
New Light on The Gazelle
in Egypt from Prehistory until the New Kingdom

Dr. Essam M. Abdel Razek

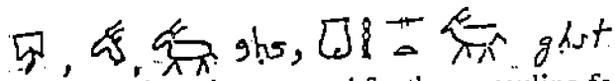
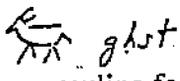
The gazelle was known in Egypt from Prehistoric times, beginning with the Paleolithic period through the Mesolithic period until the Neolithic period. It was found in several places in Upper Egypt and Nubia,⁽¹⁾ and was either carved on rocks or painted on some vases from Prehistoric times. (fig.1)

The bones of this animal were found among the deposits of the Sabiliec civilization at Kom Ombo,⁽²⁾ as well as in other sites from Prehistoric times such as Abydos and others.⁽³⁾

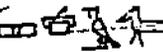
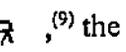
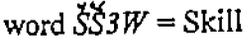
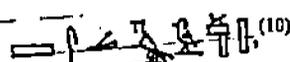
In addition, the skeletons of gazelles with horns⁽⁴⁾ were found in some tombs known as Pangraves, and according to Brunner - Traut, they had a role in the burial process since Prehistoric times. This appears very clearly on some vases which go back to this period.⁽⁵⁾

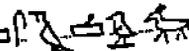
From the Old Kingdom until the end of the Pharaonic times, Egyptians used the word *ghs* and some times *ghst*, in Ancient Egyptian texts to mean the gazelle.

It was written in Ancient Egyptian in texts as follows:⁽⁶⁾

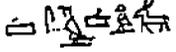
 ghs,  ghs.t

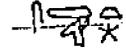
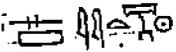
It may be that *ghs* was used for the masculine form of the name of the gazelle and *ghs.t* was used for the feminine one,⁽⁷⁾ while the Ancient Egyptians named the young gazelle,  *hrd*.⁽⁸⁾

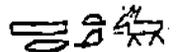
The gazelle was also used as a determinative for some words in the Ancient Egyptian language such as the word  (wisdom ,⁽⁹⁾ the word  = Skill ,⁽¹⁰⁾

occurs in the Egyptian texts with the following meaning:-
'prescription  in this form 
meaning an order or obligation.⁽¹¹⁾

with the word   meaning a prayer,⁽¹²⁾
in this form 

meaning skill or cleverness and speed ,⁽¹³⁾
It was used with the word  which means sunset or
nightfall,  ⁽¹⁴⁾

and sometimes it was written in another form 
and also 

It also occurs with the word *srt* to denote the name of place called the Gazelle Nose⁽¹⁵⁾  *ghs*  in the text from the Old Kingdom which mentions that King Pepi I charged Weni with an expedition to Gazelle Nose in the north to extinguish the disturbances caused by foreigners there.⁽¹⁶⁾

There are five kinds of gazelles in Egypt but the one known as Adam Gazelle (*Dorcas*) is the most important kind.⁽¹⁷⁾

It is probable that Ancient Egyptians tried to tame the gazelle, but they failed because of its wild nature which resists captivity.⁽¹⁸⁾

Some Egyptologists confused it with other animals such as Erman who considered it a goat⁽¹⁹⁾ while Helck considers it an antelope.⁽²⁰⁾

Klebs refers to a scene in the tomb of Menna in the Theban necropolis (no. 69) in which peasants offer a gazelle (in his opinion), to some officials of the king as a bribe while they were measuring the land.⁽²¹⁾

The most important representations of the gazelle by the Egyptian artist on monuments before the time of Third Dynasty and especially in the Predynastic period were on some tools of toilet, handles and scepters⁽²²⁾ where it was represented hunted with arrows, or in ropes which ended with a loop,⁽²³⁾ or was pursued by a dog which caught it by the neck.⁽²⁴⁾ (fig. 2)

From all this it appears that the gazelle was one of familiar animals in the imagination of the Ancient Egyptians because it was relatively common in Egypt since the Archaic period.⁽²⁵⁾

From the Third Dynasty till the end of the Pharaonic period the representation of the gazelle on Egyptian monuments and especially on the walls of tombs was familiar. It was found in scenes representing all its movements and poses, so that we do not find any tomb without a representation of the gazelle either at El Kab, Thebes, Hawawesh, Deir El Gabrawi, Sheikh Said, Bersha, Beni Hassan, Sheikh Fadl, Saqqarah, Meidum or any other place.

