The Scenes of the $b_3$ of Osiris at Ancient Egypt

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ABSTRACT

The $b_3$ is an aspect of a human that the ancient Egyptian thought that it would live after the death of the body. It is depicted as a human-headed bird flying away from the tomb to join the $k3$ in the Nether world. Unlike the concept of the soul in other thoughts, the $b_3$ is not only a part of the human, but it is the human itself. At the beginning, the word $b_3$ was written with the symbol of the $bnw$ bird. Then it was changed to a human-headed falcon. Humans had one $b_3$ while gods have many. The $b_3$ usually appeared in the texts that were related to life after death. The Pyramid Texts were the earliest source that mentioned the $b_3$ concept. There was no depiction of the $b_3$ before the New kingdom, however, some funerary statues date back to the Old kingdom had depiction of $b_3$ in totally human form. The first depiction of the $b_3$ in the Book of the Dead, was a human-headed bird with other human features referring to both its human nature and its ability to move from a place to another. The $b_3$ of Osiris was depicted many times in temples, tombs and on other monuments. The research aims to study the various representations of the $b_3$ of Osiris and to spot light on its functions.

Introduction

The $b_3$ in ancient Egypt like the concept of $k3^1$ and $slh^2$ has no accurate synonymous in any language. As the word $b_3$ has no translation, but its concept could be illustrated in many ways. When it was associated with a deity, it was explained as the manifestation of power of that deity.

In linking with the common humans, the $b_3$ concept submitted more development. That was attested in the 1st Intermediate period, the Middle Kingdom and Late period. In this development, the $b_3$ was considered the personification of the vital forces, both physical and psychological, of the dead. It was thought to be one of the forms of existence of the deceased, in which he could persist to life after his death. The $b_3$ of the common human came at death is physical in nature. The $b_3$’s freedom in the Netherworld was related to the integrity of the burial ritual and performing all the vital functions such as eating and drinking$^3$.

The deity in ancient Egypt was manifested in another deity. For example, Re was the $b_3$ of the Lord of Heaven$^4$. Osiris was the $b_3$ of the Lord of Carvens “Anubis” and the
b3 of Re, his own body⁵. Amun was the b3 of Shu⁶ and Shu was the b3 of Amun. Osiris also was the majestic b3 of the gods of Herakleopolis and at the same time the living b3 of the Great Ennead⁷.

The b3 of Osiris and the sacred animals

In ancient Egypt, the deity was also manifested in the sacred animals. The b3 of Osiris was the ram of Mendes⁸ and the km-s.t.f serpent⁹. All of Sokar, Mendes ram, Apis bull in different aspects represent the b3 of Osiris¹⁰. The phoneix of the bnw bird was also considered the b3 of Osiris¹¹. The bnw was as the b3 and also as the phoenix of god Osiris’ form¹². It was called the united b3 and the living phoenix¹³.

The functions of the b3 of Osiris

The deities in the temples lived in their statues. Their b3 were responsible for the animation of these statues. This was a daily ritual when the deities incarnated in their statues¹⁴. The b3 of god Osiris had many other functions concerning with the protection of the deities:

- Protecting the standing ram (b3-ḥḥ) at Dendera temple¹⁵.
- Protecting the four b3 of Amun at Karnak temple¹⁶.
- Protecting god Khnum at Esna temple¹⁷.
- Protecting god sšḥ¹⁸ at Edfu temple¹⁹.

The figures of b3-n-Wstr²⁰

Doc.1. The b3 of Osiris as a bnw bird

This scene (Fig.1) is represented in the tomb of Osiris at Hu²¹. It depicts the bnw bird perched on a willow tree covered with leaves. This tree was called Tr.t²² in ancient Egypt. It was represented in the tomb of Api. Behind the bnw’s head, is an inscription reads bnw-n-Wstr²³.

Doc.2. the b3 of Osiris from the fourth shrine of Tutankhamun

This scene (Fig.2) represents the b3 of Osiris along with the b3 of Re standing on a pedestal and facing each other. There are two dd pillars - the symbol of god Osiris – on each side of the two b3. This signify the place where the two deities meet at Mendes²⁴ the ancient Egyptian city ḫḥ dd.t as mentioned in the Coffin Texts. The b3 of Osiris, on the right, is depicted as a bird with a human-head wearing the White Crown, the nemes and the curved beard. On the left stands the b3 of Re as a falcon wearing the sun disk upon his nemes²⁵. The same scene is depicted in the Book of the Dead, on the papyrus of Anj (Fig.3)²⁶.

