



## The Mythological Significance of *ḥꜥj.t* ; The Goddess of the South

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### Abstract

The concept of the four supports of the sky “4 *shnwt n pt*” or the four pillars of the corners “4 *ifd n gb.t*” holds significant religious and cosmological significance in ancient Egyptian texts. These four entities are depicted as female goddesses, embodying the incarnation and personification of these celestial supports. The representation of these goddesses as integral figures within the religious iconography of Ptolemaic and Roman temples further solidifies their importance and enduring presence. The notion of the four supports of the sky as female deities reflects the ancient Egyptian belief in the divine feminine and its connection to cosmic stability. These goddesses are considered fundamental pillars, holding up the celestial vault and maintaining the order and balance of the cosmos. Their presence signifies the essential role they play in sustaining the integrity of the sky and the universe as a whole.

*ḥꜥj.t* the goddess representing the south, assumed the role of supporting the sky from this cardinal direction, *ḥj.t* personified the north, *fꜣj.t* represented the west and *wꜣj.t* embodied the east. Together, these four goddesses constituted the divine beings responsible for upholding the celestial heaven at its respective cardinal points. *ḥꜥj.t*, the goddess of the south in ancient Egyptian mythology, played a pivotal role in supporting and elevating the celestial heavens. As one of the four goddesses responsible for upholding the sky, she specifically focused on the southern side. Her function involved lifting and maintaining the southern region of the sky, ensuring the balance and stability of the cosmic order.

**Aim of the research:** - Study the Significance of Goddess *ḥꜥj.t* in Ancient Egypt. - Shedding Light on the scenes depicting her presence and role in Ancient Egypt. - Analysis the diverse representations and manifestations of *ḥꜥj.t* in ancient Egyptian scenes and temples.

## Introduction:

To the ancient Egyptians, the sky held profound significance as a tangible realm parallel to the earthly domain. It was perceived as a celestial habitat inhabited by a pantheon of gods and goddesses, who wielded power and provided protection to the mortal realm. The sky served as a conduit between the earthly plane and the afterlife, enabling the souls to traverse their journey under the guidance of celestial bodies. The stars, perceived as celestial markers, assumed a crucial role as guiding lights for the souls navigating their path in the afterlife. These celestial luminaries, along with the sun, were symbols of rebirth, embodying the cyclical nature of existence. The Egyptians held a profound reverence for the sun, which represented vitality, regeneration, and the eternal cycle of life. Its rising and setting were emblematic of death and resurrection, evoking notions of divine transcendence. Practically, the sky held practical significance for the ancient Egyptians. It served as a timekeeping mechanism, allowing them to track the passage of days, seasons, and years. By observing the celestial bodies, such as the sun, moon, and stars, they were able to ascertain the cycles of nature, predict the annual flooding of the Nile, and determine the appropriate timing for agricultural activities. The sky, therefore, played a pivotal role in their agricultural practices, shaping their livelihood and survival (Parker, 1974, p. 51-54).

In ancient Egyptian cosmology, the concept of the sky being supported by pillars or a supporting pole 𓂏 was deeply ingrained in their religious and symbolic system. The sign 𓂏 was frequently used as a determinative in hieroglyphic writings for the word *shn.t* 𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏 which denoted a pillar, support, or column to indicate the idea of support or stability. In certain instances, the determinative for *shn.t* appeared multiple times, either twice 𓂏𓂏, three times 𓂏𓂏𓂏, or even four times 𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏, highlighting the plural nature of these pillars. The term *shnwt* 𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏; 𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏(𓂏)𓂏𓂏 *shnw nt pt* referred specifically to the four pillars of the sky or the four supporters of the sky. (Faulkner, 2017, p. 297; Gardiner, 1957, p.496; Wb III, p.471-472.).

These pillars were seen as integral to maintaining the celestial realm and upholding its structure. The presence of multiple determinatives for *shn.t* emphasized the importance and strength of these pillars, signifying their firmness, stability, and unwavering nature. In the Pyramid Texts, *shn.t* was depicted as 𓂏𓂏 or 𓂏𓂏, a single pillar with the additional determinative of a stone, 𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏 *mn .f m pt mi dw mi shn.t* “may rest in heaven, as a mountain, as a support” (Mercer, 1952, p.393 “1559 c”; Blok, 1928, p.267). This inclusion of a stone determinative further emphasized the concept of solidity and durability, suggesting that the pillars supporting the sky were unyielding and enduring. Additionally, another term mentioned in the texts related to holding or lifting up the sky is *ifd* 𓂏𓂏 (Wb I, p.71), which translates to “the four corners”. The concept of the four corners *ifd* or sides of the sky, is evident in the texts of Esna Temple, the patron god Khnum-Re, known for his creative power and limitless abilities, is depicted as placing or establishing the corners of the sky : 𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏 *di .f ifd n gbtj* (Wb V, p.162) “He places the four corners of the heaven” (Sauneron, 1963, p.80, Nr. 31 “48-50”)



Additionally, *ḥḥt* may also be depicted as a lion-headed serpent, intertwining the divine attributes of both goddesses.

### I. *ḥḥt* in the New Kingdom

#### Doc.1: *ḥḥt* in the *imy dw3t*

The earliest attestation of *ḥḥt* can be traced back to the New Kingdom, where she is mentioned in the *imy dw3t*, she is depicted alongside other deities as a standing goddess, positioned in the upper register, the fourth scene of the 10<sup>th</sup> hour. Among the group of deities known as the eight “*shmw*” goddesses, who serve as guardians of the Eye of Horus, *ḥḥt* holds the second position. Her portrayal signifies her important role and divine status within the Egyptian religious and cosmological framework of that time (fig.1 a, b). In the textual sequence where *ḥḥt* is mentioned, her name precedes *tm3t* - “ who with strong arm” (LGG VII, p.465) and follows *Irt t3 tnn* “the deeds created” (LGG I, p. 531; Hornung, 1994, p.713 no.707).



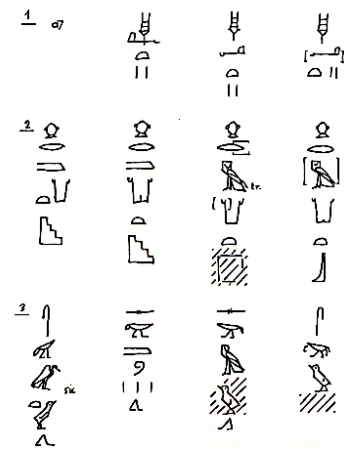
#### Doc. 2: *ḥḥt* in the Book of the Night

*ḥḥt* is also referenced in the Book of the Night, the text found inscribed in tombs dating back to the New Kingdom, including those of Thutmose I and III, Amenhotep I, Seti I, and Ramesses VI. The tomb of Ramesses VI impressively showcasing exceptional preservation of a complete versions of the Book of the Night.

#### Doc. 2 a: The seventh gate of the night “the eighth hour” (fig.2 a, b)

In the second half of the ceiling within the Sarcophagus Hall I of the tomb of Ramesses VI a remarkable depiction of the sky goddess Nut can be observed. Nut portrays in a bent position, arching over the earth. Within the space created by her outstretched arms and legs, significant texts and illustrations of the Book of Night are prominently displayed. The area dedicated to these sacred texts is meticulously organized, with rectangular divisions delineated by extensive vertical bands of inscriptions representing the eleven *Sebehets* or gates.

