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# Apotropaic Roles of Khonsu in the Ancient Egyptian Religion during the Dynastic Period

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## أدوار خونسو الواقية من تأثير الشر في الديانة المصرية القديمة خلال عصر الأسرات

كان خونسو من أبرز الشخصيات التي لعبت أدواراً متعددة في العقيدة المصرية القديمة. ولقد صلت شعبيته إلى ذروتها بداية من عصر نصوص الأهرام، فنجده منذ عصر الدولة القديمة قد قام بأداء دورا كبيرا كمنشئ لفكرة التغذية على ما بداخل الآلهة للتمتع بالأبدية. كما أنه كان يعتبر رسول للآلهة بالإضافة إله عمله كإله في اللاهوت المصري القديم. نظراً لطبيعته ككائن أسمى متعدد الشخصيات، فلقد لعب العديد من الأدوار الحاسمة على مر العصور والتي وجهت لنقادي التأثيرات الشريرة والأرواح المؤذية. بدأ خونسو هذه الأدوار كمؤسس لأكل أجسام الآلهة والتي استطاع من خلاله أن يساعد الموتى في التغذية على الجوهر الإلهي والقوة السحرية الإلهية المطلقة وأن يضمن لهم صعوداً آمناً إلى السماء في رحلتهم للعالم الآخر منذ عصر الدولة القديمة. كرسول، لعب خونسو دوراً عقابياً في تعذيب الخصوم، ولذلك يمكن اعتباره صورة نمطية للمعاقبين المرعبين الذين ظهروا فيما بعد خلال عصر الدولة الحديثة لتنفيذ أحكام الإعدام على الموتى المدانين في العالم السفلي. أما في العصر المتأخر، فلقد تم إثبات عبادته كإله للقمر والخلق والسحر والشفاء على نطاق واسع. كان خونسو كإله لديه القدرة على ضمان تجدد الكون، وإبعاد الشياطين المرضية، وتحطيم القوى الشريرة، ومساعدة الممسوسين على العودة إلى الحالة الصحية والقوة الطبيعية، وجميعها أدوار ارتبطت بالوقاية من تأثير الشر في الديانة المصرية القديمة.

الكلمات الدالة: خونسو، دور، واق، قوة، شر، تدمير

### **Abstract**

Khonsu was one of the most prominent characters in the Egyptian doctrine. His popularity reached its peak since the time of the Pyramid Texts. He endowed many functions as a cannibalism originator, messenger, and a god in the Egyptian theology. Owing to his nature as a multi-character supreme being, he played several crucial apotropaic roles throughout the ages to avert evil influences and malevolent spirits. As a founder of cannibalism, he guaranteed for the king a safe ascension to the sky. Moreover, he was viewed as a protector of the divine essence and absolute power that should be transferred to all the dead to enable them acting as the gods in heaven. As a messenger, he played a punitive role in torturing the opponents. Thus, he was equated to the chthonic executioners, who carried out sentences of death on the condemned inhabitants of the underworld during the New Kingdom. The cult of Khonsu as a god of moon, creation, magic, and healing was widely attested during the Late Period. As a god, Khonsu had a power to ensure rejuvenation, drive away disease demons, destroy evil powers, and aid the possessed to return to the normal state of health and strength.

**Keywords:** Khonsu, apotropaic, role, destroy, evil, power

**Introduction:**

Khonsu was known for his multi-character in the ancient Egyptian religion. Despite of being a god of moon<sup>(1)</sup>, a creator-god<sup>(2)</sup>, a magical-god<sup>(3)</sup>, a healer-god<sup>(4)</sup>, and an obedient member in the Traid of Thebes<sup>(5)</sup>, he was not only regarded as a god but also as an earlier cannibalism originator and primal messenger of the dead in the next world. He was attested in the Pyramid Texts especially in the versions of the Pyramids of King Unas and King Teti, where he played a double apotropaic role as a

(1) H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1952), 142.

