable iconographical nuances. Following this line of reasoning, Barta argues that the deity primarily embodied by the griffin is Horus, the noted falcon god whose roles in Egyptian mythology encompasses both kingship and war, making him a good fit for this scene. Barta however reaches this conclusion based on the symbolism on a Middle Kingdom pectoral which shall be discussed later in this chapter.⁴⁰ Whilst Horus is mentioned in the text surrounding this scene, a better case can perhaps be made for the griffin primarily being a representation of Soped instead.

Under the tail of the griffin, two gods are mentioned; Thoth and Soped, both of whom are connected with foreigners and 'border-peoples' on account of their roles as protectors of the frontiers. Though Thoth became a widespread deity throughout Egypt from the earliest dynasties, it is believed that his early cult centre was in the fifteenth lower Egyptian Nome in the eastern delta, due to its name being written as an ibis on a standard.⁴¹ As a moon deity it was thought that Thoth used the crescent moon as a sickle-like weapon against the enemies of Egypt.⁴² Soped on the other hand was the central god of the twentieth and eastern-most lower Egyptian Nome, having possibly originated in the Near East himself.⁴³ As well as being a falcon deity who was syncretized with Horus as early as the pyramid texts,⁴⁴

³⁸ Borchartd 1913a, 22. This interpretation is agreed upon by Bonnet 1952, 262-263. And Helck 1955, 7. Who also sees the griffin as just another form of the king.

³⁹ Barta 1973-74, 352.

⁴⁰ Barta 1973-74, 352.

⁴¹ Wilkinson 2003, 217.

⁴² Kees 1925, 2-3.

⁴³ Wilkinson 2003, 211. In argument of Spoed's possible Near Eastern origin see: Zivie-Coche 2011 1-2. In argument of an Egyptian origin see: Givon 1984, 779. Regardless of which is true, it is apparent that Soped was a part of the Egyptian pantheon right from the earliest periods.

⁴⁴ The king as Osiris-Orion is said to impregnate Isis as the star of Sothis who gives birth to Horus-Soped: Wilkinson 2003, 211.

Soped was also a frontier god who protected the eastern borders of Egypt and Egyptian outposts in the Sinai.⁴⁵ Not only does this role,⁴⁶ in addition to his falcon form, make him well suited as a candidate for the god whom the griffin embodies, but the interrelation of text and image seems to contribute to this analysis also. The three foreigners used in the determinative of the word *sntiw* (the foreigners whom Soped is denoted as trampling) correspond perfectly to the three foreigners (an Asiatic, Libyan and Puntite) being trampled by the griffin itself in the relief.

We see then in the Old Kingdom that, whilst maintaining its association with dominating the enemies of Egypt, the griffin takes a more defined role as a border animal who protects the country's frontiers as opposed to the forces within its boundaries. Alongside this, the creature seems to inherit divine properties in addition to the royal connotations present in the Pre-dynastic period. In terms of the deities involved we see a textual connection with both Horus and Thoth, though particularly in the Sahure's valley temple it seems like Soped is the foremost subject of representation.

2.3 Middle Kingdom

Though this chapter shall not look at griffins from the elite tombs or apotropaic wands of the Middle Kingdom, there are a few further examples of griffins in need of discussion from this period. The first of these is a pectoral that comes from the cache of Princess Mereret at Dahshur, dating to the reign of Amenemhat III (Figure 18). Made of gold and various semi-precious stones, this piece depicts two griffins trampling enemies, mirroring one another with their front paws upholding a cartouche containing the throne name of Senwosret III (*h^c-k3w-r^c*) which rests in the middle of the pectoral. The griffins are wearing a double feathered headdress fronted by a uraeus, with both bull's and ram's horns protruding from the base. The deftly patterned wings are folded along their back, their tails are raised curving back towards their crowns, and above the tails on each side is a lotus, with lotuses

⁴⁵ Wilkinson 2003, 211.

⁴⁶ Griffins in Egypt were often thought of as desert animals who lived on the border between Egypt and the 'other'.

also forming the side frame of the piece. The top portion of the pectoral shows a vulture (the goddess Nekhbet) holding a shen sign in each talon. First and foremost, it is clear that there are similarities with the griffin depicted on the causeway of Sahure given the posture and placement of the animals trampling foreigners under foot. In this case however it does not seem to resemble Soped as can be seen through an analysis of the components of the composite crown. The most prominent feature on this crown are the double feathers which have been shown to have unquestionable solar connotations in Egyptian belief.⁴⁷ This is supplemented by the bull's horns which have connotations of brightness and the rising sun in both the pyramid and coffin texts.⁴⁸ This type of Imagery works well alongside the lotuses which were also ichnographically linked with solar themes and the rebirth of the sun due to their natural tendency to open with the sun's rising and close with its setting each day.⁴⁹ Horus, as a falcon and war deity with solar connotations,⁵⁰ would therefore become the most likely candidate for the deity associated with this creature.⁵¹

A similar conclusion can be reached concerning a second pectoral which also dates to the twelfth dynasty and was found at Dashur though the exact origin is unknown (Figure 19). The piece displays a pair of Wedjat eyes that are separated by a sun-disk flanked on both sides by uraei. The side frames of the piece take the form of papyrus plants, whilst down the middle of the piece, a *h3.t* symbol separates a wingless griffin and a Seth Animal which mirror one another in their seated posture. This piece as a whole clearly represents the myth of the Wedjat eye, in which Horus's eye is damaged by Seth but later healed by Hathor⁵² (who is represented by the *h3.t* symbol).⁵³ Barta however goes much further in interpreting this object, drawing off the ideas of Westendorf. Though he (likely correctly)

⁴⁷ For an overview of the use of ostrich feathers in crowns and on fans see: Goebis 2015, 152-161. For a primary textual attestation of the feather-solar relationship see: Assmann 1999, No. 86. For an archaeological attestation of this relationship see: Friedman et al. 1999, 21-23.

⁴⁸ Goebis 2015, 164.

⁴⁹ Milward 1982, 141.

⁵⁰ Altenmüller and Westendorf state that the Horus griffin should be connected specifically to Horus-dun-ani who is affiliated with the east: Altenmüller 1965a, 158.; Westendorf 1966b, 138.

⁵¹ Some such as Quaegebeur take this depiction to only represent the king (Quaegebeur 1983, 43.) however, the overwhelming solar iconography opposes this.

⁵² In some versions of the myth Thoth fulfills this function.

⁵³ For a concise overview of the myth and the use of the wedjat eye as a symbol see: El-Toukhy 2013, 134-135. For Hathor in the role of the healer see: Wilkinson 2003, 140. The *h3.t* symbol is an emblem of the cow goddess Bat who by this time was synonymous with Hathor: Sabbahy 2017, 402.

rejects Westendorf's idea that the griffin is a winged panther who flies parallel to the sun-disk as a hypostasis of the sun god,⁵⁴ he does take interest in the idea that the sphinx is an image of the king rising from the motherly cat's womb.⁵⁵ Barta hypothesises that by extrapolating from this, one could interpret the griffin as a symbol of the falcon god, in this case the solar form of Horus, rising from the same place.⁵⁶ The theory then follows that the image of the griffin reflects the ascension of the sun bird each morning as it breaks free of the mother cat and follows the sun across the sky, thus symbolising the rising of the sun god from the eastern horizon.⁵⁷ If true this would be a late development of the beast as it is only from the Middle Kingdom onwards that the griffin receives such strong solar connections (as seen by the pectorals and in the following chapters). Regardless of the validity of this theory, Barta was undoubtedly right about the connection with Horus and the rising sun. This idea is further reiterated by the placement of the griffin on the left side of the pectoral, which constituted as east for the Egyptian who oriented themselves on the directional flow of the Nile, with the Seth Animal on the right representing the west.⁵⁸

The pectorals of the Middle Kingdom visibly display the development of a connection between the griffin and solar themes during this time. Whilst the trampling griffin still has its place in the sphere of Egyptian motifs, more diverse uses and a greater connection with the theology of the time become apparent across these two examples. With this in mind, this thesis shall move on to looking at these creatures on a group of uniquely Middle Kingdom artefacts known as the magical knives.

⁵⁴ Westendorf 1966a, 5, 41.; Westendorf 1968, 251.

⁵⁵ Westendorf 1966a, 3, 41.

⁵⁶ Barta 1973-74, 353.

⁵⁷ Barta 1973-74, 353.

⁵⁸ The Seth Animal was often connected with Libya and the west: Morenz 2002, 25.

3. The Magical knives

3.1 Overview

The so-called ‘magical knives’ (also known as wands or tusks) are unique archaeological artefacts present in the Egyptian record during the Middle kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period from around 2000_{BC} - 1600_{BC}.⁵⁹ These objects are made from hippopotamus ivory and generally maintain the overall shape of the hippo’s tusk. One end of a knife is often pointed or shaped like a fox’s head (sometimes with a lotus atop of it) whilst the other is rounded or shaped like a panther’s head.⁶⁰ The objects feature representations of various composite and regular characters, with Péter Hubai recording 72 different figures,⁶¹ across over 150 unearthed knives.⁶² When it comes to decoration of the knives, no two are the same though they all draw their decorative figures from an identical corpus of characters, thus suggesting a standardised mythology surrounding them. Accompanying the images, some of the knives possess inscriptions that inform us of their purpose, such as the following passages from the Berlin Staatliche Museen object 14207 (Figure 20):⁶³

Front face, behind the jackal-headed figure:

ḏd md.w in sz.w ššz.w iḏ.n=n stp=n sz hr [sn^c]-ib ms.t.n nb.t pr snb=s-m-(=i) ḥnh.ti

Words spoken by many protective figures: “we have come so that we may select protection upon Sena-ib, whom the lady of the house Seneb-sema has given birth to, may she live”

Front face, between the griffin and the forward-facing figure:

⁵⁹ Roberson 2009, 436.

⁶⁰ Gerke 2014, 34.

⁶¹ The actual number of demons is less than this as, for example, a sitting and striding panther were counted as two different figures despite likely representing the same entity: Hubai 2008, 182.

⁶² This figure is now over 200: Vink 2016-2017, 12.

⁶³ Transliterations and translations based on Gerke 2014, 155.

ḏd md.w in ḥꜣ ḏ.n(=i) stp=i sꜣ ḥr snꜣ-ib ms.t.n nb.t pr snb=s-m-ꜣ(=i) ḥnh.ti

Words spoken by 'The Fighter': "I have come so that I may select protection upon Sena-ib, whom the lady of the house Seneb-sema gave birth to, may she live"

Though the question of how the knives were used is still somewhat debated,⁶⁴ these passages clearly show that their overall purpose was to offer protection to new-borns, though they were likewise used to protect the mother, before, during and after childbirth.⁶⁵ Alongside this, they were also placed in tombs as an aid to achieving divine rebirth in the hereafter.⁶⁶

In his original study of these artefacts, Hartwig Altenmüller recognised a connection between the figures present on the knives and the entourage of the sun god.⁶⁷ From this he convincingly argued that the knives served an apotropaic function by means of sympathetic magic in which the child represented the newly reborn sun god whom the entourage protects by fighting away evil forces that mean the infant harm.⁶⁸ The collective noun for this entourage is most commonly documented as *sꜣw* 'those who protect' but also *nṯrw* 'gods'.⁶⁹ Though the sun god himself is only present in this series as a hypostasis given that he is embodied by the child, several other gods can perhaps be recognised. Of these, the only definitively identified deity is the frog goddess *ḥq.t*,⁷⁰ though one slightly damaged caption likely determines the wrapped double cow as *hsꜣ.t*,⁷¹ and *ḥꜣ*, 'The Fighter' denotes a demon also known from elsewhere.⁷²

⁶⁴ They were likely either placed over the body of mothers / newborns during the recital of protective spells (Altenmüller 1965a, 186.) or used to draw a protective circle around them (Hayes 1953, 248-249.; Ritner 1997, 235.)

⁶⁵ Quirke 2016, 214.

⁶⁶ Altenmüller 1986, 26-27.

⁶⁷ Altenmüller 1965a, 136-177.

⁶⁸ Altenmüller 1965a, 178-187.

⁶⁹ Quirke 2016, 6.

⁷⁰ Quirke's tusk number 5: Quirke 2016, 351.

⁷¹ Quirke tusk Aby1: Quirke 2016, 396.

⁷² *ḥꜣ* is probably a precursor to Bes: Romano 1980, 39-56. Altenmüller also argues for the presence of Sekhmet and Mut on Copenhagen Nationalmuseet knife 7795 (Altenmüller 1965b, 45-46.) though many of the signs are faded to such a degree that this is hard to defend with any certainty (Quirke 2016, 239.)

