



## The God Bak “*B3k*” in Ancient Egypt


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### KEYWORDS






*B3k*  
Moringa Tree,  
Shiny

### ABSTRACT



Ancient Egyptian religion, which arose somewhere in prehistory, was founded on the beliefs and ceremonies surrounding the ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses. The Egyptians supported and appeased these deities who represented natural forces and phenomena through offerings and ceremonies in order for these forces to continue to function. This paper investigates the god *B3k*, whose name is associated with the determinative of a tree , especially the Moringa tree which was known in ancient Egypt as "*b3k*" and its significance came to the fore through its connections to some of the gods, is inscribed in several objects, tombs and temples dated back to the New Kingdom, onwards. The main purpose of this article is to trace and analyse the scenes and inscriptions related to that particular god, to better understand his forms, functions, titles and his relationship with other deities. It also aims to detect the relationship between the god's name and the Moringa tree. In spite of the lack of references that deals directly with the god *B3k*, the study resulted in specific important conclusions including the name forms of the deity and their relationship with the Moringa tree, in addition to the deity's forms and relationship with other deities. The analytical and descriptive methodology will be employed.

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### 1. Introduction

The *Moringa tree* ,  (Faulkner, 1962, p. 78),  *B3k* Sethe, 1909, p. 73 (17)) is known to flourish in arid and hot climates and is considered one of the fastest-growing trees, reaching a great height in few years. Because the Moringa tree's leaves contain anti-oxide substances, it has a high nutritious value. Its seeds contain oil  (Faulkner, 1962, p. 78),  (*Urk. IV*, p. 1143),

known also as *B3k*, is determined in Arabic as ben oil and is marked by its ability to retain fluidity at low temperatures. The liquid is colorless and transparent, and it is used in the production of hair care products as well as machine lubricant.

During the New Kingdom, this tree appeared as *b3k* ,  (Wb, I, 1926, p. 423) which is translated as 'oily', 'shiny', or 'bright' (Faulkner, 1962, p. 78), as in someone's writings called "Anini" in his tomb in Thebes, which dates back to the reign of King Thutmose I (*Urk. IV*, p. 73). The

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word *b3k* , sometimes refers to ‘white’ or even ‘innocent’. As for the wood of the oil tree, it has been inscribed as *b3k* , or ( *Wb.* I., p. 423). Although it is rarely shown on the walls, the sacrifice of sacred oils is one of the most important aesthetic sacrifices. Oils in general, and these sacrifices in particular, help to revitalize the vitality and purity of the body of the deceased.

The tree has modern medical value since it aids in the treatment of a variety of maladies, including blood anaemia and heart disease, as well as brain and nervous system disorders. Its religious significance arose from its affiliation with certain gods, such as the god "Ptah," and it was also associated with a number of other gods, such as “Horus”, “Seth” and “Thoth”. Moringa oil is also used in the perfume industry, as well as for medicinal purposes.

## 2. Literature reviews

The god *B3k*'s name and iconography has been illustrated in the tombs, temples and even funerary objects dated back from the New Kingdom onwards.

### 2.1 The God's Iconography and Inscriptions in the Tombs of New Kingdom

#### 2.1.1. Tomb of Khaemouaset, VQ44

In the side-chamber to the right, the prince Khaemouaset appears standing in adoration (fig. 1), in front of the god *B3k* , who appears as an ibis-headed god followed by a naked falcon-headed god *Hr-m-nhn* “Horus of Nekhen”. Campbell (1910, p. 39) considered *B3k* is as being another form of the youthful Horus, son of Isis”; the god Horus of Nekhen. The two gods *B3k* and *Hr-m-nhn* are declared to be honoured as “The sons of Horus” (Abitz, 1986, p. 15). The inscription reads *dd mdw in B3k* “Words spoken by *B3k*”.

#### 2.1.2. Tomb of Nefertari, VQ 66

The god *B3k* is depicted as a crocodile-headed god with a knife in his hand, seated in a gate (fig. 2) (Goedicke , 1971, pl. 81), as being the hunter of the third gate *sbht* (Faulkner, 1962, p. 220) of the heart mats ‘insolant’ *wrd ib* (Faulkner, 1962, p. 64) of Osiris domain (Leitz, 2002, *LGG*, II, p. 744).