Among the common scenes of this representation are the hunting scenes in the desert, the gazelle being pursued by dogs,⁽²⁶⁾ (fig.3)

or attacked by a lion,⁽²⁷⁾ or hunted alive by using ropes and bows ⁽²⁸⁾ (fig. 4)

The artist also represented the gazelle while sleeping, in a wonderful scene on one of the Giza tombs.⁽²⁹⁾

It was also represented among a herd, in a unique scene on one of Meir tombs.⁽³⁰⁾ (fig. 5)

It was represented in a completely peaceful movement while striking the ground with its left hoof to remove sand or pebbles searching for herbs,⁽³¹⁾ (fig. 6) or while suckling its young as shown on one of the Giza tombs⁽³²⁾ as well as in a tomb at Saqqarah.⁽³³⁾ (Fig. 7)

It was also represented caught in a basket or held by its feet⁽³⁴⁾ (Fig. 8) or drawn by a dwarf who is scarcely higher than the gazelle which he draws with his left hand.⁽³⁵⁾ (Fig.9)

It was also represented while giving birth in the temple of King Ni-wsr - Rc.⁽³⁶⁾

It seems that from the Archaic period to the New Kingdom the gazelle was a favourite and beloved animal to the Ancient Egyptians. Sometimes it was buried with its owner.⁽³⁷⁾ It was also among the animals which were offered as sacrifices⁽³⁸⁾ especially in the rites of the god Min.⁽³⁹⁾ According to Ancient Egyptian rites, offerings were presented from all the things which exist under the sky, what comes out of the ground and all desert animals. The offered animals were thrown in the fire, especially those which represent the god Seth in the form of a "hippopotamus", and gazelles were thrown while burning on the altar as a symbol of Seth's wife.⁽⁴⁰⁾

They were grilled and offered to the god, but at the end they were eaten by the priests.⁽⁴¹⁾

However, we must bear in mind that the gazelles were also offered to different gods and even to several kings. For example, gazelle scenes were carved in Medinet Habu

of among the list of offerings as well as the scenes of the festivals of King Ramsis III among tribute lists.⁽⁴²⁾

We must note that the gazelle was offered side by side with antelopes and cattle as the offerings lists denote.⁽⁴³⁾

Therefore, the gazelle had a religious role in the fifth Nome of Upper Egypt (Qift) where it was worshipped. It was also associated with the goddess Isis.⁽⁴⁴⁾ On the other hand the gazelle had a special and distinct position in the area of Kom-mir⁽⁴⁵⁾ as a sacred animal to the goddess Enqt. However, it is worth noting that the goddess Enqt is scarcely connected with the gazelle on the Theban monuments, but there is a painting on an ostrakon from Deir el Medinet, now in the museum of Stockholm, in which the goddess Enqt appears as a gazelle. (Fig. 10)⁽⁴⁶⁾

A gazelle was found also adoring Amon in the desert during times of drought in which a famine had prevailed.⁽⁴⁷⁾

In relation with the sun, the Ancient Egyptians imagined that the sun-disk in foreign countries was transformed into a gazelle during sunset.⁽⁴⁸⁾

The gazelle was a symbol of fast running in Ancient Egyptian magic beliefs.

As a symbol of fast running,⁽⁴⁹⁾ it symbolized the enemies to resemble rites performed for the god Seth.⁽⁵⁰⁾ It

was also cursed on the Hours Tablets, perhaps as it was a beloved animal.⁽⁵¹⁾

There is even a miracle connected with it at the end of the Eleventh Dynasty. King Mentohotep IV sent his vizier Amenemhat at the head of an expedition to Wadi Hammamat in order to bring the stones necessary for making the king's sarcophagus. At that time all the desert beasts arrived at the mountain and stopped in the selected place for cutting stones. Then a pregnant gazelle came and delivered her young on the stone, as if it had guided them to the place where they can cut a big block for the lid of the king's sarcophagus.⁽⁵²⁾

