

**Uncommon Use of Full-bodied Lion Figure in Thrones' Design
Till the End of Ptolemaic Period**

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Abstract

The researcher noticed a model of a throne from the Ptolemaic period; its legs were shaped as two complete lions, an uncommon artistic style for a throne, so the study aims to focus on the birth and evolution of this style.

Key words: Lion – Throne – Isis – Harpocrates.

Methodology

The researcher follows the descriptive and analytical approach to show full-bodied figures in the design of the thrones' model as follows:

The descriptive approach is applied to describe the material of each model, size, storage place and throne's model over all description.

The Analytical approach is applied to describe the technical aspect, symbolic and religious connotation in the evolution of lions shape and how closely they are related to king's divine and mundane authority.

Introduction

The ancient Egyptian was influenced by the surrounding environment. This was clearly reflected in art¹. Among thus influences the lion was used to adorn the throne² as an important symbol of the practice of hereditary divine rule³. The diversity of throne designs and adornment are attributed to artistic evolution through all periods⁴; the use of lions in throne's designs was common as a sort of protection in ancient Egyptian art⁵, beside showing the king as a strong ruler⁶ due to the lion's characteristics and its physical features which the Egyptians linked to the divine king. So many thrones were designed with a lion's face and paws or even its paws only⁷. This pattern extended until the Ptolemaic period⁸.

The researcher observed some uncommon examples designed with two-bodied lions representing the throne's legs. The oldest example dates back to the late period in an unprecedented design. The researcher will follow the prevalence and continuation of this artistic style till the end of the Ptolemaic period.

The lion in the Pharaonic period *m3i* 

The lion played an important role in the ancient Egyptian civilization. The ancient Egyptians followed the lion's life cycle and were eyewitnesses to its strength, speed and swooping attacks¹⁰ and compared the lion to the divine king showing him as a victorious ruler¹¹. This can be seen many occasions where artists used the lion to resemble the king crushing his enemies in a show of control and strength¹².

As for religious aspects, the ancient Egyptians represented many deities with lion figures¹³. The mummification beds were also shaped as lions to express the religious and mundane value it can give to the deceased in the afterlife¹⁴. Furthermore, lions were not only depicted in scenes, but they also appeared in minor arts such as amulets¹⁵ and as a guardian sculpture such as the sphinx¹⁶ - that mainly consists of lion's body, the king's face, the holy snake, and the false beard-Nems to symbolize the lion's attributes by which the king triumphs over his enemies¹⁷. The king was also pictured with a lion's tail during festivals¹⁸ and lions were used to decorate entrances¹⁹.

The lion in the Ptolemaic period

The lion in ancient Egypt had an evident impact on arts throughout the Ptolemaic period where the king was sometimes called the living lion. The lion also appeared in different forms of art²⁰ such as in Ptolemaic-era sphinx was depicted with styles unprecedented in ancient Egypt (e.g. one paw placed on the top of the other)²¹. The griffin γρῦψ²² - means dreadful²³ was considered to be one of the most important artistic styles in the Ptolemaic period with the body of a lion, the head of a dragon, and the wings of a falcon or an eagle. It combined the strength of birds in the sky, lions on land as well as the mystic power of dragons²⁴. The goal was to have an elevated status with the characteristics of those creatures²⁵. Once again it was used as an artistic element in the amulet to protect from evil spirits, wild animals, and diseases. The amulet was meant to grant the bearer strength and blessings²⁶. Moreover, the lion continued to shape the mummification beds²⁷.

The shape of the lion in the throne design

The researcher was able to identify 3 distinctive shapes of the lion in throne designs till the Ptolemaic period:

- 1- Thrones with legs shaped as lion's paws (Fig.1)

The researcher identified a commonly – used design where the legs were shaped as lion's paws implying the strength of the lion and the authority of the divine king²⁸.



Uncommon use of full-bodied lion figure in thrones' design Till the end of Ptolemaic period

Figure (1): A Throne with legs shaped as lion's paws, depicted on Tutankhamun's throne
Period: New Kingdom
Reserve Place: Egyptian Museum
Material: Wood
After: Ibrahim, A., "The Throne of King Tutankhamun as Egyptian environmental System", In: *International Design Journal*, vol.5, Issue 3, Cairo, 2015, p.7.

- 2- The Legs of thrones were shaped as lion's paws and face (Fig.2)
 The researcher found that the lion's paws and face were depicted within thrones designs to symbolize the lion shape. This type of thrones were used by the king and his family only²⁹, it was used in mundane life³⁰.



Figure (2): A Throne with legs shaped as lion's paws and face, Tutankhamun's throne
Period: New Kingdom
Reserve Place: Egyptian Museum
Material: Wood
Dimension: H. 104 cm – W.53 cm
After: Ibrahim, A., "The Throne of King Tutankhamun, 2015, 6-7.

- 3- The legs of thrones were shaped as full-bodied lions (Figures. 3: 8)
 This stage represents an important development in the throne design, where the researcher observes that the throne's legs take the shape of full-bodied lions which seems to be an artistic evolution carrying a connotation of lion's religious and mundane symbolism³¹.