#### 2.1.3. The Theban Tomb of Senenmut TT. 353

The Inscription in the west wall of Chamber A, south section (fig. 3), in the tomb of Senenmut, inscribes the name of the god *B3k* as being: (Dorman, 1991, pl. 69) *B3k r t3wy ntr i3t w'eb* “The god *B3k* of the two lands who cleans up ‘removes’ the ruins”.

### 2.2. The God's Inscriptions in Funerary Objects

#### 2.2.1. The Theban Funerary Papyrus BD. II.1, British Museum (BM, no. 9992).

Owner (Niwinski, 1989, p. 5)  
Date: Middle or Late 21st Dynasty, the Third Intermediate Period  
Formal Features: Size: H. 26.7 cm, L. 0.55m.  
Colours: Black and red.

Inscription: (fig. 4) *B3k r t3wy ntr i3t w'eb*

“The god *B3k* of two lands, who cleans up ‘removes’ the ruins (*LGG* II, p. 744)

#### 2.2.2. The Egyptians' Book of the Dead (Based on the Hieroglyphic Papyrus in Turin):

The god *B3k* is depicted in this papyrus as a Ram-headed god, armed with two knives, and standing next to the gate (fig. 5) (Lepsius, 1842, pl. 62 (10); *LGG* II, p. 744).

The inscription related to the god reads as *B3k r t3wy ntr i3t w'eb* “The god *B3k* of the two lands, who cleans up ‘removes’ the ruins”.


### 2.3. The God's Iconography and Inscriptions in the Temples:


#### 2.3.1. The Temple of Edfu


In a scene in the Enclosure Wall, Western Wall, External Face, the king appears in front of Horus and Hathor (fig. 6), the inscription in front of the god Horus displays a name given to the god Horus of Behdet *Hr-Bhdty* in a ritual scene of God's sacrifice *htp-ntr*, as being (Chassinat, 1932, p. 69 (19); Chassinat, 2008, pl. CLXVII) *B3k t3 m nfrw.f* “Who illuminates the land with its perfection”( *LGG* II, p. 744)

In a scene in the Court, Southern Wall, East section, the king appears in front of the god Horus

and The Fourteen *k3* (fig. 7), in a ritual scene of ‘Praising the God *dw3 ntr*’, the inscription in front


of one of them reads:  (Chassinat, 1960, pl. CXVII.) *B3kw hwt Hr* “The light house of Horus; Edfu” (Chassinat, 1930, p. 181; *LGG II*, p. 744.).


An inscription in the Pylon, basement indicate a name given to the god Horus-Re as being “*B3k*  who saved Egypt from the harm” (*LGG II*, p. 744.).

The inscription reads:  *B3k-B3kty ir(y) i3dt* “The Egyptian *B3k* who act against the famine” (Chassinat, 1933, pl. CLXXIX).



### 2.3.2. The Temple of Esna

In a scene in the western interior wall, seven persons with human heads, and one with a monkey head are depicted surmounting a ram-headed figure and praising him (fig. 8) (Sauneron, 1975, p. 198-199); the god *B3k* is mentioned in front of the

second person with a human head as being  *B3k nfrw n t3* (*LGG II*, p. 744) “*B3k* the beauty of the land”. The god is mentioned again in front of

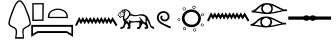
the third person with a human head as  *B3k ʿwy.fy hri (ntr) dw3 it (ntrw)* ((Sauneron, 1975, p. 198-199). “*B3k* the very great upon the god (and) praising the father of the gods” (*LGG II*, p. 744).

An inscription in the hypostyle hall, in the 14<sup>th</sup> column of an inscription of the festivals and processions of the last days of the month of Athyr, located in the hypostyle hall, probably during the date of Hadrien, the name of the god *B3k-B3kty* “Who allows Egypt to be safe”, is included in the


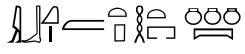
epithet of the god Khenum as being:   (*LGG II*, p. 744)

*B3k-B3kty hwi st-wrt* “The Egyptian *B3k* who is defending the sacred place”.