Doc.3. the b3 of Osiris from the funerary stela of ḫḥ-dl.f nḥt

This limestone stela (Fig.4) dating to the Late Period, was found at Akhmim. It measures 75.5 cm high. It is divided into four registers. The first register show a large figure of the winged solar-disk ḫḥ-dl.f nḥt. There are two snakes hanging from the solar disk, representing the two goddesses nḥb.t wearing the White Crown and

https://jaauth.journals.ekb.eg/
w3d.t wearing the Red Crown. The main subject of the stela is the cycle of the solar-disk which related to life, death and the rebirth of hr-di.f nḥt. The second register has a depiction of the rising of the solar disk on the left side and on the right side, the solar bark, with hr-di.f nḥt adoring ṛc-hr-sḥty and other sun gods on it, heading to the west. The third register shows the rising and the sunset of the solar disk at the same time starting a new cycle. There is a b3 on each side of the solar disk. The b3-n-šw to the left and the b3-n-Wsir to the right. Both of them appeared as a bird -with human face-standing on a shrine with an ointment cone upon their heads, holding the nh3ḥ3 scepter of Osiris and adoring a deity who has an ostrich feather upon his head and whose torso protruding from the earth and lifting the solar disk with his hands. There are four Baboons, two on each side behind the two b3, also adoring this god. The fourth register has an a six lines inscription of a standard offering list.

Doc.4. the b3 of Osiris on the lower part, interior of a sarcophagus
This scene (Fig.5) occupied the lower part of the interior of a sarcophagus. It depicts the b3 of god Osiris as a bird with human face and has an ointment cone upon its head. The b3 is perching above the mummy of Osiris that is lying on a lion-shaped bed. It holds the šn symbol of protection with its talons. Goddesses Nephthys and Isis are represented on each side of the bed. They both are sitting on backless chairs on one knee and raising the other. There is an inscription beside his head reads b3-Wṣir.

Doc.5. the b3 of Osiris from Esna temple, between columns C
This distinctive scene (Fig.6) shows emperor Domitian kneeling and burning incense before four b3 of deities from right to left: šw, ṛc, Gb and Wṣir. They are all depicted as standing rams. The b3 of Osiris is the fourth one to the left. It appeared as a ram with a large cobra, emerging between its coiled horns.

The text of the b3 of Osiris reads:

\[ b3-n-Wṣir nb 33=sn.t \]
The ba of Osiris, Lord of Esna.

Doc.6. the b3 of Osiris from Phila temple, terrace of the Naos, vestibule of the chamber of Osiris, east wall
This scene (Fig.7) depicts the b3 of Osiris standing again on the sacred grove. The Nile-god Hapi stands as a human with pendulous breasts and a large stomach. He puts his right arm on his right breast while water is pouring on the grove from his left breast. He is also pouring water from a jug in his right hand. The b3 is depicted as a bird with human-head wearing a cap adorned with the uraeus. The ceremonial beard is attached to his chin.

The text of Osiris reads

\[ d3 mdw in Wṣir dw3 ṛṣ nb \]
Recitation by Osiris, Great god, praising the Great Lord.
Doc.7. the b3 of Osiris from Phila temple, gate of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, inner doorway, 2nd register
This scene (Fig.8) represents the b3 of Osiris standing in the sacred grove. He stands above the crowns of 17 trees depicted schematically on the pond. He is receiving libations and being praised by deities. They are from left to right: Isis, Nephthys, Horus and Amun. God Thoth stands at the end after the deities writing. Another figure of Isis appeared as a cow-headed goddess behind the b3 of Osiris, pouring water on the grove. There is also a small kneeling figure of a Nile-god behind Isis. The b3 is drawn in an oversized scale. It is depicted as a bird with human-head wearing a wig with short curls, around which a ribbon is tied. The uraues adorned its forehead and a ceremonial beard attached to its chin. The feathers of the b3 bird are carefully drawn but in a peculiar manner, which is characteristic of the Late period35.