(2) E. Cruz-Urbe, "The Khonsu Cosmogony," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 31 (Cairo, 1994): 169-189; S. H. Yoo, "Patterns of Ancient Egyptian Child Deities," PhD Thesis, (Brown University, 2012), 113.

(3) Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, 2002), V: ḥ-ḥ, 761.

(4) Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 763-764.

(5) H. Brugsch, *Religion und Mythologie der Alten Aegypter: Nach den Denkmälern*, (Leipzig: J.C.Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1885-1890), 361; E. A. W. Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians or Studies in Egyptian Mythology*, (London: Methuen, 1904), II, 33; E. Otto, *Topographie des Thebanischen Gaus*, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1952), 31; W. A. Jayne, *The healing gods of ancient civilizations*, (New York: University Books, 1962), 68; M. G. Posener, "Philologie et archéologie égyptiennes," *Annuaire du Collège de France: Résumé des Cours et Travaux* 66 (Paris, 1966): 341; H. Te Velde, "Some Remarks on the Structure of Egyptian Divine Triads," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 57 (London, 1971): 83; B. Altenmüller, *Synkretismus in den Sargtexten*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975) 167; H. Brunner, "Chons," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie I* (Wiesbaden, 1975): 961; G. Hart, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, (London; Boston; Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 113; Yoo, "Patterns." 3.

good demon participating in supporting the positive face of cannibalism and as a punitive messenger engaging in punishing the opponents of the deceased king. The same retributive function continued to be played by Khonsu during the Middle Kingdom, when he contributed in opposing the opponents of the dead and burning them as was attested in the Coffin Texts. He retained his earlier apotropaic mission as a supporter of cannibalism during the New Kingdom. As long as the Late Period, he employed his apotropaic function in defeating the evil powers on earth and in the next world. Meanwhile, his functions as a creator-god, moon-god and lunar equivalent of the solar punitive deities, magical-god, and healer-god began to be spread to a great extent. His late apotropaic roles in subduing the primeval creative forces, threatening the foes, destroying the evil spirits, and protecting against the bites of the poisonous reptiles marked the end of the Dynastic Period in Egypt.

The ancient Egyptians believed that surviving the dead kings and individuals in the eternity influenced by their ability to feed on the divine essence and to gain victory over the cosmic adversaries and evil powers. In this context, Khonsu was assigned to perform several apotropaic roles to save the livings on earth and the dead in the hereafter. Such apotropaic functions were played in both of the heavenly realm and the earthly world. In the sky, he helped the royal and individual dead to absorb the divine supernatural powers of the gods during the Old and New Kingdoms. On the other hand, the Old and Middle Kingdoms witnessed his role in punishing the opponents in the otherworld. He employed the same punitive role in the

world of the livings and the next world during the Late Period, when he subdued the evil powers and destroyed the demons. Thus, it was through his apotropaic roles in assisting the dead people to absorb the divine power of the gods and destroying the hostile evil power that they would be able to enjoy immortality and endurance in the eternity.

### **Khonsu in the ancient Egyptian pantheon: *An overview***

In the divine context, Khonsu began to be depicted in the company of a group of deities on the funerary monument of King Pepi II at Saqqara during the Sixth Dynasty **fig. (1)**<sup>(6)</sup>. His cult extended to the Middle Kingdom just as a local god<sup>(7)</sup>. Meanwhile, he began to be responsible for the moon and air and assimilated with many other gods<sup>(8)</sup> like Re<sup>(9)</sup>, Thoth<sup>(10)</sup>, Shesmu<sup>(11)</sup>, Horus<sup>(12)</sup>, Shu<sup>(13)</sup>, and Ihy<sup>(14)</sup>.

(6) G. Jéquier, *Le Monument Funéraire de Pepi II*, (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1940), III, *Les Approches du Temple*, 15, pl. 21.

(7) G. Legrain, "Notes prises à Karnak. V-VIII," *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 23 (Paris, 1901), 61; J.-C. Dégardin, "Khonsou Hypostase ou Dieu Indépendant?," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3-9 September 1995*, ed. C. J. Eyre (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 316.

