

Dwellers of the Sky: Serpent in the Greco-Roman Zodiac

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Abstract

The Ancient Egyptians were close observers of the heavenly bodies behavior from prehistoric times, which evidenced by the numerous astronomical tools and scenes they left. Throughout the Egyptian history, images of night sky decorated coffins, tombs, temples and some other different kinds of monuments. These images served as a theoretical and visual tribute to the solar cycle and bore strong renewing associations.

This article investigates the function of the serpent within a various collection of ancient Egyptian zodiacs dating back to the Greco-Roman Period, which was readily incorporated into the existing tradition of astronomical iconography. In order to explain the adoption of the serpent, this article examines its role in the astronomical images.

There are no actual evidences for serpent iconography found in ancient astronomical scenes before the Greco-Roman Period, I ample to prove that knowledge of those creatures existed from the earliest time, and pervade the Egyptian symbolism. The details of the serpent picture have sketched and valid for the Greco-Roman Egypt, starting from the Third Century B.C.

Symbolism of Serpent

Serpent (or snake)¹ has a great variety of symbolic meaning derives from the consideration that these meanings may relate either to the serpent as a whole or to any of its major characteristics. The primary characteristics that gave the serpent

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¹ There is a general confusion with 'Snake': even though in biology the term 'serpent' is usually preferred for the larger kinds, literature has never made that distinction; therefore Snake and Serpent have been put under one heading. Ad de Vries, "Serpent," *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, North Holland Publishing Co., Amestrdam, 1976, p.515.

its symbolic significance were the special place it occupies in the animal kingdom (movement over the ground without legs, living in holes in the ground, yet slipping out of eggs like a bird), its cold, slick and shiny exterior, its poisonous bite and its venom that can be used for medicinal purposes, as well as its periodic shedding of its skin.² It is the symbolic of energy, force, good, evil, wisdom, power, eternity, pure and simple, etc.³

They were found throughout Egypt—in the desert sands, in old walls, in fields, by the Nile and in its swamps, on threshing floors, in houses, and in livestock enclosures and pastures. A papyrus in the Brooklyn Museum which served as a manual for a doctor treating snakebite reveals that the Egyptians had an intimate knowledge of their biology. Although the beginning of the papyrus is broken off, it would once have listed the names of thirty-seven types of snakes which were distinguished by the ancient Egyptians; at least thirty-six species have been identified in modern Egypt.⁴

Since early time of Egypt the serpent has been respected as a mysterious creature with supernatural powers probably more than any other animal. It has been associated with Religion, Astronomy and Magical Powers. The symbolism of life-giving powers to serpents may have got up through observing the Ancient man and the shedding of this creature for the skin, continually revealing a new one in the process.

Serpent metaphor in the Egyptian Mythology is rich and varied, serving both the religious and the common perspectives. It has been seen as a creator and a protector of wisdom, evil and agent of death.⁵ It had also a greatly symbolic role as an

² Becker, U. *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Symbols*, London, 1994, p.343.

³ Cirlot, J.E. "Serpent," *A Dictionary of Symbols*, Routledge Dictionaries, New York, 1971, p.385. For more symbolisms of the serpent see: Jobes, G. *Dictionary of Mythology-Folklore and Symbols*, Scarecrow Press, New York, 1961, p.20.

⁴ Hansen, N.B. "Snakes," *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol.3, American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2001, p.296.

⁵ Lurker, M. "Snakes," *Dictionary of gods and goddesses, devils and demons*, translate by M. O'Connell, Routledge, London, 1989, p.370.

embodiment of life-giving powers,⁶ healing and for the power that result in duality.⁷ It is likewise significant for the eternal life and resurrection, that the snake "became a symbol of survival (resurrection) after death."⁸ Generally, serpent symbolism shows the great contrasts between worship on one hand and frighten on the other.

It played an essential and greatly variable role; the Egyptians at times represented various gods and goddesses in the form of serpents. Not all snakes were considered badly. Deities associated with poisonous snakes were sometimes considered beneficial, for example the goddess Renenutet who associated with the fertility of fields, granary, woven material, and personified linen.⁹ Serpent-goddess Wadjet (name means "Green One"), who represented as cobra snake or uraeus,¹⁰ was among the most important worshiped serpent and the main symbol of Lower Egypt. It was the concept of immortality, which attached to the royal crown as a protector of the king.¹¹ Geb, the god of the Earth and "the father of the gods," is referred to as "the father of snakes" that emerges from the Earth.¹²

Serpents personified forces of both renewal and destruction. They could for instance symbolize the rising sun and

⁶ Manfred, L. *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*, Thames and Hudson, New York, 1980, p.108.

⁷ West, H.A. *Serpent in the Sky-The high wisdom of Ancient Egypt*, Tneosopnical Publishing House, Wheaton, 1993, p.59.

⁸ Moscati, S. "Face of the Ancient Orient: Near: Eastern Civilizations in Pre-Classical Times," *JNES*, vol.63, no.2, London, 2004, pp.125-26.

⁹ Hansen, N.B. op.cit. p.297.

¹⁰ The uraeus serpent was regarded as a representative of goddess Wadjet who had many names; among it, "one saw the embodiment of the eye of the sun god." According to mythology, it rises up on its tail end on the sun or on the forehead of the sun god and destroys its enemies with a breath of fire; its likeness appears on the forehead of Egyptian kings as a symbol of protection and ruler-ship. For more information see: Lurker, M. *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*, New York, 1980, p.127; Wilkinson, R.H. *The complete gods and goddess of Ancient Egypt*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, pp.226-7; Hart, G. *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, second edition, New York, 2005, p.161.

¹¹ Manfred, L. op.cit. p.127.

¹² Ibid, p.108.

were seen as the souls of gods but could also be demons, such as the monstrous water snake Apophis or "serpent of darkness," the symbol of evil power, who is eternally threatening the voyage of sun god Ra.¹³ In the other side the good force in the underworld is representing in the form of serpent Mehen the helpful attendant of Ra. His main source is the funerary texts and Books of Underworld of the Kingdom Periods. In the Amduat, Mehen first appears in the seventh hour, when Ra needs his protection urgently - in this very hour the great struggle against Apophis takes place. In contrast, in the Book of the Gates (fig.1) and in the Book of the Night, he escorts Ra on his bark from the beginning.¹⁴ The draughtboard, which had introduced into Egypt from Babylonia, was used in connection with astrology, and later the dead made use of when playing against Mehen.¹⁵



Fig.1: Serpent Mehen protectively encircling the cabin of the sun god; beneath is the great serpent Apophis, Book of Gates, 19th dynasty, tomb of Ramesses I, Valley of the Kings, Thebes.

cf. Theban mapping project, tomb of Ramesses I,
http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/sites/browse_tombimages_830.html
[Accessed on: 2 Mars 2015]

Development of Iconography

To understand the conditions under which the iconography of the serpent was incorporated into Egyptian collection of

¹³ Wilkinson, .H. op.cit. p.221.

¹⁴ Rothöler, B. "Mehen, God of the Board games," *Board Games Studies*, vol.2, Leiden, 1999, pp.12-13.

¹⁵ Bunson, M. *The Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991, p.37; Rothöler, B. op.cit. pp.10-23.

astronomical imagery, it is necessary to first outline the history, using and meaning of representations of heavenly bodies in Egypt. Through the Egyptian History, representations of celestial bodies are included in the decoration of temples, tombs, coffins, etc. The ritually-charged contexts in which astronomical images appear suggested that they function as more than mere representations of the natural world.¹⁶

The oldest literary evidence for the Egyptian astronomical thought and, in fact, the oldest surviving example of Egyptian funerary texts, are the Pyramid Texts,¹⁷ which likely represent the codification of an earlier oral funerary tradition.¹⁸ Among these texts, a primeval deity in the form of serpent called Kematef was mentioned in the texts, whose name is meaning "he who has completed his time."¹⁹ By the beginning of the First Intermediate Period, the next major astronomical development in Egypt likely originated by the appearing of the so called diagonal calendar or star clock. On the lids Middle Kingdom coffin, the decoration and illusion were made to the sky, without any clear representation of the serpent.

The decoration of the kings' tombs ceilings provide evidence that the ritual function of star clocks continued into the New Kingdom. The star clock represented on the ceiling of the burial chamber of Senenmut's tomb was out of date by about five hundred years at the time of the tomb's decoration.²⁰ The New Kingdom also provides the first actual evidence for the inclusion

¹⁶ Stewart, D. *Conservation and Innovation: The Zodiac in Egyptian Art*, Master Dg. Emory University, 2010, p.4.

¹⁷ Pyramid texts are group of magical spells and ritual utterances inscribed on the walls of the burial chambers of kings' pyramids from the late 5th Dynasty onward, and later in the tombs of the non-royal elite. For more information see: Piankoff, A. *The Pyramid of Unas, Texts Translated with Commentary*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New York, 1968; Faulkner, R.O. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969.

¹⁸ Allen, J.P. trans. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, 2005.

¹⁹ Manfred, L. op.cit. p.26 and 108.

²⁰ Stewart, D. op.cit. p.22.

of astronomical imagery in temples. During this period, serpent played a great role in the activities of the funerary text (Book of the Dead) and several "books of the Netherworld", including the Book of Caverns, Book of Gates and Book of Amduat²¹ that decorating the monuments of the New Kingdom.

In the Amduat, Ra fights the evil enemies in his path. Most evil of these is the serpent Apophis (Apep) (fig.1). Among the scenes that representing the struggle, in the preceding fourth hour, the bark has turned into a serpent and is now being towed across the sand. During the fifth hour the serpent's task is to spit fire to illuminate the darkness through which the Sun god is passing. In the seventh hour the serpent Apophis, who attempts to impede the way of the bark, is being dismembered and restrained by Isis and Seth. Additionally, the sun now has the protection of the *Mehen*-serpent. In the twelfth hour, the Sun god in his bark enters through the tail of a long serpent.²²

In the Book of Gates, the bark moves through twelve divisions marked by gates, with a serpent guardian on each that spits fire to illuminate the portal. The Sun god in his bark is encircled by the *Mehen*-serpent. There is also a figure for a coiled serpent in an intricate manner is representative of time. In the Book of Carvens, three serpents are seen at the entrance to the first cavern. While, Osiris is seen in a shrine that is surrounded by a protective serpent and his following are seen in their coffins protected in a like manner. In another scene, the body of Osiris is along with the ram's head and the eye of Re. This is surrounded by an Ouroboros.²³

²¹ Piccione, P.A. "Mehen, Mysteries, and Resurrection from the coiled Serpent," *JARCE*, vol.27, London, 1990, pp.43-52; Bochi, P.A. "Images of time in Ancient Egyptian Art", *JARCE*, vol.31, Cairo, 1994, pp.56-9; Lamy, L. *Egyptian Mysteries: New Light on Ancient Knowledge*, Art & Imagination, Singapore, 1997, pp.29-65; Hornung, E. *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, Cornell University Press, 1999.

²² Remler, P. *Egyptian Mythology, A to Z*, Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 2010, p.9.

²³ "Ouroboros" or the serpent that swallows its tail was first appeared as a motif in the Book of Underworld in the tomb of Tutankhamon. The whole divine figure represents the beginning and the end of time. Hornung, E. op.cit. pp.77-8. The symbol persisted in Egypt

The tradition of including astronomical ceilings in tombs, temples, lids of coffins and other monuments continue throughout the Late Period of Egyptian history. However, the system remains relatively unchanged until the introduction of the Greek zodiac. Throughout the Greco-Roman Period, this popular motif (serpent) appears in numerous settings, from temples, tombs, plaques as well as on coffins, gems, coins, and amulets. By the Second and Third centuries, its format and arrangement became more firmly formed, as did its widespread use.

Zodiac:

Zodiac is a belt of stars in the path of the sun. The word itself comes from Greek, meaning figures of animals,²⁴ because most of the constellations through which the ecliptic passes, represent animals.²⁵ The character of the Egyptian astronomy changed significantly when the Ptolemies became the rules of Egypt. Both Greek and Babylonian influences were soon visible. The assimilation of the zodiac into the astronomical iconography indicates that Egyptian artists and patrons recognized a connection between the organization of the night sky in the zodiac and in Egyptian art.

There are few in number of those Egyptian astronomical scenes which began to appear in the Second Century B.C. on the temple of Khnum near Esna (pl.1).²⁶ Those exceeding astronomical scenes which originated in the Greco-Roman Period imagine the Egyptian sky and decorating different kind of monuments. In all such zodiacs, we recognize the influence of the Egyptian science, religious and art. While the arrangement of

into Roman times, when it frequently appeared on magical talismans. Hornung, E. *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its impact on the West*, Cornell University Press, Cornell, 2002, p.58.

²⁴ Rose, H.J. *Ancient Greek Religion*, Hutchinson's University Library, London, 1946, p.119.

²⁵ Gingerich O. and Young, W.M. "Zodiac," *The new Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol.12, Library of Congress, Chicago, 1995, p.926.

²⁶ The temple is now completely destroyed, but is known through an engraving published by Napoleon's Egyptologists. Krupp, E.C. *In search of ancient astronomies*, Chatto and Windus, New York, 1977, p.216; Porter, B. and Moss, R. *Topographical bibliography of Ancient Egyptian texts, reliefs and paintings*, Oxford, 1992, vol.6, p.118.

their symbols and figurative objects for some constellations (zodiacal signs) have certainly been produced under Greek influence. It assumed the same function as more traditional astronomical images (stars, planets and constellations) in sacred and funerary backgrounds.

The zodiac had been popular in Egypt since Ptolemaic times, to such an extent that Greek and Latin authors often associated astrology with Egypt, despite the Babylonian origins of the zodiac itself. Astrology could be found in every level of society, and forecasting auspicious days or casting an individual's horoscope was a learned activity as well as a commonplace pastime. The popularity of astrological predictions in the Roman Period is attested not only by written evidence like charts and horoscopes preserved on papyri, but also by representations of the zodiac in art, where it is chiefly known through tomb and temple ceilings and a number of coffins.²⁷ The detail of the astronomical ceilings and friezes of the temples show several deities, most of which are related to heavenly bodies or to hours of the day and night. Appearing to function similarly to the temples' zodiacs, figures of serpents are found in several tombs and coffin zodiacs, which show the strongly local nature of funerary art.