The text beside the b3’s head reads:

\[\text{qd mdw in sps b3-n-Wsir ḫnty-imntt}\]
Recitation by venerable ba of Osiris, who presides in the West.

Doc.8. a procession of the b3 of Osiris from Dendera temple, Osiride chapels, east chapel no.1, frieze
This scene on the frieze surrounding the walls of this chapel (Fig.9a,b,c) represents many figures of the b3 of Osiris. They all are depicted as human-headed birds. They all adoring the solar disk in its cycle of rising and setting. The only difference in the representations of the b3, is the headdress. Some of them wear the nemes headdress with a ribbon around it, while the others wear a short cap with the same ribbon. They all have the ceremonial beard attached to their chins. All of them wear the symbol of the md36 offering upon their headdresses and hold the nb3 scepter. All of them stand on pedestals with different inscriptions such as the hb symbols, birds on the nb signs and Lotus flowers38.

The texts of the b3 of Osiris read39

\[\text{b3 ṣps n Wsir, ḫnty-imntt, nb qdw ḫk3 sbdw}\]
Venerable ba of Osiris, who presides in the West, Lord of Busiris, Ruler of Abydos.

\[\text{b3 ṣps n Wsir, ḫnty-imntt, ntr ẓ3 ḫry-ib iwn.t}\]
Venerable ba of Osiris, who presides in the West, Great god who presides on Dendera. These texts are repeated along the frieze of this chapel.

Doc.9. the b3 of Osiris from Dendera temple, Osiride chapels, east chapel no.2, east side, north-east wall
This scene on the frieze of this chapel (Fig.10) represents goddess Isis pouring water before the b3 of Osiris. He is depicted as a bird with human-head wearing a solar-disk adorned with an uraues upon his nemes. He has a ceremonial beard attached to his chin.
He is raising his hands to receive the water from Isis. Each of them stand on a high pedestal.\textsuperscript{40}

The text of the $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris reads\textsuperscript{41}

\[ b\bar{z} \; \hat{s}\bar{p}s \; n \; Wsir \; // // \; m\bar{s}w.\; tw, \; rnp.\; tw// // \; b\bar{z}w \; n\bar{t}rw \; h\bar{r} \;  \hat{h}wt.\bar{f} \]

Venerable ba of Osiris /// renewed, become young again /// who protects the souls of gods.

Doc.10. the $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris from Dendera temple, Osiride chapels, east chapel no.2, west side, north-west wall

This scene (Fig.11) is almost the same of the previous one. It represents goddess Isis offering water and bread before the $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris. He is depicted again as a bird with human-head wearing the solar-disk adorned with an uraeus upon his nemes. The ceremonial beard is attached to his chin. He is raising his hands to receive the water and the bread. The $b\bar{z}$ and Isis stand on a pedestal.\textsuperscript{42}

The text of the $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris reads

\[ b\bar{z} \; \hat{s}\bar{p}s \; Wsir \; \hat{n}\bar{t}ny.-imn\bar{t}t \; n\bar{t}r \; c\bar{s} \; h\bar{r}j.-ib \; iwn.t \]

Venerable ba of Osiris, who presides in the West, Great god who presides on Dendera.

Doc.11. the $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris from Dendera temple, Osiride chapels, east chapel, no.3, west wall, 1\textsuperscript{st} register

This scene (Fig.12) depicts the $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris among many other deities on three pedestals behind god Ptah who is sitting on the throne. $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris is represented as a ram standing on high pedestal. He wears the Two-Feathers crown adorned with two uraeui wearing solar disks on both sides.

The text of the $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris reads\textsuperscript{43}

\[ b\bar{z} \; \hat{\ell} \; b\bar{z} \; n \; Wsir \]

The standing ram, ba of Osiris.