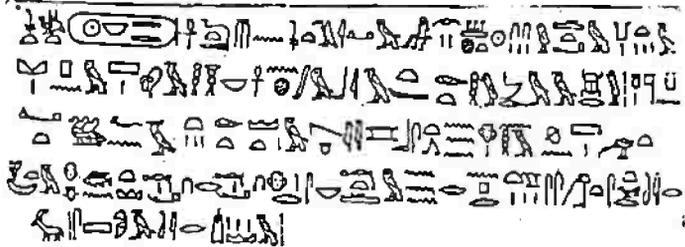
The Ancient Egyptian text mentions this incident as follows:⁽⁵³⁾

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

in ghst bk3t hr \check{J} wt hr.s r rmj lft hr.s iw irty .s hr m3
 hr s3s3 iw nn en.s h3 . s r spr.s r dw pn šps nst pw ir . n. s hr . f iw
 mšcw pn n nsw hr m33 člc n šcw nšbt . s ti (?) ⁽²⁾ t hr . f m sdt h3t pw
 ir . n . f m htp ist grt in hm . n ntr pn nb h3swt rdi m3c n s3. f (Nb -
 t3wy - R^C xcnh dt n mrwt 3w ib . f wn . n . f cnh hr nswt . f nhh hnc dt
 ir . f hhw m - hbw sd rpe h3ty - ^C imy - r niwt t3ty imy - r srw nb n
 d3d3t imy - r didi pt k3 mt t3 innt hcpy m rn ht nbt in t3 pn rmn.f t3ty
 Imn - m - h3t .

A gazelle came with its young, approached the people with its face while its eyes looked back but it did not turn its eyes until it reached this splendid mountain where it delivered its young. The army of the king looked at that and then cut its neck in front of (the block of stone) and brought fire to make an offering. Then the block was separated safely. It was this great god and lord of desert who gave (m 3c) to his son Nb - T3wy - R^c may he live forever so that his heart rejoices, stay on the throne forever and celebrate millions of Sed festivals. The hereditary prince, governor of the city, vizier, chief of all the nobles, overseer of all what heaven gives, what is given by ground, what is brought by the Nile, who dominates everything in this land, the vizier Amenemhat".

Eight days after the above mentioned miracle he ordered another inscription to be carved, as another miracle happened when rainy winds rose and then water sprang from a well which remained clean from gazelles, as the text says:⁽⁵⁴⁾



*Nsw-Bity (Nb - T3wy - Rc) °nh̄ dt ms n mwt nsw Imi
 3bd 2 3ht sw 23 dit m k3wt m dw pn m š w3h nb °nh̄ whm
 bi3t irt hw m33 hprw nw ntr pn dit b3w. fn rhyt irt h3st m
 nwy bst mw hr. nh3 n sgm. t (w) ndmt m hr ib init mh (10 r
 mh 10 hr. snb mht m mwr nprt ss - wbt. st wrt ti r ghsw
 sst3 Tir I wnTyw(3).*

*"King of Upper and Lower Egypt Nb - T3wy - Rc,
 may he live forever, He was born by the royal mother Imi in
 the second month of the first season, 23rd day. He began to
 work in this mountain in order to prepare the sarcophagus
 and the miracle repeated as rain fell, The forms of the god
 and his strength appeared to the people, the desert became
 a lake and water flowed until it reached the lake and the
 well vally (10 X 10 cubits) was found full of water to its
 brim and was kept clean from gazelles and away from
 Bedouins".*

This may indicate that gazelles were abundant in the
 Eastern desert.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The Ancient Egyptians benefited from them
 in different ways.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The Egyptian ate them, used their horns as handles of
 the tool with which he cut the stones,⁽⁵⁷⁾ used their dung and
 fat for making some chemicals, and even used their skins

for making leather. This was since the time of the Hyksos⁽⁵⁸⁾ if not before, even if we lack the evidence which supports this hypothesis.

Its importance to the Ancient Egyptians reached a very high degree as they used it (Counter – weight)⁽⁵⁹⁾

Also some fillets were decorated with gazelles and this appears on a fillet of one of the queens found in a site at Delta, (fig. 11)

and also on another fillet belonging to one of Tuhtmosis III's wives found at Thebes.⁽⁶⁰⁾ In the tomb of Menna no. 69 in the western Thebes gazelle decorated the fillets of Menna's two daughters⁽⁶¹⁾ who were secondary wives of king Amenhotep III.