In the second register of the of the ceiling, *ḥḥt* is depicted as a male with a lion-headed human body. This unique and striking representation highlights her divine nature and her connection to powerful feline symbolism. Her human body is depicted in a standing position, conveying her presence and importance in the scene. before her stands *hry mk3t* “who is on the substructure” (LGG V,p.364) and *sšmw* “the leader”. (Roulin,1996-II, p. 101(1); Piankoff , 1954, p. 420, taf. 194; Piankoff, 1942, p.60, 61)



**Doc. 2 b:** The ninth gate “the tenth hour” (fig.2 a, c)

In the uppermost section of the ceiling, showcases five deities depicted as human males, arranged in a deliberate order:  $\square \square$  hpn “servant of R<sup>c</sup>, who brings him food” (LGG IV, p.801; Wb II,p.489),  $\text{𓆎} \text{𓆏} \text{𓆐}$  *ḥj.t*, *nfrt nfrt*  $\text{𓆑} \text{𓆒} \text{𓆓}$ ,  $\square \square$  *phrr hr .f* “who runs with his arm” (LGG III,p.102)  $\square \square$  *htjw ntrw* “the follower of the gods” (LGG V,p.968; Roulin,1996-II,p.138(8); Piankoff,1954, p.424, taf.195; Piankoff, 1942, p.71)



**Doc. 2 c:**

*ḥj.t* among the nearly 50 depicted, assumes the form of a lion-headed goddess holding and raising a knife. Positioned in the sequence of deities, she follows  $\text{𓆔} \text{𓆕}$  “the one belonging to the goat”(LGG II, p.177), who is portrayed as a standing god wielding a knife, and precedes *p3ḥw*  $\text{𓆖}$  “?” (LGG III, p.28) depicted as a lion-headed goddess also holding a knife (fig. 2 d). The representation of *ḥj.t* as a lion-headed goddess with a raised knife conveys her formidable and protective attributes. This depiction emphasizes her role as a guardian and defender, symbolizing her ability to confront and repel threats to cosmic order and the sanctity of the space. (Piankoff, 1954, taf. 156)

## II. *ḥj.t* in Graeco - Roman temples

### II.I. Dandara temple:

The ceiling of the temple is renowned for its intricate and well-preserved astronomical and mythological reliefs which has significant historical and artistic value. It offers valuable insights into ancient Egyptian cosmology, mythology, and religious practices. *ḥj.t*, *hjt*, *ḥjt* and *tw3jt* depicted in multiple locations within the temple, all engaged in the act of lifting the sky. Her specific function is associated with supporting the sky from the southern side. The representation of *ḥj.t* and the other goddesses lifting the sky emphasizes their pivotal role in maintaining the celestial order and upholding the cosmic balance. The act of raising the sky symbolizes their collective effort to sustain the heavens and ensure the harmony of the universe.

**Doc. 3: South niche, right side of the base of the door frame (fig.3)**

The scene depicts the four goddesses *ḥj.t*, *hjt*, *ḥjt* and *tw3jt*, each represented in the form of a female body wearing a tight dress, engaged in the act of raising the sky. These goddesses are depicted facing each other in pairs, forming a symmetrical arrangement. The tight dresses worn by the goddesses highlight their feminine form and may symbolize their role as nurturers and sustainers of the cosmic order. By lifting the sky, they are participating in the ongoing process of upholding and supporting the heavens. (Chassinat, 1935, p.33 (5), Tafel. 176)

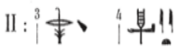
Text of *ḥj.t*:



*rśy ḥj.t dd mdw in ḥj.t s ḥc n .i hr pt n wbn m nb sk3 .i st .s r. t3w hr wbn. .s im .s m ḥ3t psdt r. m33 tw .s m pt*

*ḥꜥj.t* of the south , recitation by *ḥꜥj.t* , I hold the sky high to the one who brighten the gold, I lift up her throne to the wind because it shine above it on the head of the Ennead goddess until it is seen in the sky.

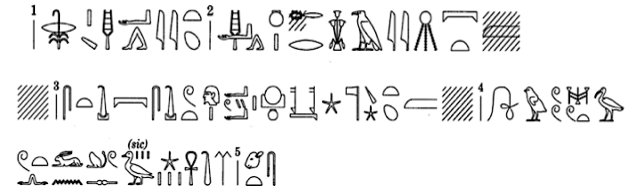
**Doc. 4: Sanctuary of Hathor**, the base of the exterior door frame (fig.4)

In the sanctuary of Hathor, at the base of the exterior door frame, there is a depiction of the four female goddesses. They are shown with their arms raised holding the *pt* sign, The depiction of these goddesses at the base of the exterior door frame suggests that they played a protective and auspicious role in the entryway to the sacred space of the sanctuary. Their presence would have been seen as a blessing and a symbol of divine guidance for those entering the sanctuary to seek the blessings of Hathor.  *ḥꜥj.t rsy* which means *ḥꜥj.t* of the south is inscribed before her. (Chassinat, 1935, p.86 (17), Tafel. 190)

**Doc. 5: Scene from the ceiling of the Osirian chapel (pronaos of the eastern Osirian chapel no.2 )** (fig.5 a, b)

The depiction of the Dendera Zodiac on the ceiling of Temple is indeed one of its most famous and iconic features, it was also called as “the Zodiac of Osiris” due to its location. It is a circular relief that represents a map of the stars and constellations as observed from the perspective of ancient Egyptians. It is circular in shape and consists of twelve sectors or divisions, each representing one month of the year. Within each division, various celestial figures and symbols are depicted. These include gods, goddesses, mythical creatures, and celestial bodies such as the sun, moon, and planets. Each figure represents a specific constellation or astronomical phenomenon. The scene showcases our four female deities standing together and supporting the celestial vault. This particular representation signifies the act of upholding the sky or maintaining the separation between the heavens and the earth, each one of them positioned on one side of the cardinal points (north, south, east, and west). The four female deities are depicted raising their arms and supporting the celestial vault, by doing so, they contribute to the stability and harmony of the universe.

The presence of the standing humans with falcon's heads suggests that they are assisting the four female deities in their task of lifting the sky. These figures may be interpreted as manifestations of “*ḥḥw* god” or related deities who possess the strength and power necessary to aid in the maintenance of cosmic order. They provide additional support and strength to ensure the successful elevation of the celestial vault, safeguarding the balance between the heavens and the earth. (Park, 2012,p.177-178; Cauville,1997, p.175 [7])


The text of *ḥꜥj.t* : 

*ršj ḥꜥj.t ḥꜥ . n j ḥr ḥ3yt m //// smnt smn .tw tp ʿwy .i 3ḥt nt š3ḥ špd.t m //// w3 .tw ikr .tw n wn pḥwy .s b3w ntrw ʿnh .ti m - ḥnt .s*

*ḥꜥj.t* of the south, I am standing carrying the sky in ..., the sky is placed firm on my arms, the horizon of the south sky “horizon of Orion and Sothis” in //// installed in a perfect way which has no end, the souls of the gods are living in it.

**Doc. 6: North wall of the eastern Osirian chapel no. 3** (fig.6 a, b and c)

The master scene on the foundation of the north wall of the chapel combines elements of cosmology, mythology, and religious beliefs. It highlights the interconnectedness of various deities, their roles in cosmic balance, and the belief in life's cyclical nature. It depicts the goddesses representing the four cardinal points lifting up the *pt* sign of the sky. Above it, Osiris is depicted lying inside his grave, the presence of his large phallus can be interpreted as a representation of his regenerative power and association with fertility, it symbolizes his role in the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The two figures mourning over Osiris are his sisters and wives, Isis and Nephtys. Their presence signifies their grief and devotion to Osiris, emphasizing the emotional and mythical significance of the scene. (Cauville,1997,199 [5])

The text of *ḥꜥj.t* :   
*ršjt dd mdw in ḥꜥj.t ḥꜥ .tw hr š ḥsp ////*

That of the south, recitation by *ḥꜥj.t* who is standing and holding the garden basin, where the image of Osiris lies.

