



Kingfisher in Ancient Egypt

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Abstract

Millions of fall emigrating birds exhausted from their long flight over the barren landscape of the Levant and the Sinai, or from their journey over the Mediterranean sea, yearly join native species in the wetlands of the Nile Delta, this is because of the location of Egypt. One of these emigrating birds are Kingfisher's family which is Known in Ancient Egypt, especially two of this bird, the first one Kingfisher (*Alcedo Atthis*) which is a common winter visitor to the lakes, streams and seashores from the old kingdom till now, plunges headlong into water from perch on branch or stone in its pursuit of fish. The second one is a pied-kingfisher (*Ceryle Rudis*) which is common resident breeding bird found on the Nile, lakes and lagoons, often hovers above water before plunging for fish, nests in holes dug into river banks. Kingfisher is one of the birds which were known in Ancient Egypt in the fowling and fishing scenes in the nobility tombs. The research aims to Study the scenes of the kingfisher in the fowling and fishing; Highlight the nature, activities and life of the bird; and Study the role of this bird in Ancient Egypt.

Introduction

Egypt is a home to a large and diverse in digenous bird population, which inhabits a wide variety of habitats. The unique geographical position acting as a bridge between the continents is the reason of why so many migrating birds are concentrated and stopped over Egypt¹. In Ancient Egypt, large number of birds especially waterfowl lives in the marshland of Delta and around the River Nile². Birds of all kinds breeding residents, overwintering and passage migrants played an important role in religious of Ancient Egyptian life³.

The large fowling expedition took place of the most part in marshes of the Delta and Fayum. As early as the late Paleolithic period, the inhabitats of the Nile region were already catching some of the migratory birds. Fowling continued during Predynastic and Historic periods⁴. From the Old Kingdom specifically at the 4th dynasty "the tomb of Queen Mersy-Ankh III" as a cult of Hathor, the ancient Egyptians enjoyed fishing and fowling⁵. The Middle Kingdom was entitled "The Pleasures of Fishing and Fowling"⁶, is indeed set in wetlands of Lower Egypt. The enjoyment of fishing and fowling was also in the New Kingdom "*shmh-ib*". As demonstrated by the frequently

of its representations in the tombs, thus indicating that the Ancient Egyptian wished to enjoy poultry in the netherworld just as they did in their lifetime⁷.

The hunting behavior is represented in Egyptian art, including that of birds⁸. In marsh scenes, many species can be seen fluttering about in the skies above the vegetation, but occasionally one peers downward in a deliberate manner or is shown fully inverted, plummeting headfirst with its wings spread⁹. These long-billed birds are pied kingfishers that hunt by hovering above rivers and scanning the waters below until they spy a fish. At that moment they dive rapidly, plunging underwater to grasp their prey in their beak¹⁰.

(I) Nature and Types of kingfisher

The kingfisher is a brightly coloured bird famous for its ability to dive brilliantly in the water. There are 114 species of kingfisher and it is divided into three subfamilies: river kingfisher, tree kingfisher, and water kingfisher. Kingfisher is found in various parts of the world, but it is more common in tropical regions¹¹.

River kingfisher (subfamily Alcedinae): or the small blue kingfishers are the most homogeneous members of kingfisher triads. They are found in East Africa, South Asia and Australia, while the European Kingfisher lives in continental Europe, with a total of 35 species. The most famous of which is the common kingfisher¹².

Water kingfisher (subfamily Cerylinae): is a large feather that lives in Africa, North America and Asia. With a total of nine species and all of them are specialized in feeding on fish. The most famous of which is the pied kingfisher¹³.

Tree kingfisher (subfamily Halcyoninae): Most tree kingfishers are found in the warm climates of Africa, Asia, and Australia and it is one of the most numerous kingfisher birds, with a total of 70 species¹⁴.

Kingfisher birds live near rivers and feed on fish. Kingfisher species live across the world far from water, and feed on small invertebrates. Kingfisher birds build their nests in the hollows on the ground, and sometimes they live in abandoned termite nests. The smallest species of kingfisher bird called the African dwarf-kingfisher, it weighs approximately 15.4 grams and is 10 centimetres long¹⁵ and the largest of these birds is the so-called giant kingfisher, it weighs approximately 360 grams and is 46 cm long, although The so-called Australian kingfisher may be one of the fattest of these species, because large individuals exceed 460 grams¹⁶.

The kingfisher nests in cavities, and many of its varieties dig holes or channels in the lands adjacent to lakes, rivers and other fresh water sources. Some of its varieties also nest in the hills that ants build, and as soon as they settle in the nest, their female lays 63 eggs on which both the father and mother are born¹⁷.

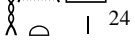

(II) Common and Pied Kingfisher:

The ancient Egyptians worshipped many creatures, especially birds¹⁸. Their tombs were decorated with several species still found in the region today, including hoopoes, swallows, and one of the most familiar of Egypt's birds: the pied kingfisher. Two species of kingfishers live along the lower Nile the common kingfisher and the pied kingfisher¹⁹.

(A) Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo Atthis*):

Local names: Sayyaad as-samak صياد السمك الأخضر , abuu mumbalad, abuu arraqs, maazuur, rafraaf²⁰.

Description: general plumage a metallic blue, the under parts; lores and patch below the eye chestnut. Crown bluish-black, spotted pale blue; throat, white; the top of the head is greenish turquoise with darker markings. The back is a brilliant cobalt blue shading into darker ultramarine blue on rump and tail. Legs are red, eyes are brown and seven inches length. It can be identified mostly by its posture: it has a relatively large head, a short neck and legs, long darter-like bill, brilliant blue upper parts and chestnut under-parts²¹. Both male and female are alike in plumage, but the female has redder on lower bill and it has a single and incomplete breast-band²². In ancient

Egyptian it is called *hntj* (the one of the canal)²³  ²⁴  ²⁵ (fig. 1)²⁶.

Distribution: North Coast, Nile Delta and Valley, Western Desert, Red Sea and North Sinai. Perhaps occasionally breeds in the country, fairly common passage and winter visitor between (late July) early August and late April²⁷.

Fishing Habits: much the same as pied kingfisher, the food is chiefly fish, in flight it hardly seems to move its wings, or they are moved so quickly that the eye doesn't catch the movement, it seems to pass along smoothly, literally like an arrow. Both species catch fish by hovering above the water and suddenly diving, catching their prey²⁸, but common kingfisher more often found in irrigation ditches and smaller waters than the large species²⁹.

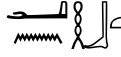


Fig.1: Common kingfisher.


After: <https://i.pinimg.com/564x/e4/db/29/e4db2903cb15e164551fdf9e47fa0be5.jpg>.
(30-12-2020)

(B) Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle Rudis*):

Local names: Sayyaad as-samak al-abqa صياد السمك الأبقع , abuu ar-raqs, ʿajjib, ʿarussa al-bahr, mulaaʿib zillu, qirillaa, shirshar³⁰.