The importance of these objects within the contexts of this thesis lies in the depictions of the griffins which appear 58-70 times across the known corpus.⁷³ Of these, all excluding two⁷⁴ are of the ‘type 1’ variety, which also appears unnamed in the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan (BH3). Though a few small variations occur between individual depictions, the figures are similar enough to be seen as all representing the same entity.⁷⁵ The discussion below shall analyse two of the most prominent arguments regarding the type 1 griffin based on this sizeable corpus of objects, which will in turn inform the discussion of the tomb of Khnumhotep II in the subsequent chapter.

3.2 The Myth of the Sun’s Eye: Altenmüller’s Argument

One of the newest and most comprehensive theories for interpreting these knives has been posited by Altenmüller and is based on a story known as ‘The Myth of the Sun’s Eye’. The earliest complete textual account of this tale comes from the second century AD though the narrative is known to predate this time.⁷⁶ In the myth, the sun’s eye, often represented by Tefnut (who is predominantly equated with Hathor, though is also linked with various other female deities), splits off from the sun god and disappears from Egypt for reasons unclear. Separated from his eye, the sun god is in a weakened state and so he sends out a series of gods and beings to bring her back. Eventually she is found in Nubia by Shu, Onuris or a syncretised version of the two, and is escorted back to Egypt where she reunites with the sun god again.⁷⁷

⁷³ Altenmüller gives the total number of griffins as 70 (Altenmüller 2013b, 26-27.) however Gerke reduces this to 58 (Gerke 2014, 35.) on account of some of these depictions being too damaged to be certain of the animal and some of the knives being found outside of Egypt (e.g. in Megiddo: Altenmüller 1965b, 70-71.)

⁷⁴ These two griffins are similar to those on the Horus and Seth pectoral from the twelfth dynasty.

⁷⁵ Unlike the BH3 example, the head is usually that of a bird however it is sometimes ambiguous. The posture of the griffin may change with the head and tail being either raised or drooped, certain griffins do not have a head between their wings, and there exist one occasion on the knives where the tail ends in the head of a snake (a feature is replicated only once on a rectangular magical rod): Gerke 2014, 143-172.

⁷⁶ Fragments and allusions to it are found in temple texts from the Ptolemaic period: Quack 2010, 341.; Gerke 2014, 41.

⁷⁷ For a translation of the papyrological version of the text see: Hoffmann and Quack 2018, 206-240. For basic studies of the monumental inscriptions see: Inconnu-Bocquillon 2001.; Junker 1911.; Junker 1917.; Sethe 1912.

Three gods that are usually present at the forefront of this tale are: Thoth, Shu and Onuris with Altenmüller adding Anubis to this list also.⁷⁸ Altenmüller argues that two of these figures (Thoth and Anubis) are present on these magic knives in the forms of the baboon and jackal-headed figure.⁷⁹ A common figure on these knives is the baboon carrying the wedjat eye (Figure 20), an image which originally represented the left Eye of Horus and was associated with the moon.⁸⁰ Subsequently this imagery was mixed up or combined with the right solar eye of Re as can be seen in sources such as the ‘Book of the Dead’ 167:

“Spell for bringing a Sacred Eye by N.

Thoth has fetched the Sacred Eye, having pacified the Eye after Re had sent it away.

It was very angry, but Thoth pacified it from anger after it had been far away.

If I be hale, it will be hale, and N will be hale.”⁸¹

On one of these knives, the baboon carrying the wedjat eye is referred to as “the bearer of the wedjat eye”, a known epithet of Thoth,⁸² leading Altenmüller to conclude that this figure is in fact Thoth returning the solar eye to the sun god.⁸³ With reference to Anubis, whom Altenmüller identifies as the jackal-headed figure on the knives, Altenmüller recognises that his role has not generally been considered in the myth before. However, due to the often-close proximity of this figure with the sun-disk and other forms which Altenmüller takes to represent the sun’s eye,⁸⁴ Altenmüller parallels him with the character ‘*wnš-kwḫ*’ one of the protagonists of the myth. In a separate article Altenmüller extrapolates this argument by analysing a passage from the sun’s eye myth which reads:

“The *kyky*-apes praise you with *spn*-wood.

The *kri*-apes with *ssndm*-wood,

The griffin swathes himself for you with his wings,

⁷⁸ Altenmüller 2013b, 18.

⁷⁹ Altenmüller 2013a, 19-24.

⁸⁰ Andrews 1994, 10.

⁸¹ Faulkner 1985, 162.

⁸² Assmann 1969, 155-156, 219.

⁸³ Altenmüller 2013a, 21-22.

⁸⁴ Altenmüller states that the sun’s eye has five different forms in relation to the jackal deity: A sun disk, a sun disk with legs, a cobra (uraeus), a lion deity and a wedjat eye. Altenmüller 2013a, 24.

The foxes erect for you their front-parts,
 The hippopotami adore you, their mouths open.
 Their foreparts are in adulation for you.”⁸⁵

in an attempt to secure a connection between the two corpuses, he notes that many of the species mentioned here can also be found in the myth of the sun’s eye.⁸⁶

If the figures on these knives can be equated with characters from this myth, then it is likely that Shu and Onuris are also present within this pantheon. Altenmüller argues that a breakthrough on this front comes from a knife found in tomb 95.2 at Dra abu al Naga (Figure 21) which dates to the seventeenth dynasty. Though it is not a Middle Kingdom piece, this knife is important as it contains the only example in which the name of the griffin is given.⁸⁷ Though the lower part of the inscription is lost, Voss (who published the original report on the piece) reads the name as *tp.ty idb.wy* ‘First of the Two Banks’ or *tp.ty t3.wy* ‘First of the Two Lands’.⁸⁸ Altenmüller on the other hand, through a manipulation of the partially erased glyph, argues that they read *in-ḥr.t*, the Egyptian name for the god Onuris. Though this argument by itself remains unconvincing due to the nature of the evidence, if true it would provide both an entity and mythology to attach to this form of the griffin.⁸⁹

For his argument to succeed, Altenmüller exposes two difficulties that must first be addressed: The fact that Onuris has never otherwise been documented as a griffin, and the problem of the human head upon its back.⁹⁰ After mentioning the first of these issues Altenmüller never returns to offer an explanation. However, one of Onuris’ known forms is that of a falcon.⁹¹ As seen above, various other falcon deities take the appearance of a

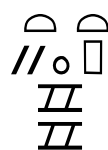
⁸⁵ Quack 2010, 348.

⁸⁶ Altenmüller 2015, 28-29.

⁸⁷ Voss 1999, 396.

⁸⁸ Voss 1999, 395-396.

⁸⁹ Voss’s transcription:



(Voss 1999, 392.). Altenmüller’s transcription:



(Altenmüller

⁹⁰ Altenmüller 2013b, 19.

⁹¹ Altenmüller 2013b, 19.

griffin, making Onuris' appearance in this form possible though not validated. In response to the second of these problems, Altenmüller recognises the head as that of the solar god Atum with the solar eye as a synecdoche of the head configuration.⁹² This understanding both allows for the masculine gender of the head and can be seen to refer back to CT [80] II, 37 which references Shu as Onuris reattaching the head of Atum back to his body:⁹³

I (Shu) am the living one, who knits on heads, who makes necks firm and who
nourishes throats.

I knit <the head of> Atum together (emended following CT [80] II 38e-f),

I make firm the head of Isis on her neck,

I knit together the spine of Khopri for him,

I am the far-traveling sunshine, which daily brings the distant (eye) back (*in-ḥrt*) to
Atum, for the nose of Re,

I will come and go,

I will open the way for Re that he may voyage to the western horizon.

Altenmüller then concludes that the griffin is a manifestation of the syncretised god Shu-Onuris who carries upon his back the head of Atum containing the sun's eye which is being returned to Egypt to reunite with the body of the sun god.⁹⁴

3.3 The Myth of the Sun's Eye: Problems

Despite currently being the one of the most comprehensive and well-received interpretations of these griffins, there seems to be various issues of different magnitudes in Altenmüller's argument. Three select issues shall be discussed in this portion: The large time difference between these artefacts and the first literary accounts of the myth, the parallelism of Anubis and *wnš-kwf*, and the reading of the griffin's name.

⁹² Altenmüller 2013b, 20.

⁹³ Translation after Faulkner 2004, 84. with small variants following Altenmüller 2013b, 20.

⁹⁴ Altenmüller 2013b, 21.

The first problem deals with the timeline of events. As stated earlier, the first full literary record of the myth of the sun's eye appears in a demotic papyrus from the second century AD, over two thousand years later than the earliest of the magical knives.⁹⁵ While it is clear that the original story predates this time, as many Egyptian stories existed orally long before they were written down, there is still some doubt as to whether this story dates back far enough to be contemporary with this corpus of objects.⁹⁶ This suspicion is reiterated by Joachim Quack who expresses the opinion that "its core is definitely rather late for ancient Egypt, not before the first millennium BC".⁹⁷ Whilst Jan Assmann and Georges Posener respectively argue that precursors to the core or certain fables from within the core of the story, can be seen during the New Kingdom,⁹⁸ not only are both of these interpretations questioned,⁹⁹ but with reference to Posener's argument, it is also accepted that certain independent fables probably predate the core.¹⁰⁰ Another argument dating this tale even further back claims that Onuris was the original seeker in the tale, and is named according with his role in it.¹⁰¹ The Egyptian name for Onuris is *'in-hr.t'*, literally meaning 'who fetches the distant one'. If this name comes directly from the myth then we could be sure that the origins of the tale stretch back as far as the Middle Kingdom due to Onuris' own existence being provable at this time.¹⁰² One may therefore feel compelled to see the proposition that the myth dates back to the Middle Kingdom as being plausible if still unlikely.

A second problem is Altenmüller's paralleling of Anubis to the character from the myth *'wnš-kwḏ'* (literally meaning 'jackal-monkey') in order to incorporate him into this tale.¹⁰³ As noted above, Altenmüller claims that because the jackal-headed figure on the knives is often

⁹⁵ Chronology based on: Shaw 2000, 483.

⁹⁶ Gerke 2014, 41.

⁹⁷ Quack 2010, 341.

⁹⁸ Assmann argues that the 'Moscow mythological story' is a late eighteenth dynasty forerunner to the core (Assmann 1985, 48.) and Posener connects a fragment of a story on the Ramesside ostracon 'O. Deir el-Medina 1598 I' with the fable of the two jackals: Posener 1978, 78.

⁹⁹ Assmann's conclusion is refuted upon lack of evidence by Baines and Jay (Baines 1996, 160.; Jay 2016, 227.), whilst Posener's hypothesis is contested by Jasnow (Jasnow 1991, 209.).

¹⁰⁰ Jay 2016, 233. Note that another proposed depiction of this myth from the New Kingdom can be seen on Berlin Ostrakon 21443. For an overview of the discussion surrounding this piece see: Braun 2020, 209-217.

¹⁰¹ Wilkinson 2003, 118.

¹⁰² For example see: Vègh 2016, 7-8.

¹⁰³ Altenmüller 2013a, 22.

positioned nearby a solar form (which Altenmüller interprets as the sun's eye), he must also play the role of the fetcher of the eye in the myth (*wnš-kwf*). However, across all the inscriptional evidence for this story, there seems to be no evidence for these two figures being linked. The closest possible connection would come from the interpretation which sees '*wnš-kwf*' translated as a 'jackal named kufi', though various more likely translations have been posited.¹⁰⁴ Luigi Prada's argument that the equivalent character in the Greek version of the text can be translated as 'monkey' (it was previously read 'lynx') reaffirms the notion that this being is a primate rather than a canine.¹⁰⁵ Mark Smith goes as far as to link this being with the 'cynocephalus' baboon.¹⁰⁶ Joachim Quack notes that after the two characters (*wnš-kwf* and the sun's eye) reach Thebes, *wnš-kwf* is thereafter only referred to as *kwf* (monkey),¹⁰⁷ with Jacqueline Jay suggesting that perhaps *wnš-kwf* is a more wild form of the more domesticated *kwf*-ape.¹⁰⁸ It is also notable that even when rendered as *wnš-kwf* this character is described as climbing to eat the fruit in a series of trees as he looks back towards his homeland that he is about to leave.¹⁰⁹ Finally, it is noted by Quack that on the Leiden papyrus (P. Leiden I 384, 22/12) this character is revealed to be the son of Thoth.¹¹⁰ On the temple inscriptions this figure seems to represent a different entity, however this is almost exclusively Thoth, often accompanied by Shu, and never Anubis.¹¹¹ Therefore, despite various textual accounts of this myth existing there seems to be no literary parallels connecting *wnš-kwf* and Anubis. Without this connection, Altenmüller's paralleling of the deities from the magical knives and the myth of the sun's eye, relies on the image of the baboon carrying the wedjat eye being a confused variant of Thoth returning the sun's eye, and a handful of animals that overlap between the two corpuses.