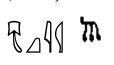
In another inscription, in the hymn of the goddess Neith, located also in the hypostyle hall, probably during the date of Trajan, specifically in the 13<sup>th</sup> column, the name of the god *B3k* is inscribed as a description of the goddess Neith:



 (Sauneron, 1975, III., p. 18-19) *B3k pt m m3wt nt irty.sy* “*B3k* the heaven (that) shines through the rays of her two eyes” (*LGG II*, p. 744.).

### 2.3.3. The Temple of Karnak

In a scene in the Propylon of Khonsu Temples, Bab el Amarna, king Ptolemy III Eurgetes I is depicted in front of the god Khonsu and the goddess Hathor (Clère, 1961, pl. 5). The god  *B3k*’s name appears within the titles of the god Khonsu (fig. 9), which are inscribed in the front of him as being:  *ii B3k m tpht Nwn* “I am *B3k* who comes from the cave *tpht* of Nun (*LGG II*, p. 744)”.

In a scene in the Propylon in front of the Temple of Montu, Ptolemy III Eurgetes I and Berenike are depicted in a ritual scene, offering incense *sntr* to the god Montu (Sethe, 1957, 69). Behind the god

Montu, the name of the god  *B3k Msk Imm* is translated as “The one with shiny fur”, or “The one with a leather-like skin(?)” (*LGG II*, p. 744). This name appeared in the titles of the god Montu as being:


  (*LGG II*, p. 744).


*B3k Msk Imm hsmn hr idb Wsr Inpw m irw.sn k3 rn.sn n Mntw nb W3st*

“*B3k* the one with shiny fur, the patron upon the river-bank of Osiris and Anubis in their soul form and their name as Montu lord of Thebes”.


### 2.3.4. The Temple of Dendara


In a scene in the Osirian Chapel (Eastern), the third register, lintel, and exterior frame, The Right-Side of the Lintel depicts the seated god Osiris, who appears facing the goddess Nephthys, the god Shu, the goddess Tefnut and the god Atum, respectively (fig. 10, 11) (P. Koemoth, 1994, p. 252-256). The

god *B3k*  is mentioned on line 21 of the hieroglyphic inscription in front of the god Atum



as being:  (Cauville, 1997, p. 184) *B3k hri Wsir s3.k di.n.k sw* “The god *B3k* (who is) from Osiris; protecting you, (which) he has given to you”.

In a scene in the Osirian Eastern Chapel No. 3, Western Doorway, First Register:

The god *B3k*  appears in this scene in a Hieracocephale form; as a falcon-headed form. He is seen holding a knife on his right hand and a *w3s* scepter on his left. The god *B3k* is depicted followed by three lions and a bull, who are leaning on a *s3* sign with their front paws, by which they

appear grasping two knives (fig. 12) (*LGG II*, p. 744). The inscription in front of the god reads:  *B3k-Hr ntr 3 m Ht-nbw* “The Great God *B3k*-Horus in *Ht-nbw*” (Cauville, 1997, p. 186).

In a scene in the western Crypt No. 2, chamber A, west wall, the king is displayed playing with two sistrums in front of the goddess Hathor and the god

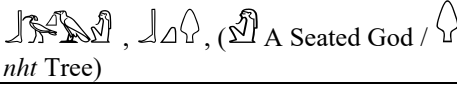


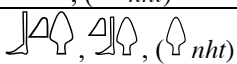
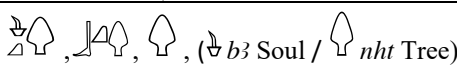
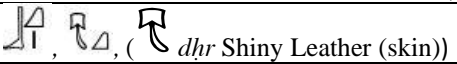
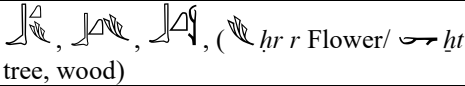
Ihy, in a ritual scene (fig. 13). The inscription in front of the god Ihy depicts the patron god *B3k*  as being:  *B3k-Hr ntrw m htp.s* (Chassinat, 1965, p. 115, pl. DXLIV, *LGG II*, p. 744) ‘The god *B3k*-Horus in whose the gods are safe’.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 The Name and Titles of *B3k*