Description: the whole plumage black and white, feathers are on the top of the head from crest, under surface white. In the male two dark bands cross the upper breast but only one in the female. Both have some thin lance-shaped black markings on the sides; black beak and legs, brown eyes and 11.5 inches length. It can be identified by its short edge crest³¹. This black and white kingfisher is a true resident in Egypt³². The pied kingfisher has the distinction of being the largest species of bird that can hover under its own wing power, kestrels and buzzards are larger, but they use the wind to keep themselves in position. Sexes alike, but the female has a single and usually incomplete breast band. It is very often depicted in a hovering position, gazing down at the water below, and this explains its ancient Egyptian name $\epsilon nhbt$ ³³ “the



one that turns around the neck³⁴” ³⁵.

Distribution: fairly common breeding resident in the Nile Delta and valley, Fayoum and up the Nile to Wadi Halfa. Also, in the Suez Canal area³⁶.

Fishing Habits: sits on banks or posts or wires whence it watches for fish. Often hovering over water for same purpose. When it stoops to a fish the wings are almost closed and complete submersion takes place. The fish, if caught, being swallowed headfirst. Cry, a vibrating whistling noise. In winter they sometimes collect into parties ranging up to twenty individuals³⁷. Kingfishers have another clever trick: unlike other members of their family, they are able to despatch and eat their prey on the wing, saving them the time and trouble of returning to their perch. This also enables them to hunt over large areas of open water³⁸. A most interesting thing about this bird is; its singular habit of hanging in mid-air, above the water, on the look-out for fish (fig. 2)³⁹.



Fig.2. Pied kingfisher.

After: <https://www.beautyofbirds.com/images/birds/kingfishers/piedkingfisher2.jpg>.
(30-12-2020)

III- Kingfisher in the Old Kingdom

Doc.1. Bas-reliefs from the mortuary temple of Userkaf, Egyptian Museum Cairo, JE. 56001.

Date: The 1st of the 5th Dynasty, O.K.

Bas-reliefs, carved of limestone, found in the mortuary temple of Userkaf at Saqqara, first ruler of the 5th dynasty. The scene from the universe room of the mortuary temple, depicts in fine relief of flock of birds and a butterfly in a marshland. A pied kingfisher hovers above in the center, in readiness to pounce on fish while the tiny common kingfisher appears in the left center on papyrus umbels, standing observing his prey for hunting⁴⁰. A hoopoe, sacred ibis, night heron and a purple gallinule stands on papyrus umbels or lotus flowers (Fig. 3)⁴¹.

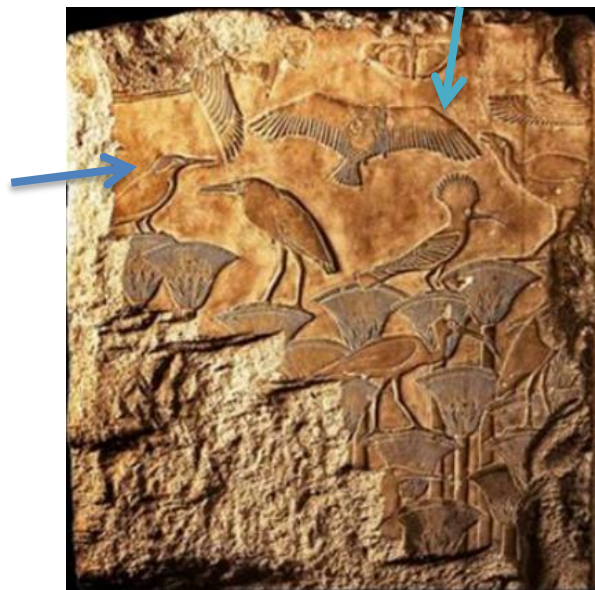


Fig.3. A pied kingfisher hovers above and a kingfisher on papyrus umbels.

After: S. Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, 1990, fig.119.

Doc.2. Grave monument of the king Sahure, in the rubble of his mortuary temple.

Date: 5th Dynasty, O.K.

Bas-reliefs, found in the mortuary temple of Sahure at Abusir, second ruler of the 5th dynasty. The scene from the rubble of the temple depicts in fine relief of a pied kingfisher defending against the attack of a genet who is about to prey on. Their three fledglings are in the nest crying to save them (fig. 4)⁴²

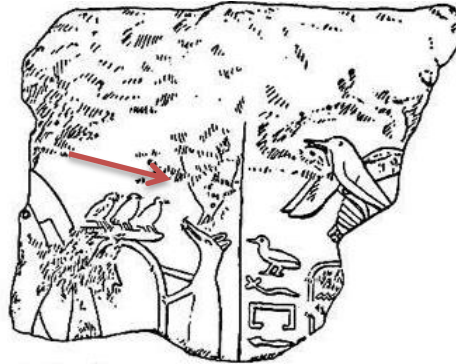


Fig.4. A pied kingfisher defending against the attack of a genet to save their fledglings.

After: L. Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sahu-re*, Band II, Die Wandbilder, Leipzig, 1913, Blatt, 74.

Doc.3. Grave monument of the king Sahure, in the rubble of his mortuary temple.

Date: 5th Dynasty, O.K.

Bas-reliefs, found in the mortuary temple of Sahure at Abusir, the scene from the universe room of the temple represents a natural scene from marshland, the fragment of bas-relief represents ibis and herons with long legs perching on an umbel. At the lower part of bas-relief is a head of a pied kingfisher holding a fish by his beak (fig.5)⁴³.



Fig.5. A pied kingfisher holding a fish by his beak.

After: L. Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sahu-re*, Band II, Die Wandbilder, Leipzig, 1913, Blatt, 16.

Doc.4. Tomb of Hetepherakhty, Leiden Museum of Antiquities

Date: 5th Dynasty, O.K.

The marshland scene shows a couple of pied kingfishers, they have been depicted in and around the marshland. A closer inspection reveals that these birds are absolutely intriguing. They were carved in stone with great detail. These two couples of pied kingfishers are depicted in hovering position, gazing down on high alert to defend their fledglings who scream inside the nest, against the attack of a genet. The relief shows that the Egyptians must have been very good observers of these kingfishers in real nature (fig. 6)⁴⁴.

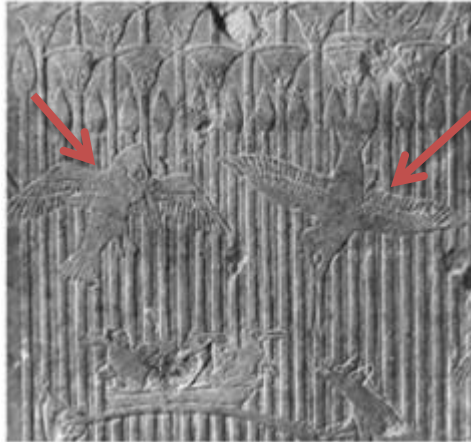


Fig.6. A couple of pied kingfishers from a marshland scene in the tomb of Hetepherakhty.

After: E. Lock-Cornelisse, *op. cit.*, fig. 2.

Doc.5. Tomb of Ti, Saqqara.

Date: 5th Dynasty, O.K.