**Doc.7: Ceiling of the eastern Osirian chapel no. 3** (fig.7)

In this scene, the goddesses representing the four cardinal points are depicted in pairs, facing each other. They are shown raising the *pt* sign. Above the goddesses, the prominent figure of the goddess Nut is portrayed in her characteristic bent position, with her body arching over the scene. From her outstretched arms, the sun disk emerges, symbolizing the birth of the sun each day and its journey across the sky. This scene showcases the important role of the goddesses in upholding the cosmic order and maintaining the separation between the earthly realm and the heavens. The positioning of the goddesses in opposing pairs suggests a balance and harmony in the cosmic forces they represent. (Cauville,1997, p.253 [5])

The text of *ḥꜥj.t* : 


*dd mdw in ḥꜥj.t ḥꜥ tw hr ipt di - nrt smn .tw tp dnn.s .s w3 .tw r ikr iwtt wnn  
 ////////////// ḥm3 .tw .s /// wn .tw iwtt rw hr st .s r rmnj ḥꜥj.t hr ḥ ršjt*

Recitation by *ḥꜥj.t* the one who is standing carrying the sky, the sky is placed on her head, held perfectly without hurrying without moving from her place, to hold the sky from the southern side

**Doc. 8: Hathor Temple, behind the Naos, the eastern side of the outside part** (fig.8)

In this scene, *ḥꜥj.t* is depicted as the central figure, raising up the sky and holding the *pt* sign adorned with stars. Above her, a winged sun disk is prominently displayed. Positioned in front of the goddess is the god *Hr bhdt*, seated and holding a *w3s* scepter in his left hand and the

ḥnh sign in his right hand. The female goddess represents the power and responsibility of lifting and supporting the sky alone, her action of holding the *pt* sign adorned with stars symbolizes her control and influence over the cosmic forces and celestial bodies. The winged sun disk positioned above the goddess emphasizes the solar aspect of the scene, representing the sun's transcendent nature and its association with divine power and enlightenment. (Cauville, 2007, p.18). The text of ḥḥj.t :


  
 ḥḥj.t ršj nw ḥḥj.t tw3 ḥr pt n Hr bhḏty ntr ʿ3 nb pt

ḥḥj.t of the south , the one who is holding up the sky for ḥr bhḏty, the great god, lord of the sky

### Doc.9: Hathor Temple, Frieze of the north wall of the offering room (fig.9 a, b)

In the west section of the lower register, ḥḥj.t is depicted with the unique form of a lion-headed serpent. Her name is mentioned in the first row alongside 19 other goddesses, suggesting her membership in a larger divine assembly or group. aHaj.t stands before *nbt k3t* and after *ḥwt ḥr* in the 4<sup>th</sup> of *šmw 28* “ the summer – the harvest time”. (Chassinat, 1972, p.100 [16])

The portrayal of the goddess as a lion-headed serpent holds significant symbolism within the ancient Egyptian religious and mythological framework. By incorporating both the lion and serpent attributes, the goddess embodies a range of qualities and symbolism, she represents a formidable and powerful deity, associated with protection, strength, wisdom, and regeneration. Her lion-headed form signifies her ability to safeguard and watch over devotees, while the serpent element emphasizes her connection to transformative and regenerative forces.

### Doc. 10: Hypostyle Hall of Hathor Temple (fig.10)

Within the Hypostyle Hall of the Hathor Temple at Dandara, a remarkable section of the astronomical ceiling captures the attention. Specifically, in the first band west from the center, a detailed scene unfolds, portraying the celestial journey of Osiris, who represents the full moon. Seated upon a throne, Osiris sails across the sky in a boat, accompanied by the goddesses Nephthys on the left and Isis on the right. The goddess *m3t* stands near the bow of the ship, symbolizing the concept of cosmic balance and harmony. Directly above Osiris, a winged scarab holding a *šn* ring, ḥnh and *w3s* scepter is depicted, while flanking him are the goddess *nḥbt* on the right side and *w3dt* on the left side. The starry sky, upon which the moon boat sails, is upheld by the four goddesses of the cardinal points. Their names are inscribed before each of them, denoting their respective roles in supporting and maintaining the celestial expanse. (Neugebauer, 1969, pl. 49).

### Doc.11: The astronomical ceiling at the Pronaos (fig.11)

In the second band east from the center of the astronomical ceiling, a significant scene unfolds. ḥḥj.t is depicted as a female figure, raising up the sky and holding the *pt* sign adorned with stars. Above her, the winged sun disk is prominently displayed. As she lifts the sky, she ensures the harmony and stability of the universe. Her act of holding the sign of the sky, embellished with stars, further highlights her connection to the celestial forces and the heavenly bodies that adorn the night sky. This scene on the astronomical ceiling illustrates the ancient Egyptians'

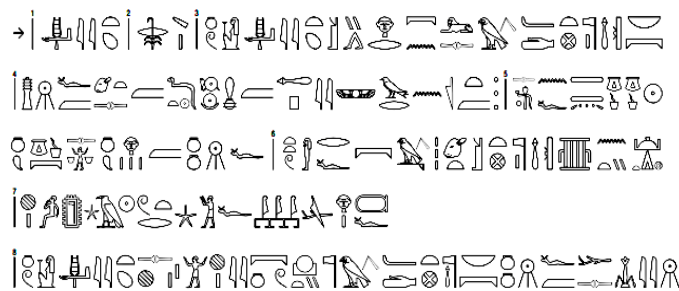


deep understanding of the interplay between the celestial and earthly realms. (Neugebauer, 1969, pl.41 unten)

**Doc. 12: Isis temple at Dandara , the eastern side of the sanctuary (fig.12)**

In the fourth scene of the third row, *ḥꜥj.t* is depicted standing and lifting up the sky. Positioned above her is a winged sun disk, in front of *ḥꜥj.t*, *Hr Bḥdt* is seated, holding the *ḥꜥ* sign in his left hand and *w3s* scepter in his right. *ḥꜥj.t* represents a vital role of supporting and sustaining the sky, her act of lifting up the sky signifies her power and responsibility in maintaining the separation between the realms and upholding the cosmic balance. (Cauville, 2007, Isis, p.95-96)

The text of *ḥꜥj.t* :



*ḥꜥj.t ršj ink ḥꜥj.t wts ḥrt n nb .s Hr Bḥdt ʿ3 ntr nb pt psd m ḥnt .s m dt Rꜥ nb mi  
 ʿpy wr n. kmt shd .n .f t3wy gbgb .n .f gb.t shꜥy .n .f ḥrw m wbn .f twt rf ḥry ntrw  
 ḥnt wtst ʿ3 ntr ḥnty i3.t di ḥy ntry dw3 .tw r. dw3 .f. gsw – prw ḥr rn .f  
 ink ḥꜥj.t shy ḥyt n 3hty ḥr Bḥdt ntr ʿ3 nb pt wbn .f m w3d .n .f ḥtmn m itn*

*ḥꜥj.t* of the south , I’m *ḥꜥj.t* who holds the sky to her master *Hr Bḥdt* , the great god lord of the sky , like a sun disk always as a great winged scarab, he lighten the two lands and lifting up the “*gb.t* ;corner of the sky” and make the faces happy with his appearance, he is really a great god in Edfou , the great god in the sacred land , The holy boy whom one come early to worship and temples with his name. I am *ḥꜥj.t* who lifting up the sky to the horizon, *Hr Bḥdt* , the great god lord of the sky who shines in it.