**Table 1**


Names and title of *B3k* of




Name Form (Determinative)	Era	Location
 A Seated God / <i>nht</i> Tree)	New Kingdom	VQ44, VQ66, TT353.
 A Seated God)	Third Intermediate Period	Theban Funerary Papyrus
 <i>nht</i> )	Graeco-Roman	Egyptians’ Book of the Dead
 <i>nht</i> )	Graeco-Roman	Edfu
 <i>b3</i> Soul / <i>nht</i> Tree)	Graeco-Roman	Esna
 <i>dhr</i> Shiny Leather (skin))	Graeco-Roman	Karnak
 <i>hr r</i> Flower/ <i>ht</i> tree, wood)	Graeco-Roman	Dendara


According to the previous table, the *Moringa tree* religious significance arose from its affiliation and association with certain gods, especially the god *BAq*; whose name has been depicted in several inscriptions with different determinatives, but the most common determinative is that of the *Moringa*

*tree*, as .


During the New Kingdom, this tree appeared as *b3k*  which is almost the same name form the god appeared with during the New Kingdom , except for the determinative of a seated god.



This tree appeared as *b3k* which is translated as ‘oily’, ‘shiny’, or ‘bright’. The god’s epithets have also appeared in Esna as “*B3k* (who) shines”, in Karnak as “*B3k* the one with shiny fur”, and his name also appeared with the determinative of  *dhr* “Shiny Leather (skin)”. On this regard also the god has also appeared with the epithet of “*BAq* Who illuminates the land”; another metaphor for the word ‘bright’.





As for the wood of the tree, it has been inscribed as *bAq* , and the god’s name form as , is depicting the same determinative of  *Xt* “wood”.


It is notable that the god’s name form has never been inscribed as  *B3k*; one of the notable name forms of *Moringa tree*.

The god’s name has been inscribed mostly during the Graeco-Roman period.

The god’s name has appeared in the New Kingdom tombs with the determinative of a seated god ; and it has never been inscribed that way in the Graeco-Roman temples.

The unusual name forms of the god: In Karnak the god’s name is inscribed as , , in Dendara as

, , , while in Esna as .

The word *b3k* , sometimes refers to ‘white’ or even ‘innocent’.

#### 3.2. The Titles of *B3k*:

**Table 2**

The title of *B3k* in different era

<b>Title (Determinative)</b>	<b>Era</b>	<b>Location</b>
<p><b>The Tomb of Nefertari:</b>                      “The hunter of the third gate (<i>sbht</i>) of the heart mats ‘insolant’ <i>wrd ib</i> of Osiris domain”.</p> <p><b>Tomb of Senenmut</b>                      “The god <i>B3k</i> of the two lands who cleans up ‘removes’ the ruins”.</p>	New Kingdom	Queens’ Valley, n°. 66, TT. n°. 353.
<p>“The god <i>B3k</i> of the two lands who cleans up ‘removes’ the ruins”.</p>	Third Intermediate Period	Theban Funerary Papyrus
<p>“The god <i>B3k</i> of the two lands who cleans up ‘removes’ the ruins”.</p>	Graeco-Roman	Egyptians’ Book of the Dead
<p>“Who illuminates the land with its perfection”.</p> <p>“The lighten house of Horus; Edfu”.</p> <p>“The Egyptian <i>B3k</i> who act against the famine”.</p>	Graeco-Roman	Edfu
<p>“<i>B3k</i> the very great upon the god (and) praising the father of the gods”.</p> <p>“The Egyptian <i>B3k</i> who is defending the sacred place”.</p> <p>“<i>B3k</i> the heaven (that) shines through the rays of her two eyes”.</p>	Graeco-Roman	Esna
<p>“I am <i>B3k</i> who comes from the cave <i>tpht</i> of Nun”.</p> <p>“<i>B3k</i> the one with shiny fur, the patron upon the riverbank of Osiris and Anubis in their soul form and their name as Montu lord of Thebes”.</p>	Graeco-Roman	Karnak
<p>“The god <i>B3k</i> (who is) from Osiris, protecting you, (which) he has given to you”.</p> <p>“The Great God <i>B3k</i>-Horus in <i>Ht-nbw</i> ‘Dendara’”.</p> <p>‘The god <i>B3k</i>-Horus in who’s the gods are safe’.</p>	Graeco-Roman	Dendara

According to the previous table, the most repeated epithet of the god *B3k* is “The god *B3k* of the two lands who cleans up ‘removes’ the ruins”. This epithet has been inscribed during the New Kingdom, Third Intermediate Period, and during the Graeco-Roman era.