One of the most impressive marshland scenes of the O.K. The tomb is well preserved, carefully reconstructed and famous for the exceptionally high quality of its reliefs. The marshland scene located on the north wall of the chapel, against the background of a marshland with birds' life, the figure of Ti standing in his boat, observing his servants hunting the hippopotamus (fig. 7 A)⁴⁵. The scene represented a pair of a pied kingfishers defending against the attack of a genet, their three fledglings are in the nest crying for their parents to save them. This is a proof of this concern, it is also confirms the well-known nature of the kingfisher for their fledglings (Fig. 7 B)⁴⁶

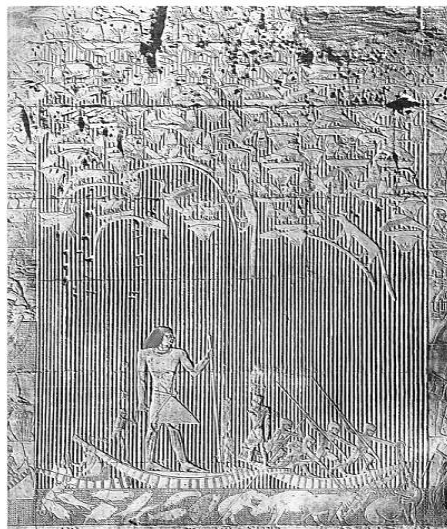


Fig.7A. Marshland scene, tomb of Ti.

After: G. Steindorff, "Das Grab des Ti" in *143 Lichtdrucktafeln und 20 Blättern*, Leipzig, 1913, pl. CXIII.

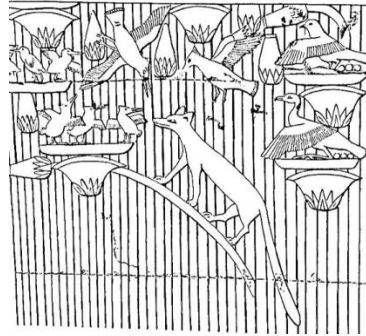


Fig.7 B. pair of a pied kingfishers defending against the attack of a genet.

After: P. Montet, *Les Scenes de la Vie Privee dans les Tombeaux Egyptiens de L'Ancien Empire*, Strasbourg, 1925, p. 2. Pl. 1.

Doc.6. Tomb-chapel of Nianchchnum and Khnumhotep at Saqqara. South wall of the pillar portico, lower right scene.

Date: 5th Dynasty, O. K.

The scene of this tomb- chapel of Nianchchnum and Khnumhotep, depicted the deceased with his wife Khentkaws, hunting in marshland which filled with flock of birds, he took the role of the king in afterlife. The grave here as a site of eternal life, every deceased person was now allowed to portray himself at the royal activities. The deceased folds a hoopoe and another bird in his right hand while the texts above him gives a heron, a hoopoe and a kingfisher as a demonstrative for word “*3bdw*” “birds”, it reads:.....*bhs 3bd.....m phw...nht*” “throw stick.....the bird...in the marshland....of the Delta”. Beside the hieroglyphic signs the kingfisher hovers above the marshland papyrus. In front of the deceased is a kingfisher feeds and defends their three fledglings from predators (Fig. 8)⁴⁷.

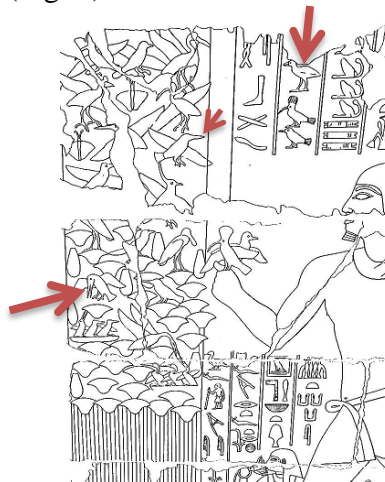


Fig.8. A kingfisher feeds their fledglings.

After: A. M. Moussa & H. Altenmiller, *Das Grab des Nianchchnum und Chnumhotep*, Mainz, 1977, Abb. 6 (Sz.4.3.2).

Doc.7. Tomb-chapel of Nianchchnum and Khnumhotep at Saqqara. South wall of the pillar portico, lower left scene.

Date: 5th Dynasty, O.K.

The fishing scene depicted birds and animals in the body of the thicket on either side of the mound of water. The above pied kingfisher is hovering above the papyrus umbels. The 2nd pied kingfisher is shown perching on an umbel while the genet catching one of the kingfisher fledglings (Fig. 9)⁴⁸.

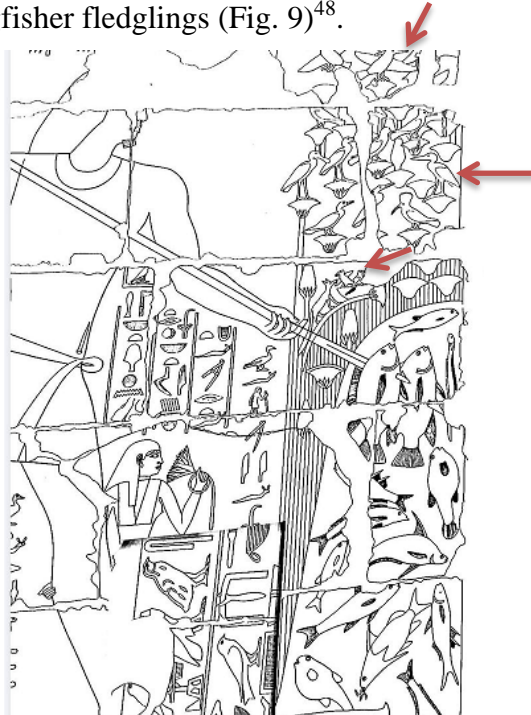


Fig.9. A pied kingfisher is hovering above the papyrus umbels, another one perching on an umbel while the genet catching one of the kingfisher fledglings.

After: A. M. Moussa & H. Altenmiller, *Das Grab des Nianchchnum und Chnumhotep*, Mainz, 1977, Abb. 5 (Sz.4.3.1).

Doc.8. Mastaba of Akhthetep at Saqqara, east wall, left half.

Date: 5th Dynasty, O.K.

The fowling takes place in a marshland. Above the thicket birds are flying in different directions, among them three kingfishers hover above the papyrus on the marshland and another kingfisher is perching on an umbel (Fig. 10)⁴⁹.



Fig.10. Three kingfishers hover above the papyrus on the marshland and another one perching on an umbel.

After: N. de G. Davies, *The Mastaba of Ptahhotep and Akhehotep at Saqqara*, part II, London, 1901, pl. IV.

Doc.9. Tomb of Iasen (G2196), north wall, Giza.

Date: 5th Dynasty, O.K.

The fowling scene in a marshland represents the tomb owner on the boat. Two kingfishers perching on an umbel among the marshland (fig. 11)⁵⁰.

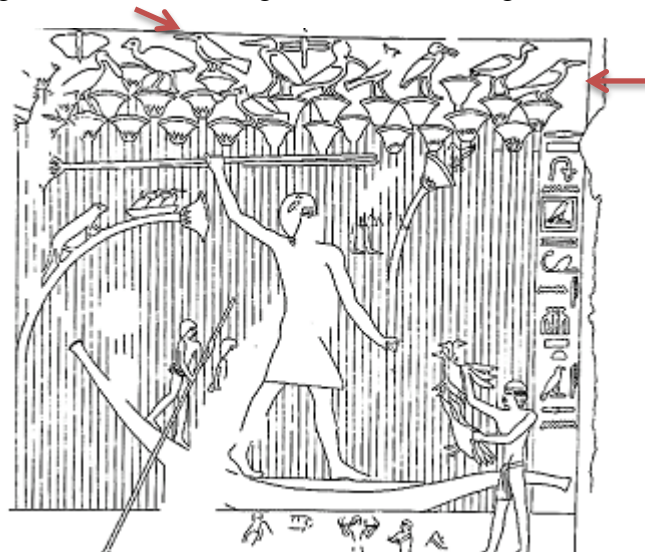


Fig.11. Two kingfishers perching on an umbel among the marshland.