**Doc. 13: Isis temple at Dandara, the ceiling (fig.13)**

In this artistic representation, the four goddesses are depicted in the act of elevating Nut, who symbolizes the sky or heaven. Nut is portrayed as a colossal figure of a bending woman, embodying the vast expanse of the celestial realm. The four goddesses are positioned strategically, with two of them lifting her arms and the other two supporting her legs. This arrangement symbolizes their role as the pillars or supports of the sky. The portrayal of Nut as a large bending figure signifies her connection to the overarching sky and emphasizes her importance in the cosmological beliefs of ancient Egypt. By raising Nut, the four goddesses demonstrate their responsibility in upholding and maintaining the celestial order. The goddesses, each with their distinct positions, represent the cardinal points or directions, thereby encompassing the entire sky. Their combined efforts symbolize the collective power required to support and elevate the vast expanse of the heavens. (Kurth, 1975, p.13,16 and 89)

## II.II. Edfou temple

### Doc. 14: The astronomical ceiling of the first hypostyle hall (pronaos)

In the western half of the southern scene, specifically in column “c” of the astronomical ceiling, an intriguing depiction unfolds. Two of the four deities are shown lifting up the *pt* sign of the sky on their raised arms. *f3j.t* stands alongside *ḥḥj.t*, positioned around the cartouche of King Ptolemy VIII. Within this scene, the cartouche with human arms holds the *šn* ring of surrounding and eternity, a powerful symbol in ancient Egyptian iconography. The ring symbolizes continuity, wholeness, and the eternal nature of existence (fig.14). The lifting of the *pt* sign of the sky by the deities underscores their role as celestial guardians and protectors. Both of them lifting up the sky from the south side (Kurth, 1975, p.92; Chassinat, 1928, p.259-260)





The text of *ḥḥj.t* :




*dd mdw in ḥḥj.t s ḥḥ .n.i ḥrt n Hr Bḥdty sk3 ist [f] r ntrw nb i3ḥ .f im s m wts nfrw. .f mi itn .f m. wj3 ḥwi .i hr .f hrw im .n .i wrd mi r<sup>c</sup> nb isw iri m ḥḥ dd w3s n nswt bitj (Ptolemy VIII)*

recitation by *ḥḥj.t* , I hold the sky for *Hr Bḥdt* , I lift up his throne on all the goddess until he shines in his boat. Like his sun disk in the sun bark (in the sky), my arms hold it and stay under him every day without being tired, the prize for that is the eternal life. The reign is for the king of upper and lower Egypt, Ptolemy VIII

### Doc. 15: The southern wall of the first hypostyle hall








In this scene (fig.15), *ḥḥj.t* is depicted as the personification of the sixth hour of the day (Wb I, p.223 “10”), which is the midday hour when the sun is at its zenith and Ra, the solar deity, is at his most powerful (Wilson, 1997, p.319; Chassinat,1928 , p.220 ;1928,pl. LXXI). She stands gracefully, adorned with a long head dress that extends down to her shoulders. With her arms raised upward, she assumes a posture of significance and authority. On her head, she wears a distinctive headdress adorned with a star enclosed within a circle, symbolizing celestial forces and divine power “the sign of *dw3.t*”. The goddess is positioned among other gods, she is standing after Bastet <sup>13</sup> , *dḥwty* <sup>14</sup> , *R<sup>c</sup> Bḥdt* <sup>15</sup>  and Horus <sup>16</sup>  that suggesting her association and interaction with the divine pantheon.

The inscription after her : 

### II. III. Esna temple

#### Doc.16: The northern (right) side of the Ptolemaic façade

*ḥj.t* , along with three other goddesses, is referenced in the great second hymn to Khnum at Esna Temple. Between the end of line 48 and the beginning of line 50 in the hymn, the names of these goddesses are mentioned. They are depicted as the divine figures responsible for lifting the sky in its four cardinal directions. (Sauneron, 1963, p.80, Nr. 31 “48-50”). The names of three goddesses representing the cardinal points are explicitly mentioned, while the fourth goddess is not specifically named (in line 49), but even though the fourth goddess is not mentioned by name, her presence can be assumed to complete the set of four cardinal points (Daressy, 1905, p.189-190; Kurth,1975, p. 91).

The hymn tells that the creator god (Khnum-R<sup>c</sup>) sails in the sky by his divine boat first southward in order to construct or establish  *mn* the southern pillar of the sky, the goddess , then he sails northward to place  *rdi* , the northern pillar of the sky, the goddess  *hj.t* , then he comes  *iw* to the west (in order to do something similar missing in the hieroglyphic origin of the text) for the limit of the western support of the sky, the goddess  *f3j.t* , at last he sails towards the east in order to place  *rdi* the eastern support of the sky, the goddess *tw3j.t*.



*ḥd. n. f ršy r mn ḥj.t ḥd. n. f mḥt r rdi hj.t iw.n.f llll drw f3j.t i3btt is r rdit tw3j.t*



He (Khnum) sails southward to establish *ḥj.t*, he sails northward to place *hj.t*, he comes to [...] the limits (border) of *f3j.t*, the east to place *tw3j.t*

### II.IV. Kom Ombo temple

#### Doc. 17: Ceiling of the temple (fig. 16 a,b)

The ceilings of Kom Ombo Temple are adorned with intricate and colorful reliefs. These reliefs depict various mythological and religious scenes, as well as astronomical and astrological symbols. Within the ceiling of the Hypostyle Hall, a captivating scene unfolds the four goddesses portrayed as women, their raised hands signifying their role in upholding the celestial expanse. (De Morgan, 1894, p.256, pl. 323)

### II.V. Altar from Isis temple at Wad Ben Naga<sup>2</sup>

**Doc.18:** Sandstone altar (H.116 cm, w.84 cm ,l. 84 cm ),dated to the Meroitic period , reign of Natakamani  and Amanitore <sup>3</sup>, now part of the inventory of the Egyptian


<sup>2</sup> an ancient town of the Kushitic Kingdom of Meroë in present-day Sudan

<sup>3</sup> The reign of Natakamani and Amanitore can be with no doubt marked as one of the most prosperous periods of the Meroitic kingdom. The king and the queen were responsible for the building, enlargement, and restoration of

Museum and Papyrus collection in Berlin (PM 7, p.263; LD V, p. 336ff.; Naethe, 2014, p.140-141). The Prussian Expedition lead by Lepsius visited the site of Wad Ben Naga near the 6<sup>th</sup> cataract in 1844. There they found a destroyed temple of Isis in island of Meroe at Wad Ben Naga, in which three sandstone altars were still in place. The block represents a chapel and serves as a stand for the bark of the god or for his cult statue. The four sides have a relief depiction of a winged sun disc, there are four similar scenes, the two goddesses are holding up the starry sky with their arms (fig. 17 a-c). The sky is supported by two female goddesses and by the king and queen.

