

## Goddess Henut

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### Abstract

This paper concerns in Goddess Henut, (the white Pelican). The research aims to throw light on her role in Ancient Egypt and to show her importance. The study included a simple Introduction about Birds in general, and the white pelican in particular. The study referred to her form, as she appears as a white pelican bird or a goddess with a pelican head, <sup>1</sup>she is known as the mother of the king, <sup>2</sup>the paper shows her mention in the different sacred Texts like the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, and the Book of the Dead. The study also discussed the different ideograms that represented the name of this goddess, it discussed her role and function in the Ancient Egyptian Religion as it was thought that she provides the deceased a safe Passageway to the Hereafter.



### Introduction

Moreover 70 species of Birds were depicted on the walls of the Ancient Egyptian Temples and Tombs. For example, The Mastaba of Ti at Saqqara from the fifth dynasty, and many tombs of Beni Hassan from the Middle Kingdom exposed several species of birds in different scenes. Many of these Birds were considered as a main source of food for all classes of the society from the higher classes to the commoners, on the other side some birds were associated with specific deities like falcon which was related to many gods like Re, , Re Horakhety, Horus, Montu, Sokar, Dedwen, and Nemty. The Vulture was associated to goddess Nekhbet and Mut. Ibis was associated to Thot; the goose with god Amon. The gray Heron was associated with Atum , while the pelican with the solar cult. <sup>3</sup>


The sacred bird for goddess Henut was the white pelican (Pelecanus Onocrotalus). It was figured in the hieroglyphic script, it rarely appeared in the scenes of the ancient Egyptian temples and tombs. It is a large water white bird with a long neck and a large bill with a puffy throat pouch used for catching fish. The pelican has strong wings, supported with thick plumage. it breeds in parts of Eastern Europe, Asia, and Turkey, while in winter it immigrated towards southern Europe, Middle East and Africa , and nowadays it immigrates towards the Nile valley , Delta, Suez canal, Fayoum, and the red sea coast . They feed on fish which they scoop from the water while flying over the surface of the water.<sup>4</sup>

### Sacred texts mentioning goddess Hnut


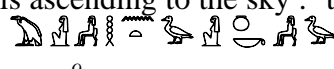
Goddess Henutis one of the beneficial deities who played a religious role in the hereafter as indicated from the sacred texts and as mentioned in the pyramid texts, coffin texts and the book of the dead


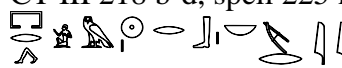
Pyr. 278 stated that  " sr Hnw.t pr psDT "Henut pelican will prophesy that the psdjet pelican will go up.<sup>5</sup> It resembles other spells in the coffin text , which are Ct VI 53e, spell 483,  sr Hnw.t pr psD.T.(i) may the pelican Henut announce that the shining one goes forth , <sup>6</sup>and Ct vi 236a, spell 622"

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 srHnw.t pr psD.t " the pelican will prophesy that the shining one will go forth"<sup>7</sup>

These spells refer that goddess Henut have the ability of prediction

Pyr. 511d mentioned  "mw.t pw n(y).t Titi Hnw.t , titi pw sA.s 'the pelican is the king's (titi) mother and king (titi) is her son, this spell refers, so that goddess Henut is assimilated to goddess Nut, who is known as the mother of the deceased king (Osiris), who helps him in his ascending to the sky .<sup>8</sup> this spell resembles also Ct V, 37d, spell 374 which mentioned that  " mwt.i Hnt , ink sA.s "my mother is the pelican, and I am her son"<sup>9</sup>


CT III 218 b-d, spell 225 mentioned that   " R n Hnw.t snS n.i r Hnw.t rdi n.(i) Hnw.t pr.i m sw r b nb mry.i." the mouth of the pelican is opened for you, the mouth of the pelican is thrown open for you, the pelican has caused you to go out into the day to the place where you wish to be".<sup>10</sup> This spell resembles the Book of the dead, chapter 68 ( coming forth by the day ) which said