Taking into account Altenmüller's exceedingly questionable reading of the griffin's name which relies on changing every glyph from Voss' original transcription, combined with the arguments given above, there simply does not seem to be enough hard evidence overall

¹⁰⁴ For the jackal understanding see: Smith 1984, 1083.; West 1969, 162.

¹⁰⁵ Prada 2014, 111-114.

¹⁰⁶ Smith 1984, 1083.

¹⁰⁷ This happens in both the Greek and demotic versions: Quack 2010, 342.

¹⁰⁸ This is based on the passage that talks about *wnš-kwf* not wanting "to leave his southern homeland, in which he is said to live "free under the sky in the trees"" Jay 2016, 226.

¹⁰⁹ Quack 2010, 342.

¹¹⁰ Quack 2010, 342.

¹¹¹ Quack 2010, 342.

supporting Altenmüller's conclusion that these knives display a pictorial reading of the myth of the sun's eye. On account of this, a couple of alternative interpretations of these scenes and particularly the meaning of the griffin, are explored below.

3.4 Alternative Interpretations

In his comprehensive book on the magical knives, Stephen Quirke offers several suggestions concerning the griffin motif. The first of these speculates that the lowered / raised neck of the griffin "might correspond to the characteristic heavier and more horizontal gait of the nocturnal leopard, in contrast to the upright neck of the lighter cheetah, a day hunter."¹¹² This hypothesis however may be discarded with reference to the Beni Hasan depiction (Figure 1) which gives the lowered-necked griffin the stripy tail of a cheetah as opposed to the spotted one of a leopard. Quirke also comments on the heads on the backs of the griffins, observing that they occasionally show protrusions emanating from the forehead which represent jets of blood.¹¹³ He compares these with later cursed figurines (Figure 22)¹¹⁴ stating that the motif is projective, used to prevent "the possibility of any force becoming inimical, rebelling against the creator."¹¹⁵ Whilst this interpretation makes a lot of sense considering the apotropaic value of the knives, Quirke does not give any further explanation as to: why the griffin is the only character to which the head is consistently connected, why most of the heads do not have this blood spurt, any character the griffin may represent.

Though this essay attempts primarily to use evidence contemporary with the depictions at Beni Hasan and Deir al-Barsha, a deviation from this procedure shall be made in order to discuss another comprehensive yet seldom mentioned hypothesis first posed by Erik Hornung. Hornung identifies similarities between this griffin and a deity depicted in the fifth

¹¹² Quirke 2016, 353.

¹¹³ Quirke 2016, 355.

¹¹⁴ For a study of the cursed figurines see: Posener 1958, 252-270. Similarly to the griffins, these figures can depict Egyptians (as well as foreigners): Koenig 2007, 224.

¹¹⁵ Quirke 2016, 355.

and eleventh hours of the 'Book of Amduat'.¹¹⁶ The first of these shows a three headed winged serpent with a human head on its tail, and the falcon-headed god Sokar standing between its wings (Figure 23). The name for the snake is given as *ntr-ꜥꜣ-wpi-dnhwy-sꜣb-šwt* "The great god who spreads (his) wings, colourful of plumage" the last portion of which was often used to refer to avian deities.¹¹⁷ In the eleventh hour, the snake appears again though pictured slightly differently with four legs and a sun-disk crowned god grabbing its two wings (Figure 24). In this instance there is an accompanying text which reads:

"He exists in this fashion.

When this god calls to him, the image of Atum comes forth from his back.

Then he swallows his images afterwards.

He lives from the shades of the dead, and his corpse (also lives from) the heads."¹¹⁸

Hornung interprets the figure holding the wings as being the 'image of Atum' who lives hidden in the snake's body and appears when the sun god passes by, a statement which can perhaps be said of the griffin also.¹¹⁹ This winged snake / griffin connection is perhaps more visible in a scene from the late twenty-first dynasty papyrus of Bakenmut where a six-legged winged snake is portrayed with the head and torso of a man protruding from between its wings, an almost exact replica of certain griffins from the magical knives (Figure 25).¹²⁰ In more recent times, articles have taken this connection further by analysing various figures from the knives and their appearances in later underworld texts, as well as their solar connections.¹²¹ These appearances occur for the first time in the Book of Two Ways where certain common demons protect paths and doors of the afterlife (Figure 26).¹²² In a text from the twenty first dynasty (Louvre Pap. 3110), this connection is even starker as the snake with a human figure between its wings appears together with several other figures from the apotropaic wands such as the bipedal hippo goddess and the frog goddess (Figure

¹¹⁶ Hornung 1963, 106, 175.

¹¹⁷ Hornung 1963, 106.

¹¹⁸ Darnell and Darnell 2018, 226.

¹¹⁹ Hornung 1963, 175.

¹²⁰ Gerke 2014, 44.

¹²¹ See: Liptay 2011, 149-156.; Roberson 2009, 427-445.

¹²² Hermsen 1991, 137.

27). Not only does this reaffirm the role of the apotropaic demons in the netherworlds but also directly links this winged snake to them.

Interestingly, depictions of the knives themselves appear in the 'Book of the Amduat' also. The first instance of this occurs in the first hour of the night, where a character named 'he who traverses the hours' carries one in his hand as he leads the solar procession (Figure 28).¹²³ In an fascinating twist, the second occasion transpires in the fourth hour where a god brandishes a magic knife in two hands before four deities who cup *ḥnh* signs in their outstretched hands, one of whom is named as Onuris (*in-ḥr.t*) (Figure 29).¹²⁴ Though the evidence outlined above heavily supports the idea that the figures on the knives are precursors to characters from the later netherworld books, who help the sun god in his nightly journey so that he may successfully undergo (re)birth, it is interesting that the conclusions drawn from this are, on the surface, similar to Altenmüller's who also both understands the head rising from the griffin to be Atum's and links this concept with mythology surrounding Onuris. Is it possible that the myth of the returning goddess developed from the nightly journey of the sun god and Onuris' role in fetching the solar entourage, ensuring its safe passage through the netherworld? Or is Onuris' presence here simply coincidental? Such questions are impossible to answer based on the evidence presented in this work. Nevertheless, whilst there is certainly a link between these apotropaic characters and the figures from the later netherworld texts, Gerke quite rightly advises caution in directly equating the named deities in these images to the Middle Kingdom griffin.¹²⁵ This is due to the great difference in time between the Book of Amduat and the early knives / tombs at Beni Hasan, which may have allowed for evolution of the iconography in the same way that the form of the griffin gave way to a snake.¹²⁶ Liptay argues however that the later incorporation of the apotropaic figures into the netherworld books cannot be coincidental and they must have retained their religious significance into this time.¹²⁷ It therefore seems most plausible that the griffin represents a demon directly involved in helping the sun god on his path through the netherworld, with the head in

¹²³ Darnell and Darnell 2018, 141.

¹²⁴ Darnell and Darnell 2018, 172.; This connection is noted in Altenmüller 2015, 24.

¹²⁵ Gerke 2014, 45.

¹²⁶ Gerke 2014, 45.

¹²⁷ Liptay 2011, 153-154.

between its wings likely indicating that it is in the presence of the sun god, which the newborn of course embodies.

One problem with this theory is the few examples in which the heads display spurts of blood, as it seems unlikely that a being who comes alive in the presence of the sun god would be depicted in this way. These are perhaps mistakes in the same way that several of the griffins are depicted with no heads between the wings at all.¹²⁸ Such a mistake could perhaps be attributed to the artist confusing the head on the back of the griffin with the severed heads of the enemy that are also shown on these knives and likely act in the way which Quirke describes in his analogy with the cursed figurines (see above). This may have been done either intentionally or unintentionally depending on how comprehensive the mythology surrounding these beings was at the time, as the knives themselves were not created by a single group of artisans, but by many different individuals. The fact that heads with these markings are anomalies in the context of the entire corpus makes this scenario perfectly possible if not probable, considering the overwhelming majority of knives in which this iconography does not appear.

¹²⁸ Both those lacking heads and the head's spurting blood are vast minorities: Gerke 2014, 143-171.

4. The Elite Middle Kingdom Tombs

Of all the known tombs dating to the Middle Kingdom, griffins have been found in the decoration at only two difference sites: Beni Hasan and Deir al-Barsha.¹²⁹ The following chapter will address the context and iconography of each of the griffins separately, taking care to analyse certain overarching theories for these animals repetitively in each specific segment in order to denote which if any type of griffin the ideas may be applied to. As not every theory can be raised and evaluated in every subsection of this chapter, preference is given on account of prominence, approach and addition to the overall understanding.

4.1 The *tp.ty idb.wy* Griffin (Type 1)

The *tp.ty idb.wy* griffin (following Voss' reading of the name) is found once in the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan (BH3),¹³⁰ located in a hunting scene on the first register on the eastern side of the North wall, facing east (Figure 2). The *tp.ty idb.wy* (which occurs unnamed in this scene) is located in front of the bowman titled 'Son of the local prince *nh.t'*, however his arrows seem only to be falling onto the creatures of the second register. The posture of the griffin is not aggressive (both tail and head are lowered) and it is not engaging with any of the other animals around it.

A comprehensive analysis of this scene is offered by Janice Kamrin who examines it in two different layers, looking at the scene as a whole as well as the iconographical components of the individual animals.¹³¹ She concludes firstly that the incorporation of Khnumhotep II and his children hunting with bows is intended to show Khnumhotep in the role of the king, as previous Old Kingdom and early Middle Kingdom hunting scenes from private tombs never show the tomb owner actively participating in the hunt (as opposed to royal scenes which

¹²⁹ For an overview and dating of the tombs at Beni Hasan see: Shedid 1994, 26-29, 32-36, 53-66. For dating the Barsha tombs see: Willems 2014, 79-98.

¹³⁰ For the original publication of the tomb see: Newberry 1893a, 39-72. For the most recent publication see: Kanawati 2014.

¹³¹ Kamrin 1999, 86-89.

do).¹³² When these scenes appear in the royal context, the king is thought to be identified with Horus who pacifies the animals from the chaotic desert which represent enemies of the gods, thus bringing order to the cosmos.¹³³ Secondly, she recognises many of the animals present can act as solar symbols, leading her to conclude that the scene as a whole acts as a metaphor for the journey of the sun god through the netherworld, with the hunted animals then being the enemies of the sun god. As the griffin in this scene is not a subject of the hunt, this understanding corroborates well with depictions on the knives where the griffin is a member of the solar entourage, who helps to protect the sun god on this journey.

Gerke disagrees with this understanding, claiming that if this were the case the griffin (and other helpers) would be shown attacking the enemies of the sun god.¹³⁴ She then states that this scene should be understood as exactly what it depicts, a simple desert hunt, with the griffin being perceived as a real creature and the head upon its back representing a genuine part of its physiological complexion.¹³⁵ Two factors however lend themselves to Kamrin's interpretation over Gerke's. Firstly, the animals that act as the sun's helpers are not shown on the same register as those who are attacked, it seems that the hunting itself is done solely by the tomb owner and his family. Secondly, in a very damaged yet comparable scene from the twelfth dynasty at Asyut, various other figures from the magical knives are present also (Figure 30).¹³⁶ In the first register of this scene, a large baboon is present, following a spotted leopard / cheetah. Unfortunately, only the rear end (tail and back legs) and a small part of the neck of this creature is still present, however the posture and species make it possible that this originally depicted a griffin. Discarding speculation, the second register shows a frontal facing figure who can undoubtedly (despite the loss of the head) be identified as *ḥ3* 'the fighter'. It therefore seems as though there is a deeper connection between some of these hunting scenes and the scenes on the apotropaic knives. Whilst it is obvious in this case that the figures do not exist in order to protect a new born child, the griffin here should be understood as accompanying the solar deity through the underworld

¹³² Kamrin 1999, 87-88. She also notes that whilst Khnumhotep doesn't wear a *šndw.t* kilt in this scene (which is the attire usually donned by the king) some other Middle Kingdom nobles do, for example: Blackman 1915, pl. 8.

¹³³ Kamrin 1999, 88.

¹³⁴ Gerke 2014, 49.

¹³⁵ Gerke 2014, 49.