Figures of serpents are occupying big portion of many zodiacs dating back to the Greco-Roman Period, decorating many Ancient Egyptian monuments (temples – tombs – coffins – gallery - plaques). It appeared for the first time on the exclusive zodiac that decorating the ceiling of a chapel in the subterranean Gallery C. at Tuna el-Gebel, or the so called "Hermopolis Zodiac," which dated back to the Early Ptolemaic Period. Then far along, it appeared on many other monuments; there are nineteen of them are known to have serpent figures content, listed chronologically as possible in the following list:

²⁷ Barton, T. *Ancient Astrology*, Sciences in Antiquity Series, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, pp.10–31; Riggs, C. *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt: Art, Identity and Funerary Religion*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005, p.57.

Temples: Esna A1 & 2 (pl.1),²⁸
 Edfu (pl.2),²⁹
 Philae A (fig.29),³⁰
 Philae B (pl.3),³¹
 Kom Ombo (pl.4),³²

²⁸ The temple is about two and half miles north-west of Esna, and now completely destroyed. It seems that Ptolemy III built and dedicated it to the god Khnum. *PM* 6, p.118. It was dismantled in 1843 and it's blocks were used to build a canal. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III: Decans, Planets, Constellations and Zodiacs*, Brown University Press, London, 1969, p.62; Clagett, M. *Ancient Egyptian Science*, vol.2: Calendars, Clocks and Astronomy, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1995, p.126.

The rectangular zodiac which used to be decorated the ceiling is still preserved in a plate from the *Description de l'Égypte* - is consider the ealiest known Egyptian zodiac, which can not be dated earlier than 246 B.C. Krupp, E.C. op.cit. p.216. The Location of the zodiac is on the northernmost and southernmost stripes of the colonnaded hall ceiling. This zodiac consists of two strips; beside the zodiacal signs, planets, constellations, winds and mythological figures, the top registers of both include the figures of the decans, while the bottom registers present some other different group of decans belong to different family. So the writer classified them as Esna A1 and Esna A2, for more detection. Note: The serpentine decans are appeared only in Esna A1.

²⁹ The temple of Horus at Edfu, which built at 237 B.C. by Ptolemy III, is the best example of Ptolemaic temple building in Egypt. Arnold, D. *Temples of the last Pharaohs*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p.169-171. The rectangular zodiac is decorating the frieze on the north wall of the outer Hypostyle, below the architraves. It is cosists of decans list, southern and northern constellation, planets, lunar staircase with Thoth and fourteen divinties, days of the lunar month, goddesses supporting the sky and moon-days. Neugebauer O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.67-8; *PM* 6, p.134. Chassinat, E. *Le Temple d'Edfu*, Mémoires publiés par les Members de la Mission archéologique francaise au Caire, tome 20, Institut Francais d'Archéologie Orientale, vol.3, Le Caire, 1928.

³⁰ The main temple of Isis at Phiae Island is dating back to the Greco-Roman Period. The astronomical scene is decorating the lower third part of the ceiling between architraves in nosteast corner of the Hypastyle hall which dated back to the time of the king Ptolemy VII. Benedite, G. *Le Temple de Philae*, IFAO, Memoires, vol.13, Paris, 1893, p.137; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.68; *PM* 6, p.237. The astronomiacal scene is contain only figure of Orion and the northern constellation.

³¹ This zodiac wich belong to the same temple of Philae, is decorating east face of the north pillar of the door way in the east outer wall of the birth house which dated back to the time of the king Ptolemy VIII. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.69. The zodiac is containing a decans list given in eight registers, the first two of which and the last two have decanal figures only, while the interior four have both names and figures.

³² The temple which dating back to the Greco-Roman Period is dedicated to both Horus the Elder and Sobek. The zodiac of Kom Ombo is decorating the soffits of architraves between coulmmns of the Outer Hypostyle Hall, which built by Ptolemy XII. De Morgan, J. *Kom Ombos Catalogue des Monuments d'inscriptions*, Vienne, 1895; *PM* 6, p.237; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.69; Gutbub, A. *Textes fondamentaux de la Theologie de Kom*

Dendera A (pl.6),³³

Dendera B (pl.5),³⁴

Dendera C (pl.7),³⁵

Dendera D (pl.8),³⁶

Ombo, IFAO, 1995, vol.1, pp.viii-ix. However, the astronomical scene which is a part of this article is situated on the easternmost soffit of the central architrave.

³³ The temple of Hathor at Dendera which dates to the Greco-Roman Period, is one of the best preserved temples of this period in Egypt. The construction lasted thirty-four years from 54 to 20 B.C. and it was finished before the reign of Augustus and Tiberius. The main temple house was built by the queen Cleopatra VII. Daumas, F. *Le Temple de Dendera*, le Caire, 1970, p.13; Wilkinson, R.H. op.cit. p.65; Arnold, D. op.cit. p.212f.

The astronomical scene (Dendera A) is located on the friezes of the side-Room XI or "Silver Room" walls, which dated back to the Late Ptolemaic Period. It is consisting of a decan list.

³⁴ This circular zodiac which dated back to the end of the Ptolemaic Period became widely known in the early portion of the 19th century, shortly after Napoleon Bonaparte's military expedition in Egypt, which removed it and it now in the Louvre Museum at Paris. It was found on the west half of ceiling of the Central Room of the East Osiris Chapel on the roof the Dendera temple. For more information see: Lagier, C. *Autour de la Pierre de Rosetta*, Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth, Bruxelles, 1927, pp.20-45; Goyon, G. "Le grand cercle d'or du temple d'Osymandyas," *Bifao*, tome 76, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Le Caire, 1976, pp.289-300; Krupp, E.C. op.cit.; Slosman, A. *Le Planisphere Tentyrite, Le livre de l'au-delà de la vie*, Paris, 1979, pp.161-179; Aubourg, E. *La date de conception du zodiaque du temple d'Hathor a Dendera*, BIFAO, tome 95, Le Caire, 1995, pp.1-10; Moore, A.H. "Voyage: Dominique-Vivant Denon and the transference of images of Egypt", *Art History*, vol.25, no.4, London, 2002, pp.531-549.

The zodiac is supported by four standing goddesses of the cardinal points of the compass, and by four pairs of kneeling falcon-headed deities. The 36 decans form the outer row of figures within which are the figures of the zodiac, with the planets in exaltations, interspersed with constellations.

³⁵ The rectangular zodiac is decorating six of the seven bands of the Outer Hypostyle Hall ceiling which built by Tiberius (14-37A.D.). Brugsch, H. *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum*, band 1: "Astronomische und Astrologische Inschriften Altaegyptischer, Dnkmaler." J.C. Hinrich' Sche Buchhanlung, Leipzig, 1883, pp.5-23, 67-68, 147-152; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.67; *PM* 6, p.134. The central band of the ceiling consists of a row of winged creatures. The zodiac itself is depicting a big group of celestial elements in a sequential fashion, one positioned next to the other.

Dendera C zodiac is a part of the rectangular zodiac of Dendera temple, located on the first (inner) strip to the west and first (inner) strip to the east of the center. The scenes are consisting of the daily journey of the god Ra during the hour of the day, divine souls and spirits, lunar staircase and divinities, and the four winds.

³⁶ This zodiac is also a part of the rectangular zodiac. It is located in the second (middle) strips to the east and west of the center. The zodiac which surrounded by a large female figure of the goddess Nut, consists of double rows of constellations decan list, planet, hours of the day and night, barks of the sun and moon, and the winds. For more information see: Brugsch, H. op.cit. pp.15-23; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.78; *PM* 6, p.49.

Dendera E (pl.9),³⁷
Koptos (fig.13),³⁸
Esna B (pl.10),³⁹
Dendera F (pl.11),⁴⁰
Deir el-Haggar (pl.12),⁴¹
Akhmim (fig.14).⁴²

³⁷ This zodiac is also a part of the rectangular zodiac. It is located in the third (outer) strips to the east and west of the center. The zodiac which surrounded by a large female figure of the goddess Nut, consists of double rows of constellations, decans list, planets, and hours of the day and night. For more information see: Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.79; *PM* 6, p.49.

³⁸ The temple of Min and Isis at Qift (Koptos), is dating back to the Greco-Roman Period. The astronomical scene is decorating a reused block of the ceiling. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.81-82; *PM* 5, p.123. The scene is containing figures for the zodiacal sign Leo, Orion and Sothis in barks, and mythological or decanal figures.

³⁹ It is the temple of Khnum at Esna which dated back to the Greco-Roman Period. The rectangular zodiac is decorating six of the seven bands of the Hypostyle Hall ceiling which built by Vespasian-Domitian (69-96 A.D.). Sauneron, S. *Le Temple d'Esna: Band 4*, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Le Caire, 1969, no.418; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.82-83; *PM* 6, p.116. The zodiac on the ceiling is framed at either end by a bending figure of Nut; it consists of the zodiacal constellations, some other constellations, decans and the planets.

⁴⁰ This zodiac is decorated the upper frieze of the east wall of south corridor of access to the ambulatory of the Birth House at Dendera. It has only a decan list. Daumas, F. *Les Mammisis de Dendera*, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Le Caire, 1959, p.220; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.84-85.

⁴¹ The temple is located at the western end of the Dakhleh Oasis. It is dating back to the 1st Century A.D. The astronomical scene itself which dating back to the 2nd Century A.D. is decorating the ceiling of the sanctuary. Kaper, O.E. "The astronomical ceiling of Deir el-Haggar in the Dakhleh Oasis," *JEA*, vol.81, London, 1995, p.175f.

The zodiac is representing a bending figure of Nut, between her arms and legs there are four registers of scenes. First the body of Nut, is the first register which contains some decans, and Sirius. The second register contains the days of the lunar months. The third register depicts the nightly course of the sun from the west to the east and only six hours of the Night. The fourth register contains the months of the lunar calendar, the winds, and some of the constellations and the zodiacal signs.

⁴² This zodiac is decorating a remaining block from the Roman Period temple of gods Triphos and Min which dated back to the time of Emperor Trajan, now completely destroyed. The block with zodiac has been described by a number of travellers and scholars. The circular zodiac is containing some zodiacal constellations and decans. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.86-89; *PM* 5, p.20. For more information about the temple see: Al-Masri, Y. "Preliminary report on the excavations in Akhmim by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization," *ASAE*, tome 69, Le Caire, 1983, pp.7-13.

Coffins: Harendotes (pl.13),⁴³
 Soter (fig.24),⁴⁴
 Kleopatra (fig.25),⁴⁵
 Petemenopohis (fig.26),⁴⁶
 Heter (fig.27).⁴⁷

⁴³ This zodiac is representing on the wooden inner coffin of Harendotes, high priest of the god Amen, Horus, Isis, Anubis, Amsu, and other gods. The no. 6678 coffin is now in the British Museum, is remarkable for its form and ornamentation, and for the numerous astronomical texts and pictures which are painted inside the cover. Budge, E.A.W. *British Museum, Guide to the first and second Egyptians rooms*, British Museum, London, 1904, p.92; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.61-62; *PM* 1, pp.623-24. It is dated back to the early Ptolemaic Period. In the center a figure of Nut with arms above head and Chapter 89 of the Book of the Dead on her body, around her are a decan list, planets, and some constellations.

⁴⁴ The wooden coffin of the local official Soter found in Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, west bank of Luxor, and now in the British Museum (no.6705), is dated back to the Early 2nd Century A.D. A.D. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.91; *PM* 1, p.675, no.4. Bagnall, R.S. and Rathbone, D.W. *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians*, British Museum Press, Los Angeles, 2004, p.204; Riggs, C. "Archaism and Artistic Sources in Roman Egypt. The Coffins of the Soter Family and the Temple of Deir el-Medina," *Bifao*, tome 106, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Le Caire, 2006, pp.316-317.

The zodiac is occupies the inner face of upper section of the coffin. It filled by the raised arms goddess Nut, the zodiac, and the hours of the day and night.

⁴⁵ The wooden coffin of the Petamenophis, son of Soter found also in Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, west bank of Luxor, and now in the Louvre Museum (no. E 13048), is dated back to the Early 2nd Century A.D. A.D. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.92-93; *PM* 1, p.675, no.9; Riggs, C. *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt: Art*, pp.282-83. Riggs, C. "Archaism and Artistic Sources in Roman Egypt," pp.316-317.

The zodiac scene is occupies the inner face of upper section of the coffin. It contains zodiacal signs and hours of the day and night, surrounded the body of the raised arms Nut.

⁴⁶ The wooden coffin of the Kleopatra the daughter of Soter found in Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, west bank of Luxor, and now in the British Museum (no.6706), is dated back to the Early 2nd Century A.D. A.D. *PM* 1, p.676, no.13; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.91-92. Riggs, C. *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt*, p.281; Riggs, C. "Archaism and Artistic Sources in Roman Egypt," pp.316-317.

The zodiac is occupies the inner face of upper section of the coffin. It contains zodiacal signs and hours of the day and night, surrounded the body of the raised arms Nut.

⁴⁷ It is the wooden coffin of Heter probably from Thebes but now lost. It dated back to about 125 A.D. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.93; *PM* 1, p.647

The zodiacal scene is on the inner face of upper section of the coffin. Brugsch, H. "Ueber ein neu entdecktes astronomisches Denkmal aus der thebanischen Nekropolis," *ZÄS*, band 14, Leipzig, 1880, p.21. It represents the goddess Nut surrounding with zodiacal signs, horoscope, constellations, planets, hours of the day and night, and winds.

Gallery: Hermopolis (pl.13).⁴⁸

Tombs: Nag Hamad A (pl.14),⁴⁹

Nag Hamad B (pl.15),⁵⁰

Athribis (fig.22),⁵¹

Petosiris A⁵² (pl.16) and B⁵³ (pl.17) at El-Muzzawaga.

⁴⁸ The astronomical scene is on the ceiling of a chapel within the subterranean Gallery C at Tuna el-Gebel (Hermopolis west), on west side beyond the arch. It is dated back to the reign of the king Ptolemy I. Gabra, S. "Fouilles de l' universite Fouad El Awel a Tuna El-Gebel", *ASAE*, tome 39, Le Caire, 1939, p.491-92; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit., p.54. The partly preserved zodiac is containing a decanal list, planets, north constellation and dieties, around a figure of stretch Nut.

⁴⁹ It is a rock cut tomb of two rooms at Nag Hamad city south west of Sohag. Both Neugebauer and Parker who published it were uncertain about the date of the tomb to be Ptolemaic or Roman Period. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.75-76. Nag Hamad A zodiac is situated on the ceiling of outer room. It shows a twisted figure of Geb supports a bending figure of Nut, between them are six registers of barks contains a decan list, constellation, planets, sun and moon.

⁵⁰ Like Nag Hamad A zodiac, Nag Hamad B zodiac also belong to the same tomb but decorating the ceiling of inner room. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.76-77. It shows figure of Shu supports a bending figure of Nut, around Shu are four registers of celestial bodies contains a decan list, constellation, planets, hours of night, lunar and solar deities.