The queen Amanitore is shown dressed in a long kilt, a double collar necklace on her chest and has an *uraeus* on her head with earrings and a headdress with a ribbon. She is with short hair and voluminous body representing the Meroitic ideal in contrast to the more Egyptianized goddess with the slim body and the long hair. The male figure on the altar is the king Natakamani, he is dressed in a short kilt with a bull's tail. His head is decorated by a *uraeus*, large earrings and a long ribbon, he has a collar necklace on his chest.

In front and behind the king and queen, the names are written, in cartouches. Unique is that one of the names, the throne name is written in Egyptian hieroglyphs, the birth name is written in Meroitic hieroglyphs however in the longer vertical inscription the birth name is again written in Egyptian hieroglyphs. The other two sides of the altar has the figures of *tw3j.t* who is connected here to the north instead of her usual direction (the east) and the goddess *h<sup>c</sup>.j.t*, the midday goddess who connected to the south. The names of the goddess are in front of their heads, and the labels relating to the cardinal directions are behind their heads. The texts accompanying the figures are an invocation to the goddess Isis. (Naethe, 2014, p. 141)

  
*šm<sup>c</sup>.j h<sup>c</sup>.j.t h<sup>c</sup>.n (j) hr.pt tn Is.t dj h<sup>c</sup>.n hr .n (j) s.t s r km3 nms s m s m wi3 s*  
*mj jtn m msktt*

*h<sup>c</sup>.j.t* of Upper Egypt, I hold up the heavens for Isis, who gives life. Through me is her place more distant than that of her creator. May she glow in it in her bark, like the sun disc in *msktt*-bark.” (Virtal, 2015, p.470-471)

In a notable observation, it becomes apparent that *h<sup>c</sup>.j.t* assumes the title of the “Goddess of Upper Egypt” rather than the traditional one as the “Goddess of the South”. This variation in her assigned title brings forth intriguing implications and highlights a shift in her perceived domain, the title of “Goddess of Upper Egypt” suggests a broader jurisdiction and expanded sphere of authority for her.

### Conclusion:

- *h<sup>c</sup>.j.t*, the ancient Egyptian goddess played a crucial role in sustaining and elevating the celestial heavens from its southern side. Among the goddesses *h<sup>j</sup>.t*, *f3j.t* and *tw3j.t* tasked with upholding the sky, she held a specific responsibility for the southern aspect.

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numerous temples from Faras in Lower Nubia in the north, to Wad Ben Naga and Naqa in the south.(Virtal, 2015, p.465)

- The scenes within the research illustrate a symbolic representation of ancient Egyptian cosmology, emphasizing the concept of cosmic balance and order. By depicting the female deities working together to lift the celestial vault, the scene conveys the belief that the gods and goddesses maintain the equilibrium between the earthly and divine realms. The act of raising their hands and holding the sky symbolizes the goddesses' role in supporting and elevating the cosmic forces, highlighting their responsibility for upholding celestial order and preserving the universe's balance. This act not only signifies their contribution to maintaining cosmic stability but also underscores their protective role. By ensuring the steadfastness of the celestial vault, these deities safeguard the world, guaranteeing its continuity and prosperity.
- The presence of *ḥꜥt* spans various historical periods, but it is within the Graeco-Roman period that her depictions flourish and find their most prolific expression within the scenes in the Egyptian temples. She manifests in a multitude of forms, each representing different aspects of her divine nature, she appears in various iconic depictions, ranging from a human female form (Docs. 1, 3 – 17) to a human with a lion's head ( Docs. 2 a ,c) and even as a lion-headed serpent. These distinct representations highlight her diverse roles and attributes within the Egyptian religious pantheon.

In her human female form, *ḥꜥt* embodies the essence of femininity and power. Often depicted in a standing position, she exudes grace and authority, this portrayal emphasizes her connection to the celestial realm and her pivotal role in upholding the heavens. In some instances, she adorns her head with a star (Doc. 15) encircled in a symbolic of *imy dw3t*, symbolizing her celestial power and association with the celestial bodies.

When represented with a lion's head, *ḥꜥt* takes on a more fierce and protective aspect (Docs. 2 a, c), this hybrid form combines the regal qualities of a lion with the wisdom and divine nature of a goddess. It represents her guardianship and her ability to ward off malevolent forces. This form signifies her role as a powerful deity capable of defending and preserving cosmic order. Additionally, *ḥꜥt* occasionally appears as a lion-headed serpent, blending the attributes of both a fearsome predator and a creature associated with rebirth and transformation. This manifestation symbolizes her connection to the cycles of life, death, and renewal. The serpent imagery also underscores her association with wisdom, hidden knowledge, and the underworld.

- *ḥꜥt*, exhibits a fascinating array of attributes through her choice of symbolic objects. In certain depictions, she is depicted holding a knife (Doc.2 c), while in others, she wields a scepter (Doc.1). However, the most prevalent motif associated with *ḥꜥt* is her outstretched arms, lifted high to support and hold the sign of the sky (Docs. 3-14,17) and in certain scenes she was observed assuming a prayer-like posture by raising her arms (Docs. 15,16). When portrayed holding a knife, *ḥꜥt* conveys a sense of power and authority. The knife represents her ability to defend and protect, serving as a symbol of her strength in safeguarding the cosmic order. This depiction underscores her role as a guardian and reinforces her significance in upholding the celestial realms. In scenes where *ḥꜥt* holds a scepter, she embodies the regal aspects of her divinity. The scepter signifies her sovereignty and divine authority, emphasizing her role as a ruler and protector. This portrayal highlights her dominion over cosmic forces and her ability to

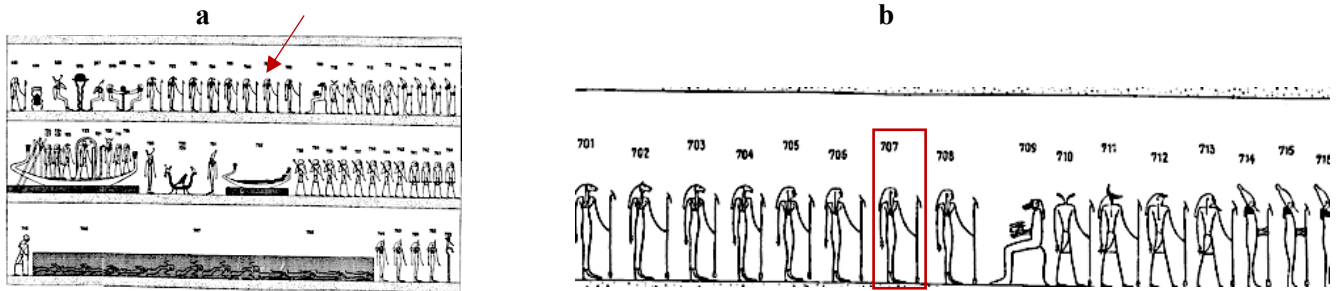
maintain harmony within the celestial spheres. However, it is the imagery of *ḥꜥj.t* raising her hands to hold the sign of the sky that prevails in the majority of her representations. This gesture represents her pivotal role in upholding and supporting the celestial heavens.