Doc.12. the united $b\bar{z}$ of Osiris and Re from the tomb of Nefertari, Valley of Queens

There was a belief in ancient Egypt that the person after death transformed to Osiris. Another belief that the deceased accompanied Re in his journey in heaven. The issue was that how the deceased could become Osiris and join him in the Underworld and become Re and join him to heaven. The Book of the Underworld succeeded to solve this question by considering that Osiris was the body which went down to the Underworld, and Re was the $b\bar{z}$ which left the body at death and rised to heaven. Therefore, when life is renewed through the unity of the body and the spirit, it renewed through the unity of Osiris and Re.\textsuperscript{44} In the Book of the Dead, was the first representation of the two deities Osiris and Re in one body and talking with the same mouth. This figure was called the united $b\bar{z} \; \hat{q}b\bar{z} \; dm\bar{d}$. It depicted the union of the $b\bar{z}$.\textsuperscript{44}
of both Osiris and Re who met in Mendes. Their new form represented a ram-headed mummy known as the Ram of Mendes. When the two bꜣ of Re and Osiris met in Mendes, they became the One who has two bꜣ (bꜣwyfy). The Coffin Texts mentioned that union reads: Wsir pw ḥt ḫ ḫ dḥt ẖm.n.f bs Im n Rꜥḥḫ n ḫpt.n ky ky ḫḫḫ n ḫpr m bꜣ. ḫy m ḫḥt which means “Osiris, when he entered Mendes, where he found the Ba of Re.

Then the one embraced the other. Then (they) became the one with two Bas in Mendes. Egyptologists believed that Osiris was ḫḥt which meant to be the place where god Re was born.

The united bꜣ was called ḫḥt which could mean to show the eternity of this combination. It was depicted in many of the private and royal tombs of the new kingdom, in the texts of the Litany of Re, in the Book of the Dead and in the papyri of the 21st dynasty.

This scene from the tomb of queen Nefertari (Fig. 13) was one of the most important scenes of the united bꜣ. It represents it as if it is rising between the hands of the two goddesses Isis and Nephthys. They both symbolized the two mountains of the Horizon. The relationship of the two goddesses with the united solar-Osirian god was documented in the new kingdom’s books of the Netherworld, where Isis and Nephthys were depicted as the arms of the solar god and were connected to his legs. This related to their role as the goddesses who protected the solar god; the arms punish his enemies, and the legs support him and connect him to earth. The united bꜣ was depicted as a ram-headed mummy with a large solar disk between its horns. He wears the nemes headdress, a broad collar and a long band tied at the front. He stands on a pedestal.

The texts on each side of the bꜣ reads:

Wsir ḫtp m Rꜥ means “Osiris who rests in Re”.

Rꜥ pw ḫtp m Wsir “He is Re who rests in Osiris”.