⁵¹ It is a tomb of the two brothers Pamehyt and Ibpaeni at Athribis, near Nag-Hamad. It is dated back to late 2nd Century A.D., Roman period. The astronomical scene is represented on ceiling of the hall, it is consisting of two zodiacs beside each other, surrounded by mythological figures and texts. Petrie, W.M.F. *Athribis*, British School of Archaeology in Egypt and Egyptian account, no.14, Hazell, Watseon and Viney, LD., London, 1908, pp.12-13, 23-24, pl.xxxvi; Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.96-98; *PM* 5, pp.33-34. The zodiac is consisting of zodiacal signs, horoscopes, and constellation.

⁵² The cut rock tomb of the priest Petosiris in the Dakhla Oasis is one of the best preserved decorated tombs from Roman Egypt. It is on a ridge called Qaret el-Muzawaqqa and probably dates to the late 1st and early 2nd Century A.D. Osing, J. *Denkmäler der Oase Dachla aus dem Nachlass von Ahmed Fakhry*, Mainz am Rhein, Mainz, 1982; Riggs, C. *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt Art*, p.161. The two circular zodiacs are decorating the double-chambered tomb, one on each ceiling.

Petosiris A zodiac is that one which is decorating the first chamber of Petosiris tomb. The zodiac which supported by four winged nude goddesses, is surrounded by a snake and a crocodile facing each other. It is contain figures for the planets and some zodiacal constellations.

⁵³ Petosiris B zodiac is the one which is decorating the second chamber of Petosiris tomb. The zodiac which supported by four winged nude goddesses is containing figures for the planets, mythological creatures, deities praised to a winged scarab in a bark, and some zodiacal constellations.

Plaques: Disc (fig.16),⁵⁴

Daressy (Cairo) Zodiac (fig.15).⁵⁵

Identifying the correlations between all of those monuments reveals the kind of copies and adaptations of much earlier texts and scenes came about. The function of serpent imagery is supported by its incorporation into monuments decoration in the Greco-Roman period. For instance, the relative figures of the serpents in the zodiac differ from one astronomical scene to other. It should be noted that the serpent motif itself was but one of many competing motifs in a varied Hellenistic-Roman zodiacs. Serpents in all kind of forms (winged, coiled, half human, etc.) populate the astronomical scenes of this period.

Serpentine Iconography:

Serpents played different characters in the zodiac as decans, mythological creatures, heavenly bodied, winds and finally as part of religious scenes.

Decans:

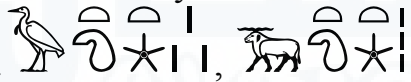
The star clocks of the Middle Kingdom, employed stars⁵⁶

⁵⁴ It is a terracotta circular plaque decorating with some zodiacal signs, solar bark and mythological creatures, dating back to the Early Ptolemaic Period. It is now in Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

⁵⁵ The grey marble plaque Zodiac of Cairo or the "Daressy Zodiac," is dated back to the Roman Period. It was sighted by Georges Daressy in an antiquities dealer's shop in Cairo prior to 1901. Its present location is unknown, but a squeeze taken by Daressy is preserved in Cairo at the I Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale. Evans, J. "The astrologer's apparatus: a picture of professional practice in Greco-Roman Egypt," *Journal for the History of Astronomy*, vol. 35, part 1, no. 118, London, 2004, p.9.

It consists of 3 concentric circles and the various signs have been divided from each other. Outside the central roundel there are two rings, the inner ring containing the decans and the outer ring the zodiacal signs. In the center are the busts of the Sun and the Moon gods, and a snake. Gauthier, H. "Monuments et fragments appartenant à l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire," *Bifao*, tome 12, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire, 1916, p.144; Belizia, L. *The Paranatellonta in ancient Greek astrological literature*, translated by Fiorello, F., Genova, 2010, pp.7-8.

⁵⁶ Actually, most of the authors before 1945 like Daressy and Petrie considered decans kind of constellations, Daressy, M.G. "Une ancient liste de decans Égyptiens," *ASAE* 1, Le Caire, 1900, p.79; Petrie, W.M.F. *Wisdom of the Egyptians*, British School of Archaeology in Egypt and Bernard Quaritch Ltd, London, 1940, p.16; but later, authors like Neugebauer and Parker suggested that the decans are both stars and constellations. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. vols.1-3.

at ten-day intervals which come to called ⁵⁷
 var.  *b3kty*⁵⁸ "decans,"⁵⁹ whose purpose was using to tell the hours by the night. They become later a part of the Rameside star clocks, preserved in the tombs of some of 20th Dynasty kings. They were a series of 36 stars located close to the ecliptic whose risings, or later, transits, served to keep track of hours, ten-day periods, and ultimately years; they were positioned so that a new one rose or transited at intervals marking the hours; the whole cycle would take a year to complete,⁶⁰ beginning once more with the heliacal rising of the Sothis (Sirius) decan. They divided each zodiacal sign into three periods, and also correspond to 360 days, and 12 further decans to the remaining five days.⁶¹ Each decan has its own god and personified;⁶² represented by figure of a single star only, or as constellations; and the name of each one is almost accompanied by one or more stars.⁶³

Decans are survive on over 50 lists of pictorial astronomical records.⁶⁴ The earliest mention of some individual decans dates from the Old Kingdom, as a part of the Pyramid Texts.⁶⁵ But the earliest lists of decans were found painted the coffin lids of the First Intermediate Period about 2100 B.C. at

⁵⁷ *Wb* I, p.430.

⁵⁸ Wilson, P. *A Ptolemaic Lexicon - A Lexicographical Study of the Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, Peeters Publishers and Department of Oriental Studies, Leuven, 1997, p.304.

⁵⁹ These stars are called "decans" from the Greek word for "ten." Conman, J. "The Egyptian Origins of Planetary Hypsomata," *Discussions in Egyptology*, vol. 64, Oxford, 2006-2009, p.7.

⁶⁰ Antoniadi, E.M. *L'astronomie Égyptienne- depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à la fin de l'époque Alexandrine*, Gauthier-Villars, Paris, 1934, p.78; Stewart, D. op.cit. p.14.

⁶¹ Clagett, M. op.cit. p.50.

⁶² Bunson, M. op.cit. p.37.

⁶³ Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.2.

⁶⁴ Park, R. "The First Decan," *Current Research in Egyptology*, edited by K.Griffin, Current Research in Egyptology 2007, University of Swansea, London, 2007, p.107.

⁶⁵ Parker, R.A. "Ancient Egyptian Astronomy," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, vol.276, no.1257, London, 1974, pp.53-4.

Asyut, providing the deceased with his own private start clock. Here we find thirty-six decans arrange in thirty-six columns of twelve lines each in a diagonal pattern.⁶⁶ The legacy of the Middle Kingdom Decanal Star Clock continued into the New Kingdom. On the astronomical ceilings of the Sennmut tomb, the minister of Hatshepsut decans also depict. The ceilings of many tombs depict the night sky as groups of star-gods or decans, moving across the sky in boats. During the subsequent centuries many different lists of decanal stars were developed.

The decans accumulated a great deal of mythological associations over the centuries, and from the Ramesside period an iconographical development took place whereby they began to be depicted as leonine, or more commonly, serpentine deities. This connection between decans and other astral deities in one side, and serpents in other side, is most explicitly stated in the Book of the Heavenly Cow,⁶⁷ where it is said that *bꜣ n ntr nb m ḥꜣw.w* "the souls of all the gods [i.e. the decan-stars] are in the snakes."⁶⁸ By the end of the New Kingdom, alongside the astronomical scenes, decans caught the eyes by appearing on a massive number of objects such as bracelets, necklaces, statues, menits, amulets, naoi, mummy-shrouds and scenes.⁶⁹

The serpentine decans appeared on some monuments belonging to the Third Intermediate Period. Among them, from the 22th Dynasty during the reign of Osorkon II, is an astronomical scene (fig.2) decorating the ceiling of the king's

⁶⁶ Neugebauer, O. "The Egyptian Decans," *Vistas in Astronomy*, vol.1, Pergamon Pr., London, 1955, p.47.

⁶⁷ A-S von Bomhard, *The Naos of the Decades*, Oxford Center for Maritime Archaeology Oxford, 2008, pp.63-65; Dosoo, K. "Baktiotha: The Origin of a Magical Name in P. Macq. I 1," Draft of paper to be published in the *Proceedings of the X International Congress of Coptic Studies*, Camplani, A. & Buzi, P. (eds.), Rome, 2012, p.3.

⁶⁸ Hornung, E. *Der ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh: eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Bd.46, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Mythos, 1982, verse 284, p.122.

⁶⁹ For more information about those monuments see: Kakosy, L. "Decans in Late-Egyptian religion," *Oikumene*, vol.3, Budapest, 1982, pp.163-191.

tomb at Tanis.⁷⁰ Decans⁷¹ on this scene are taking form of erecting serpent, some standing with human arms and legs, and one has wings. Their popularity is shown by the variety of their kinds to be found in the amulets, especially those of the goddess Sekhmet-Bastet. One of them is dating back 23rd Dynasty during the reign of Takelot III (fig.3 A and B),⁷² is a faience statue of the goddess who represented as a lion-headed woman holds a shrine-shaped sistrum and sitting on a throne decorated with two decans represented as coiled serpents with human arms. While another faience statue⁷³ of the same goddess is representing her sitting on a decorated throne with two standing figures of serpents with human arms and legs⁷⁴ and another lioness-headed deity. The purpose of this kind of amulets is the double protection gained from both goddesses and decans. Egyptians believed that some stars were dangerous or hostile, while others afforded people protection and bestowed blessings. Images of decans were inscribed on protective amulets,⁷⁵ as well as necklaces which by wearing a person could claim their protection.

⁷⁰ Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pl.17; Kakosy, L. op.cit. p.164.

⁷¹ The Egyptians believed that decans are a threat of the dangerous power during that late period, and the bands of decans on the walls thought to control their power and harnessed to protect the king.

⁷² It is found in Tuna el-Gebel at Minia, and now in the British Museum (EA51822). For more monuments see: Quack, J.F. "The decans on the sides of the throne," *Festschrift für Dieter Kessler zum 65. Geburtstag, Tuna el-Gebel 4*, Vaterstetten, 2013, pp.74-7.

⁷³ It is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (26.7.868).

⁷⁴ Erroneously identified as Nehebkau by Petrie, W.M.F. *Amulets - illustrated by the Egyptian collection in University College*, Constable and Company Ltd, London, 1914, p.41, no.194n; Arnold, D. "An Egyptian Bestiary," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. lii, no.4, New York, 1995, p.18.

⁷⁵ Kakosy, L. op.cit. p.179.

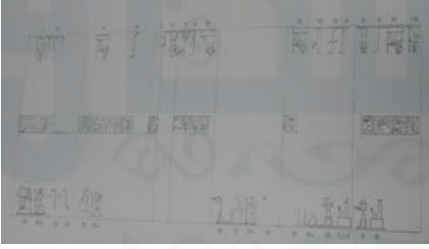


Fig.2: An attempt to reconstruct and locate the decans on the ceiling of Osorkon II's tomb, 22th Dynasty, Tanis, from Montet's description.
cf. Montet, P. *Les Constructions et le Tombeau d'Osorkon II à Tanis*, Paris, 1947, pl.xxix.



A



B

Fig.3: Decans on the amulets of Sekhmet-Bastet, Third Intermediate Period, A) British Museum, B) Metropolitan Museum.
cf. A) British Museum online, B) Arnold, D. "An Egyptian Bestiary," p.18.

By the reign of Darius I of the 27th Dynasty, serpentine decans appeared on the walls of Hibis temple at Kharga Oasis (fig.4).⁷⁶ The scene is representing the king making offering to the decans. Those serpentine decans are powered representing; one of the strange figure in the fourth register represented a four-headed erected serpent. They also appear on a shrine of Nectanebo I and a chapel of Ptolemy VIII on the uppermost terrace of the Deir el-Bahari temple of Hatshepsut.⁷⁷ Though widely spaced in time, these monuments show that the serpentine decans continued to expand their influence.

⁷⁶ For more information see: Davis, N. *The temple of Hibis in El-Khargeh Oasis*, III, Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition Publications, New York, 1953, pl.15; Kakosy, L. op.cit. p.179.

⁷⁷ For more information see: Bataille, A. *Les inscriptions grecques du temple de Hatshepsout*, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire, 1951; Kakosy, L. op.cit. p.180.



Fig.4: Decans decorating the walls of Hibis temple, 27th Dynasty, Kharga Oasis.

cf. Davis, N. De G. *The temple of Hibis in El-Khargeh Oasis*, III, New York, pl.15.

Neugebauer and Parker⁷⁸ were the best who classified the lists of decans they found into two main groups with several sub-groups. The main groups are consists of both *Primary Decans* and *Triangle Decans* of the Epagomenal Days. While the sup-groups are six different decanal lists. The differences are not great, consisting mainly of the dropping out of one or two decans and their replacement by others. Those main groups are the following: *Senmut* family of Decans, *Seti I A* family, *Seti I B* family, the *Seti I C* family, *Tanis* family and the *Miscellaneous list*. However, decans with serpentine iconography appeared in only two groups (families) of decans, which are the *Seti I B* family and *Tanis* family.

Seti I B Family decans:

Serpentine decans of this family are taking forms of pure serpents or mixing with other creatures; they appeared on many zodiacs through the Greco-Roman Period, are chronologically as

⁷⁸ Subsequently, I have used Neugebauer and Parker's work *Egyptian Astronomical Text* selectively, which explore the evidence for Egyptian observation of the night sky throughout Egyptian history.

the following: Esna A1, Edfu, Philae B, Dendera A, Nag Hamad A, Dendera D, Esna B and Dendera F. Those eight lists of decans range in time from Ptolemy III-V (246-160 B.C.) for Esna A1, to Trajan (98-118 A.D.) for Dendera F. Three lists are from friezes, four from ceiling and one from a doorway.

Decans of this family are different from the other groups, that no deities are named, nor are stars ever given, but in only two lists (Dendera A, Dendera D) minerals (metal or type of wood)⁷⁹ are associated with each decan, it is mentioned in a little caption near each figure. Both names and figures of the decans appeared in five of the lists which are Edfu, Philae B, Dendera A, Dendera D and Dendera F; while the other three lists: Esna A1, Nag Hamad A and Esna B, have only figures of the decans and names are omitted.

Belong to this family of decans, only nineteen have serpentine figures, beside three deities called "Deities of the Epact" (listed afterward the group of the decans); they are all as the following⁸⁰:



Decan no.2- *št(w)* :⁸¹ vars. Dendera D adds $\star$. The name appeared only on Dendera A and Dendera D, while omitted from all the other zodiacs.