¹³⁶ El-Khadragy 2007, 111-112, 125.

as a protective demon which enables the rebirth of the sun god each day and therefore also symbolically assists the rebirth of the tomb owner in the afterlife.

4.2 The *sfr* Griffin (Type 2)

The *sfr* griffin is found twice across these two sites in the tombs of Baqet III and Khety at Beni Hasan (BH15 and BH17 respectively).¹³⁷ On both occasions the *sfr* griffins are depicted in a hunting scene on the first register on the western side of the north wall, facing east (Figures 4 and 6). In the tomb of Baqet the *sfr* griffin is fronted by a Seth Animal and trailed by a serpopard whereas in the tomb of Khety the same three animals appear but in the opposite order. In both tombs all these animals are located behind an active bowman and are neither being hunted nor are they actively attacking any lesser animals.

Altenmüller argues that these scenes show the tomb owner together with mythical and non-mythical animals tracking the sun's eye and killing the enemies of the sun god as sacrifices to him.¹³⁸ He states that the reason for the alternative name of the griffin is because it has not yet found the sun's eye (as seen through the fact that the head is not located between its wings) and it is therefore at this moment simply an animal of the desert taking part in the hunt.¹³⁹ In addition to the previously given arguments rejecting his interpretation of griffins as participants from the myth of the sun's eye, the orientation of this scene is incorrect for a depiction of this tale. The ancient Egyptians were careful in orientating depictions to reflect their 'real world' geographical locations. However, this scene in both tombs is depicted on the northern wall despite the sun's eye having fled to Nubia in the south, thus further diminishing the strength of Altenmüller's claim.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ For the original publication of the tombs see: Newberry 1893b. For the most recent publication of tomb 15 see: Kanawati and Evans 2018.

¹³⁸ Altenmüller 2013b, 22.

¹³⁹ Altenmüller 2013b, 22.

¹⁴⁰ Note also that all the Beni Hasan scenes move from west to east, following the path of the sun barque through the netherworld, as does the Asyut scene mentioned in the previous sub-section.

Ludwig Morenz's approach uses this idea of geographical representation differently, claiming that the three fantastical animals grouped together in this scene alongside the elephant / rhinoceros which trails them (only present in the tomb of Baqet III) together symbolise the four cardinal points.¹⁴¹ In this interpretation the elephant / rhino which is commonly linked with Nubia represents the south, the Seth Animal which is linked with Libya represents the west, the serpopard which was imported from Mesopotamia represents the north, and the griffin which is an animal of the Red Sea coast and eastern frontier represents the east.¹⁴² The main problem with this argument is that the elephant does not appear in the second version of this scene in the tomb of Khety. As these are the only two copies of the scene which contain these three creatures, it is difficult to prove a pattern that only exists in one of the two examples.

The etymology of the name *sfr* may help us with understanding this creature, though it is not definitively agreed upon between scholars. The leading theory claims that it is a derivative of the term *srf* 'to be warm / hot'. Evidence supporting this claim can be found in two passages from the coffin texts, brought to light by Morenz, which read:¹⁴³

CT VII, 222 k-m:

I am your father/image in the midst of your *hm*-shrine; after I have given the *srf* to the throne of heaven, after I have repeated your Ba-shape by your (outer) strength

CT V, 67 d-f:

I divide / judge the court among the shining ones(?) as the *srf* enters, as the *srf* leaves

Notably in the first instance, the determinative for the term *srf* is a four-legged animal (though it possesses no wings), whilst the second example contains a double determinative

¹⁴¹ Morenz 2002, 28.

¹⁴² Morenz 2002, 26-28.

¹⁴³ Translations follow after: Morenz and Schorch 1997, 372, 374.

comprised of a brazier (Gardiner Q7) and a seated god figure (Gardiner A40).¹⁴⁴ Together these determinatives seem to once again confirm the link between this beast and a deity connected with heat and warmth.

On account of these connections, perhaps the most sense can be made of this depiction by seeing it as another manifestation of a deity from the solar entourage following Kamrin's interpretation of the similar scene in the tomb of Khnumhotep II. Though different from the main *tp.ty idb.wy* griffin on the magical knives, the presence of the Seth Animal and serpopard which themselves appear regularly on the knives seemingly reinforces this conclusion. This interpretation would then give rise to questions regarding the different nuances between the *sfr* and the *tp.ty idb.wy* which occupy similar contexts and iconographical meaning and yet were undoubtedly distinct figures in the Egyptian mind. Unfortunately, not enough data is present to draw meaningful conclusions concerning differences in context, for example the fact that the *sfr* griffin occurs both times on the western side of the wall whereas the *tp.ty idb.wy* is only present on the eastern side. We can thus only conclude that the *sfr* must not contain the 'image of Atum' but is rather its own creature that nevertheless possesses solar connections.

4.3 The *s3(w)g.t* Griffin (Type 3)

The *s3(w)g.t* griffin is found twice across the two sites in the tombs of Khety and Nehri I (BH17 and Barsha 4 respectively).¹⁴⁵ At Beni Hasan the griffin is found on the eastern half of the south wall facing west, positioned at eye height directly in front of a large depiction of the tomb owner who stands with a large staff facing east (Figure 8). At Deir al-Barsha the griffin is positioned behind a pair of *gif* monkeys and a pair of *i'n* baboons, each made up of a male and a female (Figure 9).

The first issue that must be dealt with when discussing this fantastical animal is the reading of its name. Whilst most read the inscription at Beni Hasan as *s3wg(.t) m=s* (Sauget is her

¹⁴⁴ Morenz 2002, 29.

¹⁴⁵ For the original publication of the tombs see: Newberry 1893b, 51-62.; Newberry and Griffith 1895, 29.

name), Ludwig Morenz understands it instead as *s3w ns.t m=s* ('Protector of the throne' is her name).¹⁴⁶ This understanding is rejected by Quack who states that the female pronoun must match the male name *s3w* (claiming that it does not make sense in this circumstance to match the female *ns.t*), and so *s3(w)g.t* remains our best understanding.¹⁴⁷

One prominent theory surrounding this fantastical animal is that it depicts a domesticated form of the griffin.¹⁴⁸ With regards to Beni Hasan, this is reasoned due to its collar and what seems to be a short leash, in association with the close proximity between the griffin and Khety himself, which is mirrored by the close presence of his dog at his foot.¹⁴⁹ Though the Barsha version is represented in a different context, it is portrayed behind two forms of apes that are known to have been domesticated at this time, perhaps indicating that it is part of a procession of domesticated animals.¹⁵⁰ One theory goes further with this argument, claiming that the *s3g.t* griffin is really a dog dressed to look like a griffin.¹⁵¹ Meeks proposes that this disguise would transform an ordinary hunting dog into a ceremonial, ferocious hunting dog, at the same time increasing the prestige of the owner.¹⁵² In terms of the griffin as a dog, a few pieces of evidence do lend some traction to this theory, as both the teats on the Beni Hasan griffin and the pointed ears on the Barsha griffin are more reminiscent of canine as opposed to leonine qualities.¹⁵³ Despite this, there does not seem to be enough evidence altogether to resolve this theory one way or another.¹⁵⁴ What can be said however is that, if true, Meeks' interpretation of the decoration inducing 'ferocious' qualities in the otherwise regular hunting dog can be dispelled on account of her swollen teats. Very rarely if at all are active hunting dogs depicted with lactating teats in Egyptian art, a fact which is reiterated through a tentative comparison with modern African wild dogs which indicates

¹⁴⁶ Morenz and Schorch 1997, 377-379.

¹⁴⁷ Quack 2010, 350. Note that at Deir al-Barsha the name is written *s3g.t* (with an Egyptian vulture '3' instead of the pintail duck 's3' and quail chick 'w')

¹⁴⁸ Meeks 2001, 505.; Barta 1973-74, 341.

¹⁴⁹ Barta 1973-74, 341

¹⁵⁰ Barta 1973-74, 341

¹⁵¹ This thought was originally posited by Davies 1933, 28.

¹⁵² Meeks 2001, 505.

¹⁵³ Of these two features, the teats are slightly less compelling as there exist New Kingdom examples of feline sphinxes with swollen teats (Gardiner 1953, pl. 1.), however there also exist winged griffin-like canids with pointy ears which may have originated from this practice if it did exist (Crowfoot and Davies 1941, pl. 20 .)

¹⁵⁴ If anything, a rejection of this idea is more defensible due to the lack of evidence of disguising animals in Egypt: Gerke 2014, 51.

that it is not the natural behaviour of dogs to hunt whilst lactating.¹⁵⁵ Others such as Gerke further reject the idea that *s3(w)g.t* griffins are tamed pets based on the desert context at Barsha,¹⁵⁶ and the possible non-original context of the animal at Beni Hasan.¹⁵⁷

Lisa Sabbahy attempts to interpret this griffin by linking it to Nefertum as well as to the griffin in the story of the returning goddess who “swathes himself for you (Hathor) with his wings”.¹⁵⁸ Even if the connection with this myth was plausible, the term used for ‘griffin’ in this story is *sfrr* and it is suffixed by a male pronoun making this connection (with a female *s3(w)g.t* griffin) undoubtedly erroneous.¹⁵⁹ The connection to Nefertum is spurred by the lotus flower tail of the griffin standing in front of Khety I at Beni Hasan which Sabbahy connects with the line from the pyramid texts (PT 249): “I appear as Nefertem, as the lotus blossom which is at the nose of Re”.¹⁶⁰ Though it is a big jump to connect the griffin to this god based on the utilisation of a very common piece of funerary iconography, she does do well to steer the discussion of this griffins meaning towards ideas concerning solar themes and rebirth.¹⁶¹

The most likely interpretation for this griffin comes from Vera Vasiljevic who uses von Bissing’s observation that the griffin as well as the ‘nurse, singer and harpist’ who appear behind the depiction of Khety all come from a separate draft of the scene, and were later incorporated into the existing scene, thus linking the two depictions (the griffin and musicians) together.¹⁶² Vasiljevic understands the musicians as being comparable to those from the Old Kingdom which are used to allude to the return of the deceased to this world.¹⁶³ While wet nurses are not usually a part of this scene, they are often part of scenes of (re)birth (sometimes shown holding apotropaic knives)¹⁶⁴ which the returning of the

¹⁵⁵ Creel and Creel 2002, 72.; For a general overview of dogs (including their role as hunters) in Egyptian antiquity see: Brewer 2001, 28-48.

¹⁵⁶ Gerke 2014, 54.

¹⁵⁷ von Bissing and Montet were both of the opinion that the griffin was part of an original scene which predated the current one: von Bissing 1904, 110-111.; Montet 1911, 17.

¹⁵⁸ Sabbahy 2017, 404. For quote see: Quack 2010, 348.

¹⁵⁹ Transcription and transliteration can be seen in Darnell 1995, 80.

¹⁶⁰ Faulkner 1969, 61.; For a discussion of this text see: Anthes 1955, 81-89.

¹⁶¹ Sabbahy 2017, 402.

¹⁶² von Bissing 1904, 111.; Vasiljević 2003, 435.

¹⁶³ Nurses can also be shown playing instruments in such scenes: Vasiljević 2003, 435.

¹⁶⁴ Altenmüller 1983.; Altenmüller 1987.

deceased can be connected with.¹⁶⁵ Vasiljevic therefore claims that the *szg.t* griffin acts in a similar capacity to the griffin from the magical knives in helping to protect the grave owner through the dangers of rebirth.¹⁶⁶ This more than any other interpretation fits the symbolic aspects of this griffin whose lotus tail and lactating teats are naturally signs of fertility and (re)birth, and also matches well with the other griffins which all seem to share this core function, whilst being nuanced in various ways.

4.4 The *tštš* griffin (Type 4)

The *tštš* griffin is found only once across these sites in the tomb of Ahanakht I at Deir al-Barsha (tomb 5).¹⁶⁷ It is located on the right-hand side of the upper register, on the inner wall of the outer chamber (Figure 10). Originally it was part of a procession of regular and fantastical animals though most of the scene has been ruined. Further damage was also inflicted on the griffin itself by Copts as can be seen in modern images (Figure 31).¹⁶⁸

Unlike with other griffins, the name *tštš* has unambiguous roots, being derived from the verb of the same spelling meaning ‘to pound’, ‘to chop’ or ‘to hack to pieces’. This gives the griffin aggressive and violent connotations which are matched by its posture with an erect head and raised tail. In her interpretation of this beast, Sabbahy concentrates predominantly on the headgear of the griffin, connecting the shorter, wider part with the lotus headdress of Nefertum.¹⁶⁹ In accepting Altenmüller’s argument for the connection between the griffins and the myth of the returning goddess,¹⁷⁰ Sabbahy notes that Nefertum can take the form of a lion, is often depicted wearing a manet, and is the son of the goddess Sekhmet.¹⁷¹ The first of these, she states, is important because the wandering goddess at one point takes the form of a lion, whilst the latter two connect Nefertum with

¹⁶⁵ Vasiljević 2003, 435.