“The god *B3k* of the two lands; *B3k r t3wy*” is an epithet that seems to be coherent to *B3k*’s names. The god *B3k* and the physical property of *illuminating, brightening* as “a lighten house’ and *shining* are actually placed in parallel with the god’s features. He is described as being ‘*B3k* the one with shiny fur”, which might reveal his physical aspect of illumination.

*B3k* the patron deity, appears in Karnak and Dendara; “The patron upon Osiris and Anubis”, and “The god *B3k* (who is) from Osiris; protecting you”.

*B3k* who saved Egypt from the harm, is detected from the epithets of “The Egyptian *B3k* who act

against the famine”, and “The Egyptian *B3k* who is defending the sacred place”.

The fearful and violent physical aspect of *B3k* is revealed in the epithet of ‘The hunter of the third gate (*sbht*)’.

### 3.3. Deities Associated with *B3k*:

Depending on this study, it is clear that the god *B3k* is associated with god *Horus* as one god “*B3k-Hr*” in *Ht-nbw* “Dendera”, and has an important role with him.

The Relationship between *B3k* and other deities could be detected in his epithets:

- Neith: “*B3k* the heaven (that) shines through the rays of her two eyes”.
- Nun: “I am *B3k* who comes from the cave *tpht* of Nun”.
- Osiris: “The hunter of the third gate of Osiris domain”, “The god *B3k* (who is) from Osiris; protecting you”.

- Anubis: “*B3k* the patron upon Osiris and Anubis in their soul form”.

### 3.4. The Figures of *B3k*:

- A Crocodile-headed god as in the tomb of Nefertari. *B3k* is depicted as a crocodile-headed god with a knife in his hand, seated in a gate (fig. 2). This might show some assimilation between of the god *B3k* and the crocodile-headed god Sobek.
- An Ibis-headed god as in the tomb of Khaemouaset where god *B3k* appears as an ibis-headed god (fig. 1), followed by a naked falcon-headed god *Hr-m-nhn* “Horus of Nekhen. This might show some assimilation between of the god *B3k* and the ibis-headed god *Dhwtj*.”

### 3.5. The Relationship between *BAq* and Other Deities:

- **Horus:** god *B3k* is declared by C. Campbell as being another form of the youthful “*Horus of Nekhen*” or the two gods *B3k* and *Hr-m-nhn* are declared to be honored as “The sons of Horus” (fig. 1). *B3k* could also be another form of the god “*Horus of Behdet*” in Edfu; as *B3k*’s name has been given to him in a ritual scene (fig. 6). *B3k*’s name has also been inscribed as the light house of Horus, in Edfu (fig. 7).
- In Dendera, the god *B3k* is associated with god *Horus* as god “*B3k-Hr*”.
- **Osiris:** in Dendera, the god is declaring himself in an epithet as being originated from the god Osiris, and as being the hunter of the third gate of Osiris domain, in another epithet in the tomb of Nefertari.
- **Khnum:** In Esna, the name of god *B3k* is inscribed in the epithet of the god *khnum* as being “The Egyptian *B3k* who is defending the sacred place”.
- **Khonsu:** in Karnak, *B3k*’s name appears within the titles of the god *Khonsu* (fig. 9), that are inscribed in front of him as being “I am *B3k* who comes from the cave *tpht* of Nun”.
- **Montu:** in Karnak, the name of god appeared in the titles of the god *Montu* as being “The one with shiny fur”.
- **Ihy:** in Dendara, the name of the god appeared in the titles of the god *Ihy* (fig. 13) as being ‘god *B3k*-Horus in who’s the gods are safe’ 3.

The Relationship between *B3k* and other deities.

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## Figures

### Figure 1.

Khaemouaset in adoration, in front of the God *B3k* and the Hor-em-Nekhen

After, G. Lecuyot, *La tombe du prince Khaemouaset [VdR n° 44]. Etude architecturale: Préface du Dr. Ali Hassan*, Le Caire : Conseil supérieur des antiquités, 1997, pl. LI.