Mineral: Carnelian and gold.⁸²

Figure: Serpent-headed god, standing and offering two *nw*-jars.

⁷⁹The minerals with which the decans were associated, are given the identification established by Harris, J.R. *Lexicographic Studies in Ancient Egyptian Minerals*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1961.

⁸⁰According to the classification of Neugebauer and Parker. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.134-44.

⁸¹*Wb* IV, p.555.

⁸²The writer of this article choose to not write the glyphic names of the minerals but the translation in English according to Brugsch, H. *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum*, and Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III: Decans, Planets, Constellations and Zodiacs*, because of their far connection to the issue of the article which is the serpent iconography.

3- *knm(t)*  .⁸³ vars. Edfu  for ; Philae B, name omits; Dendera D adds .

Mineral: Garnet.

Figure: Erect serpent with three small serpents crossing its body.⁸⁴

5- *h3t d3t*  .⁸⁵ vars. Edfu omits ; adds  and  for *d3t*; Philae B, name omits.

Minerals: Glass and gold.

Figure: Serpent on a support (fig.5).

6- *phwy d3t*  .⁸⁶ vars. Edfu writes as  ; Dendera A and Dendera D write as  .

Minerals: Galena and gold.

Figure: Erect serpent (fig.5);⁸⁷ except Dendera F, cat-headed serpent.⁸⁸



Fig.5: Decans nos.5-9, Dendera D zodiac.
In Situation

⁸³ *Wb* V, p.132.

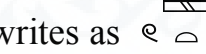
⁸⁴ That kind of scenes which depicted an erect serpent with some other crossing its body appeared for the first time during the 22th Dynasty on the ceiling of Osorkon II's tomb at Tanis. Kakosy believes that the decorators may have used older patterns. Kakosy, L. op.cit. p.164.

⁸⁵ *Wb* III, p.20.

⁸⁶ *Wb* I, p.537.

⁸⁷ The erected serpent appeared for the first time among the religious scenes of the Amduat, where in the Fifth Hour an erected serpent guarded the door; the figure which spread later through most the religious books and the astronomical scenes.

⁸⁸ Noted that Dendera F always uses the same figure (cat-headed serpent) and omits  determinative by the end of the name.

- 8- *wš3t(i) bk3t(i)*  :⁸⁹ vars. Edfu omits  and the final , and has  for the first ; Philae B, name omits; Dendera D writes as .

Mineral: Tuquoise.

Figure: Edfu, Dendera A, Nag Hamad A, as serpent with human arms and legs, standing, offering two *nw*-jars; Philae B, the same but without legs; and Dendera D, serpent-headed baboon, standing, offering two *nw*-jars (fig.5).

- 9- *ipst*  :⁹⁰ vars. Dendera D, adds  under ; Dendera F,  for  and  for .

Minerals: Iron and gold.

Figure: Erect serpent (fig.5).

- 12- *hnt(t) hr(t)*  :⁹¹ vars. Dendera D, adds  ; Edfu reads .

Minerals: Dark quartz and gold; except Dendera D, quartz and gold.

Figure: Erect serpent; except Dendera F, erased cat-headed serpent.

- 15- *spt(y) hnwy*  :⁹² vars. Edfu omits , one  and adds ; Philae B, reads ; Dendera D omits  and adds .

⁸⁹ *Wb* I, p.368.

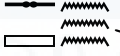
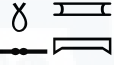
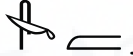
⁹⁰ *Wb* I, p.69; Neugebauer and Parker read as *ipsd* for the New Kingdom. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.136.

⁹¹ *Wb* III, p.307; Neugebauer and Parker use  for , Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.136.

⁹² *Wb* IV, p.100.

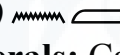
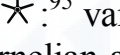
Minerals: Flint.

Figure: Erect serpent.

- 17- *sšmw*  ⁹³ vars. Philae B, reads  *sšmw* (?) *hr*; Dendera A, mistakenly writes *ts rk*,⁹⁴ Dendera D, reads .

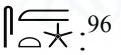
Minerals: Glass and gold.

Figure: Esna A1, Nag Hamad A and Esna B, serpent with human arms and legs, standing, offering two *nw*-jars; and Edfu, Dendera A and Dendera D, erect serpent with human arms, offering two *nw*-jars.

- 18- *knm(w)*  ⁹⁵ vars. Dendera D, adds .

Minerals: Carnelian and gold.

Figure: Esna A1, Edfu and Dendera A, uraeus serpent coiled on a support; Nag Hamad A and Esna B, erect serpent; and Dendera D, uraeus serpent coiled.

- 20- *smd*  ⁹⁶ vars. Dendera A, reverses  and adds ; Dendera D, adds .

Minerals: Copper and gold.

Figure: Erect serpent with another serpent crossing it's body, except Philae B, erect serpent only.

- 21- *srt*  ⁹⁷ vars. Philae B, adds ; Dendera D, adds .

Minerals: Dark flint and gold.

Figure: Erect serpent.

⁹³ *Wb* IV, p.291.

⁹⁴ The name *ts rk* is belongs to the Decan no.34 which represented in the same zodiac as a lion-headed goddess with uraeus on head, seated, holding sistrum and flagellum.

⁹⁵ *Wb* V, p.132.

⁹⁶ *Wb* IV, p.146.

⁹⁷ *Wb* III, p.463.

23-*hry hpd srt*  :⁹⁸ vars. Edfu,  for  and omits ; Philae B, name broken; Dendera D,  for  and  for .

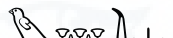
Minerals: Glass and gold.

Figure: Ercet winged serpent.

24-*tpy-^c zhw(y)*  :⁹⁹ vars. Edfu,  for ; Dendera D,  for  and  for ; Dendera F,  for  and adds .

Minerals: Garnet.

Figure: Esna A1, Nag Hamad A, serpent with human legs, standing; Edfu, Philae B, erect serpent with human arms, offering two *nw*-jars; Dendera A, erect serpent;¹⁰⁰ Dendera D, serpent with human arms and legs, standing, offering two *nw*-jars; and Dendera F, cat-headed serpent.

27- *b3w(y)*  :¹⁰¹ vars. Edfu the name erased; Dendera A, mistakenly writes  *wš3ti*.¹⁰²

Minerals: *tsmd* / *ssmit* and gold.

Figure: Esna A1, erect serpent with up-curved tail; Edfu, erect serpent with heads at both ends;¹⁰³ Philae B, Nag Hamad A, Dendera D and Esna B, erect serpent with up-curved body.

⁹⁸ *Wb* III, p.271.

⁹⁹ *Wb* V, p.284.

¹⁰⁰ According to Brugsch, it is holding two *nw*-jars. Brugsch, H. *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum*, p.20.

¹⁰¹ *Wb* I, p.413.

¹⁰² The same opinion for Brugsch and Chassinat. Ibid. p.20; Chassinat, E. op.cit., vol.4, p.178.

¹⁰³ Brugsch mentions it as just an erect serpent. Brugsch, H. *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum*, p.20.

30- *sz kd* : ¹⁰⁴ vars. Edfu omits ; Dendera D, adds | to ;

Dendera F,  for .

Minerals: Glass and gold

Figure: Serpent with human arms and legs, standing, offering two *nw*-jars; Edfu, same without legs; and Dendera F, erased cat-headed serpent.

32- *rt* : ¹⁰⁵ vars. Dendera A adds  before . Note: (word *rt* var. *i'rt*   ¹⁰⁶ var.   ¹⁰⁷    ¹⁰⁸ is originally means "uraeus" or "cobra" snake).

Minerals: Granite and gold.

Figure: Nag Hamad A and Esna A1, serpent-headed god, standing, arms raised in praise.

33- *rmn hry* : ¹⁰⁹

Minerals: Quartz and gold.

Figure: Serpent with human arms and legs, standing, offering two *nw*-jars; and Philae B, without human legs.

36- *tpy-^c spdt* : ¹¹⁰ vars. Philae B, name omits; Dendera D, reads as    .

Minerals: Ebony(wood, not a mineral) and gold.

Figure: Edfu, erect serpent with human arms, offering two *nw*-jars; Dendera A, Nag Hamad A, Dendera D, serpent with human arms and legs, standing, offering two *nw*-jars; Philae B, erect serpent with lion-head; and Dendera F, erased.

¹⁰⁴ *Wb* V, p.80.

¹⁰⁵ *Wb* I, p.12.

¹⁰⁶ Faulkner, R.O. *A concise dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Griffith Institute-Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1981, p.45.

¹⁰⁷ Keimer, L. *Histoires de serpents dans l'Égypte Ancienne et Modern*, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire, 1947, p.8

¹⁰⁸ *Wb* I, p.12; Wilson, P. op.cit. pp.44-5.

¹⁰⁹ *Wb* II, p.420.

¹¹⁰ *Wb* IV, p.111.

Deities of the Epact

By the end of the *Seti I B* family of decan list, there are two groups of deities following the decans. The majority of them belong to the first group which are the deities of the dual year. While the other group is the eleven deities that are built up the epagomenal days and represent the days between the lunar year of 354 days and the civil year of 365 days, the so called "epact."¹¹¹ Just in two zodiacs (Denddera A and Dendera D), three deities with serpentine figures are represented, and also associated by the minerals. The deities who all have the same name are as the following:

- 1- *wš3t(i) bk(3)t(i)* :¹¹² vars. Dendera A,  for  and omits *bk(3)t(i)*; Dendera D, follow the name with *nkr 3 m imnt ḥry-ib 3 ʿnḥt*, "great *nkr* in the west, residing in the land of the west."¹¹³

Minerals: Ebony (wood) and gold.

Figure: Serpent on a support (fig.6).

- 3- *wš3ti* :¹¹⁴ vars. Dendera A, omits .

Minerals: Elbony (wood) and gold.

Figure: Erect serpent (fig.6).

- 5- *wš3ti* .¹¹⁵

Minerals: Ssmit and gold.

Figure: Erect serpent .

¹¹¹ Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.133.

¹¹² *Wb* I, p.368.

¹¹³ Neugebauer and Parker suggest that it is an epithet of the serpent figure below the deity. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.139.

¹¹⁴ *Wb* I, p.368.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.



Fig.6: Deities of the Epact, nos.1-3, Dendera D zodiac. In Situation



Fig.7: Decans nos.13-17, Dendera B zodiac. cf. Aubourg, E. *La date de conception du zodiaque du temple d'Hathor a Dendera*, fig.2.

Tanis Family decans:

Decans of this family are taking forms of pure serpents or mixing with other creatures; they appeared in many zodiacs through the Greco-Roman Period, are chronologically as the following: Hermopolis A, Dendera B, Nag Hamad B and Dendera E, they are all from ceilings. I should also mention that this family of decans also appeared as a part of Kom ombo zodiac, but with names only. Those four lists of decans range in time from Ptolemy I (304-283 B.C.) for Hermopolis A, to Tiberius (14-37 A.D.) for Dendera E.

There is not any special Character for this family of decans different from the other families. All lists have figures of deities associated with the decans, but only one list (Hermopolis A) gives names as well. The stars are usually present but not consistently. Belong to this family of decans, only seven have serpentine figures; as the following:¹¹⁶

13-s(3) *pt(i)* *hnwy*  ¹¹⁷ vars. Dendera B,  only;

Dendera E, omits  and wrongly adds  for .

Deity: Horus- son of Isis.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ According to the classification of Neugebauer and Parker. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.141-47.

¹¹⁷ *Wb* III, p.287.

¹¹⁸ The decans of Tanis Family are associated with deities, who named only beside the name of the decan itself.

Figure: Nag Hamad B, Dendera E, serpent-headed god, wearing the white crown; and Dendera B, without crown (fig.7).

Stars: 2.

14- *sšm(w)*  ¹¹⁹.

Deity: Ra.

Figure: Nag Hamad B, serpent-headed god, wearing the *Atef*-crown with horns.

Stars: 4.

17- *tpy-^c smd*  ¹²⁰.

Deity: Horus—who loves.....

Figure: Serpent-headed goddess (fig.7).

Stars: 2.

28- *ḳd*  ¹²¹.

Deity: Ptah.

Figure: Dendera B, four uraei on a support ; and Nag Hamad B, four human-headed uraei on *nb*-sign.

Stars: 3.

29- *sš(wy) ḳd*  ¹²².

Deity: Nefertem.

Figure: Nag Hamad B, in one bark, a falcon-headed uraeus, wearing *Atef*-crown with horns, and another crocodile-headed with horns and sun disk.

Stars: Omit.

31- *ṛt*  :

Deity: Not preserved.

Figure: Uraeus serpent.

Stars: 4.

¹¹⁹ *Wb* IV, p.291.

¹²⁰ *Wb* IV, p.146.

¹²¹ *Wb* V, p.80.

¹²² *Ibid*.

34- *rmn hry*   :¹²³ vars. Hermopolis A, adds .

Deity: Renenutet.

Figure: Hermopolis A, serpent-headed goddess; Dendera B, ibis-headed serpent, wearing *Atef*-crown with horns, on a support,¹²⁴ under Orion constellation;¹²⁵ it could be the Egyptian form of the Greek constellation Hydra.¹²⁶ In Nag Hamad B, it represented as ibis-headed uraeus with horns on a support.

Star: Hermopolis A, omits; Dendera B, 1.

After this declaration, there are some notes about the previous group of serpentine decans should be mentioned. First of all; decan no.36 *tpy-ꜥ spdt* in Philae B, has a strange figure of an erected lion-headed serpent, which was a great inspiration for many monuments of the Greco-Roman Period and later. Hundreds of amulets found depicting some decans out of the astronomical scenes as lion-headed serpent deities.¹²⁷ An example (fig.8) of those amulets on which the center of the reverse is occupied by the lion-headed radiate coiled serpent (Chnoubis), round him are the triads of animals which are commonly placed round Harpocrates, like scarabs, goats, crocodiles, birds and snakes.¹²⁸

The figure of Chnoubis that commonly found on magical gems of the Roman Period had been discussed by Jackson who believes that it is a kind of decan derived from earlier Egyptian

¹²³ *Wb* II, p420.

¹²⁴ Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. pp.146-147.

¹²⁵ Antoniadi, E.M. op.cit. p.70.

¹²⁶ Daressy, G. "L' Egypte celeste," *Bifao*, tome 12, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Le Caire, 1916, p.13.

¹²⁷ Derchain, P. "Intailles magiques du Musée de Numismatique d'Athènes," *Chronique d'Egypte*, tome 39, Le Caire, 1964, p.89.