¹⁶⁶ Vasiljević 2003, 435.

¹⁶⁷ Newberry and Griffith 1895, 30-35.

¹⁶⁸ For an overview of the tomb see: Newberry and Griffith 1895, 30-35.; Kaper 1992, 43-47.

¹⁶⁹ Sabbahy 2017, 406.

¹⁷⁰ It should be noted that Altenmüller himself does not connect this particular griffin to the myth of the sun’s eye, he only explicitly connects the *szr* griffin and type 1 griffin to this myth: Altenmüller 2013b, 21-22.

¹⁷¹ Sabbahy 2017, 406.

Hathor who alongside Tefnut often occupies the role of the goddess herself.¹⁷² She then further connects the tall plumes to those that can be seen in a depiction from the twelfth dynasty tomb of Ukh-hotep at Meir, which are worn by a procession of women who approach the tomb owner carrying lotus sceptres, in what is perhaps a festival of Hathor (Figure 32).¹⁷³ Though this essay has already shown disapproval towards Altenmüller's theory, this is not in and of itself cause for disregarding the griffin as Nefertum (in connection with Hathor). However, considering the shape of the headdress, the one on the griffin is quite clearly more curvaceous than the straight conical lotus found atop of Nefertum, and there is also cause to think that this part of the headdress was a later addition regardless, completely removing it from the picture altogether.

Despite rejecting her conclusions, Sabbahy's identification via the headdress is interesting. If one looks closely at the relief as it appears today (Figure 31), despite the excessive damage and superimposed Coptic cross, there appears to be a pair of lines protruding horizontally from the head which were missed by Newberry in his El-Bersheh facsimile (Figure 6). Once identified these lines are easily recognised as a pair of ram's horns. This then lends credit to the idea that the rounded outer part of the headwear shows a pair of bull's horns with the longer inner plumes then likely representing a pair of feathers to complete a crown. Though the two feathers are slightly different, this make-up is exceedingly reminiscent of the crown worn by the griffins on the pectoral of Mereret discussed in the first chapter of this thesis (Figure 18). In a slightly more speculative proposal, the line that runs across the neck of the griffin may in fact be the hairline of the griffin's wig which is also present on the pectoral of Mereret as well as various other depictions of griffins. The comparison to Mereret's griffin makes further sense when considering the name of the griffin and its literary meaning in connection with the pectoral where the griffin is trampling the enemy of the pharaoh. Based on this understanding we can see this griffin as a god or demon likely serving an apotropaic function due to its role as a destroyer of enemies (in this case presumably the enemies of the tomb owner).

¹⁷² For the manet as a symbol of Hathor: Staehelin 1966, 125-127. For a basic overview of the Hathor Sekhmet relationship in relation to the myth of the wandering goddess see: Richter 2010, 157-159.

¹⁷³ Sabbahy 2017, 407, 410.

Both the ram's horns and the connection with the headdress on Mereret's pectoral were also observed by Gerke, however she argues that the horns were later inclusions for two reasons.¹⁷⁴ The first of these relates to the physical attributes of the incisions which use more delicate lines than the rest of the animal, and do not contain any traces of colour (unlike the feathers which they surround). Compounding this point is a similarly delicate-lined lion-like figure present between the *hnn* animal and the *tštš* griffin.¹⁷⁵ Not only is the style of this figure different from the original carvings, but the figure also substantially breaks the register barrier, putting it beyond doubt that these finer additions belong to a later instalment. The second reason for her dismissal of these aspects relates to her claim that no deities or symbols of deities exist within any of the tombs at Barsha or Beni Hasan.¹⁷⁶ Her theory therefore states that the being was originally an exotic animal that Ahanakht saw or heard about on his travels and recorded in a fantasised account,¹⁷⁷ whilst a later observer connected it with a being that they were familiar with (the crowned griffin like the one on the pectoral of Mereret) and so added certain details to make it conform with this.¹⁷⁸

Though the late addition of the crown's horns must be conceded, there is still reason to think that the Barsha griffin is comparable to those from Mereret's pectoral. Firstly, contrary to Gerke's claim that no (symbols of) deities are present at Beni Hasan or Deir al-Barsha, the presence of the *tp.ty idb.wy* at Beni Hasan and the hunting scenes discussed above, prove that some degree of divine symbolism could be applied to these depictions. Furthermore, the name *tštš* can be found in Coffin Text 945 where various parts of the deceased are equated with divine beings such as Re and Soped.¹⁷⁹ Alongside this, the posture of this griffin, concerning particularly the erect head and tail, is anomalous in comparison with the other griffins of Beni Hasan and Deir al-Barsha, yet matches well with those on the pectoral.¹⁸⁰ Finally its name fits perfectly with the image of trampling enemies, and its

¹⁷⁴ Gerke 2014, 55-58.

¹⁷⁵ Gerke 2014, 57.

¹⁷⁶ Gerke 2014, 56, 58.

¹⁷⁷ Much like the inaccurate account of the Elephant in the tomb of Khety: Morenz 2002, 21.

¹⁷⁸ Gerke 2014, 104, 112.

¹⁷⁹ Faulkner 2004, 160-161.

¹⁸⁰ The position of wings is different which may have been practical, as well as the front legs that were holding up the king's cartouche.

headdress, whilst not a perfect match, is reminiscent of these beings as well. It therefore seems that even though no connection with a specific god is implicit in this particular depiction, the *tštš* should nevertheless be understood as a (semi-)divine figure that combats the enemies of the tomb owner, analogous to those of Mereret's pectoral despite the faintness of the crown lines which by themselves seem a less than conclusive reason for rejecting this interpretation.

Concluding this hypothesis, if we look at the overall evolutionary track of the griffin, there is no doubt that during the Middle Kingdom they diverged into different 'species' (types) from a single Old Kingdom, or possibly Pre-dynastic 'ancestor' as discussed in the first chapter. Of the new Middle Kingdom griffins, it seems as though the *tštš* is the most direct descendant of the griffins from the earliest times. As previously mentioned, the earliest griffins were always shown dominating their surroundings which probably served as a metaphor for the kings of the time dominating their subjects. In the Old Kingdom this idea became more concrete showing the griffin as a deity, dominating the enemies of Egypt, on behalf of the king. Though the connection with a specific deity gets more complicated in the scenes from the noble's tombs, only the *tštš* maintains this symbology of being a dominant aggressor in both name and posture into the Middle Kingdom.

5. Conclusion

From the analysis of this essay it is possible to conclude that the griffins of Beni Hasan and Deir al-Barsha all serve a similar purpose of helping the rebirth of the tomb owner in the afterlife. This follows a general trend towards the acquisition of solar connections which can be seen in the Middle Kingdom through these tombs, the apotropaic knives and the pectorals of the same period. Despite this identical core purpose, each of the separately named griffins has its own particular nuances reflected in both its title and its iconography.

The *tp.ty idb.wy* griffin reflects a demon from the apotropaic knives who fights off the enemies of the underworld in order to ensure a safe rebirth of the sun god whose place is filled by the tomb owner or the new-born child in the context of the tombs and knives respectively. For this reason, it is placed within a hunting scene in the grave of Khnumhotep II, which both represents the pacification of the enemies of the gods and acts as a euphemism for the journey of the sun god across the netherworld. The head protruding from the back of this griffin is part of a being which lives inside its body and rises up from between the wings when the animal is in the presence of the sun god. In later texts the head or bust is referred to as the 'image of Atum' and the being itself is connected with the god Sokar, however it is impossible to say whether these connections were already present in the Middle Kingdom.

The *sfr* griffin seems to serve a similar role as the *tp.ty idb.wy* as shown by its depiction in the same scene type, as well as its association with the Seth Animal and serpopard which also appear on the magical knives. There must however have been a difference in the Egyptian understanding between these beings as not only does the *sfr* possess a different name from the *tp.ty idb.wy*, but also a different anatomical representation. The *sfr* is composed in both instances without a head between its wings and therefore can be said not to encapsulate this 'image of Atum'. Possibly the *sfr* can be understood as a powerful animal whose profile fitted this role as a member of the solar entourage.

The *s3g(w).t* griffin achieves its purpose in a different way, by being layered with rebirthing iconography. The swollen teats and lotus tail of this griffin are pointedly rejuvenative in symbolic value and the connection in the Beni Hasan scene with the nurses and musicians further solidifies this interpretation. On the whole, the evidence seems to support the idea of this being as a 'tame' animal, however the conclusion that it represents a costumed dog is unjustified and otherwise unprecedented. Unfortunately, little can be said of the *s3g(w).t* in Barsha 4 as both the context and the most telling parts of its iconography are lost, though given the sharing of a designation, parallels can and should be drawn between it and the Beni Hasan version.

The *tštš* griffin shows the least connection to rebirth and is most similar to the griffins of the Old Kingdom and perhaps the Pre-dynastic Period. Its name and posture command a sense of power and destruction, similar to the one in the tomb of Sahure which trampled the enemies of Egypt. If one accepts the connection between the *tštš* and the griffins from the pectoral of Mereret (as the author does) based on the: name, shared posture and headdress, then there is perhaps some element of rejuvenation connected to this being too. On the pectoral, the griffins are framed by lotus flowers which do of course reflect this purpose, however these are not directly connected to the beast itself and so this claim is certainly refutable. The feathered headdress may also imply a degree of solar connection, though this again is less obvious in comparison with the other examples.

Due to the unique context of these griffins concerning their presence for the first time in the noble rather than royal sphere, connections between these creatures and specific deities were for the most part not posited. If such a connection is present it would likely be between the *sfr* or *tštš* griffin and a solar form of Horus, in following from artefacts and texts of the same period. Whilst the *tštš* has the greater resemblance to one of these royal depictions, the *sfr* occupies a scene in which the tomb owner is replicating the king as Horus, and is also positioned next to a Seth Animal, both of which facilitate this connection if it exists. Again however, this cannot be postulated with certainty given the uniqueness of the context and the lack of evidence at hand.

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Figures:

Figure 1:



Unnamed griffin from the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan

Figure 2:



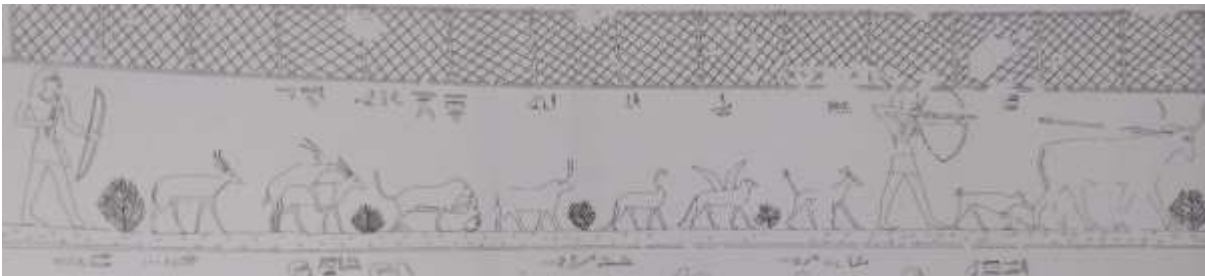
Facsimile of the hunting scene containing a griffin on the eastern side of the north wall of the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan

Figure 3:



Three fantastical animals in a row including a griffin named *sfr* in the tomb of Baqet III at Beni Hasan

Figure 4:



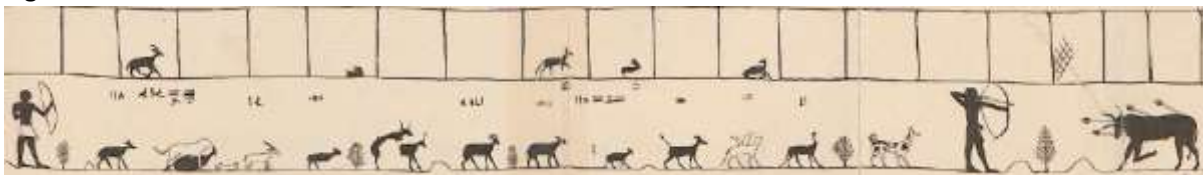
Facsimile of the hunting scene containing a griffin on the western side of the north wall of the tomb of Baqet III at Beni Hasan

Figure 5:



Three fantastical animals in a row including a griffin named *sfr* in the tomb of Khety at Beni Hasan