In art the Egyptians made statuettes of the gazelle which are exhibited in different museums all over the world, for example:

A model of a gazelle made of ivory stands on an inlaid base in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and goes back to El Amarna period.⁽⁶²⁾ (fig. 12)

There is another model of a gazelle made of wood represented in a crouched position and extending its neck. The shape of its head indicates that it is about to snap something with its mouth. We can notice the homogeneous

artistic details of the gazelle's body. This model is exhibited in Antwerp museum, Belgium, and is dated to the time of the 18th Dynasty.⁽⁶³⁾

These are two models given only as an example, not enumeration. They show to what extent the Ancient Egyptian liked this animal and tried to make models of it in different shapes.

List of Abbreviations

- BiOr = Bibliotheca orientalis Nederlandsch inst. Voor het Nabije Oosten (Leyden).
- Giza = Junker, H., Giza 12 Bde, Wien - Leipzig (1929-1955).
- LÄ = Lexikon der Ägyptologie, 7 Bde, Wiesbaden (1975-1990).
- LD = Lepsius, K.R., Denkmaler aus Agypten und Aethiopien, 12 Bde, Berlin (1849-1959).
- Meir = Blackman, A.M., The Rock Tombs of Mier, 6 vols., London (1914-1953).
- MIFAO = Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (Le Caire).
- NAWG = Nachrichten Von der Akad. der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen, Phil. Hist. Kl. (Gottingen).
- RT = Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie Egyptiennes et Assyriennes (Paris).
- URK. I = Sethe, K., Urkunden des Ägyptischen Altertums, Leipzig (1933).
- Wb = Erman, A. und Grapow, H., Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, 6 Bde, Berlin (1957).
- ZÄS = Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde (Berlin).

Bibliography

(1) Darby, W.J., (ed.) et al., *Food, the Gift of Osiris, I*
London (1977), p.234.

(2) Ibid,

(3) Ibid,

During the excavations carried out by the University of Cairo, Faculty of Archaeology, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Gab Allah Ali Gab Allah in 1987 at Meet Rahina, the bones of some animals were found. Some of them were classified as bones of a gazelle in a study by Hussam Eldin Abdel Hamid published in Poland. He was sometimes right in defining the bones as those of a gazelle.

See: Gautier, A., Hussam Eldin Abdel Hamid, *Survey study of Animal Bones from Meet Rahina*, Warsaw (1990) in: BIOR LI no. 1-2 (1994), p. 81.

(4) Hayes, W., *The Scepter of Egypt*, Part II, New York, (1959) fig. 19.

(5) Brunner - Traut, E., *Gazelle*, LÄ II, (1977) p. 426;

Compare this with a vase which belongs to Naqada civilization within paintings showing the gazelle, now in the Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels inv. E. 263;

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- See: Balty, J.C., De Meulenaere et al.,
The Royal Museum of Art and History,
Brussels (1988), p. 12.
- (6) Wb V, 191, 1-9.
- (7) Meeks, D., *Anne Lexicographique*, III, Paris (1982),
p.316.
- (8) Wb III, 398, 9.
- (9) Gardiner, A.H., *Notes on the story of Sinuhe*, RT 36,
(1914), p. 32 L. 10-11;
cf. Koch, R., *Die Erzählung des Sinuhe*, Bruxelles (1990),
p. 25 L.1;
for different forms see: Wb IV 543, 7-16.
- (10) Wb IV, 544, 8.
- (11) Wb IV, 544.
- (12) Faulkner, R. O., *A Concise Dictionary of Middle
Egyptian*, Oxford (1976), p. 247.
- (13) Wb IV 543, 5-6.
- (14) Wb IV, 545, 2-3;
cf. Wb IV, 279, 11;
Faulkner, R. O., *op.cit.*, 246.
- (15) Urk I, p. 104.
- (16) Redford, D.B., *Egypt Canaan and Israel in Ancient
Times*. Princeton (1992), pp. 55-56.