¹²⁸ Bonner, C. "Amulets chiefly in the British Museum – a supplementary article," *Hesperia*, vol.xx, issue 4, American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Athens, 1951, p.308.

tradition.¹²⁹ The various parts of the human body were thought to be controlled by the thirty-six astrological decans, and Chnoubis was associated with the area of the womb.¹³⁰ That this association between the decans and serpents carried on into Coptic times is suggested by a passage in the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, in which the sons of Death are described as decans 'in the form of winding serpents.'¹³¹



Fig.8: Chnoubis in the center of an amulet. Mid-dleton, Lewis Collection, C.17, British Museum.

cf. Bonner, C. "Amulets chiefly in the British Museum," pl.99, no.65.



Fig.9: Crowned serpent, coin of Antonius Pius, private collection. cf. <http://www.edgarlowen.com/roman-imperial-coins-2nd-century-for-sale>. [Accessed on: 5 Mars 2015]

Another note: decans (nos.13-14-29-34) and many mythological creatures¹³² of the zodiac are representing wearing different kind of crowns, the matter that extent during the Roman Period. Big number of the Roman coins is occupied by those kinds of crowned serpents, like those dated back to the reign of Antonius Pius (138-161 A.D.) from Alexandria (fig.9). Other examples belong to Nero Billon Tetradrachm of Alexandria (54-68 A.D.) (fig.10) and Trajan (98-117 A.D.) (fig.11) have crowned figures of the serpent Agathodaem¹³³ on support, coiled with head up, surrounded by poppies and grain ears.

¹²⁹ Bonner, C. *Studies in magical amulets: chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, University of Michigan press, London, 1950, pp.25, 57-59; Jackson, H. M. *The Lion Becomes Man-The Gnostic Leontomorphic Creator and the Platonic Tradition*, Atlanta, 1985, pp.81-84.

¹³⁰ Spier, J. "Medieval Byzantine magical amulets and their tradition," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol.56, London, 1993, p.25.

¹³¹ Dosoo, K. op.cit. p.3.

¹³² Will discuss later in this article.

¹³³ The Agathodaemon or good genius was worshipped in every Egyptian town, and had a special name in each, and was sacred to god Sarapis.



Fig.10: Crowned serpent Agathodaem, coin of Trajan, private collection.

cf. www.forumancientcoins.com/gallery/ [Accessed on: 5 Mars 2015]



Fig.11: Crowned serpent Agathodaem, coin of Nero Billon Tetradrachm of Alexandria, private collection, Classical Numismatic Group.

cf. www.coinproject.com/global_search_db.php [Accessed on: 5 Mars 2015]

On the other side, the great appearing of the winged serpentine decans, which the Egyptian knew perfectly well that snakes don't fly. But there is a deeply meaning to their placing the serpent in the air under specific circumstances. The winged serpent, common to so many civilizations, was employed in Egypt as well and played a similar symbolic role. The Greek author Herodotus claimed to have seen skeletons of flying snakes when he visited Egypt. It is not known how the idea of winged snakes originated, but among the suggestions that have been put forth are the resemblance of the posture of the snake's neck and anterior of its body to wings when it is excited, the fact that horned vipers throw themselves at their victims, or the resemblance of a shedding snakeskin to wings.¹³⁴

In some other zodiacs (Kom Ombo, Koptos and Akhmim), some unknown decans are figured following each other without any names mentioned and they are also not represented in special sequence. Among them are some having serpentine figures. On the eastern most soffit of the central architrave of the Outer Hypostyle Hall of Kom Ombo temple is a scene into two registers (fig.12), the upper one depicted *knmt* decan no.1 and the leader of the decans of Tanis family, is represented as a falcon-headed god wearing the double crown, holding *wAs* scepter and *anx*, in a bark with group of stars around him; while the lower register depicted an unknown decan represented as a god with

¹³⁴ Hansen, N.B. op.cit. pp.298-9.

two heads for serpents (probably Nehebkau according to Shorter)¹³⁵ holding a serpent in both hands, standing between two decans (a human-headed and bull-headed deities) each on a bark, and all standing in front of the king.



Fig.12: Decan *knmt* accompany some other decans, Kom Ombo zodiac. In situation.

While the reused part of the ceiling of Koptos temple (fig.13) is decorated with some remaining heavenly bodies like Leo, Orion, Sirius, and some unknown decans; among them: in front of Orion, a praised coiled serpent with human arms and legs, and another figure represented a praised coiled uraeus with human arms (head damaged) above Leo. The outer circle of Akhmim zodiac (fig.14) is decorated by some unclear and certain decans (most of them omitted or partly damaged), the serpentine decans are as the following: two serpents facing each other (partly damaged); ibis-headed coiled uraeus; damaged figure (with only tail of a serpent appeared); coiled serpent; serpent with two human legs; serpent with a single leg (uncertain, for human or bird).

¹³⁵ Shorter, A.W. "The God Nehebkau," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol.21, The Egypt Exploration Society, London, 1935, p.42.



Fig.13: Koptos zodiac (drawing by Coleman, R.H. from Oriental Institute photography 8709 taken by Dr.Nims, C.F.in 1951, with permission to Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A.)
cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, fig.18.



Fig.14: Akhmim zodiac (drawing by Wilkinson, J.G. in his sketches MSS.I.p.89 in Bodleian Library, Oxford, with permission to Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A.)
cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, pl.45.

The only remain of the few extant examples of an Egyptian zodiac dating back to the Roman Period is Cairo zodiac (fig.15). On it, the inner ring is decorated by the complete group of Dodecaoros¹³⁶ which driven directly from the Egyptian decans. The Ancient Egyptian roots of the dodecaoros may be seen plainly in several figures of animals, like the ibis (associated with Aquarius), a crocodile (Pisces), and serpent associated with Gemini.¹³⁷ The bearded coiled serpent is wearing a crown and clearly represents the Greek god Agathodaimon.¹³⁸ Those animals, attributable, Egyptologists think to be twelve forms or phases assigned to the sun during his twelve hours journey.¹³⁹ In

¹³⁶ The term "Dodecaoros" is composed of (*dodeca*, twelve) and (*hora*, hour) and literally means "twelve hours." It generally stands for the twelve hours of natural day, from sunrise to sunset, and we can translate it as "circle of twelve hours." Each of these twelfths were associated with the name of an animal, which according to Boll, originally the name was likely to show big or small constellations near the equator, marking the beginning or the extension of the twelfth part of the circle. Boll, F. *Sphera: neue griechische texte und untersuchungen zur geschichte der sternbilder*, Teubner, Leipzig, 1903, p.309 Belizia, L. op.cit. p.7.

¹³⁷ Evans, J. op.cit. p.9.

¹³⁸ Daressy, G. "L'Egypte celeste," p.28; Evans, J. op.cit. p.9.

¹³⁹ Offord, J. "Astronomical Notes," *Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada*, Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, vol.10, Toronto, 1916, p.568.

the center, there is also a curved serpent under the busted heads of Apollo for the Sun and Phoebe for the Moon gods.



Fig.15: Cairo or Daressy zodiac.
cf. Boll, F. *Sphera*, pl.vi.

Mythological creatures:

Alongside the decans, zodiac of the Greco-Roman Period are occupied by a numerous number of mythological creatures, the majority of them are taken the serpent shape (winged, with human feet or arms, many-headed, etc.). Those serpentine creatures appeared on the (Astrological Disc, Esna A1, Esna A2, Nag Hamad B, Esna B, Athribis and Petosiris A) zodiacs. Only on Petosiris A zodiac (fig.), the whole astronomical scene is surrounded by two figures of a serpent and a crocodile facing each other, imitating the traditional Ouroboros figure, without any mythological creatures within the zodiac itself. While on the other zodiacs they are represented as the following:

Among the reliefs on the astrological Disc (fig.16) which decorated the both sides, is a figure for coiled serpent on support, on one of the faces it is located in between the zodiacal sign Gemini and a solar bark, while on the other face it located between Taurus and Gemini. It is clear the connection between the serpent and the zodiacal sign Gemini, the matter which paralleled the same connection on Cairo zodiac between the creature and the sign.



Fig.16: The Astrological Disc.

cf. http://collections.lacma.org/sites/default/files/remote_images/piction/ma-31595533-O3 [Accessed on: 24 February 2015]

These creatures appeared also on a big portion of Esna A1 zodiac (pl.1), just above the decanal figures and immediately after no.25 are various of them, mostly serpents, whose relevance to the decans according Neugebauer and Parker is unknown.¹⁴⁰ They are as the followings: Five serpents with different sizes around decans (no.29 to 33); three coiled uraeus-serpents with double heads (one winged) above decans (no.25 to 34); an uraeus-serpent wearing the *Atef*-crown and an uraeus on a support¹⁴¹ both behind decan no.34; two serpents (one coiled) above the Eastern Wind, while there are two winged serpent and a coiled uraeus-serpent in front of the wind (fig.17).



Fig.17: Some mythological creatures surrounded the decans, Esna A1 zodiac.

cf. *Description de l'Égypte, Bibliothèque de l'Image*, The American University in Cairo Press, Germany, 1997, vol.i, pl.87.

In Esna A2 zodiac (pl.1) the serpentine mythological creatures are representing surround the planets and constellations in this part of the ceiling. In between Taurus and Aries there is a figure for winged coiled-serpent. Stuck between the zodiacal signs Sagittarius and Aquarius, easy to recognize three different

¹⁴⁰ Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.63.

¹⁴¹ But Brugsch, considered it as decans. Brugsch, H. *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum*, p.23.

groups of gods represented standing on serpent-like barks. In Nag Hamad B zodiac, in between decan no.2 and the back of the god Shu and under his right arm, there is a figure for a mythological creature depicted as a coiled human-headed uraeus with a sun disk on the head.

In point of fact the biggest number of those creatures appeared on Esna B zodiac (pl.10). On the lower register of the first strip to the south of the center there are a group of creatures (fig.18) as the following: two snakes under each other in a pictorial representation, each with a tree above its back,¹⁴² the upper one with two human heads, while the other with double tail; in front of the nine shrines of Ptah are figures for some creatures represented as a serpent in the form of a lion with four legs and wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt above head. The shrines themselves are represented above a huge uraeus-like bark, and they are all decorated with uraeus on the top.

The upper register of the same strip, is decorated with serpentine figures (fig.19) as the following: under the feet of Nut there are two coiled ram-headed serpents which are curled each other forming three coils; and finally a figure for uraeus serpent with body in three coils above Nut who is representing raising the sky; an erected falcon-headed serpent; an erected uraeus with two human arms; three serpents under each other, the extreme upper one is coiled and had a crocodile head; falcon-headed serpent with feather above head; in front of two dog-headed gods, are a coiled serpent with four human heads.¹⁴³ Just under feet of the another Nut figure is representation of a lion with a tail in the form of serpent; a god with two serpents-head, holding erected serpents with both hands; in front of the ram-headed wind, are two serpent-headed gods.

¹⁴² This kind of pictorial representation of the serpent is used usually on the magical papyri.

¹⁴³ This kind of pictorial representation of the serpent is used usually on the magical papyri.



Fig.18: Some serpentine mythological creatures, upper and lower register of the first strip, Esna B zodiac.
In Situation



Fig.19: Some serpentine mythological creatures, lower register of the second strip, Esna B zodiac.
In Situation

On the same zodiac, and on the second strip to the south of the center there are some more creatures, as the following: under the figure of the god Tutu is another winged serpent with heads at both ends and two scarabs, one between each two wings (facing the feet of Nut); three figures under each other, the extremely upper one is a crocodile with a tail in the form of serpent, under him is a serpent with heads at both ends, and the extremely lower is a winged serpent; two rabbit-headed gods standing above a winged serpent; four serpent above each other, the extremely upper one is coiled, the third has an Atef-crown and the extremely lower is coiled on two support; a crocodile with a tail in the form of a serpent; under the crocodile is coiled serpent on a support; coiled serpent on two supports; coiled ram-headed; uraeus wearing Atef-crown behind decan no.15. While the upper register is occupied by nine figures between Taurus and Cancer, they are two winged serpent, a serpent with ram horns, a serpent curled around lotus flower, uraeus serpent with two heads, serpent with Atef-crown, coiled serpent with heads at both ends, and finally a serpent.

Following the previous strips, on the seventh strip to the north of the center there are two registers full of creatures. The figures in the lower register (fig.20) are the following: above the ram-headed wind, are coiled winged uraeus serpent with two heads, and ram-headed coiled serpent with a body in two coils.

Behind the wind is a huge coiled serpent with body in fifteen coils. Under a figure of lion (with the tail in the form of a crocodile) is a coiled uraeus serpent with eight heads.¹⁴⁴



Fig. 20: Some serpentine mythical creatures, lower register of the seventh strip, Esna B zodiac.
In Situation



Fig.21: Some serpentine mythical creatures, upper register of the seventh strip, Esna B zodiac.
In Situation

The upper register (fig.21) is also occupied by figures starting from the right-side by coiled uraeus serpent above the winged scarab-shape wind. Just behind the previous figure are two lions standing above a serpent. In one column, there are figures for an ouroboros with uncertain figure inside, crocodile-tailed scarab, and finally a serpent with four heads (two at each end), to the right, two serpent heads and four legs of birds, while to the left, are two human-headed uraeus with four human legs. Above a sphinx, is a figure for coiled erected serpent with heads (two at each end). While in front of the sphinx is figure for a coiled uraeus on *nb*-sign inside a rectangular. Next, there are two figures for curved serpents, one is erected with heads at both ends, and the other has heads at both ends one for a falcon and the other for a serpent.

There is a single figure of a mythological creature on Petosiris B zodiac (pl.17), it is a winged eye of Horus with human legs and ten erected uraeus above head in front of the human-headed scarab.

¹⁴⁴ This kind of pictorial representation of the serpent is used usually on the magical papyri.

Both the zodiacs of the two brothers Pamehyt and Ibpmeni at Athribis (fig.22) are surrounded totally with massive number of mythological creatures, the majority of these are serpentine figures. Those figures are as the following: on the west side are figures for uraeus with an erected tail of a lion; three serpents standing behind each other; ibis-headed erected uraeus; coiled uraeus. On the north side there are figures for human-headed uraeus; uraeus; two uraeus under each other, the lower one is winged and falcon-headed; two serpent under each other, the upper one is winged falcon-headed uraeus and the other with erected tail; three uraeus standing behind each other; two falcon-headed uraeus with ram horns; winged uraeus; under a shrine, coiled uraeus above *nb*-sign.