After: W.K. Simpson, *Mastabas of Western Cemetery*, part I, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1980, fig. 30.

Doc. 10. Chapel of Kaemnofret's.

Date: 5th Dynasty, O.K.

A relief from Kaemnofret's chapel represents the bird life in marshland. The birds on the marshland are herons, ibis, pigeons, cormorants, a kingfisher, hoopoe and lapwing as well as a butterfly and grasshopper. A kingfisher is perching in an umbel (fig.12)⁵¹.



Fig.12. A kingfisher is perching in an umbel

After: W.S. Smith, *Country Life in Ancient Egypt*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Plate 8 (no. 04.1761).

Doc.11. Mastaba of Ptahhotep and Akhthetep at Saqqara.

Date: End of the 5th Dynasty, O.K.

The fowling takes place in a marshland. Among the flock of birds are two kingfisher hovers by their wings above the marshland. At the bottom of the marshland a pair of pied kingfishers attack an Egyptian mongoose which has reached their nest and caught one of the three fledglings (fig.13)⁵².

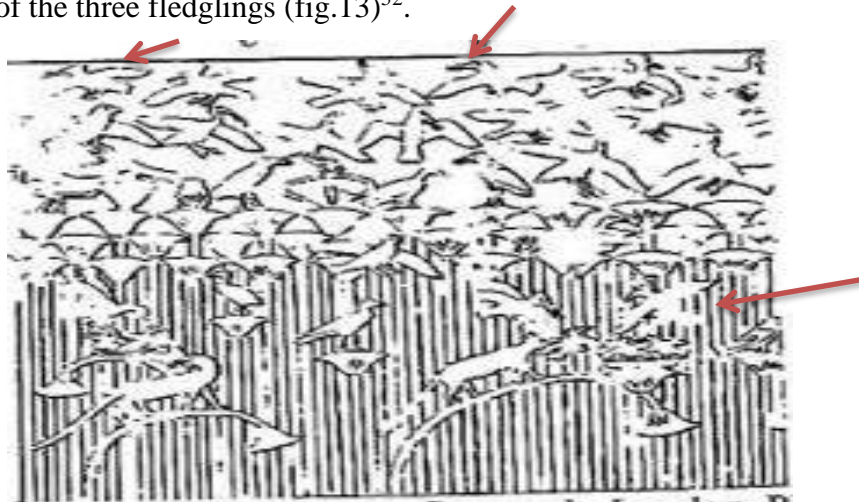


Fig.13. Two kingfisher hovers above the marshland and a pair of pied kingfishers attack a mongoose.

After: G. Davies, *The mastaba of Ptahhotep and Akhethotep at Saqqara*, London, 1901, Pl. XIII.

Doc.12. Tomb chapel of Wattothor, Room B5, north wall.

Date: 1st of the 6th Dynasty. O.K.

A scene from the chapel of Wattothor, wife of Merruka and daughter of king Teti. She is represented sitting on the throne accompanying her beloved dogs. Under her legs sits a child holding a kingfisher by his left hand (fig.14)⁵³.

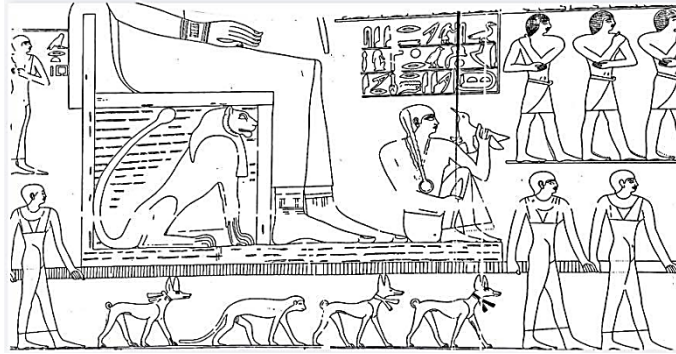


Fig.14. A child holding a kingfisher by his left hand.

After: N. Kanawati, M. Abder-Raziq, *Merruka and his Family, The Tomb of Waatekhetar, Part II*, 2008, pl. 69.

Doc. 13: Tomb of Merefnebef⁵⁴, east wall, south part, Saqqara.

Date: 1st of the 6th Dynasty.

A scene of fowling and fragment of the fishery scene⁵⁵ from the east wall of the tomb of merefnebef (fig. 15 A). The scene represents a common kingfisher which can be identified mostly by its posture; it is shown perched on an umbel behind a heron (fig. 15B)⁵⁶



Fig.15 A. A common kingfisher perched on an umbel behind a heron.

After: K. Myśliwiec, *Saqqara I, The Tomb of Merefnebef*, Varsovie, 2004, pl. LXIII.



Fig.15 B. A common kingfisher from the tomb of Merefnebef.

After: E. Lock- Cornelisse, *Op.cit.*, p. 15 (fig. 6)

Doc.14. Tomb of Seankhuptah, room I, east wall, lower section.

Date: 1st of the 6th Dynasty. O.K.

Fishing and fowling scene represents a marshland filled with birds, the body of the thicket is partly occupied by the traditional mound of water, to the right of which are lively scenes of nesting birds and four animals two common Genets and two Egyptian Mongoose. In the top right corner, a pair of pied kingfisher is attacking a mongoose to protect their four fledglings which are in the nest, and the mongoose already catch one of them (fig. 16)⁵⁷.



Fig.16. A pair of pied kingfishers is attacking a mongoose.

After: N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, The Tombs of Neferseshemre and Seankhuptah*, Vol. III, England, 1998, pl. 76.

Doc.15. Tomb of Hesi, portico, south wall, east of entrance.

Date: 6th Dynasty, O.K.

The fishing takes place in a marshland which is depicted as usual in front of the boat, with the traditional mound of water rising in the middle. The top of the thicket ends in two rows of open umbels. Birds are shown in a symmetrical manner, being arranged in two rows, the upper one flying to the right and the lower to the left. Pied kingfisher is shown in the upper row from right the 5th and in the lower row, from right the 4th one (Fig. 17 A)⁵⁸.

Three birds with their eggs, are nesting among the umbels, two geese between them a turtle dove. Other birds and animals are depicted in the body of the thicket on either side of the mound of water. To the left from top are shown a pair of pied kingfishers attacking a common genet which has reached their nest and caught one of the fledglings. Below them is a nesting egret, flying hoopoe and a kingfisher perching on an umbel (Fig. 17 B)⁵⁹.