**Figure 2.**

The Third and Forth Door of the Domain of Osiris, Tomb of Nefertari.

After, H. Goedicke – G. Thausing, *Nofretari: eine Dokumentation der Wandgemälde ihres Grabes*, Graz, 1971, pl. 81.



**Figure 3.**

Inscription of the West Wall of Chamber A, South Section, Tomb of Senenmut TT. 353.

After, P.F. Dorman, *The tombs of Senenmut: The architecture and Decoration of Tombs 71 and 353*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991, pl. 69





**Figure 4.**

Theban Funerary Papyrus BM. 9992

After, A. Niwinski, *Studies on the Illustrated Theban Funerary Papyri of the 11th and 10th centuries B.C.*, Universitätsverlag Freiburg - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989, pl. 7a



**Figure 5.**

The Hieroglyphic Papyrus in Turin.

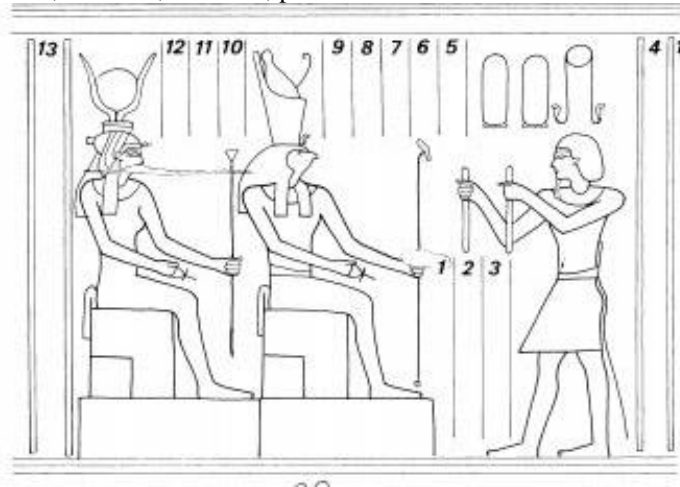
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**Figure 6.**

Edfu Temple, Enclosure wall, Western wall, External face.

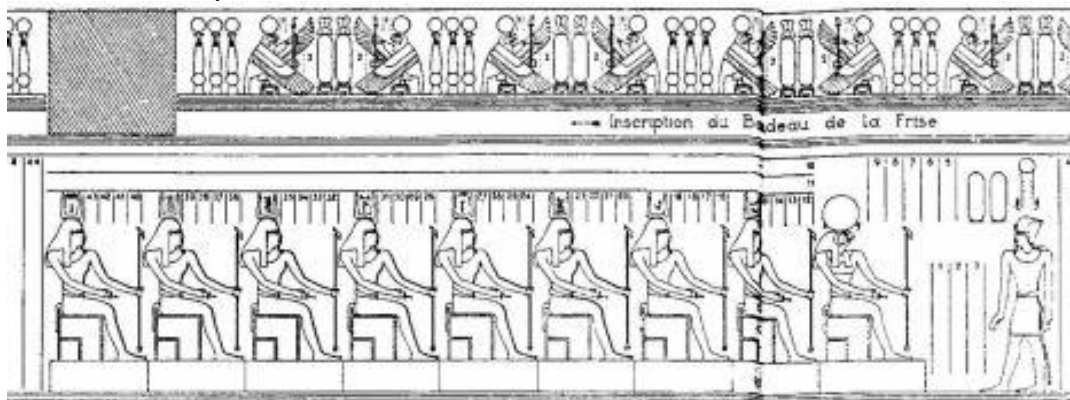
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**Figure 7.**

Edfu Temple, Enclosure wall, Western wall, External face.