(8) Brunner, "Chons," 962.

(9) J.-C. Dégardin, "Khonsou - Rê Homme ou Enfant?," *Le Centre Régional pour l'intégration des personnes étrangères de Liège* 21 (Lille, 2000): 39-52.

(10) P. Boylan, *Thoth, The Hermes of Egypt: A Study of Some Aspects of Theological Thought in Ancient Egypt*, (London; Edinburgh; Glasgow [etc.]: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University press, 1922), 205-206; Ph. Derchain, "Mythes et Dieux Lunaires en Égypte," *La Lune, Mythes et*

Dégardin thought that Khonsu was not started as a primarily god, instead, he could be firstly considered as a simple reflection and substitute for other major divinities<sup>(15)</sup>. In this context, Posener viewed in Khonsu a terrifying and helpful minor god, depending on circumstances<sup>(16)</sup>. He also added that the nature of Khonsu as a cosmic divinity, his infantile features, and his young age has always prevented him from taking the first place in any religious center and did not specifically designate him for the supreme patronage of a particular city<sup>(17)</sup>. Altenmüller determined the role of Khonsu as a slaughter demon during the Old and Middle Kingdoms<sup>(18)</sup>.

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*Rites, Sources Orientales V* (Paris, 1962): 40, 42-43; C. J. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth, Two Key Figures of the Ancient Egyptian Religion*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 116-117.

(11) K. H. Sethe, *Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte: Nach den Papierabdrücken und Photographien des Berliner Museums*, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908), I: *Spruch I-468 (Pyr. I-905)*, 210; S. A. B. Mercer, *The pyramid texts: in translation and commentary*, (New York; London; Toronto: Longmans, green and co., 1952), 93; R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 81 (§402-403); Altenmüller, *Synkretismus*, 167.

(12) Boylan, *Thoth*, 207.

(13) E. Hall, "Harpocrates and Other Child Deities in Ancient Egyptian Sculpture," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 14 (Cairo, 1977): 55-58; Cruz-Urbe, "Khonsu," 172, 174; Yoo, "Patterns." 5-6.

(14) A. De Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin texts*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), IV: *Texts of Spells*, 268-354, 180 (i-j).

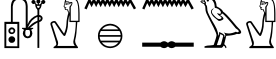
(15) Dégardin, "Khonsou Hypostase," 309, 316.

(16) M. G. Posener, "Philologie et archéologie 66," 340.

(17) M. G. Posener, "Philologie et archéologie 66," 341.

(18) Altenmüller, *Synkretismus*, 167.



Legrain and Otto assumed that the prominent divine aspects of Khonsu as a dependent god started during the Middle Kingdom, probably in the Thirteenth Dynasty, when the title  sš-n-Hnsw i.e. “Scribe of Khonsu”<sup>(19)</sup> was firstly recognized in the religious context in the caption of Spell 207 of the Coffin Texts<sup>(20)</sup>. Brunner confirmed that the essence of Khonsu has originally changed from being a destructive demon to a major god particularly during the New Kingdom, when he started to gain a high reputation in the world of the gods<sup>(21)</sup>. Meanwhile, he became a local god at Thebes, where his temple was built at Karnak next to the temples of his parents<sup>(22)</sup>. The prominence of Khonsu as a god outside Thebes continued later on and many other sanctuaries and shrines were built for his personal cult in Upper and Lower Egypt<sup>(23)</sup>.

(19) A. De Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin texts*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947), III: *Texts of Spells*, 164-267, 155 (b); R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin texts*, (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1973), I: *Spells 1-354*, 168; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, 2002), VI: *h-s*, 602.

(20) Legrain, “Karnak,” 61; Otto, *Topographie*, 1952, 31.

(21) Brunner, “Chons,” 962.

(22) Boylan, *Thoth*, 204; R. H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2003), 114.