Doc. 13. The united bꜣ of Osiris and Re from a papyrus of the 21st dynasty

This distinctive scene (Fig. 14) represents the united bꜣ of Osiris and Re on a papyrus dating back to the 21st dynasty. The united bꜣ appeared as a ram-headed mummy -with an uraeus between it’s horns- standing between goddesses Isis to the left and Nephthys to the right. The bꜣ wears a curved beard attached to its face and a dangling strap around his shoulders. Both deities and the bꜣ are standing on a bark surmounted by two arms emerged from the sun disk. There are many stars occupied the space around the bark. Isis and Nephthys supported the mummy with their hands. There is the ḫḫḫ symbol hanging around Nephthys’s arm and the ḫḏ- which is god Osiris’s symbol- around Isis’s arm. Beside the mummy’s face to the right, an inscription reads ḫḏ nṯr ḫꜣ. The left, is an inscription reads ḫḏ nb pt.
Conclusion
- The bꜣ of god Osiris is depicted in the tomb of Osiris (doc.1), on the fourth shrine of king Tut-ankh-Amun (doc.2), on the papyrus of Ani (doc.2), on a funerary stela of ḫr-di.f nḥt (doc.3), on a sarcophagus (doc.4), at Esna temple (doc.5), at Philae temple (doc.6,7), at Dendera (doc.8, 9,10,11), at the tomb of queen Nefertari at the Valley of Queens (doc.12), on the papyrus dating to the 21st dynasty (doc.13).
- The bꜣ of Osiris appeared in many forms such as: a bnw bird stands on the Willow tree (doc.1), a human-headed bird wearing the White Crown upon the nemes headdress (doc.2), a human-headed bird wearing an ointment cone upon his head (doc.3, 4), a standing ram with a large cobra upon his head (doc.5), a ram wearing the Two-Feather Crown (doc.11), a human-headed bird standing on the sacred grove (doc.6, 7), a human-headed bird wearing the symbol of mḏ offering upon the nemes (doc.8), a human-headed bird wearin the solar-disk adorned with the uraeus upon his head (doc.9, 10), and finally as a ram-headed mummy (doc. 12, 13).
- The bꜣ of Osiris appeared along with the bꜣ of other deities such as: the bꜣ of Re, the bꜣ of Shu, and Geb. He also appeared with Isis, Nephthys, Horus, Amun the god Hapi and Ptah.
- The bꜣ of Osiris is depicted while receiving offerings from other kings and deities. He received the offering of burning incense from emperor Domitian (doc.5), the offering of pouring water (doc.9, 10).
- The function of the bꜣ of Osiris was the protection of the bꜣ of other deities such as: the standing ram (bꜣ-ḥꜣf) at Dendera, the four bꜣ of Amun at Karnak. He also protected the deities themselves such as: god Khnum at Esna and sšḥ at Edfu.
- The bꜣ of Osiris held many titles as the following: nb tš-sn.t, nb ḏdt, ḫnty-imntt, bꜣw nṯrw ḫr ḫw.t.f, nb ḏdw, ḫkꜣ ṣbdw, nṯr 쳐ꜣ, ḥrj-ib ʾwn.t, wnn-nfrw-msꜣ-ḥrw.
- Many sacred animals were associated with the bꜣ of Osiris as Mendes Ram, Apis bull and km-š.tꜣ serpent. The bꜣ of Osiris was manifested in them.
- Both bꜣ of Osiris and Re united together and thus created a united bꜣ called ‘ḏbꜣ dmꜣf’. it was depicted as ram-headed mummy refering to the ram of Mendes where the two gods met.

Fig.1. The bꜣ of Osiris as a bnw bird
Fig. 2. The two b3 of Osiris and Re from the 4th shrine of Tut-ankh-Amun Piankoff. A, The Shrines of Tut-Ankh-Amon, New York (1955), p.55, fig.16.

Fig. 3. The two b3 of Osiris and Re from the papyrus of Ani Budge. E, The Book of the Dead, The Papyrus of Ani, volume 3, London (1913), sheet 9.

Fig. 4. The b3 of Osiris on a stela of hr-di.f nḥt
Lutz. H, Egyptian Tomb Steles and Offering Stones of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of the University of California, Leipzig (1927), pl.44.
Fig. 5. The b3 of Osiris on the lower part, interior of a sarcophagus. Steward. H, *Mummy-Cases and Inscribed Funerary Cones in the Petrie Collection*, Warminster (1986), Tafel.15.


Fig. 7. The b3 of Osiris being watered by a Nile-god. Bénédite. G, *Le Temple de Philae 1*, Paris (1893), pl.XXXVI.
**Fig. 8a** Cow-headed Isis before the bꜣ of Osiris

**Fig. 8b.** The deities adore the bꜣ of Osiris

**Fig. 9a.** A procession of the bꜣ of Osiris on the frieze of the east Osiride chapel, no.1, east wall, at Dendera temple

**Fig. 9b.** The bꜣ of Osiris on the frieze of the east Osiride chapel, no.1, south wall, at Dendera temple

**Fig. 9c.** The bꜣ of Osiris on the frieze of the east Osiride chapel, no.1, north wall, at Dendera temple
**Fig.10.** Goddess Isis offering water before the $b_3$ of Osiris

**Fig.11.** Goddess Isis offering water and bread before the $b_3$ of Osiris

**Fig.12.** the $b_3$ of Osiris as a ram
Fig. 13. The united $b\overline{s}$ of Osiris and Re in the tomb of Nefertari
Suzanne. L. Onstine, “The Relation between Osiris and Re in The Book of Caverns”

Fig. 14. The united $b\overline{s}$ of Osiris and Re on a papyrus from the 21st dynasty

1 - The $k\overline{s}$ was described in hieroglyphic as two upraised arms $\uparrow\downarrow$. It was considered as the symbol of protection or embracing the person by his $k\overline{s}$. There were numerous representations of the king accompanied by his $k\overline{s}$, either as the hieroglyphic symbol or as a man with the $k\overline{s}$ symbol upon his head; Andrey O. Bolshakov, “Ka” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Volume 2, Oxford (2001), p.215-217.