The Pharaonic period	
	
<p>Figure (3) : The legs of throne were shaped as full-bodied lions Period : Late Period Reserve Place : Los angeles museum of art Number : AC1992.152.57 Material : Bronze Dimension : H.7,78–W.6,83 After : https://collections.lacma.org/node/172541 (accessed 23/7/2019 8pm)</p>	<p>Figure (4): The legs of throne were shaped as full-bodied lions Period : Late Period Reserve Place : The Metropolitan Museum Number : 64.308 Material : Bronze Dimension : H.4,6 – W.2,7. After : https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/550992?&searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ao=on&ft=throne+from+Egypt&offset=0&pp=20&pos=4(accessed 26/7/2019 10 am)</p>
Continue: The Pharaonic period	
	
<p>Figure (5) : The legs of throne were shaped as full-bodied lions Period : Late Period Reserve Place : Egyptian Museum, Berlin Number : AM 4580 Material : Bronze Dimension : H.14,2 – W.15,5. After : http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultLightboxView/result.t1.collection_lightbox.\$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=Slightbox_3x4&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F&sp=T&sp=0 (accessed 24/7/2019 11pm)</p>	

Models dating back to the late and Ptolemaic periods



Figure (6): An Amulet of Isis nursing her son Horus, sitting on a throne with legs shaped as full-bodied lions
Period : Late – Ptolemaic Period
Reserve Place : The Metropolitan Museum
Number : 26.7.867
Material : Blue faience
Dimension : H.2,7 – W. ,8.
After :

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/570350?&searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ao=on&ft=lion+from+ancient+Egypt&offset=240&rpp=80&pos=250>(accessed 26/7/2019 11 am)



Figure (7): Statuette of Harpocrates sitting on a throne with legs shaped as full-bodied lions
Period : Late – Ptolemaic Period
Reserve Place : Christie's Auction House – London
Number : _____
Material : Bronze
Dimension : H.9,5
After :

<https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/ancient-egyptian-bronze-harpocrates-late-period-to-4616293-details.aspx> (accessed 1/8/2019 2 am)

Ptolemaic Period



Figure (8) : The legs of throne shaped as full-bodied lions
Period : Ptolemaic Period
Reserve Place : The Metropolitan Museum
Number : 23.6.26
Material : Copper
Dimension: H.8,8 – W.6 ,1.
After :

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/551318?&searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ao=on&od=on&ft=Amulet+from+ptolemaic+and+Roman+period+from+Egypt&offset=800&rpp=80&pos=855>(accessed 18/7/2019 1 am)

Deities included in the research models:

1. Isis *ꜥꜣt*  ³²

The goddess name was written with a symbol of the throne³³ indicating her major role in Egyptian Divine royalty³⁴. She may also have been an embodiment of the power of the throne³⁵. Hence, the meaning of her name is the throne, or she who had a dominant authority³⁶. She was connected to various deities, which led to being depicted in different forms³⁷. She was considered to be a guardian goddess of both the living and the dead³⁸, the goddess of wheat, rain and wind with great magical powers³⁹ according to her main role in Osiris myth helping him in resurrection⁴⁰.

She was also the mother goddess of the king, being Osiris's wife and the mother of Horus⁴¹. She became even more popular during the Ptolemaic period and highly-respected in the Ptolemaic monarchy⁴² building her huge temples across Egypt, the most important one is the temple of Philae⁴³.

2. *ḥr-pꜣ-ḥrd*  ⁴⁴ (Horus the Child)

Harpocrates to the Ptolemies⁴⁵, he is one form of Horus, son of Isis and Osiris⁴⁶ depicted as a shaved-head child⁴⁷ with a lock of hair on the right side (a unique sign of youth in ancient Egyptian art), while sucking his finger. He either wears the double crown

shmty ⁴⁸  as a ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt⁴⁹, or the hemhem crown⁵⁰ *hmhm*  ⁵¹ (means "to

shout," "cry out")⁵² made of triple *ꜥꜣt* crowns⁵³ *ꜥꜣt*  ⁵⁴, it is considered as an evolution form of *ꜥꜣt* crown⁵⁵ which was Osiris symbol⁵⁶. Other forms of Harpocrates include the top of the lotus flower, a plump child, sitting on the throne, pictured clothed and naked⁵⁷, Isis nursing him⁵⁸.

Harpocrates appeared more frequently during the late period⁵⁹, especially among mean people⁶⁰. During the Ptolemaic period, he was one of Alexandria's holy triad (Isis, Serapis, and Heru-pa-khered) and one of the guardian deities of Alexandria⁶¹. Thus, large quantities of his statues were found inside the houses and tombs of mean people for being the most-respectful among the holy triad. Due to his unique religious status, he was pictured on the Alexandrian and regional coins⁶². The Worship Harpocrates was linked to other deities due to him being a child who cannot be separated from his mother, so he did not have his own temple⁶³. Yet, he was worshiped beyond Egypt in Greece, Rome, Sicily, Malta, and even north-western India⁶⁴.