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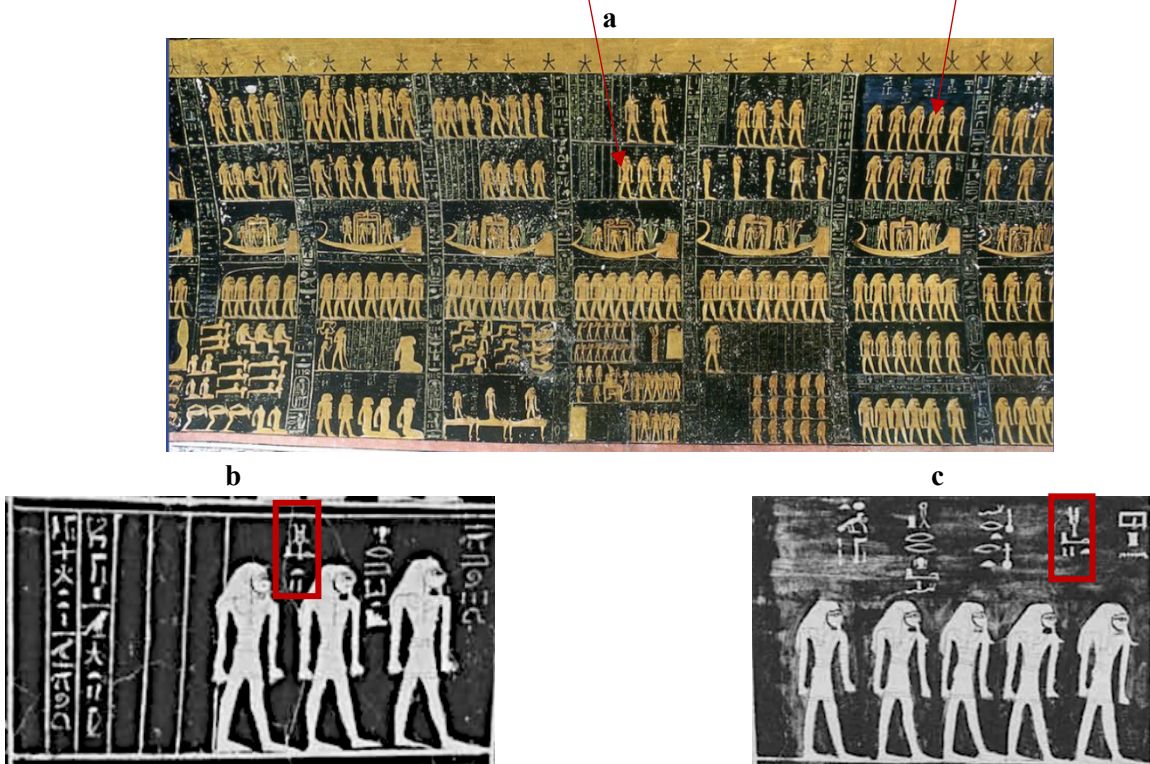
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Fig. 1



(Hornung, 2007, p.171 no.707)

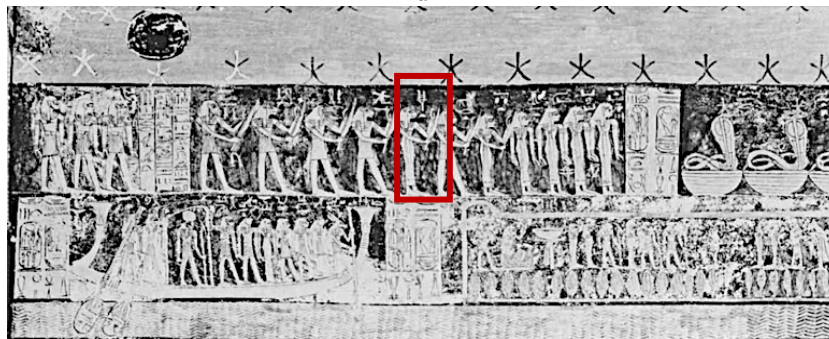
Fig. 2



(Piankoff, 1954, taf. 194)

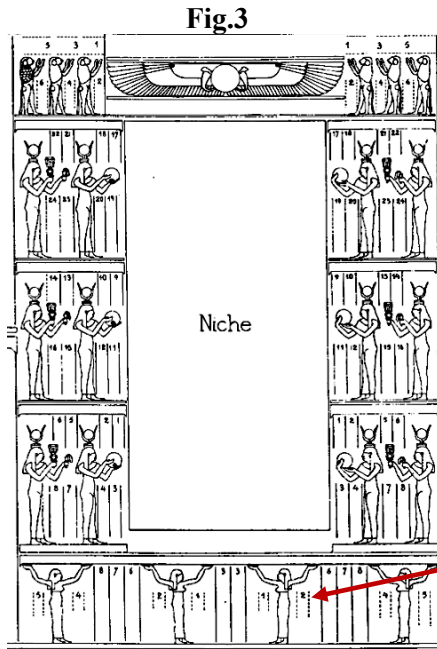
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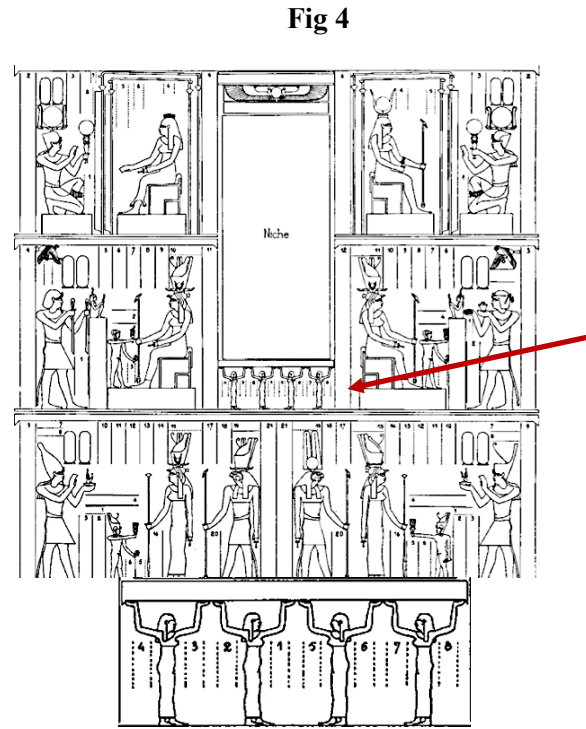


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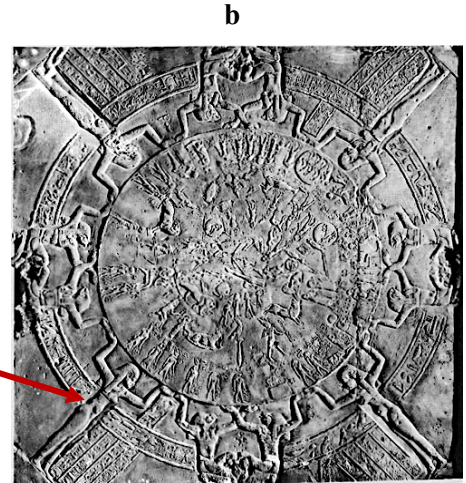


(Chassinat, 1935, Tafel. 176)



(Chassinat, 1935, Tafel. 190)

Fig.5



(Cauville, 1997, pl. 86)