2 - The $s\hbar$ was the disembodied soul. It had a special importance in mortuary rituals of ancient Egypt. The $s\hbar$ allowed the human form of the deceased to visit earth; Margaret R. Bunson, *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Newyork (2002), p.1.


In ancient Egyptian Myths, the b3 of Osiris was the bnw bird who rests on Willow tree; Ridolfo V. Lanzone, Dizionario di Mitologia Eigiza, Vol.5 Torino (1881-1886), pl.70.

12 - Marriete. A, Dendérah IV planche, Paris (1873), pl.75 (18,19).
18 - ssh [star] was the constellation of Orion. He was mentioned in the Pyramids Texts and was referred to as ‘Father of gods’. He was usually depicted as a god surrounded by stars that is sailing across the sky; Richard H. Wilkinson, The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt, London (2003), p.127; LGG VI, 152.
20 - LGG II, 676.
21 - Hu was the modern name of a city which was the capital of the 7th Nome of Upper Egypt. The name of the main city in the nome was hw.t shym which was shortened to hw. During the ptolemaic period it was called Diospolis Parva. It was the cult center of the deity Bst until the New kingdom when it became the cult center for goddess Hathor; Karola Zibelius, “Hu” in LÄ III, 64.
22 - WB V, 385.
24 - Mendes was the Greek name of a city in ancient Egypt called dd.t, the modern Tell Al-Ruba. It is situated about 23 km east of Mansora, Al-Dakahlia government. The chief deities of Mendes who formed the Triad, were the ram-headed god b3-nb-dd.t (the b3 of Osiris), ⲁⲧ ⲧ ⲧ ⲧ ⲧ, his consort the fish-deity h3t-mhyt ⲧ ⲧ ⲧ ⲧ ⲧ and their son hr-ps-hrd ⲧ ⲧ ⲧ ⲧ; Donald B. Redford, “Mendes” in The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, Volume 2, Oxford (2001), p.367; LGG II, 683; V, 17; WB III, 123.
25 - WB V, 630.

29 - LGG V, 253.

30 - WB II, 312.


36 - WB II, 184.

37 - The *md* offering of oil was one of the ointment used in the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth. The *md* along with the *mnht* cloth in the ritual offerings refered to the rebirth; WPL II, 866.


47 - CT IV 276/7c-280/1a.


"البا" هو جانب من جوانب الإنسان الذي أعتقد المصريون القدماء أنه سيعيش بعد موت الجسم. وقد تم تصويره على شكل طائر برأس إنسان يطير بعيدًا عن القبر ليتم إلى "الكا" في العالم السفلي، على العكس من مفهوم الروح في المعتقدات الأخرى، فإن "البا" ليس فقط جزءًا من الإنسان، ولكنه الإنسان نفسه. في بادئ الأمر، تمت كتابة كلمة "با" باستخدام رمز الطائر بنو. ثم تم تغييره إلى شكل الصقر برأس إنسان. كان هناك ارتفاع بأن البشر يمتلكون "با" واحدًا فقط في حين أن الآلهة لديهم الكثير من "البا". وقد ظهرت "البا" عادة في النصوص التي تتعلق بالحياة بعد الموت. وكانت نصوص الأهرام الأول الذي ذكر مفهوم "البا". لم يكن هناك تصوير "البا" قبل الدولة الحديثة، ومع ذلك، فإن بعض التماثيل الجنائزية التي تعود إلى الدولة القديمة صورت "البا" في شكل بشري تمامًا. وقد كان أول تصوير "البا" في كتاب الموتى في شكل طائر برأس إنسان له سمات بشري، أخرى ناشئة بأن "البا" كجزء من طبيعته البشرية وكذلك قدرته على الانتقال من مكان إلى آخر. وقد صورت "البا" الخاصة بالإله آوزوريس عدة مرات على جدران المعابد، المقابر والآثار الأخرى. ولذلك يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة المناظر المختلفة ل"البا" الخاصة بأوزوريس وإلقاء الضوء على وظائفها.