Analytical study

The researcher analyzed throne models which contained full-bodied lions from the religious and artistic aspects throughout the Pharaonic and Ptolemaic periods as follows:

Uncommon use of full-bodied lion figure in thrones' design Till the end of Ptolemaic period

- The existence of two full-sized lions is attributed to the artist for being influenced by the Pharaonic period especially the scenes depicting the King in the battle. It was common to picture the lions accompanying the King⁶⁵ symbolizing strength and guardianship to the throne (Fig.9). Onwards, the full-bodied lions evolved to become an essential part of the throne design⁶⁶. with added grace, strength and stability to the throne and therefore the King⁶⁷. It's evident how the artist has preserved the artistic inheritance of lions in battles scenes and introduced it to sculptures as seen in the models mentioned in this research.



- Throne designs which were infused with lion shapes remained associated with the King's characteristics and the Divine royalty until the end of the Ptolemaic period. The characteristics of the Divine king can be traced back to the Osiris myth, where the throne was passed on from deities to their mortal offspring through the Divine king⁶⁸. Osiris was the last of the deities⁶⁹ who preferred to remain in the other side as a ruler of the kingdom of the dead⁷⁰ and appointed his son, Horus, as his successor to rule Egypt⁷¹ before being raised to heaven⁷², Consequently, he became the source of the royalty⁷³ and the king had been described as representative of the deity, Horus, on earth⁷⁴. This ideology continued through the Ptolemaic period⁷⁵. where the Ptolemaic king was considered as the legitimate heir to the divine royalty⁷⁶. Thus, the presences of the lions indicate protection to the king and divine royalty⁷⁷.
- The Egyptian artist was affected by the symmetric phenomenon in nature e.g.: Nile banks, North and South, the kingdom of life in the east and the kingdom of the death in the west, so the symmetric phenomenon occupied the thought of the ancient Egyptian who tried to implements as much as possible⁷⁸. This is shown through the presence of the two full-bodied lions on the right and left sides of the throne as a type of environmental heredity which deduced by the ancient Egyptian from his interaction with the nature.
- In highlighting the details of the lion's physical elements, the ancient Egyptian artist practiced what is known as holographic style of sculpture, a common style which highlighted behavioral and kinetic features of the lion in its environment (e.g. movement of the tail, facial expressions before attacks, relative positions of its paws, etc). This required highly-skilled artists to achieve realism in sculpture which became known as the realistic school (Fig.10)



- The ancient Egyptian artist presented the Osirian divine triad (Osiris-Isis-Horus) in two models discussed in this research:
 - Amulet of goddess Isis when she is nursing her son Harpocrates. the chair presents Osiris according to one of the symbols that makeup his name *w-sir* ⁷⁹ which is the chair; goddess Isis represents the second member of the triad in her well-known form. The third member is god Horus where Horus the child is being nursed by his mother. Amulets were used by the living and dead for: blessing, protection, rebirth and life.
 - The statue of Harpocrates represents the Osiris myth through the hemhem crown worn by Harpocrates. Harpocrates is seen sitting on the throne which refers to the third element of the triad, Isis the goddess. The appearance of the two lions symbolizes protection of the throne and the divine royalty. The artist managed to combine symbols of youth and maturity in the statue of Harpocrates, hence, highlighting one of his characters, fertility⁸⁰. Besides, it showed him as a king and heir to his father Osiris's throne (Fig.11).



Conclusion

- The lion occupied the ancient Egyptian thoughts throughout the ancient Egyptian civilization and the Ptolemaic period in many artistic aspects and proceeded through stages of artistic development that highlighted the importance of the lion as religious and mundane symbol for the king and royalty shown by accompanying the king in religious and mundane scenes, as well as being part of the throne design.
- The effect of lion was evident on the artistic depiction then on sculptures thereafter. The ancient Egyptian artist followed the holographic sculpture style to show the detailed elements of the lion's body which is known in art as the realistic school.
- The study shows different styles for the thrones where the lion was depicted with paws or paws and face before the appearance of uncommon full-bodied lions in some occasions.

استخدام غير شائع لشكل الأسد الكامل في تصميم كرسي العرش حتى نهاية العصر البطلمي

شاع استخدام الأسد كنوع من الحماية في تصميم كرسي العرش وذلك لإظهار الملك كحاكم قوي، لما يحمله الأسد من صفات وخصائص جسدية تتبعها المصري القديم وربطها بشخصية الملك، ولذلك ظهر العديد من كراسي العرش مُصممة بوجه ومخالب أسد أو مخالب أسد فقط، ونظراً لانتشار هذا النمط الفني فقد امتد تأثيره إلي العصر البطلمي، ورصد الباحث بعض الأمثلة غير الشائعة لنماذج من كراسي العرش جاء تصميمها من خلال أسدين كاملين يمثلان قوائم المقعد، أقدمهما يؤرخ بالعصر المتأخر في نمط فني غير مألوف في تصميم كرسي العرش.

الكلمات الدالة: إيزيس – حربوقراط – أسد – كرسي العرش.

End note

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