(23) Brunner, “Chons,” 961-962; W. Helck, “Gae,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* II, (Wiesbaden, 1977): 400; F. Gomaà, *Die Besiedlung Ägyptens während des Mittleren Reiches. I. Oberägypten und das Fayyûm*, (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1986), 45; F. Gomaà, *Die*

### **Khonsu in the ancient Egyptian religion: *Apotropaic roles***

Since the time of the Old Kingdom, Khonsu played the role of the supporter of cannibalism through preparing the meal of the dead from the bodies of the gods, who were destined for sacrifice. Furthermore, he acted among the bloodthirsty messengers, who punish the opponents, to help the dead enjoying the eternal life during the Old and Middle Kingdoms<sup>(24)</sup>. He also participated in burning of the hearts during the Middle Kingdom that became an inspiration to the later violent executioners during the New Kingdom. By the New Kingdom, he was raised to be a major god especially at Thebes, where he was not worshipped as an independent god but together with his divine parents. In addition, he played in the Book of the Dead the same cannibalistic role of the Old Kingdom that apotropically helped the dead in absorbing the power of their lords. During the Late Period, he played an apotropaic magical role to protect from the stings of the serpents and to destroy the chaotic forces of creation. Meanwhile, he was also

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*Besiedlung Ägyptens Während des Mittleren Reiches. II. Unterägypten und die angrenzenden Gebiete*, (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1987), 166; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, 2002), IV: *nbt-h*, 191; A. J. Spencer, *Excavations at Tell El-Balamun 2003-2008*, (London: The British Museum, 2009), 79; D. Warburton, *Architecture, Power, and Religion: Hatshepsut, Amun & Karnak in Context*, (Zurich; Münster : LIT Verlag, 2012), 189.

(24) M. G. Posener, "Philologie et archéologie égyptiennes," *Annuaire du Collège de France: Résumé des Cours et Travaux* 65 (Paris, 1965): 343.

functioned as a healer-god and healed from the demons of diseases.

The apotropaic acts of Khonsu as a patron of cannibalism, demon messenger, proto- punitive incarnation of the New Kingdom chthonic idols, and a supreme god of moon, creation, magic, and healing and his special abilities in preventing evils were clearly attested in the textual and iconographic contexts of the Dynastic Period as follows:

### **1. Khonsu as a cannibalism patron:**

The analytical study of the “Cannibal Hymn” has been widely recognized in the recent years<sup>(25)</sup>. All the researches generally explained the act of cannibalism since the time of the Pyramid Texts and up to the New Kingdom. This study will only focus on the apotropaic task of god Khonsu in supporting cannibalism that led to the transformation of the divine powers from the gods to the dead in the Pyramid Texts and the Book of the Dead. This notion could be analyzed in the textual context of the Old and New Kingdoms as follows:

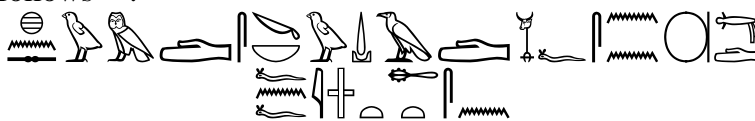
#### **1.1. In Old Kingdom religious inscriptions:**

Khonsu played a violent task reflecting the aggressive side of his character during the Old Kingdom, especially in

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(25) F. Kammerzell, “Das Verspeisen der Götter - Religiöse Vorstellung oder poetische Fiktion?,” *Lingua Aegyptia* 7 (Hamburg, 2000): 183-218; Ch. Eyre, *The Cannibal Hymn: A Cultural and Literary Study*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 89-91; K. Goebis, “The Cannibal Spell: Continuity and Change in the Pyramid Text and Coffin Text Versions,” *Bibliothèque d'Étude* 139 (Le Caire, 2004): 143-173.

the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties. Meanwhile, his dominant feature was ferocity as was described by Posener<sup>(26)</sup>. It was the first time to meet him in a bloody mission in Utterance 273 (§ Spells 402a-b) of the Pyramid Texts<sup>(27)</sup>. This utterance represents part of the so-called “Cannibal Hymn”, in which he was described as the slaughterer of the gods as follows<sup>(28)</sup>:



*Hnsw mds nbw d3d.f sn n N šdi.f n.f imyt ht.sn*  
“*Khonsu cuts down the gods, he slaughters them for N.*  
*(and) takes out for him what is in their body*”.