Figure 6:

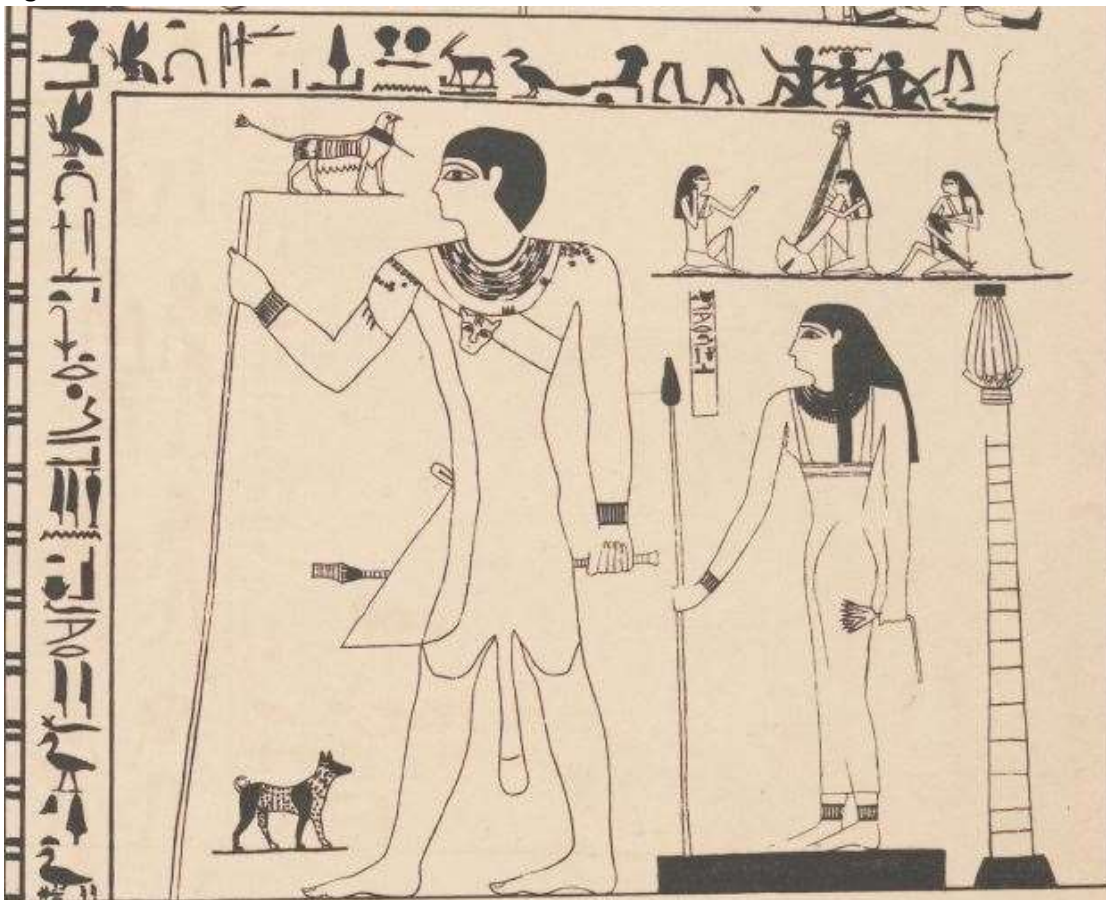


Facsimile of the hunting scene containing a griffin on the western side of the north wall of the tomb of Khety at Beni Hasan

Figure 7:

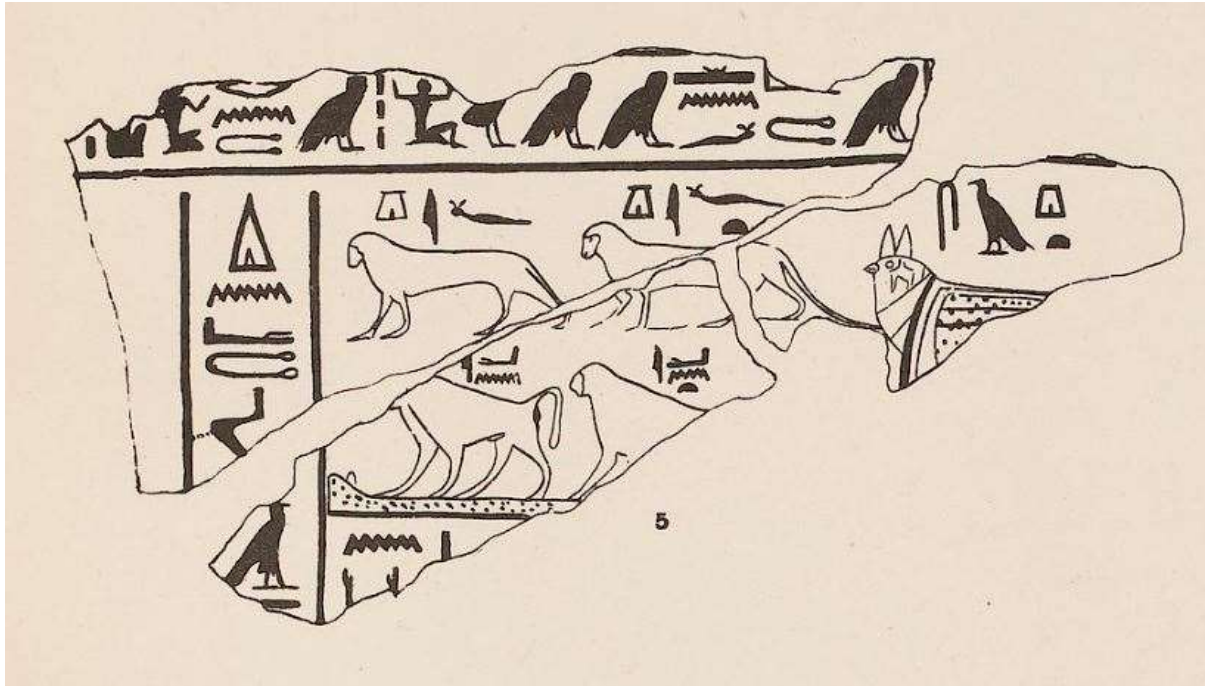
A griffin named *s3(w)g.t* from the tomb of Khety at Beni Hasan

Figure 8:



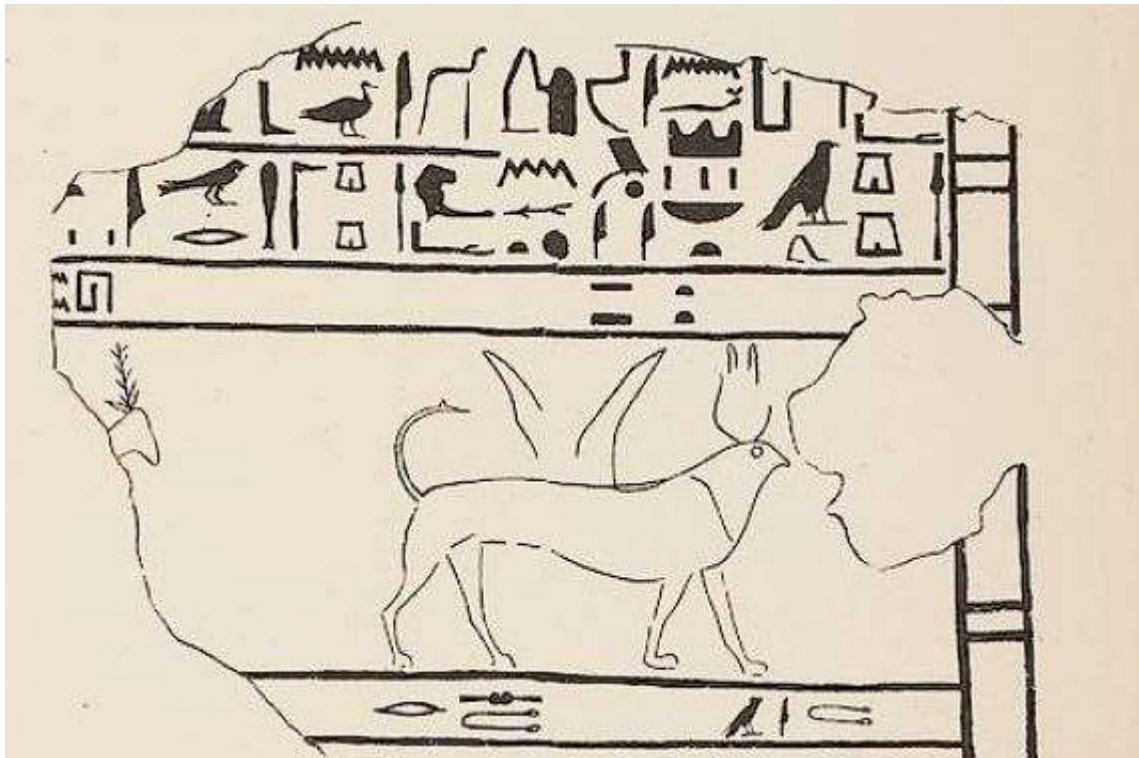
Facsimile of the scene containing a griffin on the eastern side of the south wall of the tomb of Khety at Beni Hasan

Figure 9:



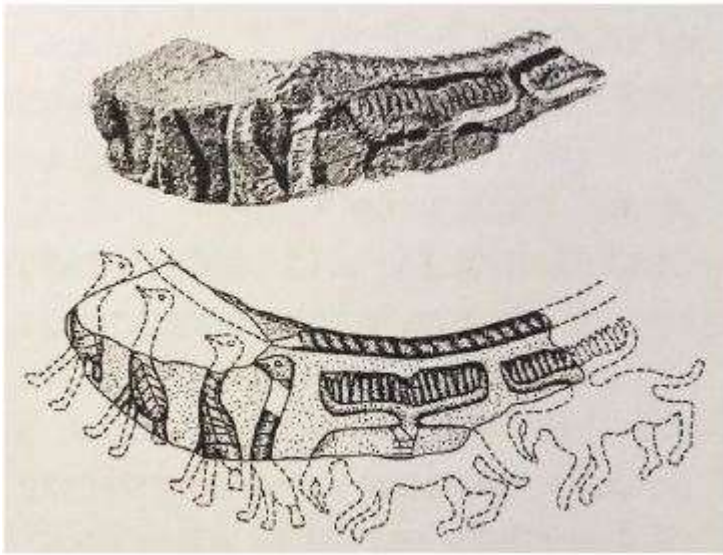
Facsimile of a fragment containing a griffin named *s3g.t* from the tomb of Nehri I at Deir al-Barsha

Figure 10:



Facsimile of the scene containing a griffin named *tštš* on the inner wall of the outer chamber of the tomb of Ahanakht I at Deir al-Barsha

Figure 11:



Pre-dynastic Dagger handle from Abydos depicting griffins

Figure 12:



Pre-dynastic Gebel Tarif knife handle depicting a griffin

Figure 13:



Pre-dynastic Dagger handle from Hierakonpolis depicting a griffin

Figure 14:



The Two Dog Palette (reverse)

Figure 15:



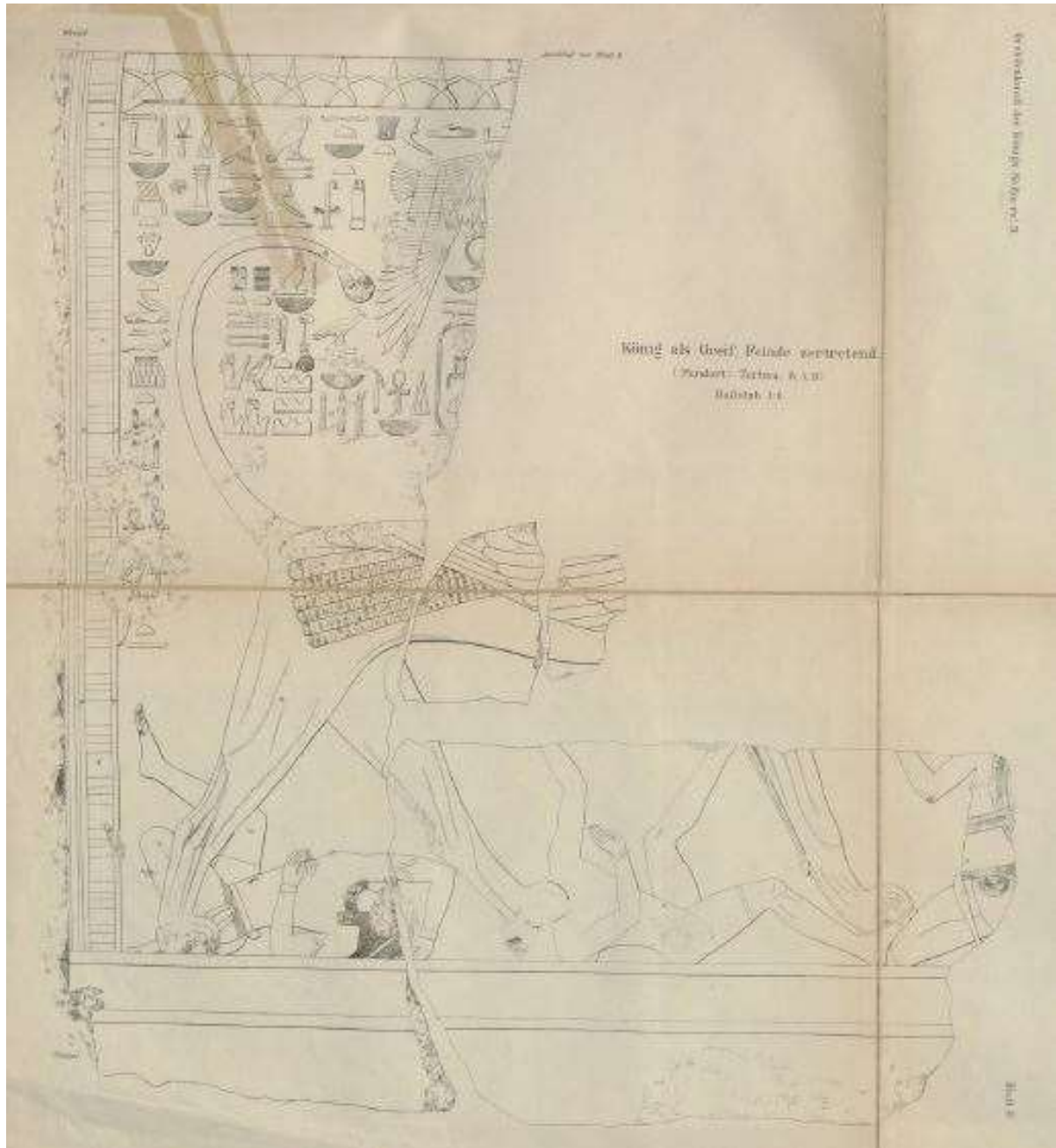
Pre-dynastic cylinder seal from Mesopotamia displaying a griffin

Figure 16:



Pre-dynastic cylinder seal from Mesopotamia displaying a griffin

Figure 17:



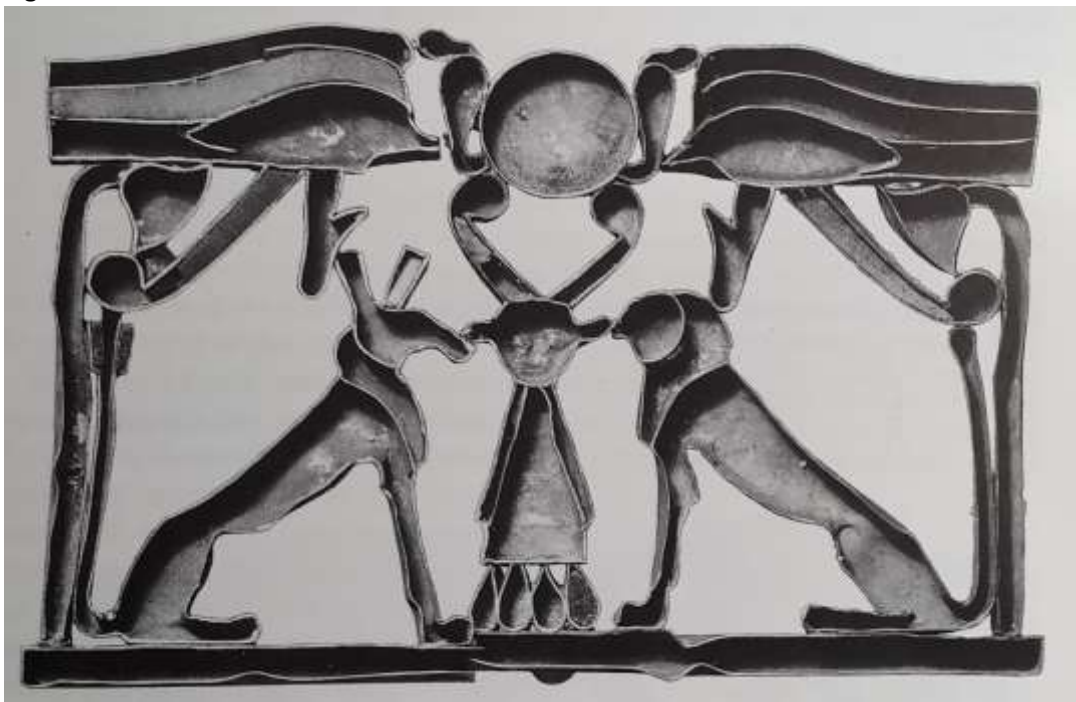
Facsimile of the griffin from the tomb of Sahure

Figure 18:



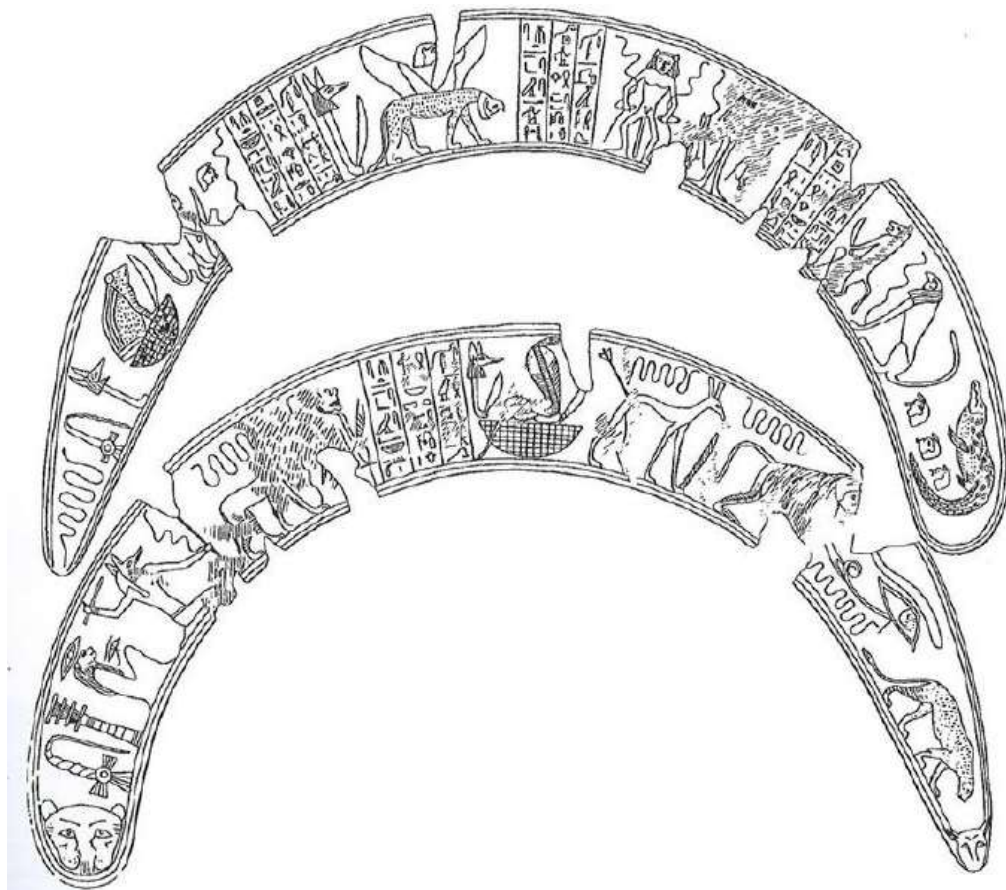
Middle Kingdom pectoral of the queen Mereret displaying two griffins

Figure 19:



Middle Kingdom pectoral from Dashur? featuring a griffin

Figure 20:



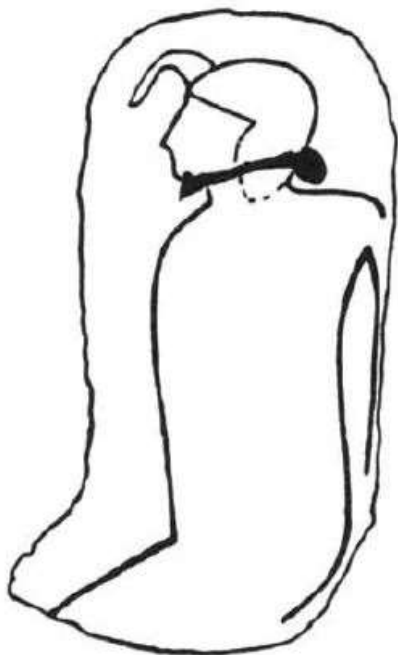
Magic wand from the Berlin Museum (Object number 14207)

Figure 21:



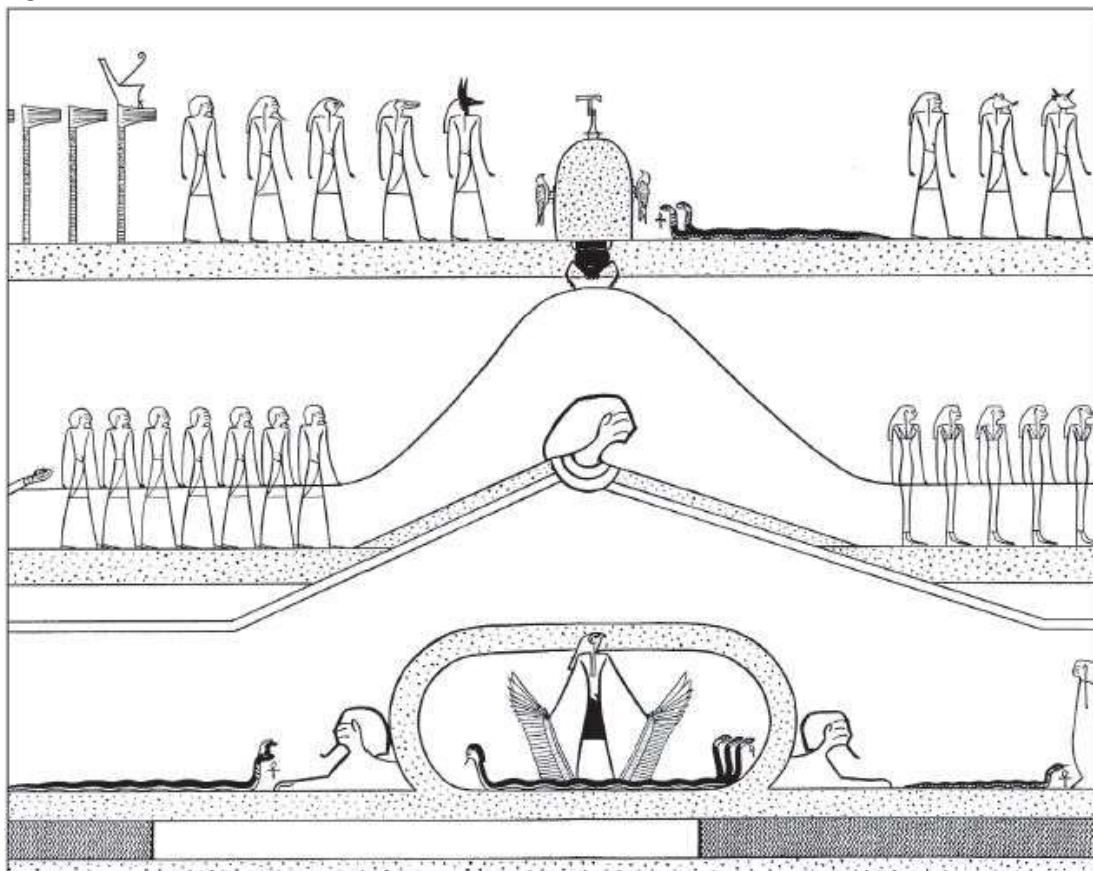
Magic wand containing the name of the griffin from Dra abu al Naga

Figure 22:



Facsimile example of a cursed figurine

Figure 23:



Scene from the fifth hour of the Book of Amduat

Figure 24:



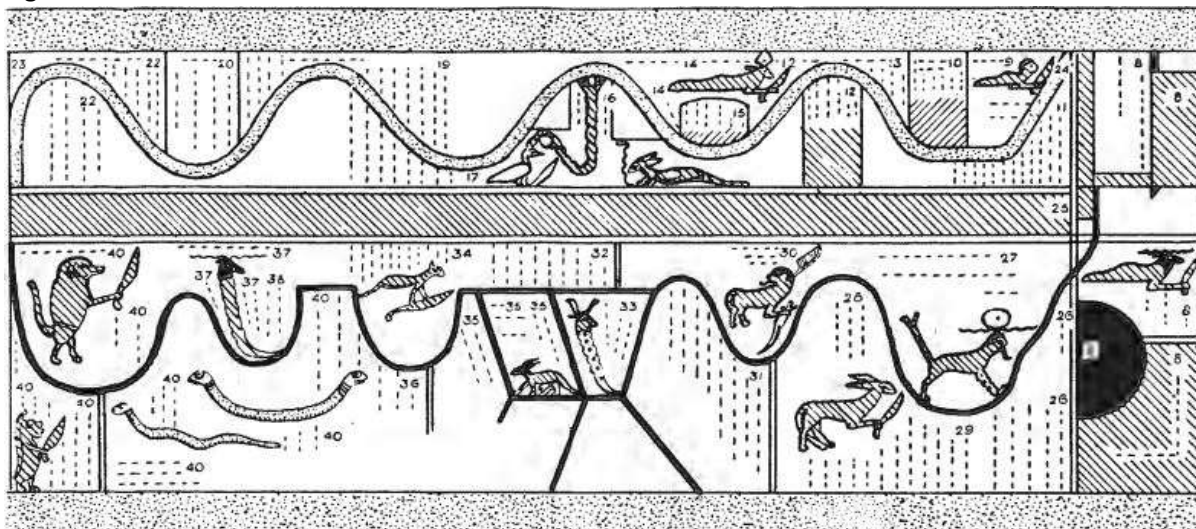
Winged snake with god holding the wings from the eleventh hour of the Book of Amduat

Figure 25:



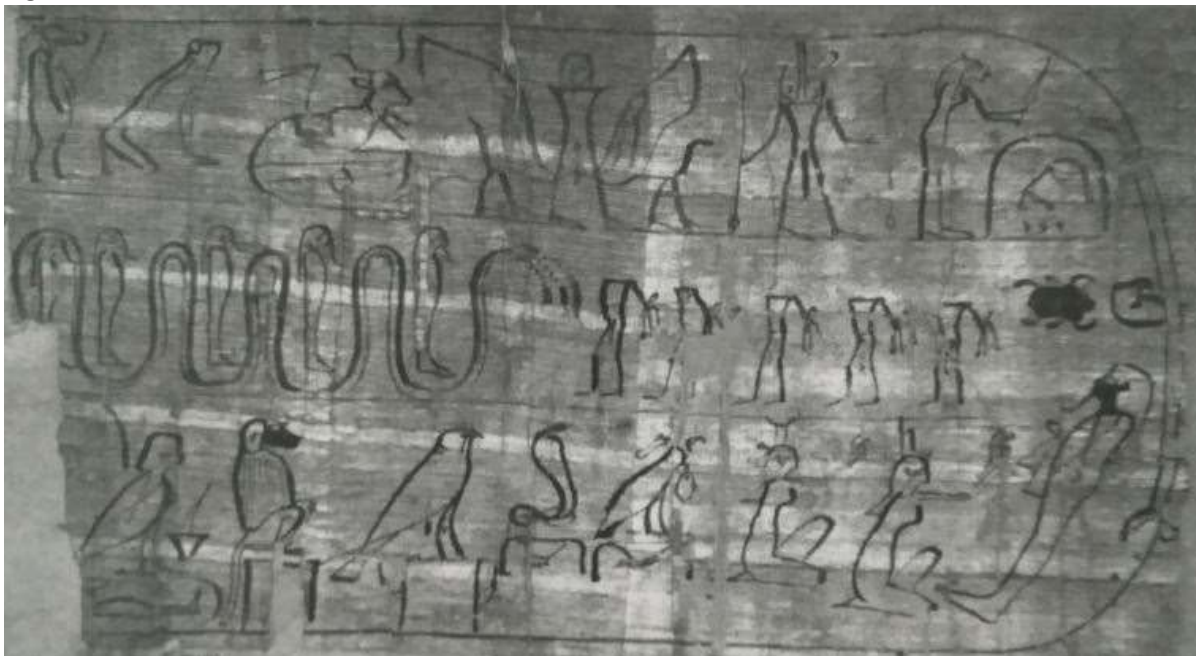
Scene from the mythological papyrus of Bakenmut

Figure 26:



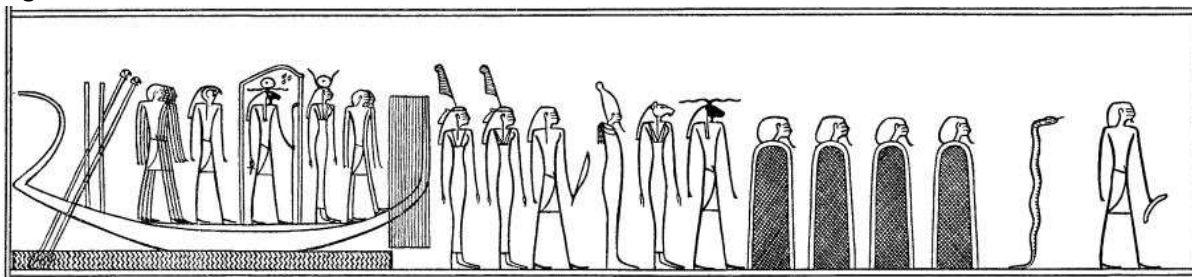
Scene from the Book of Two Ways which seem to show certain demons who are also present the magical knives

Figure 27:



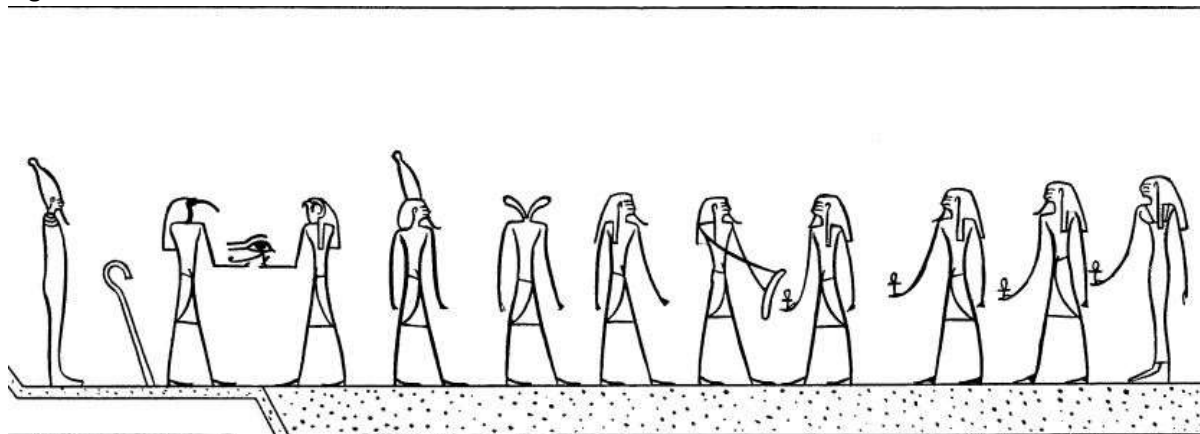
Louvre funerary papyrus 3110 containing demons from the magical knives in the first register

Figure 28:



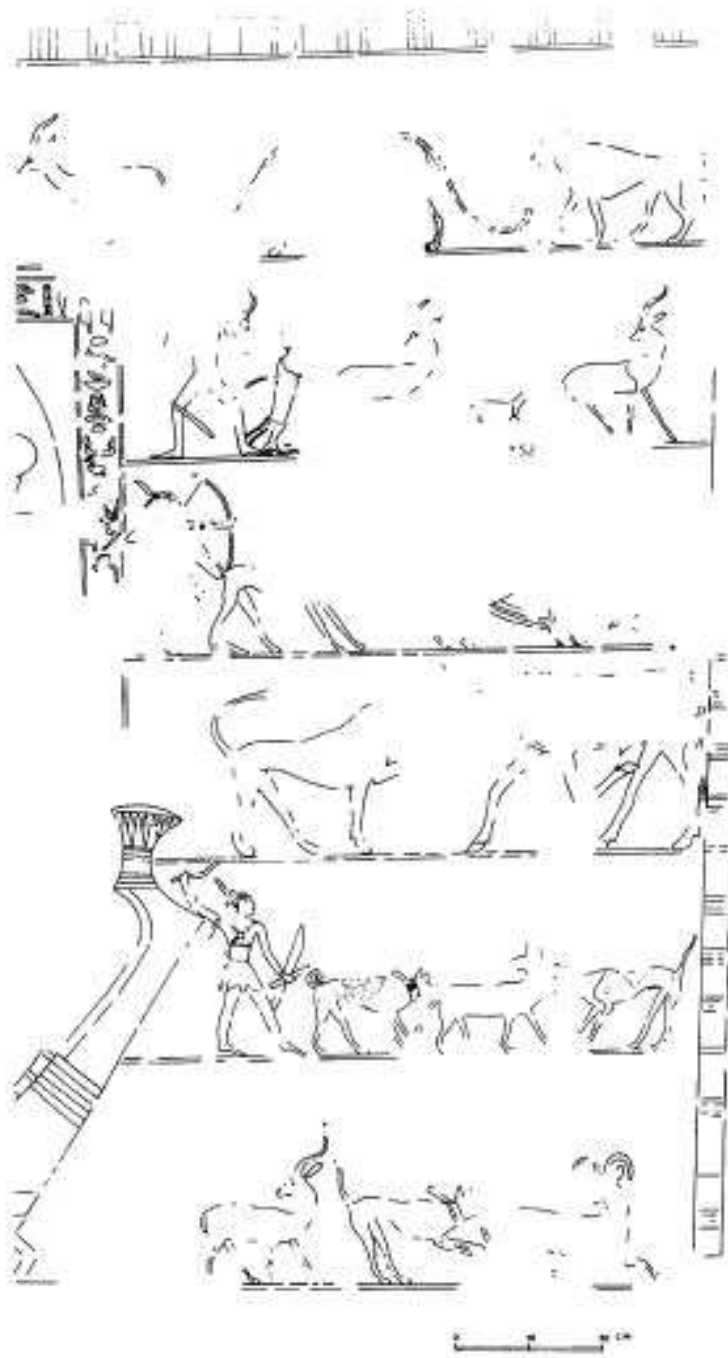
Scene containing a man carry a magical knife from the first hour of the Amduat

Figure 29:



Scene containing a man carry a magical knife from the fourth hour of the Amduat

Figure 30:

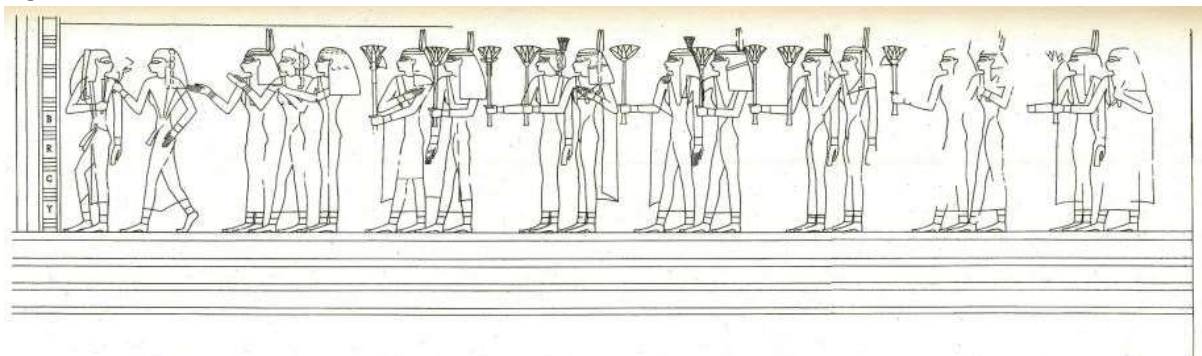


Tomb of Iti-ibi-iqer at Asyut depicting certain figures from the magical knives

Figure 31:

The *ḥḥ* griffin at Deir al-Barsha

Figure 32:



1. ROOM B: EAST WALL: NORTH OF ENTRANCE, REGISTER 1

Procession scene from the tomb of Ukh-Hotep at Meir