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- (17) Boessneck, J.C., *Die Haustiere in Alt ägyptische*,
München (1953), pp. 29 ff.
- (18) Borghouts, J.F., *The Magical Texts of Papyrus*
Leiden (1977)Vso 4, 5.
- (19) Paton, D., *Animals of Ancient Egypt* San Antino,
Texas (1994), p. 10.
- (20) Helck, W., *Materialien Zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte
des Neuen Reiches*, Wiesbaden (1969) pp.
155-159, 206-207, 232-233, 306-307.
- (21) Klebs, L., *Die Relief und Malereien des Neuen
Reiches*, III, Heidelberg (1934), p. 7.
- (22) Davies, W., *Masking the below*, Oxford (1992),
pp. 83-88.
- (23) Klebs, L., op.cit., I, p.68.
- (24) Aldred, C., *Egyptian Art*, London (1980), p. 37;
Smith, W.S., *The Art and Architecture of Ancient
Egypt*, New York (1980), p. 44.
- (25) Brunner - Traut, E., op.cit., 426.
- (26) Klebs, L., op.cit., p. 38.
- (27) Ibid., p. 68.
- (28) Among the common hunting scenes in the desert is
hunting the gazelle by using a loop which is held by a
hunter in order to catch desert animals of all kinds,
including gazelles.

see: Klebs, L., op.cit, p. 68.

(29) Junker, H., *Giza*, XI, fig. 63.

(30) Blackmann, A., *Meir*, II, pl. VII.

(31) Aldred, C., op.cit., p. 112.

(32) LD., II, pl. 12.

(33) Davies, N. de G., *The Mastaba of Ptah hetep and Akhet hetep at Saqqarah*, I, Egypt Exploration fund, London (1900), pl. XXII, p.10.

(34) Wolf, W., *Die Kunst Aegyptens: Gestalt und Geschichte*, Stuttgart (1959), fig. 682.

(35) Smith, W.S., *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in The Old Kingdom*, London (1946), p. 225.

(36) Klebs, L., op.cit., p. 62.

(37) Brunner - Traut, E., op. cit., p. 426;

Leclant, J., *Fouilles et Travaux en Egypte*, 1952 - 1953, (1954), p. 73 n. 3;

Compare this with the skeleton of the horned gazelles which were found in some of the bell-shaped -tombs [known to Egyptologists as pangraves] in some sites of Upper Egypt and Nubia.

see: Hayes, W., op.cit., p. 40.

- (38) He presented a gazelle which he named *ghs* with the ibex for he named the gazelle *ghs* and while he gave the ibex the name *ghs*
see: Helck, W., op.cit., p.p. 351 - 354 - 402 - 403 - 428 - 429, 502 - 503
- (39) Bonnet, H., *Reallexikon der Agyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin (1952), p. 201
- (40) Kees, H., *Bemerkungen zum Tieropfer der Agypter und seiner symbolik*. NAWG (1942), p. 78
- (41) Ibid., p. 83.
- (42) Darby, W.J., (ed) et al., op.cit., p. 234.
Kees, H., op.cit., p. 78 n.7
- (43) cf. Derchain, P., *Rites Egyptiens I, Le sacrifice de l'Oryx*, Bruxelles (1962), p. 7
- (44) Bonnet, H., op.cit., p. 201
- (45) Komier is one of the cities that is located in the third Nome of Upper Egypt (Nekhen - Nekheb) and lies at about 11 km to the south of Esna
See: Mahran M. B., *Misr Welshark El Adna El Kadim*. Misr, Part II (in Arabic) Alexandria (1988) P. 72
- (46) see: Peterson, B.E.J., *Zeichnungen aus einer Totenstadt*, Stockholm (1971), p. 77

- (47) Brunner - Traut, E., op.cit., p. 426.
- (48) Spiegelberg, W., *Der Aegyptisch Mythus vom sonneauge*, Strasbourg (1917), pp. 51, 53;
 Daumas, F., *Les propyleet du Temple d'Hathor a philae*, ZAS 95 (1969), p. 10, n. 65.
- (49) Brunner - Traut, E., op.cit., p. 426;
 Compare that with what is mentioned in the first Chester-Beaty papyrus in the love songs, in which he says: "Come quickly, sister, as the jumping gazelle across the desert, its feet are wounded, its limbs exhausted and fear is penetrating its body".
 see: Gardiner, A.H., *The Library of Chester-Beaty*, London (1931), p.35.
 Cf. Simpson, W.K., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, New Haven and London (1972), pp. 321 - 322.
- (50) Wildung, D., *Feindsymbolic*, LA II, (1977) p. 147.
- (51) Bonnet, H., op.cit., p. 201.
- (52) Ramdan El Said, *Tarikh Misr El Kadima*, part I (in Arabic) Cairo (1988) p. 256.
- (53) Gouyat, J., Montet, P. *Les inscriptions hieroglyphiques et hieratiques du Ouadi Hammamat*, MIFAO 34 (1912), pp. 77 - 78.
- (54) Ibid. pp. 97-98.