' R Hnw.t snS n.i r Hnw.t rdi n.i Hnw.t pr.i m sw r b nb mry.i." the mouth of the pelican is opened for me, the mouth of the pelican is giving to me , and I go out into the day to the place where I wish to be .<sup>11</sup>

It is suggested that the mouth of the Pelican is the tomb from which the deceased will go out,<sup>12</sup> while another opinion says that this spell associated the celestial vault (where the sun rises) with the mouth of the pelican.<sup>13</sup>

CT III 330 a, spell 243 mentioned that  "ink Hnw.t mAA ti ms.k" I am the pelican who saw your birth .<sup>14</sup>

CT III 392C, spell 263 mentioned that  "ink Hnw.t mAA ti ms.kI am the pelican who saw your birth , who saw your birth. "<sup>15</sup>

Ct iii 393b, spell 264 mentioned that  " N pn Hnw.t mAA . ti tp.k ' N is the pelican Henut who sees your head. He has come here, so that he may seek his fledglings"<sup>16</sup>

Ct vi 238a, spell 622 mentioned that  " Ss n.i tp n Hnw.t' I affixed the head of the pelican ".<sup>17</sup>

The last spells refer to the nature of the pelican bird which scoop fish and keep it in its pouch to feed its fledglings in their nests assuring the identification between Henut with goddess nut who protects and helps her son (the deceased king) in his ascension to the sky in the neither world , and These spells refer to the resurrection and the rebirth of the deceased

## Iconography and scenes of Henut

### Doc. 1

Another scene at the chamber of seasons, solar temple of Niweserre representing three Henut pelicans in captivity on the east wall corresponding to the rising of the sun. They are accompanied with their names  $\text{𓆎} \text{𓆏} \text{𓆐}$  and each one was preceded by the phallus sign, referring that they composed only of males, they were guided by three priests who pushed them with their sticks. It seems that they were captivated at the solar temple as it had a mythological association with the solar cult. fig. 2<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 1. A scene representing Henut pelicans in captivity on the east wall in the chamber of seasons, solar temple of Niweserre

After K. Jansen- Winkeln, "Noch einmal zur, Pelikanszene" im Sonnenheiligtum des Niuserre" *GM* 166, 1998, Fig. 1

### Doc. 2

She appeared also as a goddess with a head of pelican at the temple of Ramses II, the nineteenth dynasty, at Abydos. She speaks to the doorkeepers (*iry.w aA.w*). She also talks to the deceased. She directs him and opens the underworld for him, the scene is accompanied with text saying " *pr Hnw.t dwi.t iw s dwi.s n iry.w aA.w sAi.w sbA.w ssn sXbi.w bA.w ami.w Swi.wt n mti.w...i iry.w -aA. w i mAa bA pn n AX mnx aA Dsr.w m s.t igr.t bAi mi n.t Ra Hkni mi n.t wsir in.s Hnw.t Dwi.t r N i Hnw.t mAa sw i Hnw.t sSm.s N i Hnw.t wp n.f dwA.t hi n.T ap.f Tn Hnw.t sSm.T sw r wA wt Dwi.T n.f Hkn .f m nis.T Haaw.T mAA.T bA.f Hnw.t Dwi.t "* "may the pelican goddess rise, she who speaks to the gatekeepers who guards their gates who swallows the bAw and devour the shadows of the deceased," saying "o guards of the doors, o lead to the kingdom of the dead this excellent Ba, great of holiness," and she addressed the deceased saying " become Ba like Re ,praised like Osiris" , thus speaks the pelican goddess who speaks about N."O , goddess pelican , lead him, o goddess pelican, may you guide N. O ,goddess pelican , open the Duat to him , hello to you , when it passes near you, goddess pelican, so that you guide it towards the paths. If you call him, he is delighted by your call and you rejoice when you see his bA.O, pelican goddess who cries<sup>19</sup>

Goddess pelican is clearly presented in this text as the guide who leads the deceased towards the celestial ways, and which protects him maternally against the frightening guards of the doors in the hereafter.