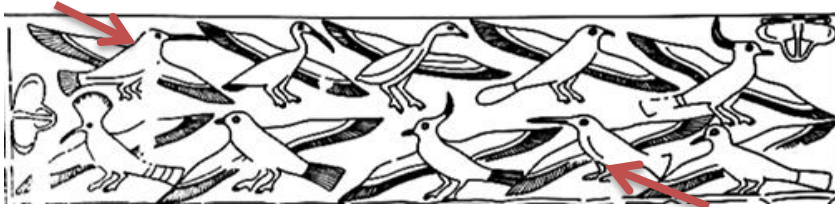


Fig.17 A. Pied kingfisher is shown in the upper and lower rows.

After: N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, The Tomb of Hesi*, Vol. V, England, 1999, pl. 53.

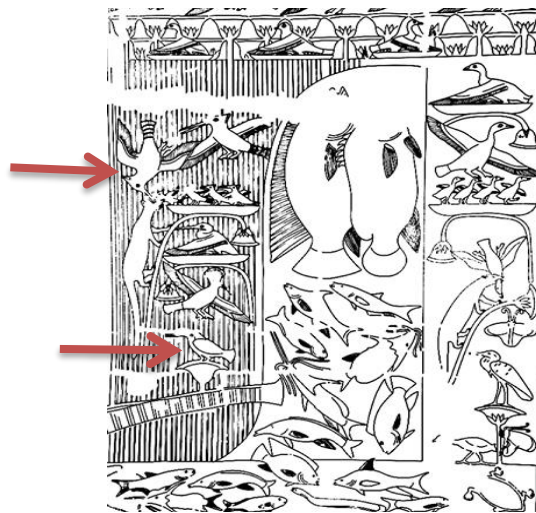


Fig.17 B. Two pairs of pied kingfishers from top and A perching kingfisher is on an umbel at the bottom.

After: N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, The Tomb of Hesi*, Vol. V, England, 1999, pl. 53.

Doc.16. Tomb of Hesi, portico, south wall, west of entrance.

Date: 6th Dynasty, O.K.

The tomb owner was depicted in large papyrus boat on a flowing trip with his wife, but both of their figures were almost entirely chiselled out. He held in his missing hand three decoy birds a pied kingfisher, a hoopoe and a goose (fig. 18 A)⁶⁰. A vertical line of hieroglyphs in front of the tomb owner describes his action as written in the following text⁶¹:

ϣmꜣj⁶² 3pdw m phww.

Hunting (with throw-stick) birds in the marshlands.

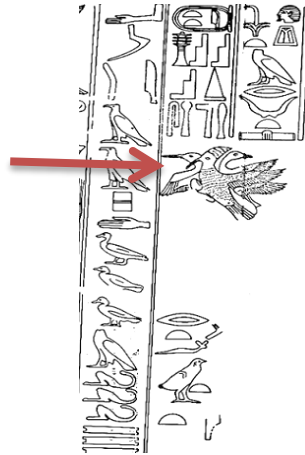


Fig.18 A. A pied kingfisher, a hoopoe and a goose were held by the tomb owner.

After: N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, The Tomb of Hesi*, Vol. V, England, 1999, pl. 54.

The fowling takes place in a marshland. Birds in the upper row fly to the left while those in the lower one fly to the right. Upper row from left the 3rd one is a kingfisher and the 6th is pied kingfisher. While lower row from right the 1st one is a kingfisher, the 4th is a pied kingfisher and the 5th is a kingfisher (fig. 18 B)⁶³.

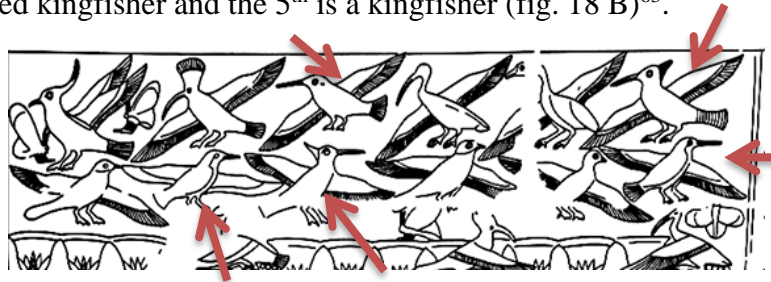


Fig.18 B. Two pied kingfishers and kingfishers among two rows of birds.

After: N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, The Tomb of Hesi*, Vol. V, England, 1999, pl. 54.

Birds and animals are also shown in the body of the thicket, against the papyrus stems. At the right side, pair of egrets are defending against a common genet, beneath these is a pied kingfisher from the left, is sitting on its eggs, while its partner in the center hovers beside the nest. Its portrayal partly frontal and partly in profile is both unusual and attractive. To the left of these is a nesting kingfisher (Fig. 18 C)⁶⁴.

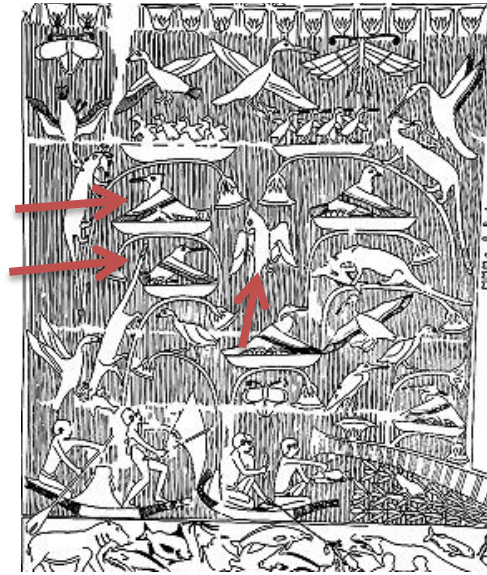


Fig.18 C. Pairs of pied kingfishers and a nesting kingfisher.

After: N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, The Tomb of Hesi*, Vol. V, England, 1999, pl. 54.

Doc.17. Tomb of Hesi, portico, south wall, east of entrance.

Date: 6th Dynasty, O.K.

The scene depicted three registers of some attendants and children who accompanied the tomb owner and his wife on the fishing trip. In the 3rd register the second girl with the pigtail and disc stands and holds a kingfisher by their wings (fig.19)⁶⁵.



Fig.19. A girl holds a kingfisher by their wings.

After: N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, The Tomb of Hesi*, Vol. V, England, 1999, pl. 53.

Doc.18. Tomb of Pepiankh at Meir.

Date: 1st of the 6th Dynasty.

Ascene from the tomb of Pepiankh at Meir depicted a kingfisher hovers by his wings above the marshland (fig. 20)⁶⁶.

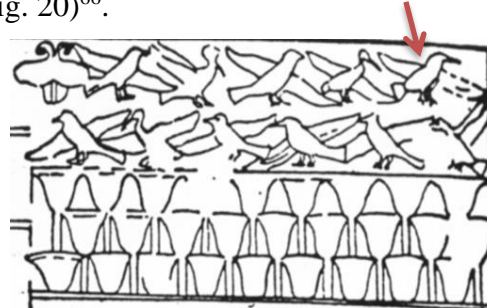


Fig. 20. a kingfisher hovers by his wings above the marshland.

After: A. Blackman, *Meir V*, pl. XXIV.

Doc.19. Tomb of Pepiankh, Meir.

Date: 6th Dynasty, O.K.

This scene represented spear fishing in the marshlands by the tomb owner. As a sport the fishing scene, was only practised by the tomb owner and his family, who are always shown successfully spearing two large fish. The scene represented a kingfisher perched on an umbel and below a mongoose, another kingfisher hovers above the marshland (Fig. 21)⁶⁷.