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- (55) Ibid
- (56) Cf. Kees, H., op.cit. p 83
- (57) Klebs, L , op.cit., III, p. 100
- (58) Hayes, W . op.cit., p. 19.
- (59) Cf. Brunner - Traut, E., op.cit., P 426.
- (60) Aldred, C., *Jewels of the Pharaohs*, London (1971),
pp. 119-120.
- (61) Ibid., p. 199.
- (62) Hayes, W., op.cit., p 315, fig. 196.
- (63) Peeters, A.R., *Egypte Onomwonden Egyptische
Oudheden von het Museum Vlesshuis*,
Antwerp (1995), p.88.



Fig. 1

Gazelle carved on rocks.

See : Houlihan, P. , The Animal of the pharaohs,
Cairo, (1997), P. 43

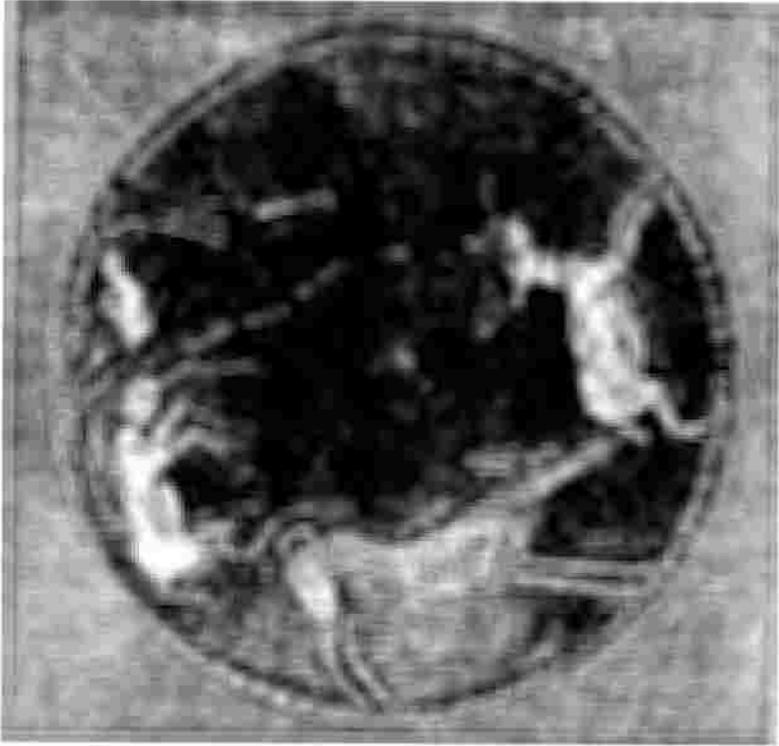


Fig. 2

A Gazelle pursued by dogs

See : Smith , W.S., *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* , London , P.44 .



Fig. 3

The Gazelle being pursued by dogs. Hunting Scene in
the chapel of Sebni
See : Meir , I , Pl . VIII .

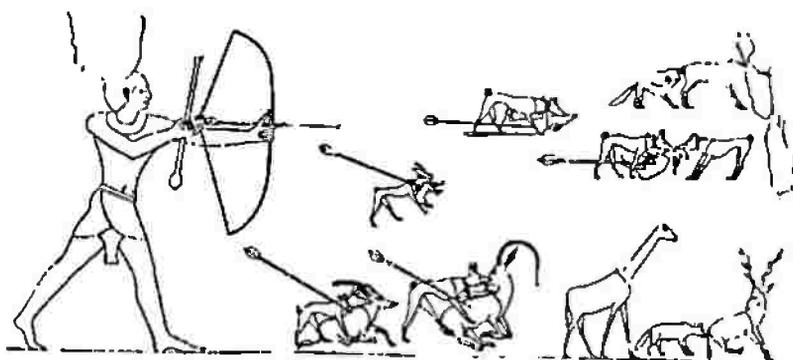


Fig. 4

Gazelle hunted using arrows.