Fig. 6

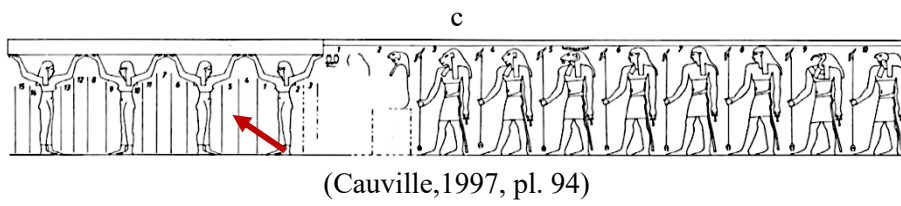
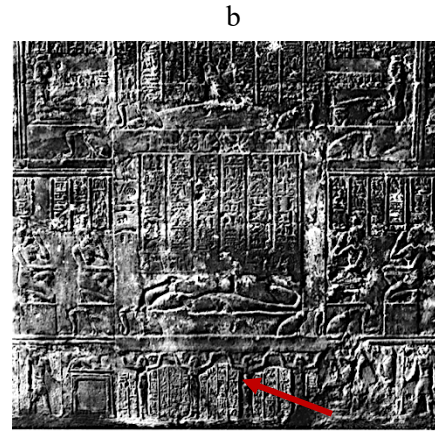
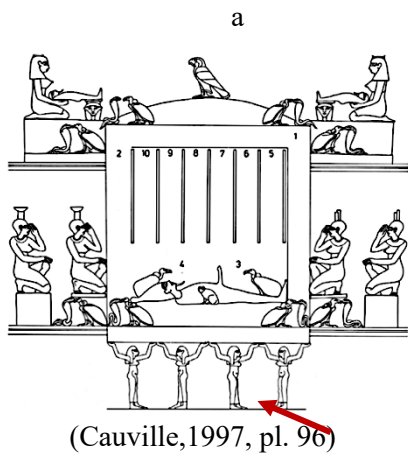


Fig.7

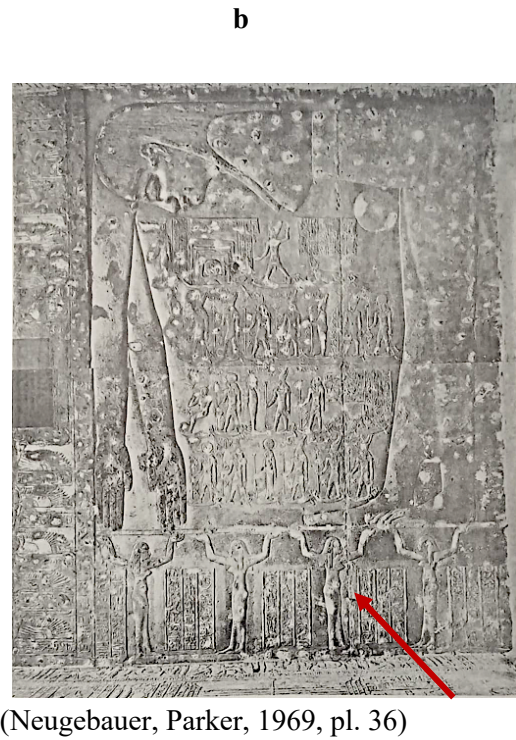
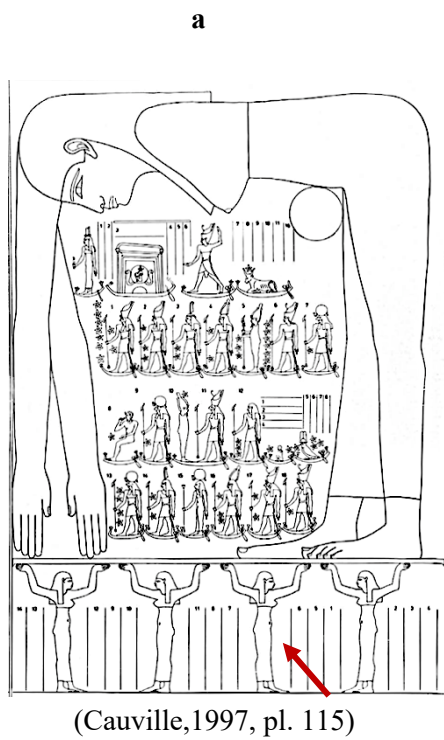


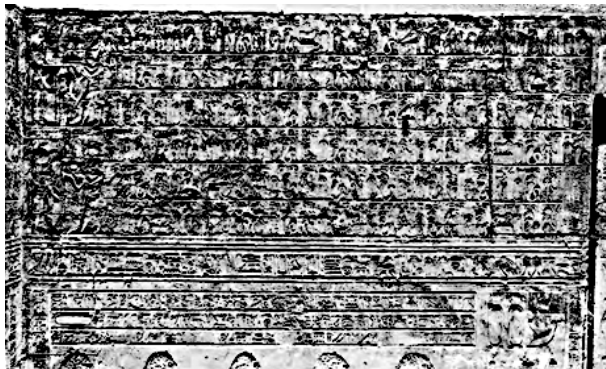
Fig. 8



(Cauville, 2007, pl. 15)

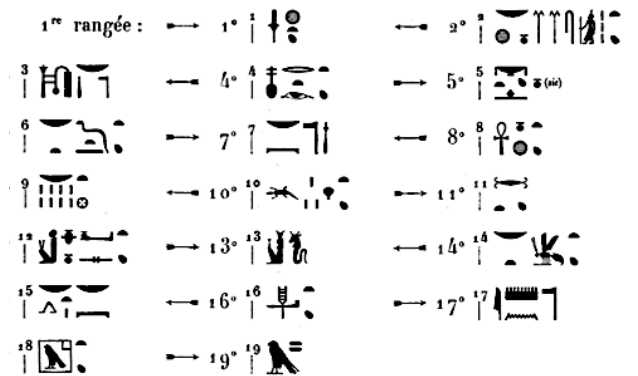
Fig. 9

a



(Chassinat, 1972 , pl. DCXXIX)

b



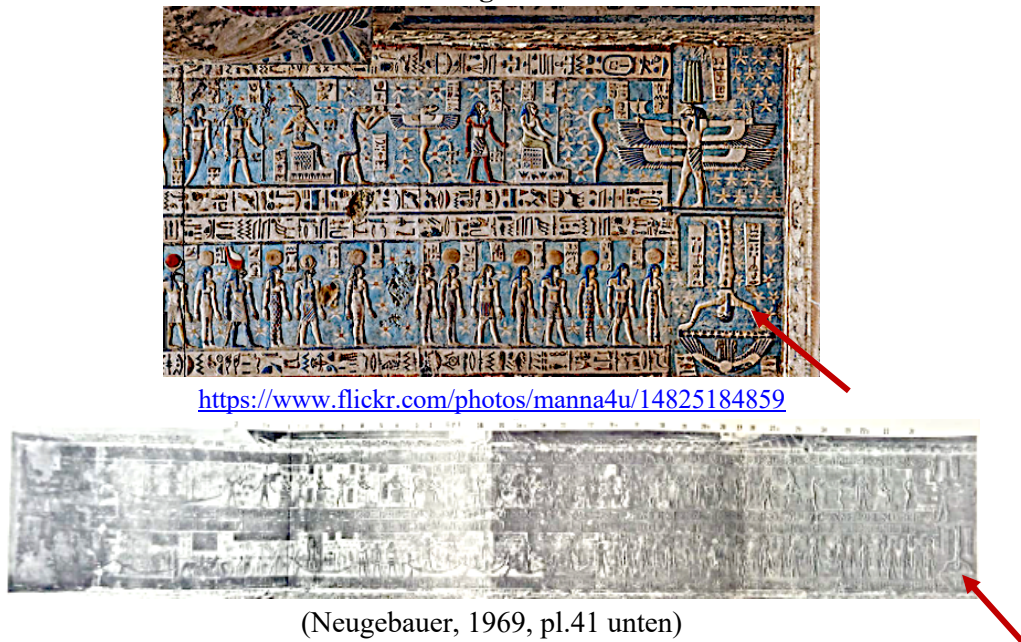
(Chassinat, 1972 , p. 100, no. 16)