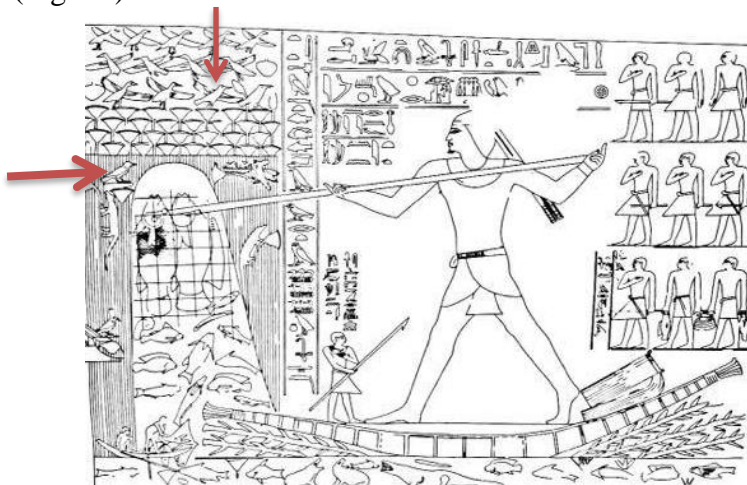


Fig.21. A kingfisher perched on an umbel and anther one hovers above the marshland.

After: N. Kanawati, *The Tomb and its Significance in Ancient Egypt*, Cairo, 1999, fig. 30.

Doc.20. Mastaba of Kaemankh at Giza.

Date: 6th Dynasty, O.K.

The scene represented the tomb owner stands on a boat and in front of him his son Wr-khw. A marshland scene represents a flock of wild birds that have been depicted

in and around the marshlands; the birds have been depicted in various positions, though not always in a realistic way. A kingfisher is perching on an umbel (Fig. 22)⁶⁸.



Fig.22. A kingfisher is perching on an umbel.

After: J. Vandier, *Manuel IV*, fig. 407 (XXV).

Doc.21. Tomb of Queen Idout wife of Pepi, Saqqara.

Date: 6th Dynasty, O.K.

The scene represented the queen Idout standing on a boat in front of flock of birds in a marshland of a fishing scene, among them a kingfisher hovers above the papyrus on the marshland, another kingfisher is perching on an umbel (Fig. 23)⁶⁹.

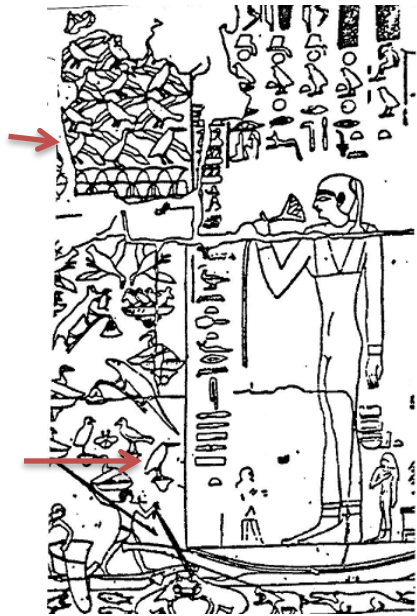


Fig.23. A kingfisher is perching on an umbel.

After: J.Vandier, *Manuel IV*, fig. 154.

Doc.22. Tomb of Pepiankh-hnykm at Meir.

Date: End of the 6th Dynasty.

A fowling scene from the tomb of Pepiankh-hnykm at Meir depicted the tomb owner and his family, enjoyed fowling as a sport using a boomerang while among the flock of birds in a marshland a kingfisher in the 2nd row hovers to the top (fig.24)⁷⁰

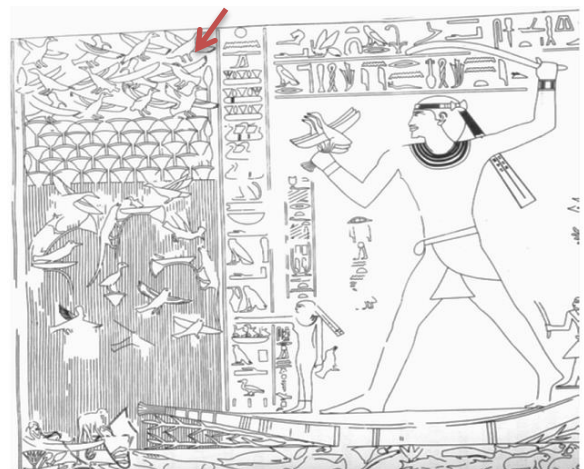


Fig.24. A kingfisher hovers to the top.

After: N. Kanawati, *The Tomb and its Significance in Ancient Egypt*, Cairo, 1999, p. 119, fig. 32.

Doc.23. Tomb of Knounes at Zawit el Meitin.

Date: End of O.K.

The scene represents the tomb owner stands on a boat, uses his boomeranged to hunt the birds which run over the marshlands in the swamp, a kingfisher hovered to bottom in readiness to pounce on fish, in the center a kingfisher hovers to the top and another kingfisher perching on an umbel (Fig. 25)⁷¹.



Fig.25. A kingfisher is hovering.

After: J. Vandier, *Manuel IV*, fig. 408 (XXX).

IV- Kingfisher in the Middle Kingdom

Doc.24. Tomb of Sinibi from Meir.

Date: 12th Dynasty, M.K.

A fowling and spearing fish scene represented the tomb owner standing with his wife on a boat using the boomerang to catch birds. A kingfisher hovered to bottom in readiness to pounce on fish (fig.26)⁷².

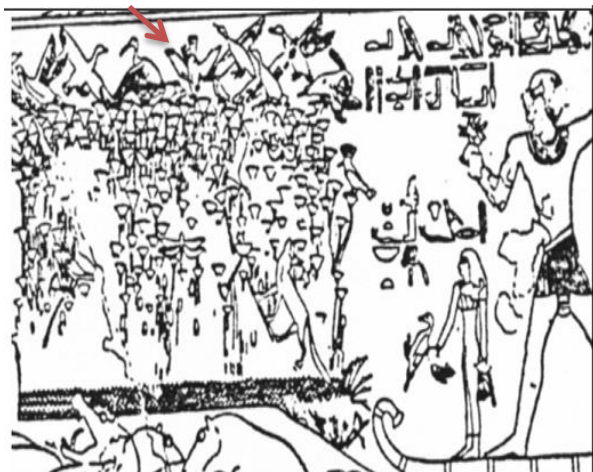


Fig.26. A kingfisher hovered to bottom in readiness to pounce on fish.

After: J. Vandier, *Manuel IV*, fig. 227.

Doc.25. Tomb of khnum-hotep III, Beni Hassan (tomb no. 3), east wall, north side.

Date: 12th Dynasty, M.K.