Ukhhoteb I tomb

Klebs, L. Die Relief und malerein des Neuen
Reiches , Band I , Heidelberg , (1934) , p 68

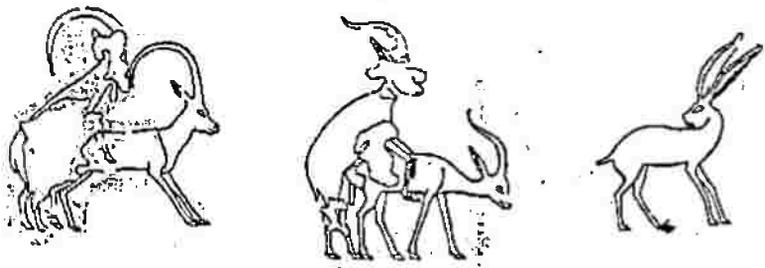


Fig. 5

Gazelle Mating .

See : Meir, II , pl. VII .

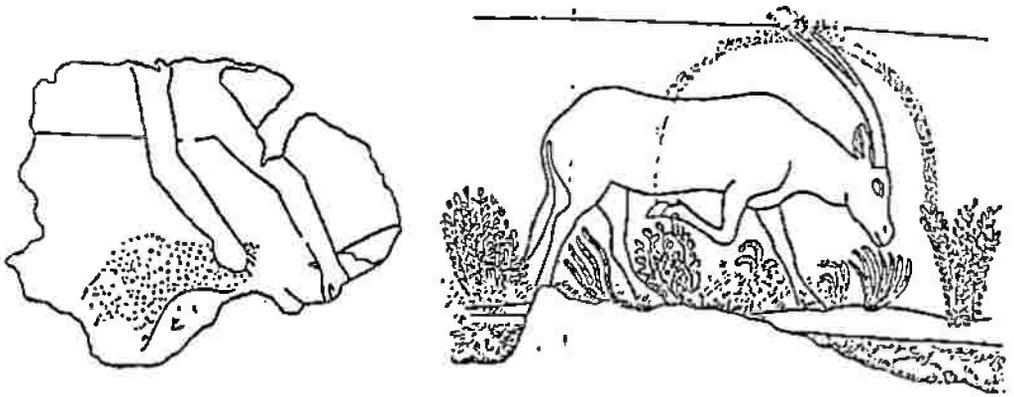


Fig. 6

Gazelle digging with its left hoof
See : Smith , W.S, op cit., p. 272 .

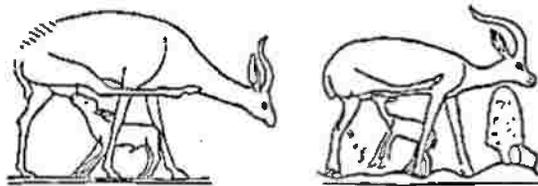


Fig. 7

Gazelle nursing its young

See : Davies, N. de G. ,the Mastaba of ptah hetep and Akhet hetep at Saqqarah , I, Egypt Exploration Fund London (1900) pl XXII .



Fig. 8

A Gazelle caught in a basket or by its feet

See : Wolf , W., Die Kunst Aegyptens : Gestalt und Geschichte, Stuttgart , (1959) , p. 682 .



Fig. 9

A Gazelle drawn by a dwarf.

See: Smith, W.S., A History of Egyptian Sculpture and painting in the old Kingdom, London, (1946), p. 225.