Fig.10



(Neugebauer,1969, pl. 49)

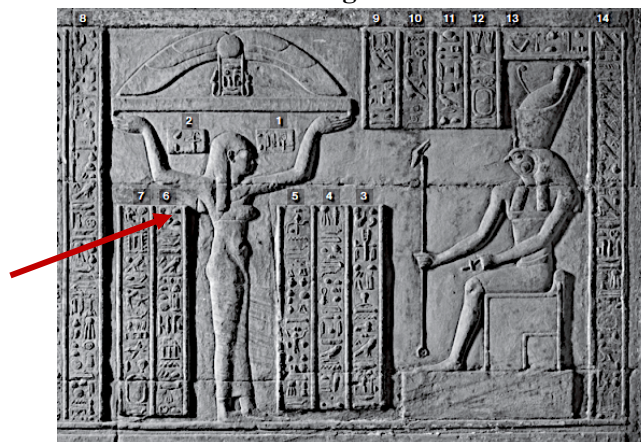
Fig.11



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/manna4u/14825184859>

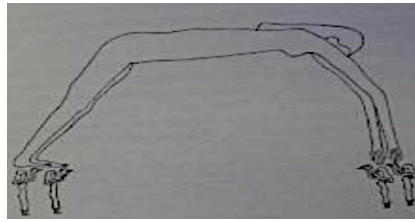
(Neugebauer, 1969, pl.41 unten)

Fig.12



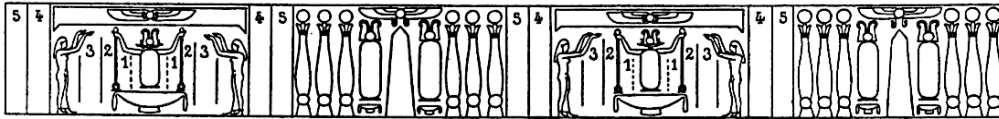
(Cauville, 2007, Isis, pl. 99)

Fig.13



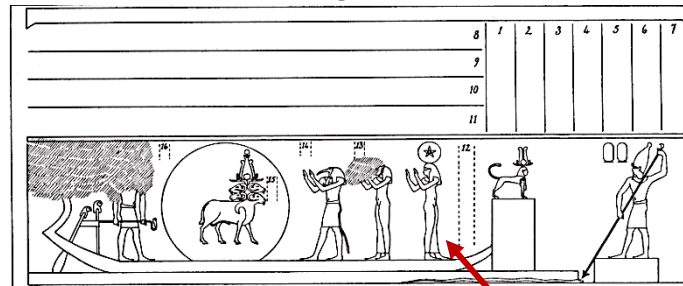
(Kurth, 1975,89)

Fig.14



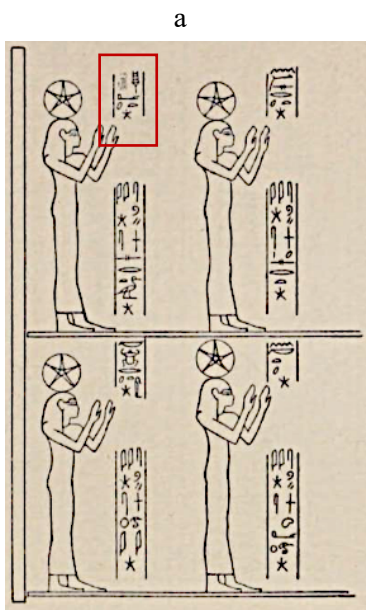
(Chassinat, 1928, Fig.1)

Fig. 15



(Chassinat, 1929, pl. LXXI)

Fig.16



(De morgan, 1894, p.256, pl. 323)

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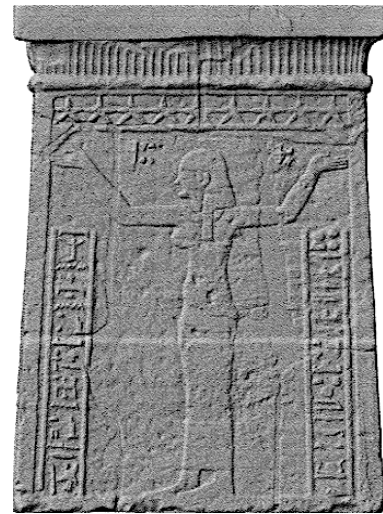
Fig.17

a



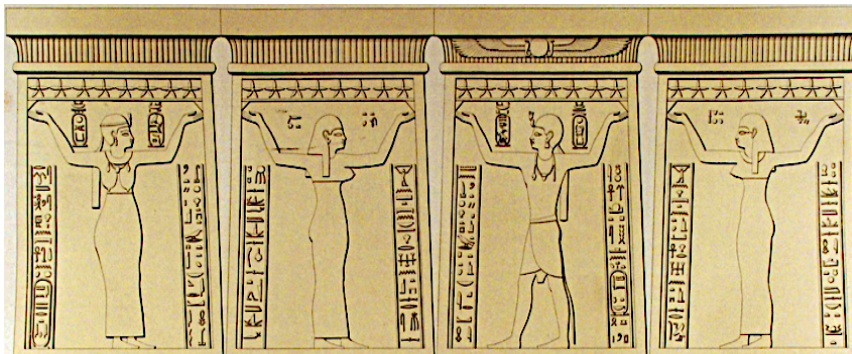
(Virtal, 2015, fig. 3, p. 471)

b



(Naethe, 2014, p. 141)

c



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## ملخص اللغة العربية

## عحاييت ؛ آلهة رفع السماء الجنوبية

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يحمل مفهوم دعامات السماء الأربعة أو أركان الزوايا الأربعة للسماء أهمية دينية وكونية كبيرة في النصوص المصرية القديمة ؛ وقد تم تصوير هذه الكيانات الأربعة على أنها آلهة أنثوية تجسد الدعامات السماوية. إن تمثيل هذه الآلهات كشخصيات متكاملة في المعابد البطلمية والرومانية يزيد من ترسيخ أهميتها ووجودها الدائم. إن فكرة دعامات السماء الأربعة كآلهة أنثوية تعكس الإيمان المصري القديم بالآلهات وارتباطها و دورها في الاستقرار الكوني. تعتبر هذه الآلهة ركائز أساسية، تحمل القبول السماوي وتحافظ على نظام وتوازن الكون و تلعب دور اساسي في الحفاظ على سلامة السماء والكون ككل.

لعبت "عحاييت"، إلهة الجنوب في الأساطير المصرية القديمة، دورًا محوريًا في دعم السماوات ورفعها. وباعتبارها واحدة من الآلهة الأربع المسؤولة عن دعم السماء، فقد ركزت بشكل خاص على الجانب الجنوبي. وشملت وظيفتها رفع ودعم المنطقة الجنوبية من السماء، وضمان توازن واستقرار النظام الكوني. يهدف البحث إلى استكشاف أهمية الإلهة عحاييت في مصر القديمة، وتسليط الضوء على المشاهد التي تصور وجودها ودورها في مصر القديمة، وتحليل مناظرها المتنوعة في المعابد المصرية القديمة.

**الكلمات الدالة:** عحاييت، آلهة الجنوب، رفع السماء، الدعامات السماوية