A fowling scene in the tomb of khnum-hotep III at Beni Hassan. It represents the tomb owner holding some birds in his left hand while his other hand raised up with throw stick ready to hurl them. The scene depicts in fine relief of hunting birds with

throwing-stick in a papyrus-stick in a papyrus marsh (fig. 27 A)⁷³. Flock of birds in a marshland, a kingfisher in hovering position, gazing down on high alert to defend their fledglings who scream inside the nest, against the attack of mongoose (fig.27 B)⁷⁴

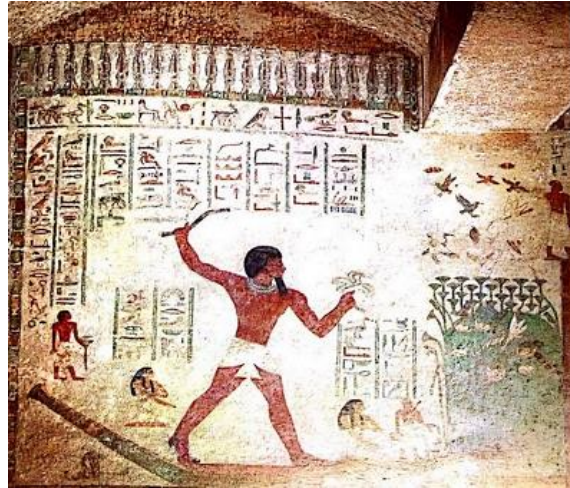


Fig.27A. The scene depicts in fine relief of hunting birds with throwing-stick in a papyrus-stick in a papyrus marsh.

After: W. Decker, *Sports and Games of Ancient Egypt*, translated by A. Guttman, Cairo, 1992, p. 164.

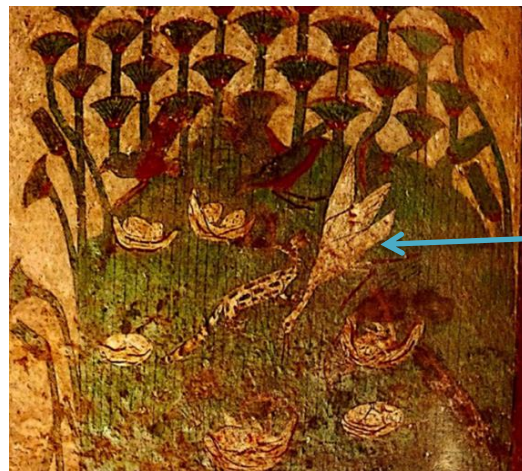


Fig.27B. A kingfisher defends their fledglings against the attack of mongoose.

After: 270. أحمد سعيد و آخرون، مقابر بني حسن الصورة و الدلالة، القاهرة، 2012، ص.

Doc.26. Tomb of Bakt, Beni Hassan (tomb no. 15).

Date: 12th Dynasty, M.K.

Pied kingfisher (*Ceryle Rudis*), its beak is black; rest streaky grey on white, this bird identifies with (Martin-Pêcheur pie). The remains of black and white extant when the early copyists saw it seem to justify this, ancient Egyptian name is *ḥnḥbt* (fig. 28)⁷⁵.

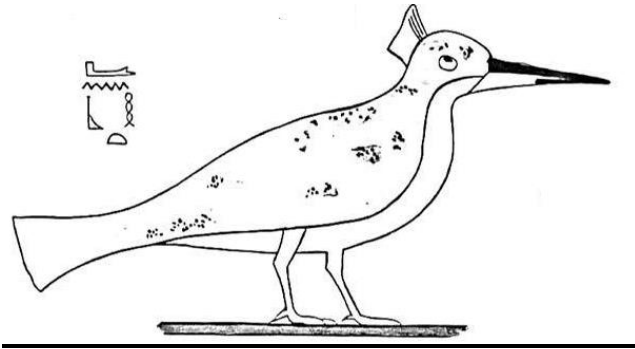


Fig.28. Pied kingfisher, ancient Egyptian name is $\epsilon nhbt$.

After: I. Rosellini, *Monumenti dell’Egitto et della Nubia*, Pisa, 1834, fig. 9.

Doc.27. Tomb of Bakt, Beni Hassan (tomb no. 15).

Date: 12th Dynasty, M.K.

A common kingfisher, the upper parts of the bird is mostly bright metallic blue, including the head. The back is cobalt, and one can see greenish reflections on the head and wings, red outline to eye, black iris, green patches on breast and tail. ancient Egyptian name is $hntj$ (fig. 29)⁷⁶.



Fig.29. The common kingfisher, ancient Egyptian name is $hntj$.

After: Nina M. Davies, “Birds and Bats at Beni Hassan”, *JEA* 35, London, 1949, pl. II.

V- Kingfisher in the New Kingdom

Doc.28. Fragment of the mural decoration of Queen Nefetiti’s aviary at Tell-el-Amarna, green room, west wall.

Date: 18th Dynasty, N.K.

The scene represents a pied kingfisher between papyrus, it is hovers down by its wings. The weight of the heavy inflorescences makes them bend their stems, while the magnificent bird flies beneath their leaves. The Amarnian period achieved an amalgam of poetry and realism that will not be found again in the following periods during the evolution of painting in ancient Egypt (fig.30)⁷⁷

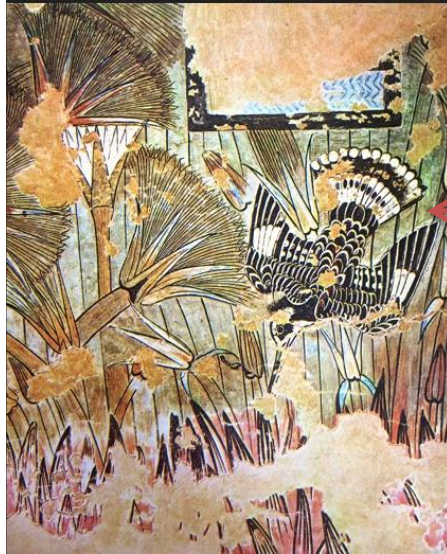


Fig.30. A pied kingfisher between papyrus, it is hovers down by its wings.

After: H. Frankfort, *The mural Painting of El-Amarneh*, London, 1929, pl. 4.

Doc.29. Tomb of Neferhotep (TT49), Thebes, Louvre Museum E. 13101.

Date: 18th Dynasty, N.K.

The extraordinary precision of limestone wall paintings and reliefs from the Pharaonic period give us a clear picture of the landscapes of the time. Huge thickets of papyrus grew in the meanders and marshes bordering the Nile; their triangular stems bore green umbels that could reach a height of six meters. In Antiquity, these marshlands swarmed with animal life, showing a genet and mongoose hunting among bird-filled marsh. The scene represents a kingfisher in the middle of the marshland hunting his prey (Fig. 31)⁷⁸.

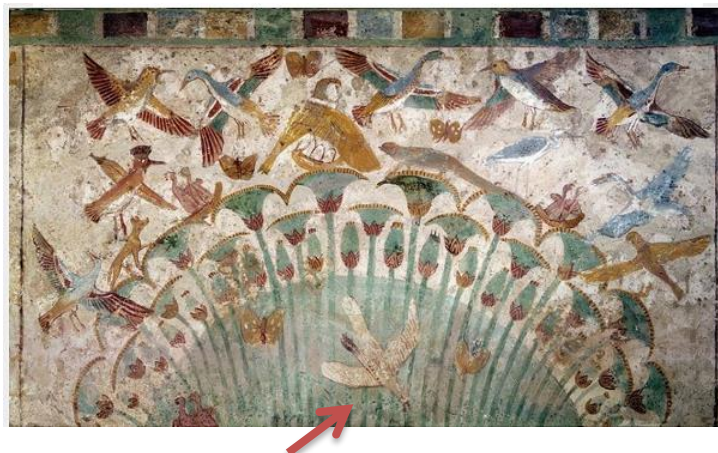


Fig.31. A kingfisher hunting his prey.