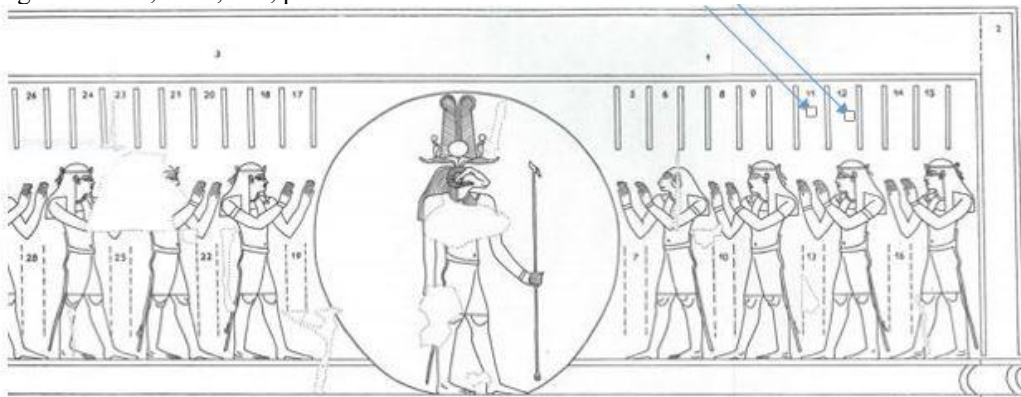
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**Figure 8.**

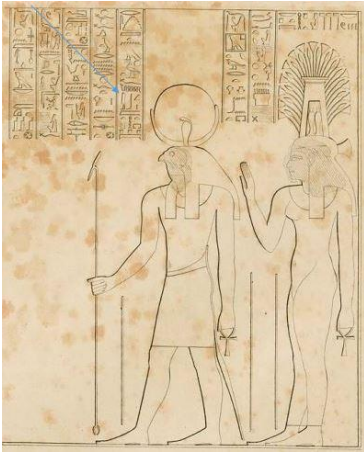
Western Interior Wall, Esna Temple.

After, S. Sauneron, *Le temple d'Esna, VI/1, dessin des scènes par Laila Ménassa*, Le Caire, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1975, 546, p. 199.



**Figure 9.**

The Propylon of Khonsu Temples in Karnak.  
After, *LD IV*, p. 13e



**Figure 10**

Dendera, Osirian Chapel (Eastern), Third Register, Lintel, Exterior Frame.  
After, S. Cauville, *Le temple de Dendara: les chapelles osiriennes*, II, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Paris, 1997, pl. 90



**Figure 11**

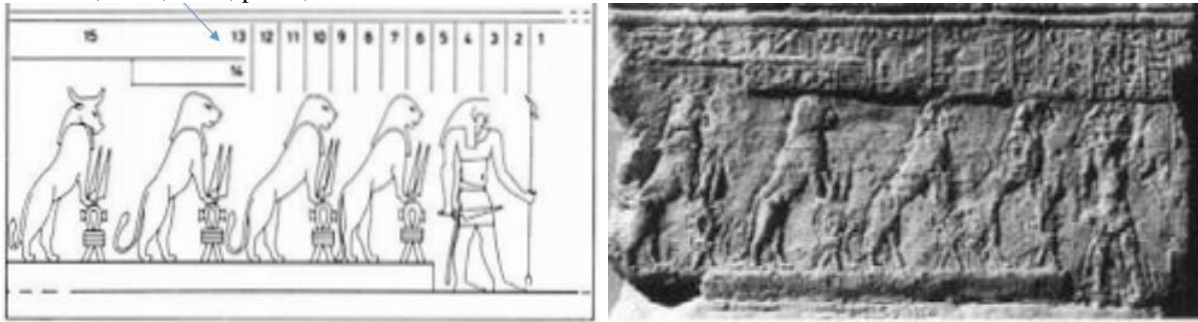
Dendera, Osirian Chapel, Right-Side of the Lintel Depiction.  
After, S. Cauville, *Le temple de Dendara: les chapelles osiriennes*, II, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale; Paris, 1997, pl. 120



**Figure 12**

Dendara, Osirian Eastern Chapel No. 3, Western Doorway, First Register.

After, S. Cauville, *Le temple de Dendara: les chapelles osiriennes*, II, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale; Paris, 1997, pl. 92, 121.



**Figure 13**

Dendara, Western Crypt No. 2, Chamber A, Western Wall

After, Chassinat-Fr. Daumas, *Le temple de Dendara, Tome sixieme*, Le Caire, 1965, pl. DXLIV.