In the previous spell, Khonsu served as a patron of cannibalism. He slaughtered the gods and took out what was in their bodies to enable the deceased king swallowing and seizing their magical power. Scholars explained this function as an act tending to assist the deceased king in absorbing the divine bodies of the gods to feed on their knowledge, physical strength, life forces, and magical power<sup>(29)</sup>. It was through such cruel absorption that the deceased king would be able to live on the essence of every

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(26) M. G. Posener, “Philologie et archéologie 66,” 339.

(27) Brunner, “Chons,” 960.

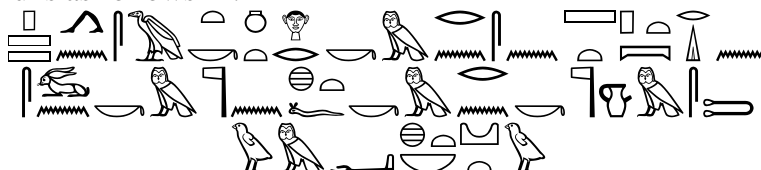
(28) Sethe, *Altaegyptischen pyramidentexte I*, 210; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 93; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 81 (§402).

(29) J. Zandee, *Death as an enemy: according to ancient Egyptian conceptions*, (New York: Arno press, a New York company, 1977), 213; G. Meurer, *Die Feinde des Königs in den Pyramidentexten*, (Freiburg – Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 47, 51.

god, consume the divine power that would not be taken away in the otherworld, be elevated to the state of the gods, and reach the stars.

It seems clear that the aggressive role of Khonsu as a patron of cannibalism in the Pyramid Texts was apotropaic because it tended to protect the king in his way to the sky through providing him with special divine powers needed to achieve immortality. In other words, Khonsu participated in the safe transformation of the gods' spiritual components and essentials, which shall never perish even after the death of their bodies, to the deceased king, who had naturally lost his power and vital essence after his death. This apotropaic task was an extremely positive trait and it tended to ensure the resurrection of the king in the eternal life. When Khonsu innovated cannibalism, there was no intention to support the act of consuming another being as food, instead, the act apotropaically helped the king in incorporating the idealism and perfection of the divine realm of the gods through feeding on their flesh and devouring their unperishable strength and magical power. There is no doubt that the apotropaic service of Khonsu in the "Cannibal Hymn" strengthened the divine might, omnipotence, and magical power of the departed kings in the hereafter. Furthermore, it could be regarded as a prophylactic procedure protecting the king against evil or bad luck and maintaining his ability to overcome all the possible dangers in the otherworld, just like the gods. In this context, there is a recitation, that was quit repeated in the Pyramid Texts, such as in Utterance 368 (§ Spells 638 a-c), describing the divine ability as a supernatural power that protect from the

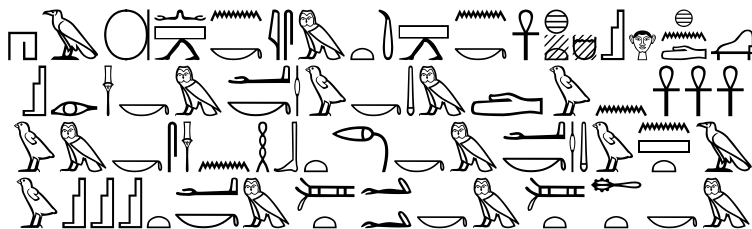
enemies and chase away evil influences and bad things. It runs as follows<sup>(30)</sup>:



*pšš.n s mwt.k Nwt hr.k m rn.s n štp̄t rdi.n.s wn.k m n̄tr n  
h̄ft(y).k m rn.k n̄tr h̄nm.s tw m' ht nb(t) dwt*

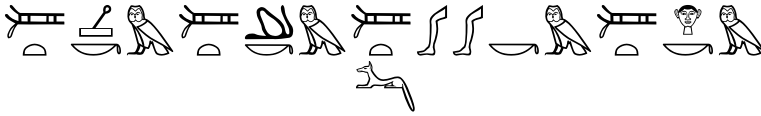
*“Your mother Nut has spread over you (i.e. the king) in her  
name of Shetp̄t. She caused you to be a god without your  
enemy, in your name God. She protects you from every bad  
thing”.*

Noteworthy is that the required result of the apotropaic role of the aggressive Khonsu in the “Cannibal Hymn” finds its echo in Utterance 213 (§ Spells 134a-135b) of the Pyramid Texts. This utterance confirms that the everlasting of the king depended on assimilating his body parts with the divinities as follows<sup>(31)</sup>:



(30) Sethe, *Altaegyptischen pyramidentexte I*, 347; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 127; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 121 (§638).

(31) Sethe, *Altaegyptischen pyramidentexte I*, 80-81; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 58; Faulkner, 40 (§134-135).



*h3 N n šmī.n.k is m(w)tti šmī.n.k 'nht ḥmsi ḥr ḥndw (W)sir  
 'b3.k m '.k wđ.k mdw n 'nhw mks nhbt.k m '.k wđ.(k) mdw n  
 štzw-swt '.k m (I)tm(w) rmny.k m (I)tm(w) ḥt.k m (I)tm(w)  
 s3.k m (I)tm(w) ph.k m (I)tm(w) rdwy.k m (I)tm(w) ḥr.k m 'I  
 np(w)*

“O Unas! You have not gone dead; you have gone alive (to) sit on the throne of (O)siris. Your scepter (is) in your hand that you may give orders to the livings, the handle of your lotus-shaped scepter (is) in your hand. Give orders to those of the mysterious places. Your lower arm(s are) of (A)t(u)m, your upper arms (are) of (A)t(u)m, your body (is) of (A)t(u)m, your back (is) of (A)t(u)m, your rear (is) of (A)t(u)m, your legs (are) of (A)t(u)m, your face (is) of An(u)bis”.

The demonic nature of Khonsu in the Pyramid Texts was discussed by Zandee, who regarded him as a cannibalistic demon and apotropaic helper of the deceased in the afterlife<sup>(32)</sup>. It was also suggested by Meurer that Khonsu was most probably chosen deliberately in the Pyramid Texts to kill his divine siblings and protect the deceased king against the possible evils because of being a not well-known god or because he was not be ranked among the prominent deities at the time when the Pyramid Texts were written<sup>(33)</sup>. Accordingly, it was through the apotropaic function of Khonsu, which enabled the king to absorb the

(32) Zandee, *Death*, 213.

(33) Meurer, *Feinde*, 48-49.

divine characteristics during his rejuvenation in the Pyramid Texts, that his subsequent cult was associated with creation and magic as long as the Late Period.

**1.2. In New Kingdom religious inscriptions:**

Beside being a prominent god during the New Kingdom, Khonsu enjoyed the virtue of performing his earlier brutal mission as an agent of the savage physical violence. In the Book of the Dead, he slaughtered the gods to enable the justified dead realizing their divine essences and power. This role was clearly indicated in Chapter 83, in which the deceased was assimilated with Khonsu, who retained his earlier apotropaic function as a patron of cannibalism as follows<sup>(34)</sup>:



*ink Ḥnsw dndn nbw*

*“I am Khonsu, who cuts off the lords”.*

**2. Khonsu as a bloodthirsty messenger:**

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(34) E. Naville, *Das Aegyptische Todtenbuch der XVIII. bis XX. Dynastie: Aus Verschiedenen Urkunden*, (Berlin: Verlag von A. Asher & Co., 1886), 1: *Text und Vignetten*, pl. XCV (6); Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 762; P. Barguet, *Le livre des morts des anciens Égyptiens*, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 121; G. Allen, *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth by Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in their Own Terms*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 72; R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, (London: British Museum Publications, 1985), 81.