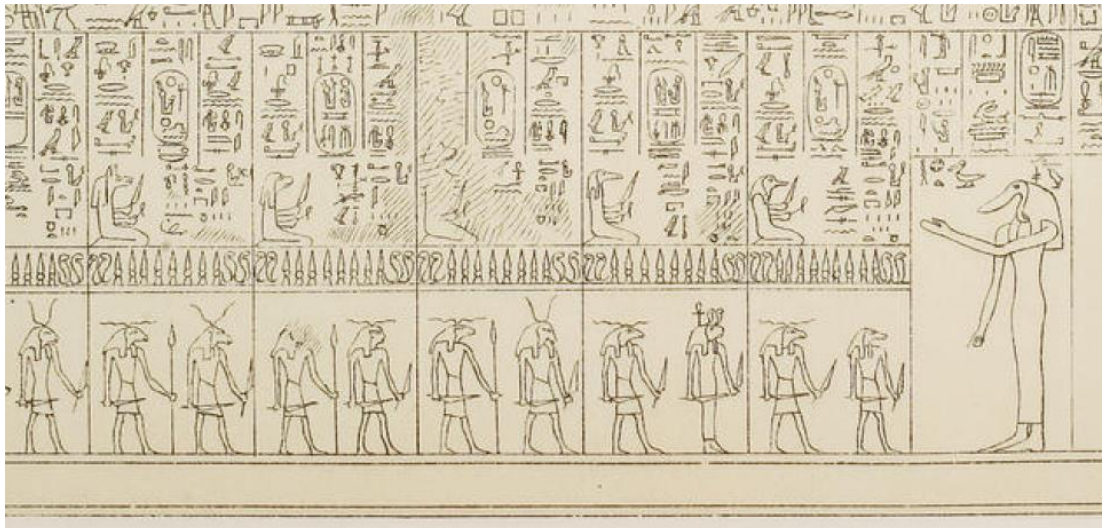


Fig .2. A Scene representing goddess Henut with a pelican head, facing the doorkeepers, temple of Ramsese II Abydos

After A. Mariette, *Abydos: description des fouilles exécutées sur l'emplacement de cette ville. Temple de Sési (Supplément)-Temple de Ramsès-Temple d'Osiris-Petit temple de l'ouest-Nécropole*, paris, 1880, pl. 15

**Doc. 3**

She was represented as a complete white pelican as in the scene of the hall of the festival where the Henut pelican appeared among other birds offered by offering bearers of King Oserkon II to the different deities and the name of the bird was written on the columns underneath the scene Hnt

fig. 1<sup>20</sup>






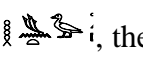










Fig 3 Offering bearers carrying the sacred bird of goddess Henut(white pelican) among other birds, hall of festival of Osorkon II

After E. Naville, *the hall of Festival of Osorkon II in the great temple of Bubastis*, London, 1892, pl. 22

**The name:**

From the studied texts and scenes, it is concluded that the name of *Henut* was written in different ideograms like

Pyr. 278 , Ct vi 53e, spell , Ct vi 236a, spell 622" , Pyr. 511d mentioned , Ct v, 37d , CT III 218 b-d, spell 225 , the Book of the dead chapter 68 , CT III 330 a, spell 243 , CT III 392C, spell 263 , Ct iii 393b, spell 264 , Ct vi 238a, spell 622 , hall of festival in the temple of Oserkon ii , chamber of seasons at solar temple of Niuserre , in the temple of Ramses ii at Abydos  So it is noticed that Variant determinatives were