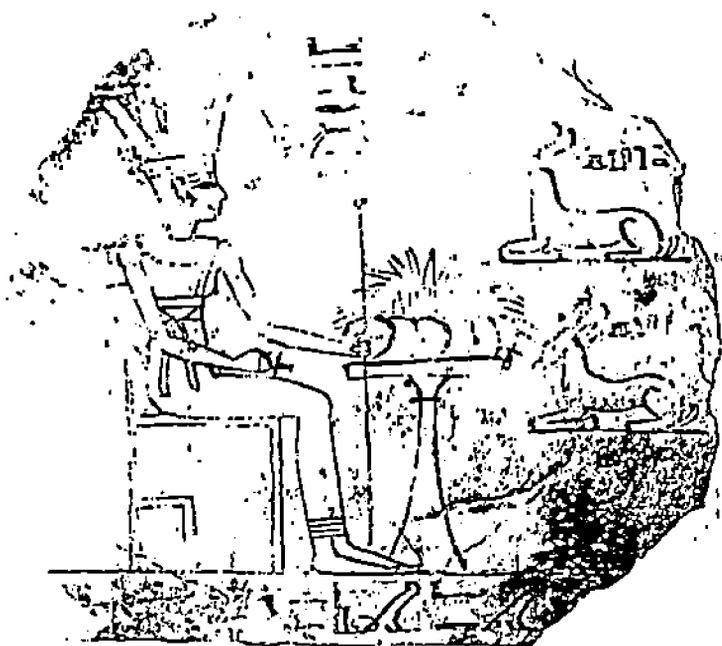


Fig. 10

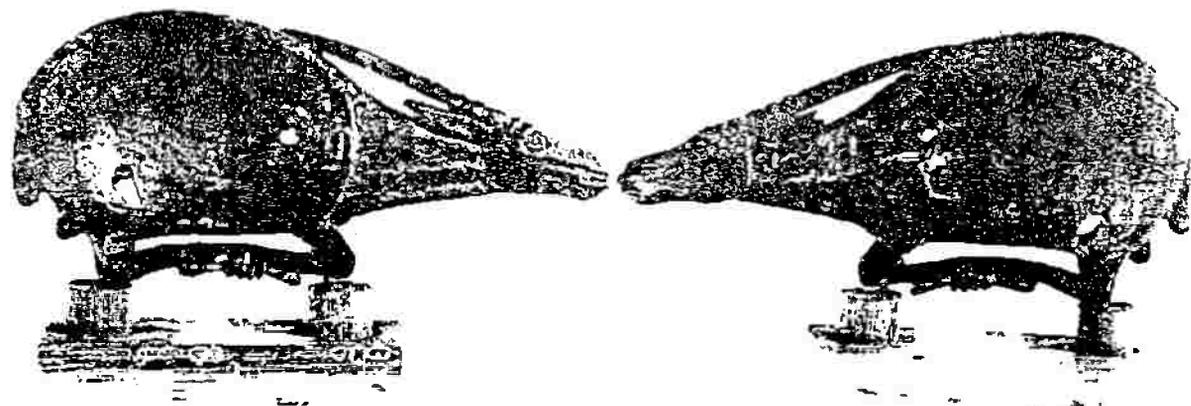
The Goddess Enqt as Gazelle

See: Peterson, B.E.J., Zeichnungen aus einer Totenstadt,
Stockholm, (1973), p. 77.

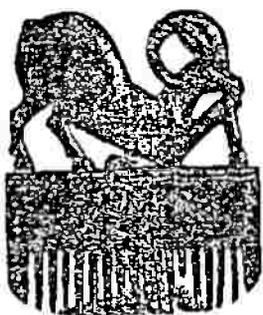


Fig. 11

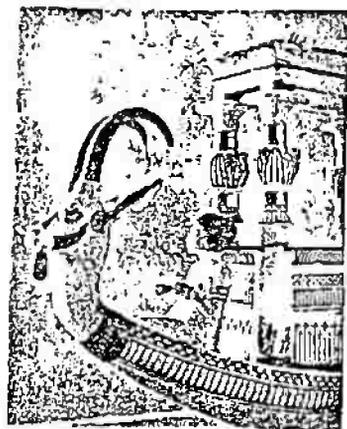
Gazelle decorating fillet .
See : Aldred, C ., Jewels of the pharaohs, London , (1971) ,
p. 119 .



A



B



C

Fig. 12

Model of Gazelle

A See Peeters A.R. in
 Egypte Onomwonden Egyptische oudheden van het
 Museum Vleeshuis, Amsterdam (1995) P. 88

B,C - Noblecourt, D., Interpretation et Datation D'une Scène Gravée Sur Deux
 Fragments De Réceptacle en Albâtre provenant Des fouilles Du
 palais D'ugarit, Ugaritica III Tome VII: 956. Paris, P. 87-88