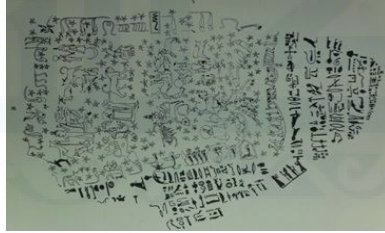


Fig.22: Athribis zodiacs.

cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, pl.51.

On the eastern side there are figures for two Solar Barks with some gods adoring to them, among those deities are group of seven serpents and a coiled uraeus. On the south side are figures for two coiled ram-headed serpents curled each other forming three coils; serpent with heads at both ends; two human-headed serpents; a single small serpent; human-headed serpent; erected coiled serpent inside a rectangular, group of nine serpents standing behind each other; coiled serpent with heads at both ends; two falcon-headed uraeus following two crowned (crowns are in the form of solar disk between horns) serpents.

Heavenly bodies:

As a part of the zodiacs, serpentine figures are also playing a great role in connecting the various heavenly bodies (zodiacal signs, constellation, and rarely planets). It appeared once

fashioning the planet¹⁴⁵ Jupiter in Athribis A (fig.22) representing in the form of a hawk with three serpents' heads in Leo, the matter that must be intended according to Petrie.¹⁴⁶ In Esna A2 (pl.1), planet Venus is represented holding a serpent with up-curved tail. While the majority scenes are going to the zodiacal sign Leo who occasionally represented in the form of a lion standing atop a serpent-like bark appears to be trampling on a serpent, and its tail to be held by a woman. In Dendera B, there is a bird behind the woman standing on the tail of the serpent, and in Dendera E (fig.23), the woman holding a flail.



Fig.23: Leo on a serpent-like bark, Dendera E zodiac.
In Situation

Like the zodiac ceilings which are found in the temples and tombs, the coffins adopt exclusively Egyptian forms for the individual zodiacal signs. The interior lids of the coffins were also comparable to the ceiling of the tombs and temples, where heavenly bodies appear to be conceptually linked with the notion of the night sky and association with Nut. Among the twelve zodiacal signs that decorating the coffins (Soter, Kleopatra, Petamenophis and Heter) (figs.24-27) and surrounding the figure of Nut, is again the figure of Leo standing above a serpent, with the lion's tail itself taken the shape of a serpent. On Petamenophis, only the forward legs of Leo standing on a small serpent-like bark, which is parallel to the figure of Leo in Petosiris B. Daressy believes that Leo is represented Horus the

¹⁴⁵ It was so rare in the Ancient Egyptian astronomical scenes to represent the serpentine planets except in the tomb of Ramses VI, where Scorpio is symbolized in the form of a serpent. Schwoller de Luicz, R.A. *The temple of Man - Sacred Architecture and The Perfect Man*, Inner Traditions, Hong Kong, 1998, p.483.

¹⁴⁶ Petrie, W.M.F. *Athribis*, p.12.

god of Aphroditopolite province standing on the god Set (serpent) the deity of Antaeopolis province, and the lady behind Leo is the goddess Mut of Apollonopolis province.¹⁴⁷



Fig.24: Coffin lid of Soter.
cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A.
Egyptians Astronomical texts III, pl.47
A.



Fig.25: Coffin lid of Kleopatra.
cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A.
Egyptians Astronomical texts III,
pl.48.

¹⁴⁷ Daressy, G. "L'Egypte celeste," p.11.



Fig.26: Coffin lid of Petemenopohis.
cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A.
Egyptians Astronomical texts III, pl.47
B.



Fig.27: Coffin lid of Heter.
cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A.
Egyptians Astronomical texts III,
pl.50.

There is also a constant figure for a constellation (either North or South of the Ecliptic) which is represented as a serpent with the coiled body forms four coils, inside a rectangular, appeared above Leo in Esna A2 (fig.28) and behind him in Dendera E. Daressy¹⁴⁸ believes that this form of serpent is a kind of Egyptian identification for the Greek goddess Hydra. Another constellation in Dendera E (fig.30), between Taurus and decan no.10, is represented as a god with two feathers crown, holding with both hands an erected ram-headed serpent.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p.12.



Fig.28: A constellation (either North or South of the Ecliptic, Esna A2 zodiac.

cf. *Description de l'Égypte*, vol.I, pl.87.

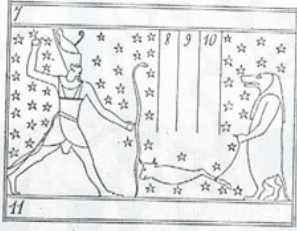


Fig.29: Philae A zodiac.

cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, fig.16.



Fig.30: A constellation in the form of a god holding ram-headed erected serpent, Dendera E zodiac. In Situation

A parallel scene in Philae A zodiac (fig.29), is representing a group of Northern and Southern constellations, among them is Orion who is figured holding a serpent. Holding the serpent is a familiar scene appeared in many other zodiacs of the same period like Kom Ombo and Esna B where there are representation for deities holding serpents in both hands, is identical for the common figure of god Harpocrates¹⁴⁹ doing the same. In many scenes, Egyptian deities are shown holding erect serpents as kind of staffs. Although a staff was probably in common use in Ancient Egypt as an aid in walking, as a weapon and a symbol of an absolute power.

Wind:

On most of the astronomical scenes of the Greco-Roman Period, winds are represented in its traditional strange figures as outstretched winged falcon or ram, and sometimes as a ram-head

¹⁴⁹ Harpocrates was adapted by the Greeks during the Greco-Roman Period from the Egyptian god Horus-the child.

falcon with outstretched wings, except only on two zodiacs which are Athribis and Dendera D, where it is represented as winged serpents. In Athribis zodiacs (fig.22), there is no clear figure for the winds on this astronomical scene, but most of the writers like Neugebauer and Parker¹⁵⁰ believe that the winged serpents within the circle of the mythological creatures around the double zodiacs, in west-south corner may represent one of the four winds. While in Dendera D, the West wind (fig.31) is represented as a double serpent-headed human figure with a crown above the head and double outstretched wings, in his hands he holds an *anh* (key of life) in one hand and in the other hand the symbol  *ḥw* 'wind.' Identification of the west wind only is certain from accompanying legends.



Fig.31: West wind, Dendera D zodiac.
In Situation

The idea to represent the winged wind that was one of the Greek astronomy matters is its pure influence of the Greek culture that preferred to represent their winds with outstretching wings.¹⁵¹ But the Ancient Egyptian kept their fondness in using the animal figures to characterize the astronomical deities which is clear in representing the winds with a variety of animals' figures or in the form of human being with animals' heads.

Religious scene:

Serpents also engaged a worthy part of religious scenes on the Greco-Roman zodiacs, among those scenes there are representation for a part of the Book of the Amduat decorating

¹⁵⁰ Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.256.

¹⁵¹ For more information see: Jordan, M. *Encyclopaedia of Gods: Over 2,500 Deities of the World*, Kylecathie, New York, 1993, pp.5, 45 and 80.

the body of Nut on Harendotes coffin, or representation for some gods like Tutu, Ra, Harpocrates and Ogdoads of Hermopolis. Serpents are again busy this kind of scenes and appeared for many times joining the deities or representing them.



Fig.32: Coffin lid of Harendotes.

cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, pl.28.

In the center of the Harendotes astronomical scene which decorating his coffin lid, a religious scene (fig.32) are decorating the upper part of the goddess Nut's body just under her breasts. The scene is a part of the Book of the Amduat that describes the underworld in terms of the journey of Ra through twelve hours. During the fourth hour, Ra enters the desert. The river becomes dry and littered with dangerous snakes and the path is repeatedly blocked by huge doors. Ra's barque is transformed into a fire breathing snake and both Thoth and Sokar protect the sun god as he makes his slow progress through the desert. In the fifth hour (to which the scene belongs), the sun must pass over the cave of Sokar. Inside the cave, Sokar restrains a winged serpent Apophis, representing with four human legs spitting fire. While the two eyes above human figure are representing the sun and the moon.¹⁵² Another scene, on the Lake of Fire, Sokar are

¹⁵² Lamy, L. op.cit. p.63.

representing spreading the wings of the serpent, between the double-headed Aker who protects Ra from Apophis. Under the whole scene, is a representation for the Chapter 89 of the Book of the Dead.¹⁵³

Tutu, one of the zodiac gods, was one of the local deities of Dakhleh Oasis, was admired as a defeater of Apophis the traditional enemy of the sun-god Ra. Gradually, a cult grew up around the deity and he appeared on amulets, coins and in temple reliefs. By Roman times Tutu had become a fully-fledged deity depicted in human form. The most common epithet of Tutu was 'the one who keeps enemies at a distance.'¹⁵⁴ He occurs in the zodiac of Esna B in the company of 'pseudo (false) decans'¹⁵⁵ which are associated with the regular decans.¹⁵⁶ The zodiac tomb at Athribis¹⁵⁷ has located him amongst the same deities. That connection to the zodiac appeared in the temple of Tutu at Kellis in the Dakhleh Oasis, he is once simply called *sb3* 'star'.¹⁵⁸

On first strip to the south of the center in Esna B (fig.33), there is figure for a crocodile-headed lion (possibly be god Tutu) with a tail in the form of serpent, above him there is another smaller figure for the same god but with a flacon-head. While on the second strip to the south of the center in Esna B, Tutu is represented as a sphinx standing above a serpent, and another figure representing on the seventh strip of the same ceiling for Tutu with two ibis-headed and falcon-headed gods standing above his back. In Deir el-Haggar (fig.34), he also appeared as a lion standing above a pedestal with the tail taken the shape of a serpent.

¹⁵³ Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.61.

¹⁵⁴ Pinch, G. *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, British Museum Press, London, 1974, p.36.

¹⁵⁵ Kaper, O.E. op.cit. p.188.

¹⁵⁶ Kakosy, L. "The Astral Snakes of the Nile," *MDAIK*, vol.37, Wiesbaden, 1981, pp.255-60.

¹⁵⁷ Petrie, W.M.F. *Athribis*, pls.36 and 38.

¹⁵⁸ Kaper, O.E. op.cit. p.188.



Fig.33: Two figures for Tutu with serpent-tail, Esna B zodiac.
In Situation



Fig.34: Tutu on a pedestal, Deir el-Haggar zodiac.
cf. Kaper, O.E. "The astronomical ceiling of Deir el-Haggar in the Dakhleh Oasis," fig.1.



Fig.35: Elephants atop serpents, a comb, Predynastic Period.
cf. Theodore M. Davis Collection, 1915 (30.8.224)

On the west side of the Petosiris B zodiac is the representation for the Solar Bark, with its bow decorating by a figure for the god Tutu on a serpent. This god is not exceptional in the astronomical scenes either located on the walls of many tombs and temples. On the wall near the entrance of the famous zodiac' tomb of Petosiris, god Tutu appeared also depicting as a sphinx with an uraeus tail, standing atop another uraeus above a support.

The scene of standing above the serpent is exact depth in the Egyptian history. A comb (fig.35) dating back to the Predynastic Period which shows a group of elephants (a part of big group of animals) presented atop serpents seems to be symbolic. The mythology of many African peoples associates elephants and serpents with the creation of the universe.¹⁵⁹

Heru-pa-Khered or (Harpocrates) also is one of the deities which appeared on the zodiacs of this period, who always presented holding serpent and many other animals. In the center of Petosiris B zodiac (fig.36), a figure for nude child (probably Harpocrates) standing atop two crocodiles while holding two erected uraeus, and have a sun disk above head. Some magical

¹⁵⁹ Arnold, D. "An Egyptian Bestiary," p.8.

stelaes have similar scenes depicting him standing on the back of a crocodile and holding snakes in his outstretched hands were used to be erect in the temple courtyards, where they would be immersed or lustrated in water; the water was then used for blessing and healing purposes as the name of Heru-pa-Khered was itself attributed with many protective and healing powers.¹⁶⁰ There are at least two references in magical texts to him be sit over a serpent or serpents.¹⁶¹

An Egyptian common idiom explicitly quoted on stela: "Every male and female serpent, every snake, every lion, every crocodile is under the feet of this god." It shows his ability to throttle his helpless enemies in his hands, while reducing the crocodile opponents to subservience beneath his feet.¹⁶²



Fig.36: Harpocrates atop two crocodiles, holding two erected uraeus, Petosiris B zodiac. cf. Petosiris Tomb Ceiling, www.egyptmyluxor.weebly.com [Accessed on: 17 Mars 2015]



Fig.37: A serpent in front of god Ihy, Dendera E zodiac. In Situation

Another god in Dendera E (fig.37), have an unusual figure according to Neugebauer and Parker¹⁶³ identified as "not a decan but a young sun," it's the god Ihy who is represented also as a naked boy sucking finger and an erected serpent in front, both on a bark. Also just behind the bark of Ihy, Hathor and Isis, there is

¹⁶⁰ For more information see: Armour, R.A. *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt*, Second edition, American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1986; Wilkinson, R. op.cit. p.132.

¹⁶¹ Dosoo, K. op.cit. p.6.

¹⁶² Whitehouse, H. "To seal the mouth of all snakes," *Ashmolean Museum Annual Report*, vol.19, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, Oxford, 1990-91, p.6.

¹⁶³ Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. op.cit. p.166.

a final bark in front of the feet of Nut has an erected uraeus coming out of a lotus flower on a bark, identified as "symbol of the sun,"¹⁶⁴



Fig.38: Ogdoads deities, Dendera C zodiac.
In Situation

Immediately in front of the Southern and Western winds, on Dendera C (fig.38), there is a scene for a group of eight standing deities or the "Ogdoads,"¹⁶⁵ the deities who worshipped in Hermopolis "the City of Hermes" in Greek, which was a major cult center of the god Thoth. Four of them are goddesses (Nunet, Kukyet, Huhet, Amunet)¹⁶⁶ had the heads of serpents, each holding scepter and *ꜥnh* sign, while the rest are male gods depicted with frog's heads.

Many other scenes on the zodiacs of Dendera C, Dendera D, Dendera E and Esna B are representing the daily journey of the god Ra using the Solar Bark, where the serpent appeared in the form of different deities or as a rope pulled the bark. As protectors and assists for Ra, in the Upper and in the lower register of Dendera C, the Divine souls and the Blessed Spirits are represented as three serpents with human arms and legs praising (fig.39), four sailors holding oars, three human-headed birds, and three serpent-headed birds praising, they are all help the god during the journey. Serpent also appeared three different

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p.80.

¹⁶⁵ They form one of the Egyptian creation myth, the eight elements combined causing the energy which caused the creation of the primordial mound, which rose from the water. The gods and goddesses of the Ogdoad then ruled the earth. When they died they took up residence in the Duat (or Underworld). For more information see: Wilkinson, R.H. op.cit. pp.77-8; Armour, R.A. op.cit. pp.153-4.