After: J. Vandier, *Les Antiquities Egyptienne au Musee du Louvre*, 1973, Pl. XVIII

V- Conclusion

In a country which literally lived on the banks of a river in aquatic life with extended marshlands in the north where wild birds nested, The kingfisher was represented in Old, Middle and New kingdom. It is mainly represented in the 5th, 6th, 12th and 18th Dynasties as shown in the following table:

5 th Dynasty	6 th Dynasty	12 th Dynasty	18 th Dynasty
-Temple of Userkaf, Saqqara (1 Doc.)	-Tomb of Wathkhetor, Saqqara (1Doc.)	-Tomb of Sinibi, Meir (1 Doc.)	-Fragment queen Nefetiti, Tell-el-Amarna (1 Doc.)
-Temple of Sahure, Abusir (2 Doc.)	-Tomb of Merefnebef, Saqqara (1 Doc.)	-Tomb of Khnumhotep III, Beni Hassan (1 Doc.)	-Tomb of Neferhotep, Thebes (1 Doc.)
-Tomb of Hetepherakhty, Saqqara (1 Doc.)	-Tomb of Seankhuptah, Saqqara (1 Doc.)	Tomb of Bakt, Beni Hassan (2 Doc.)	
-Tomb of Ti, Saqqara (1Doc)	-Tomb of Hesi, Saqqara (3 Doc.)		
-Tomb of Nianchnum and Khnumhotep, Saqqara (2 Doc.).	-Tomb of Pepiankh, Meir (2 Doc.)		
-Mastaba of Akhthetep, Saqqara (2Doc.).	-Mastaba of Kaemankh, Giza (1 Doc.)		
-Tomb of Iasen, Giza (1 Doc.)	-Tomb of Idout, Saqqara, (1 Doc.)		
-Chapel of Kaemnofret's, Saqqara (1Doc.)	-Tomb of Pepiankh-hnykm, Meir (1 Doc.)		
	-tomb of Knounes, Zawit el Meitin (1 Doc.)		

From the previous table, it is noted that the first appearance of the kingfisher on Egyptian monuments dates back to the 5th dynasty. Saqqara is the most place that kingfisher depicted in (15 documents represented Kingfisher and pied kingfisher only in the 5th and 6th dynasties). But kingfisher disappeared at Saqqara in the 12th and 18th Dynasties.

Kingfisher depicted at Meir in 4 doc. (3 from 6th dynasty and 1 from 12th dynasty). At Giza depicted in 2 doc. (1 from 5th dynasty and the other from the 6th dynasty). At Abusir 2 doc. From the 5th dynasty, Kingfisher depicted in one scene in Zawit el Meitin (6th dynasty), Beni Hassan 3 doc. (12th dynasty), Thebes (18th dynasty) and Tell el Amarna (18th dynasty).

From the whole documents, Kingfisher depicted in the universe room with natural scenes from marshlands (Doc. 1 the mortuary temple of Userkaf) and (Doc. 2-3 the

temple of Sahure). Kingfisher depicted perching on an umbel in (Doc. 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 19, 20, 21 and 23). The kingfisher hovers above the marshland papyrus in (doc. 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16b, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 26).

The kingfisher defending against the attack of a genet to save their fledgling in (doc. 2, 5 and 15). The kingfisher holding a fish by his beak in (doc. 3). The kingfisher depicted in hovering position, gazing down on high alert to defend their fledglings who scream inside the nest, against the attack of a genet in (doc. 4). The kingfisher feeds their fledglings in (doc. 6). The kingfisher used as a demonstrative for word “*3bdw*” birds”, in (doc.6), this confirms its importance and its great role in the ancient Egyptian marshland life. Kingfisher attack an Egyptian mongoose which caught one of their fledglings in (doc. 11, 14 and 25b).

A child holding a kingfisher by his left hand in (doc. 12) and a girl holds a kingfisher by their wings in (doc. 17), it improves that the children preferred to hold kingfishers and enjoy playing with it as toys. Children of both sexes appear in fishing and fowling scenes; it was a social event in which women and children participated. The tomb owner holds a combined of three birds pied kingfisher, hoopoe and a goose by his missing hand in (doc. 16A) which proves the importance of the pied kingfisher among birds in Ancient Egypt.

Kingfisher perching on their nest in (doc. 16 c). A kingfisher hunting his prey in (doc. 27). Kingfisher depicted with several birds like a hoopoe, sacred ibis, heron and gallinule, pigeons, cormorants, lapwing, butterfly, grasshopper, erget, and a goose.

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- ⁷⁸ J. Vandier, *Les Antiquities Egyptienne au Musee du Louvre*, 1973, pl. XVIII, p. 134; P.F. Houlihan, *Animal World*, fig. 95; Collectif, *Les Antiquites Egyptienne I*, Guide du Visiteur, 1997, p. 27; Ch. Ziegler, *Le Monde de la Bible*, 1992, tome 78, p. 43; *PM I*, p. 449 (n. 1); E. Delange, *Tresors du Plus Grand Musee du Monde*, 1991, p. 73.



طائر الرفراف (صياد السمك) في مصر القديمة حبيبة المنياوي

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المخلص

تتضم الملايين من الطيور المهاجرة الخريفية المنهكة من رحلتها الطويلة فوق المناظر الطبيعية القاحلة في بلاد الشام وسيناء، أو من رحلتهم فوق البحر المتوسط، سنويًا إلى الأنواع المحلية في الأراضي الرطبة في دلتا النيل، هذا بسبب موقع مصر الجغرافي. إحدى هذه الطيور المهاجرة هي عائلة الرفراف المعروفة في مصر القديمة، ولا سيما نوعان من هذا الطائر: النوع الأول (صياد السمك الأخضر) وهو زائر شتوي للبحيرات والجداول وشواطئ البحر من مصر القديمة حتى الآن ويقوم بالغطس وراء فرائسه من الأسماك. والنوع الثاني (صياد السمك الأبقع) وهو من سلالة الطيور المقيمة الذي يوجد في النيل والبحيرات والبحيرات الشمالية ويتميز بالتحليق في مكان واحد قبل أن يقذف بنفسه إلى الماء للإسماك بفريسته من الأسماك ويبني عشه في حفر في جوانب المجاري المائية. طائر الرفراف هو أحد الطيور التي عرفت في مصر القديمة في مشاهد الطيور والصيد في مقابر النبلاء، يهدف البحث إلى دراسة مناظر طائر الرفراف (صياد السمك) في مشاهد صيد الطيور والأسماك؛ إبراز طبيعة ونشاط وحياة طائر الرفراف؛ ودراسة دور هذا الطائر في مصر القديمة.

معلومات المقالة

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صياد السمك الأخضر؛
صياد السمك الأبقع؛
صيد الطيور؛ صيد
الأسماك؛ المستنقعات؛
مستنقعات البردي.

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