The apotropaic role of Khonsu as a  $\square \circ$   $wp(w)t(y)$ -messenger<sup>(35)</sup> was limited to the religious textual context during the Old and Middle Kingdoms as follows:

### 2.1. In Old Kingdom religious inscriptions:


Armour noticed that one of the major duties of Khonsu in the Egyptian pantheon was to serve as a  $\square \circ$   $wp(w)t(y)$ -messenger of the gods since the time of the Old Kingdom<sup>(36)</sup>. In the Pyramid Texts, he was employed as a mixture of a demon and a punitive messenger as was attested in the “Cannibal Hymn”. In Utterance 273 (§ Spells 402c), he was described as  $\square \circ$   $wp(w)t(y)$   $pw$   $h3bw.f$   $r$   $hsf$  i.e. “This (is) the messenger whom he (i.e. N.) sends forth to exact revenge”<sup>(37)</sup>. Thus, as a  $\square \circ$   $wp(w)t(y)$ -


(35) A. H. Gardiner, *Egyptian grammar: Being an introduction to the study of hieroglyphs*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 183, 280, 462, 553, 560 (for  $ip(w)ty$ ); R. O. Faulkner, *A concise dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962), 60; A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der aegyptischen Sprache*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), I: 304: 6-11; P. Wilson, *A Ptolemaic lexikon: A lexicographical study of the texts in the Temple of Edfu*, (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 225-227; R. Hannig, *Ägyptisches wörterbuch I, Altes Reich und Erste Zwischenzeit*, (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2003), 334-335; R. Hannig, *Ägyptisches wörterbuch II, Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*, (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2006), 658-659.

(36) R. A., Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt*, (New York: American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2002) 148.

(37) Sethe, *Altaegyptischen pyramidentexte I*, 210; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 93; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 81 (§402).



messenger, the apotropaic function of Khonsu was to punish the opponents of the king, who might inflict harm on him during his ascension to the sky.

Noteworthy is that the general punitive role of the   $wp(w)t_3(y)w$ -messengers that was firstly originated in the religious context during the Old Kingdom continued during the time of the Middle and New Kingdoms. For example, they were described as the employed executioners in the place of slaughter in Spell 45 of the Coffin texts, which says<sup>(38)</sup>:

  
 $wp(w)t_3(y)w\ nw\ nmt\ \acute{s}tzt$


“The messengers of the mysterious place of execution”.


In the Magical Papyrus Leiden I (346), slaughtering as a severe punishment was also attributed to the

  $wp(w)t_3(y)w$ -messengers of the New Kingdom, who were described as   $wpwt_3(y)w\ m-ht\ \acute{s}p_3wt\ uryw\ \acute{s}'wt$  i.e. “The messengers (who) roam the districts (and) cause slaughters”<sup>(39)</sup>. The same

(38) A. De Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin texts*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935), I: *Texts of Spells, 1-75*, 196 (d-e); Faulkner, *Coffin texts I*, 39.


(39) B. H., Stricker, “Spreuken tot beveiliging gedurende de Schrikkeldagen naar Pa I 346,” *Oudheidkundige mededeelingen van het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 29 (Leiden, 1948): 62, pl. X (I: 3-6); P. Vernus, “Études de Philologie et de Linguistique (II),” *Revue d'égyptologie* 34 (Paris, 1982-1983): 124, no. 65.

retributive task of the  *wp(w)tyw*-messengers as tormentors of the dead and inflictors of sanctions as retributions for offenses, was also discussed in Chapter 163 of the Book of the Dead. This chapter includes a spell describing them as

 *wp(w)tyw th3 nty irrw* i.e. “The envoys of the transgressor, (who) do evils”<sup>(40)</sup>. They were also described as the inflictors of harm as was recorded in Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead, which says<sup>(41)</sup>:



“The messengers put down harm and bring about punishments”.