¹⁶⁶ They are symbolizing the primeval waters, darkness, hiddenness and infinity.

times in the same scene under the Solar Bark of Ra. On the bow a falcon-head god Montu spearing the cursed Apophis (the enemy of the Gods, here depicted as water snake). The bows of the Solar barks themselves are sometimes taking the shape of the serpent's head like in Esna B, and on the stern there is a god steering the bark who always represented holding the paddles using a serpent-like rope.



Fig.39: Serpents with human arms and legs praising the Solar Bark, Dendera C zodiac.
In Situation



Fig.40: Serpents with human arms and legs praising the Solar Bark, Dendera D zodiac.
In Situation

On Dendera D, serpents with different kinds are tied again to the barks of gods; among them some pulled the Boat of the Morning Sun of Kheper-Ra into the Eastern Sky by three black jackals and an Uraeus (fig.40). Other two scenes are representing the Solar Bark of Ra-Horakhty pulled across the sky by three deities and an uraeus, on the bow of one them is a falcon-headed god spearing the cursed Apophis (fig.41). A similar scene of pulling the Solar Bark (fig.42) appeared on the outer of surfaces of the coffin of Soter (on the right side of the coffin a scene for travelling of the bark by day, and on the left side is the night journey), in which three gods holding uraeus with sun disk on head dragged the bark. Also, on the walls of Petosiris tomb at El-Muzzawaga, a similar scene (fig.43) depicting four goddesses helping to pull the bark with the help of the uraeus. Those two previous scenes from different tombs show the great connection between the items of the zodiac and the surrounded traditional religious motifs on walls.



Fig.41: Pulling the Solar Bark using a serpent-like rope and a falcon-headed god spearing the cursed Apophis, Dendera D zodiac.
In Situation

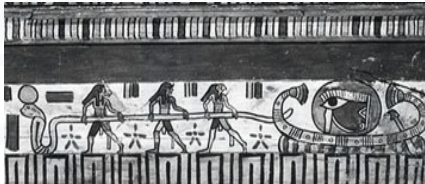


Fig.42: Pulling the Solar Bark using a uraeus -like rope, outer of surfaces of Soter coffin, British Museum
cf. Riggs, C. *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt*, fig.88.



Fig.43: Pulling the Solar Bark using a uraeus -like rope, tomb of Petosiris, Dakhla Oasis.
cf. Petosiris Tomb Ceiling,
www.egyptmyluxor.weebly.com
[Accessed on: 17 Mars 2015]

Serpent Influence:

From all the previous serpentine figures, it can be seen that Egyptian iconography was utilized in an unusual ways during the Greco-Roman period, which often infused with non-Egyptian iconographical elements. There also seems to be more dominance of ancient Egyptian iconography, while the effect of the extensive Greek and Roman presence in Egypt at that time. The Egyptian influenced Greek thought in the representation of potentially evil spirits in animal and hybrid forms, with birds or snakes body components.¹⁶⁷

The most obvious element of Egyptian influence is the use of decans, especially the serpentine formed ones, in both the Greek and Roman zodiacs. The Greek divided each zodiacal sign into three decans, each 10° wide and with its own magical or

¹⁶⁷ Lucarelli, R. "Demonology during the Late Pharaonic and Greco-Roman Periods in Egypt," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, vol.11, 2011, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, p.112.

divine name. Another astrological doctrine with Egyptian roots is the *dodecaoros*, according to which an Egyptian constellation is associated with each sign of the Greco-Roman zodiac.¹⁶⁸ That influence appeared strongly in three different zodiacs (Athanasius Kircher zodiac, Grand Zodiac and Bianchini's zodiac).

In the fourth section "Astrologia Aegyptiorum and Chaldaeorum hieroglyphica" of the second volume of his book, "Aegyptiacus Oedipus" Kircher¹⁶⁹ explained the Egyptian zodiac (fig.44) which he divided into northern hemisphere containing the zodiacal signs with the northern constellations, and the southern hemisphere containing the zodiacal signs with the southern constellations. In Both hemispheres, the influence of Cairo Zodiac is so clear; they are each consisting of two rings and a center: the inner ring is decorated by the twelve Dodecaoros and the outer by the zodiacal signs. The center of the northern one is occupied by a coiled serpent; the dodecaoro no.10 is representing in the form of a coiled uraeus in Leo; and finally Egyptian god holding a serpent and sceptre in Gemini. While, in the southern zodiac a dodecaoro in the form of a big serpent occupied four zodiacal signs (the head in Capricorn and the tail in Aries); there is also a figure for an Egyptian god holding two serpent, one in each

¹⁶⁸ Evans, J. op.cit.

¹⁶⁹ Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680), a German polymath, is often credited with first calling scholarly attention to Egyptian hieroglyphics. His book *Aegyptiacus Oedipus* was written in Latin. Woods, T.E. *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization*, Regnery Publishing, Washington, 2005, pp.108-10. For more information about Kircher see: Mann, N. "George Yeats and Athanasius Kircher," *Yeats Annual*, vol. 16, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2005, pp.163-93.



Fig.44: Athanasius Kircher's zodiac.
cf. Athanasius Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, Rome, 1653, pp.206-7.

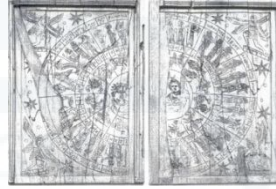


Fig.45: Grand zodiac.
cf. Evans, J. "The astrologer's apparatus: a picture of professional practice in Greco-Roman Egypt," fig.1.

Grand zodiac (fig.45) is one of the remarkable astrological tables.¹⁷⁰ It is starting from the outside by the names of the 36 decans which full the outer ring in Greek, and the inside ring is occupied by the zodiacal signs. In the center are busts of the Sun and the Moon. The Egyptian names of the decans are written in Greek, which is not surprising, since the iconography of the tablets indeed suggested that they were manufactured in Greek Egypt.¹⁷¹ Also significant are the Egyptian way of representing the four winds engraved in the corners. For each zodiacal sign there are three decans are engaged. Among them, the first decan in Cancer is represented in the form of an erected coiled jackal-headed uraeus; the first decan in Leo is represented in the form of an erected uraeus with coiled tail (partly damaged); while the last serpentine decan is in Virgo and also represented in the form of an erected uraeus with coiled tail and horns.

The last example is the marble board (Bianchini's zodiac) (fig.46A and B) which dated back to the 2nd century A.D.,¹⁷² displays the surviving fragments of a planisphere¹⁷³ incorporating

¹⁷⁰ It is found in the Grand village in Lorraine, France. It is made of ivory, and was found in pieces at the bottom of a well excavated in 1967. It is now in the Musée des Antiquités Nationales at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, no.inv.83675. Evans, J. op.cit. p.5.

¹⁷¹ Goyon, J. "l'origine égyptienne des tablettes décanales de Grand (Vosges)," *Les tablettes astrologiques de Grand (Vosges) et l'astrologie en Gaule romaine*, table ronde du 18 mars 1992, De Boccard, 1993, p. 63-76; Evans, J. op.cit. pp.5-7.

¹⁷² It found in fragments on the Aventine Hill in Rome in the 18th century, and now in Louvre Museum (MA 540).

¹⁷³ The word *Sphera* is Greek means the "Sky map."

the so-called "Barbaric Sphere", which depicts the Greek, Egyptian and Mesopotamian constellations. The partly damaged board is consisting of concentric rings, bearing zodiac signs, terms, and decans. But also on one of the rings is representation for twelve animals figures (Dodecaoros), among them is a coiled serpent in Gemini. The center is decorated by two constellations in form of beers (rather than decorative busts of Helios and Selene such as saw on the table of Grand),¹⁷⁴ both coils by bearded coiled serpent, which is more clearly depicted the god Agathodaimon on Cairo zodiac. By recognizing the Mesopotamian clothes of the decans' figures in this sphaera, it seems to have a composite of Mesopotamian and Egyptian constellations and the double influence of both two cultures on the Greco-Roman zodiac.



A



B

Fig.46: Bianchini's zodiac, Louvre Museum

cf. A: Louvre Museum online; B: Mid-Manhattan Library / Picture Collection, [www. http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/) [Accessed on: 28 January 2015]

These examples represented an alternative, Egyptianizing form of the zodiac, based on a doctrine known as Dodecaoros. In them the signs of the zodiac arranged in circle around a bifurcated disc representing the day and night skies. Another remarkable feature is their double zodiac, serpent that occupied the center in some of them, and finally the Egyptian form of the decans, as well as their Egyptian names. They all have important connections with Cairo zodiac. They all show Egyptian influences.

¹⁷⁴ Evans, J. op.cit. pp.7-9; Belizia, L. op.cit. pp.3-7.

The Egyptian influence also clear in the Ophiuchus or (Serpent Holder) figure which driven from Harpocrates as that figure appeared in the celestial equator of Petosiris B zodiac. Ophiuchus, in Latin he is called "Serpentarius," the name is derived from the Greek words *ophis* (serpent) and *cheiro-o* (to handle),¹⁷⁵ hence, the *Serpent Holder* is a constellation commonly represented as a man who is grasping the snake.

The inscriptions of the Roman stone amulets which were of great antiquity in Egypt, shown also that Egyptian influence. Stones inscribed with magical signs or words of power provided specific protections for the living as well as the dead.¹⁷⁶ Among those stones which usually decorated by images of gods, human, animals, monsters or zodiacal signs, is the so called "gem-stone" that the Greeks engraved at an early date.



Fig.47: Magical gem depicting a decan, private collection, Michel Tab.18. 3.
cf. Nemeth, G. "The Snake-headed Demon," p.59.



Fig.48: Magical gem depicting a decan, Kelsey Museum.
cf. <http://www.lib.umich.edu/files/exhibits/pap/magic> [Accessed on: 5 Mars 2015]

Some of the Roman astrological gems are decorated by figures of serpent-headed deities of an Ancient Egyptian origin that were erroneously labeled as Gnostic.¹⁷⁷ They are all interpreted as decan-amulets. Among those, is a gem (fig.47) on which we found a description of the third decan of zodiacal sign Libra in the form of a serpent-headed standing human figure

¹⁷⁵ Allen, R.H. *Star Names: their lore and meaning*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1963, p.302.

¹⁷⁶ Evans, J. op.cit. p.14.

¹⁷⁷ Nemeth, G. "The Snake-headed Demon," *International Journal of Research on Ancient Magic and Astrology*, vol.12, University Elte, Budapest, 2012, p.58.

wearing a crown and Egyptian skirt, and holding a *w3s* scepter and *nh*. Another Haematite gem¹⁷⁸ (fig.48) dating back to the Roman Period, also represented the decanal serpent as an Egyptian God with two heads for a serpent and an ibis, holding an Egyptian *w3s* scepter and the *nh* symbol. Below, there is a figure for a crocodile with a disk on its back.

The particular class of engraved gems that have linked to the astrological practice in Egypt is appropriate to Egypt.¹⁷⁹ These kinds of astrological gems incorporated are the proper magical as developed formulae for controlling from magical-astrological the decans that caused various medical ailments and traditions.¹⁸⁰



Fig.49: Decan Amulet Nehebkau, Metropolitan Museum. cf. Nemeth, G. "The Snake-headed Demon," p.59.



Fig.50: Magical gem depicting a decan, private collection. cf. Bonner, C. "Amulets chiefly in the British Museum," pl.99, no.60.



Fig.51: Bronze amulet. cf. Petrie, W.M.F. *Amulets*, pl.xlix, no.135aa.

Another example about that kind of serpent influence is a numerous number of Roman amulets on which some kinds of the Egyptian serpentine decans occupy.¹⁸¹ They were extensively used in everyday magic to protect both the magician and his client.¹⁸² The close corresponding between the gems and the amulets can help us to identify gems of possible serpentine

¹⁷⁸ It is found and purchased in Egypt, and now in the Kelsey Museum (no.26059). For more information see: *Traditions of Magic in Ancient Antiquity*, <http://www.lib.umich.edu/files/exhibits/pap/magic>

¹⁷⁹ Evans, J. op.cit. p.36.

¹⁸⁰ Spier, J. op.cit. p.25.

¹⁸¹ Kakosy, L. "Decans in Late-Egyptian Religion," pp.176-7.

¹⁸² Pinch, G. op.cit. p.78.

significance. Among those amulets is that one in the Metropolitan Museum (89.2.540) (fig.49),¹⁸³ it represents a serpent-headed deity with human arms raised to the mouth, legs and up-curved tail. This kind of serpent is erroneously identified as *nḥbw-k3w* "Nehebkau" by some writers.¹⁸⁴ Another influence character of the zodiac is the tradition figures of different deities holding the serpents which represented on many un-astronomical monuments especially the magical gems like that figured for kilted tunic dressed man of the military type, and shod with boots, standing with a serpent in each hand. Egyptian gods are frequently shown holding serpents (fig.50), and in the imperial period they are sometimes clothed as Roman warriors.¹⁸⁵

Another bronze amulet (fig.51) is mentioned by Petrie,¹⁸⁶ which gathered many of the previous influence in one monument. In its center there is a big figure of the god Bes standing on an Ouroboros, and on the top to the right side there is the god Tutu represented as a sphinx standing above a uraeus, with the tail taken the shape of a serpent. To the left of Ouroboros is a partly defaced figure with two large animal legs and a crown of seven uraei. At the bottom there is a figure for Harpocrates standing on the back of a crocodile and holding snakes in his outstretched hands as part of other different animals.

¹⁸³ Nemeth, G. op.cit. p.59.

¹⁸⁴ The debarring of Nehebkau deserves special attention, since Alan Shorter proposed that the representations of certain figures (human body, serpentine head and tail) on amulets still used in Hellenistic and Roman times are identical with Nehebkau. Petrie, W.M.F. *Amulets*, p.49, no.254b&d; Shorter, A.W. op.cit. p.42

¹⁸⁵ Bonner, C. "Amulets chiefly in the British Museum," p.304.

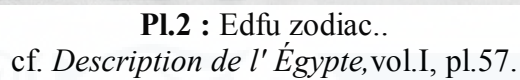
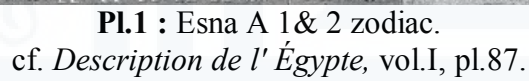
¹⁸⁶ Petrie, W.M.F. *Amulets*, pp.30-31.