used like 

**The function of goddess Henut:**

**From the studied texts and scenes, it is concluded that:**

1. Goddess Henut speaks to the doorkeepers of the hereafter. She directs the deceased towards the celestial ways, and she protects him maternally against the frightening guards of the doors and opens the underworld for him.
2. She is identified with goddess Nut as both of them is called the mother of the deceased king and helps him in his ascending to the sky as she has a celestial role and she allowed the resurrection of the deceased.<sup>21</sup>
3. She had a protective function as its sacred bird had the ability to scoop up fish and the other hostile creatures with its pouch
4. It is obvious that goddess Henut (pelican) had mythological associations with both the rising and the setting of the sun, and this no doubt was the reason for keeping its sacred bird at the solar temple
5. The mouth of the Pelican (sacred bird of Henut) represents the door of the tomb from which the deceased will go out, while another opinion associated the celestial vault (where the sun rises) with the mouth of the pelican.

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<sup>6</sup>R. O.FAULKNER, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts II*, (Warminstar, 1977), 128  
<sup>7</sup>*Id.*, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts I*, (Warminstar, 1973), 204  
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<sup>9</sup>*Id.*, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts II*,10  
<sup>10</sup>*Id.*, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts I*,177

<sup>11</sup>E.A.W. Budge , *The Book of the dead : facsimiles of the papyri of Hunefer, Anhai, Kerasher and Netchemet with supplementary text from the papyrus of Nu*, London, 1899, pl. 11, sheet 7

<sup>12</sup>G. Hart, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, 2nd Edition, London & New York, 2005, 125.

<sup>13</sup>Chri Cannuyer., "Le pélican céleste dans les textes funéraires Egyptiens."In C. Cannuyer, F. Mawet, J. Ries eds., *Le ciel dans les civilisations orientales*, Bruxelles ,1999,50

<sup>14</sup>R. O.FAULKNER, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*I,201

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*,127

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*,128

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 205

<sup>18</sup>F.W.F. Bissing, le chambres des trois saisons du sanctuaire solaire du roi Rathourés (V<sup>e</sup> dynastie)a Abousir" *ASAE* 53, 2, 1955, 331; D.Meek., "Les oiseaux marqueurs du temps"*Bulletin du Cercle Lyonnais d; Egyptologie Victor* no. 4, 1990, p. 43

<sup>19</sup>Chri Cannuyer., "Le pélican céleste dans les textes funéraires Egyptiens."In C. Cannuyer, F. Mawet, J. Ries eds., *Le ciel dans les civilisations orientales*, Bruxelles ,1999, 51.

<sup>20</sup>E. Naville, *the hall Festival of Osorkon II in the great temple of Bubastis*, London, 1892, p.33

<sup>21</sup> A.G. Abel Fattah, S. Bickel, "Trois cercueils de Sedment",*BIFAO* 100,Le Caire, 2000, 9



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### المعبودة حنوت

منى عز على

قسم الإرشاد السياحي، كلية سياحة وفنادق المنصورة

### الملخص

يمثل هذا البحث دراسة عن المعبودة حنوت، (البجع الأبيض). إذ يلقي الضوء على أهمية هذه المعبودة والدور الذي لعبته في الديانة المصرية القديمة. وبدأت الدراسة بعرض مقدمة بسيطة عن الطيور في مصر القديمة، ثم ألحقها بمقدمة عن البجع الأبيض. تشير الدراسة إلى الأشكال التي ظهرت بها المعبودة في المناظر، حيث كانت تظهر على شكل طائر البجع الأبيض أو إلهة برأس بجة، وتعرف بوالدة الملك، ويتناول البحث أيضاً دراسة للنصوص المقدسة التي ذكرت هذه المعبودة مثل نصوص الأهرامات، نصوص التوابيت، وكتاب الموتى، وعرضت أيضاً الأشكال المختلفة لاسم المعبودة من خلال النصوص والمناظر المختلفة التي تمثل اسم هذه الإلهة، كما ناقش البحث دورها ووظيفتها في الديانة المصرية القديمة، حيث إنها تضمن مروراً آمناً للمتوفى في العالم الآخر.

### معلومات المقالة

#### الكلمات المفتاحية

المعبودة؛ حنوت؛ البجع الأبيض.

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