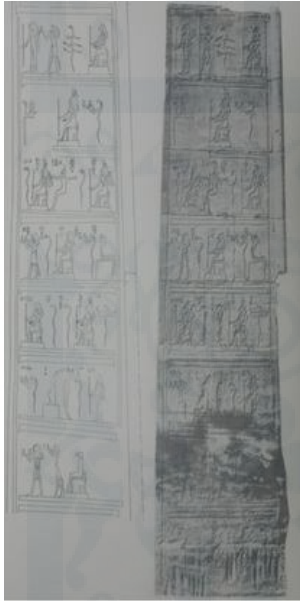
Conclusion

This study identifies a potential, specific source for the serpentine figures on some distinctive astronomical scenes or "zodiacs" which decorated some monuments (temples – tombs – coffins – gallery - plaques), are shown a complete relation with the depictions of such serpent and its consequence in these kinds of scenes; while the best examples of the serpentine figures have been found on ceiling of the temples and tombs. Serpent forms extensive renovations in the Greco-Roman period. Identifying the correlations between all of those monuments which reveals the kind of copies and adaptations of much earlier texts and scenes which came about it. Equally evidently, it is the strict *absence* of this type of iconography of serpent from drawings found in monuments and inscriptions of much earlier periods.

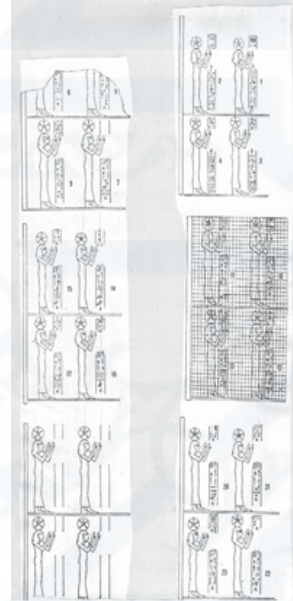
Serpents, dwellers of zodiacs by the Early Ptolemaic Period, took variety of shapes like winged, erected, coiled, even if they are represented as a human figure (with human heads, arms, legs, or all together), while the body still in its serpent form. In this article, I have shown that, in the case of decans, mythological creatures, heavenly bodied, winds and religious scenes, there is a large body of evidence for placing serpents in the Greco-Roman zodiac.

We now have a detail picture not only of the figure of the serpents and the place of their practice, but also the apparatus they used to conquer the zodiac during the Greco-Roman Period, and be the most popular creatures used to decorate the astronomical scenes. The article indicates the mutual influence of both the Greek and the Egyptian civilizations in the field of astronomy. The study also shows that serpent play considerable role in astronomy in the Roman period.





Pl.3 : Philae B zodiac.
cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A.
Egyptians Astronomical texts III,
pl.57.



Pl.4 : Kom Ombo zodiac.
cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A.
Egyptians Astronomical texts III,
pl.31.

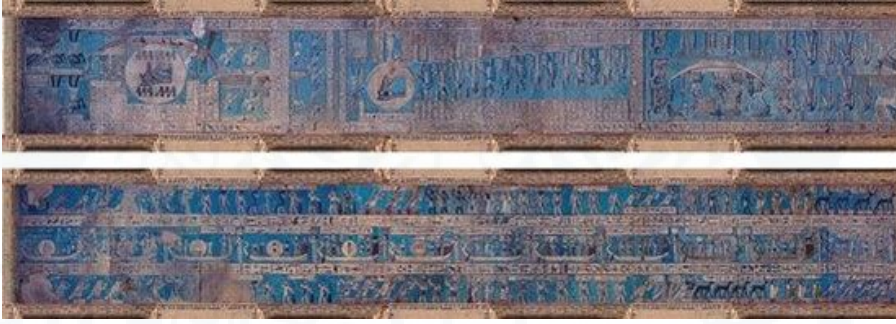


Pl.5 : Dendera B zodiac.
cf. Louvre Museum online.



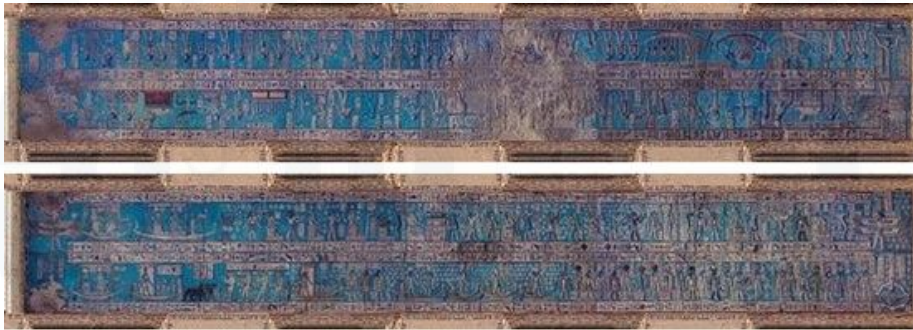
Pl.6 : Dendera A zodiac.

cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*,
pls.33-34.



Pl.7 : Dendera C zodiac.

cf. <https://www.pinterest.com/Graeco-Roman-Egyptian-Art> [Accessed on: 3 February 2015]



Pl.8 : Dendera D zodiac.

cf. <https://www.pinterest.com/Graeco-Roman-Egyptian-Art> [Accessed on: 3 February 2015]

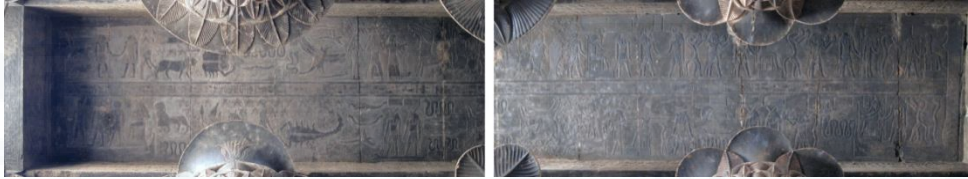


Pl.9 : Dendera E zodiac.

cf. <https://www.pinterest.com/Graeco-Roman-Egyptian-Art> [Accessed on: 3 February 2015]



First Strip



Second Strip



Third Strip



Fifth Strip



Sixth Strip



Seventh Strip

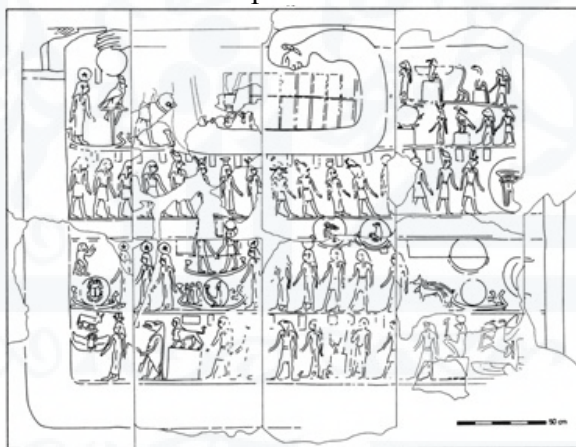
PL.10 : Esna B zodiac.

cf. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Ceiling_reliefs_in_Esna_Temple [Accessed on: 3 February 2015]



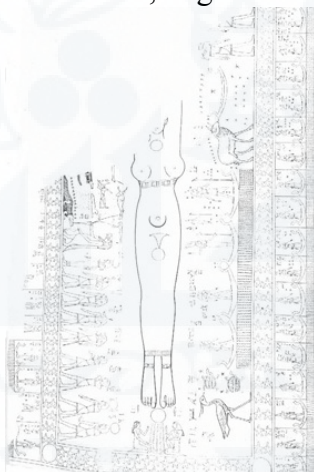
Pl.11 : Dendera F zodiac.

cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, pl.38B.



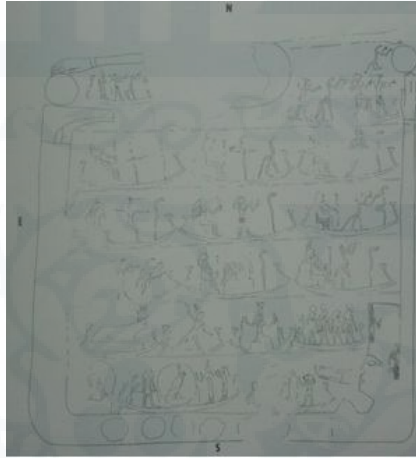
Pl.12 : Deir el-Haggar zodiac, drawing by Kapper.

cf. Kaper, O.E. "The astronomical ceiling of Deir el-Haggar in the Dakhleh Oasis," fig.1.



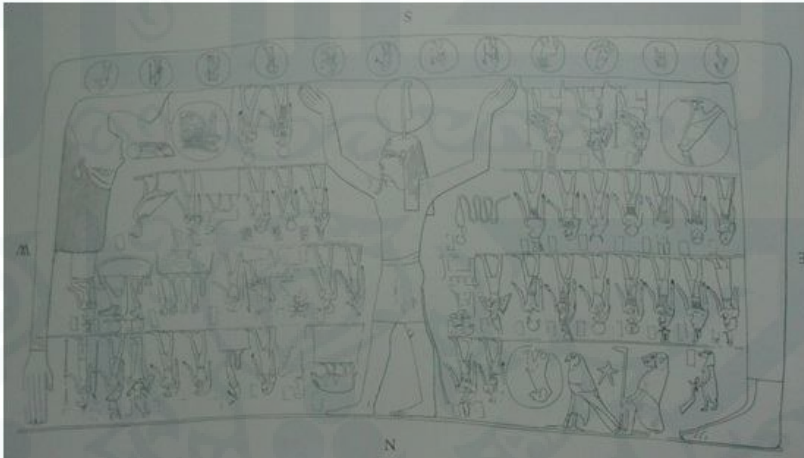
Pl.13 : Hermopolis zodiac.

cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, pl.26.



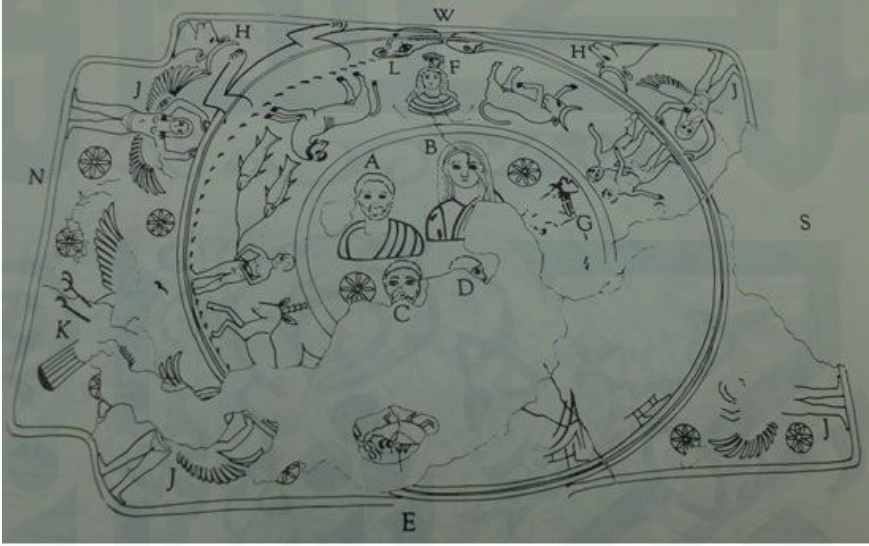
Pl.14 : Nag Hamad A zodiac.

cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, pl.38A.

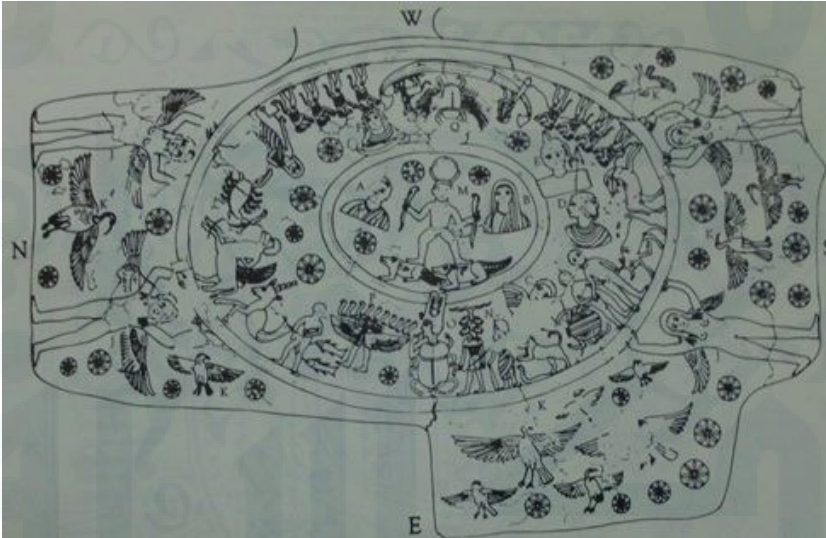


Pl.15 : Nag Hamad B zodiac.

cf. Neugebauer, O. and Parker, R.A. *Egyptians Astronomical texts III*, pl.39.



Pl.16 : Petosiris A zodiac.
cf. Clagett, M. *Ancient Egyptian Science II*, fig. III.100a.



Pl.17 : Petosiris B zodiac.
cf. Clagett, M. *Ancient Egyptian Science II*, fig. III.100b.

كان المصريون القدماء مراقبين جيدين لحركة الأجرام السماوية بدء من عصور ما قبل التاريخ، الأمر الذي يتضح من العديد من الأدوات بل والمناظر الفلكية التي تركوها. فعلى مر التاريخ المصري، زينت صور السماء ليلاً بما تحتويه من أجرام التوابيت والمقابر والمعابد وأنواع أخرى مختلفة من الآثار. هذه المناظر هي بمثابة تحليل مرئي لنظريتهم عن الدورة الشمسية، والتي تتواكب مع النظريات الحديثة.

تعنى هذه المقالة بالبحث في دور الثعбан وتمثيله على مجموعات مختلفة من دائرة البروج المصرية القديمة والتي يعود تاريخها إلى فترة العصر اليوناني-الروماني، هذا الكائن الحي الذي أصبح أحد أيقونات الفلك المصري. ومن أجل شرح مدى الدور الذي لعبه الثعбан في الفلك المصري القديم، فإن هذا البحث يتناول أشكال تمثيله المتنوعة في المناظر الفلكية.

رغم عدم وجود أدلة تمثيل واضحة للثعбан في المناظر الفلكية القديمة قبل العصر الروماني اليوناني، فقد أسهب الباحث في إثبات تلك العلاقة بين الثعбан والمناظر الفلكية منذ أقدم العصور وكذلك رمزيته في مصر القديمة. حيث تميزت صورة الثعбан خلال العصر اليوناني الروماني في مصر بالتنوع والثراء، وظهر ذلك مع بدء احتلاله مكانة كبيرة في دائرة البروج المصرية بداية من القرن الثالث قبل الميلاد.