The contending of Horus and Seth also provides us with another remarkable New Kingdom proof of the main apotropaic function of the  *wpw(tyw)*-messengers of god Osiris in destroying the hearts of the evildoers to avenge them in the west. This matter was

(40) K. R. Lepsius, *Das Tottenbuch der Ägypter: nach dem Hieroglyphischen Papyrus in Turin*, (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1842), pl. LXXVIII (18); Barguet, *livre des morts*, 235; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 160; Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 160.

(41) Naville, *Aegyptische Tottenbuch*, pl. CXXXVII (17-18); Allen, *Book of the Dea*, 99; Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 33.



clearly emphasized in the inscriptions of the Papyrus Chester Beatty I (D) (Recto), which says<sup>(42)</sup>:



*wpw(tyw) ḥs3-ḥrw iw bn st snḏw n ntr nb ntrt iw.i dit pry.sn  
mtw.sn in ḥ3ty n p3 nty nb irt spw binw*

*“The fierce-faced messenger(s) who fear no of any god or  
goddess. I will let them come out and they will bring the  
heart of anyone who commits bad deeds”.*

As a punitive messenger, Khnosu was employed in punishing the enemies in the afterlife in order to apotropaically protect the deceased king from the possible threats that might face him during his journey to the sky.

Regarding to the root of his name,   *ḥns*, which means “to traverse” or “to travel through”<sup>(43)</sup>, Khnosu was generally known for his mobility and as being a traveler<sup>(44)</sup>. According to Bleeker, it seems that this distinctive

(42) A. H., Gardiner, *Late-egyptian stories*, (Bruxelles: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1932), 58 (15, 5: lines 3-5); M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California press, 1976), II, *The New Kingdom*, 222.


(43) Gardiner, *Egyptian grammar*, 585; Faulkner, *Concise dictionary*, 193; A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), III: 299: 5-19; Wilson, *Ptolemaic lexikon*, 736; Hannig, *Ägyptisches wörterbuch I*, 953-954; Hannig, *Ägyptisches wörterbuch II*, 1899-1900.


(44) M. G. Posener, “Philologie et archéologie 65,” 343; Altenmüller, *Synkretismus*, 167; Yoo, “Patterns.” 133.

identification characterized him, particularly that his apotropaic role as a violent and aggressive emissary in the hereafter during the Old and Middle Kingdoms depended on his mobility and ability to traverse and protect the sky<sup>(45)</sup>.

## 2.2. In Middle Kingdom religious inscriptions:

The apotropaic function of Khnosu as a strict envoy continued during the Middle Kingdom. Meanwhile, he retained his violent nature of the Old Kingdom and served

as a  *wp(w)t(y)*-messenger, who was often sent to punish anybody, who would oppose the dead. In Spell 573 of the Coffin Texts, Khonsu was invoked by the deceased

to be his  *wp(w)t(y)*-messenger and to repulse those who would inflict harm in the otherworld. This spell says<sup>(46)</sup>:




*wp(w)t(y).i pw Hnsw h3bw r hsfw*

“*This (is) my messenger Khonsu who (is) sent against who would oppose (me)*”.


It seems clear that the previous spell was an extension of Utterance 273 (§ Spell 402c) in the Pyramid Texts. Moreover, it is another evidence of the apotropaic role of


(45) Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 116.



(46) A. De Buck, *The Egyptian coffin texts*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), VI: *Texts of spells 472-786*, 179 (g); R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin texts*, (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1977), II: *Spells 355-787*, 177.

Khonsu as a dangerous  *wp(w)t(y)*-messenger, whose main function was to fight against the opponents of the deceased in the hereafter.

On the ground of the apotropaic roles of Khonsu in punishing the opponents, achieving victory over chaos, and protecting the deceased king during the Old and Middle Kingdoms, he was given several titles indicating his responsibility in ensuring the triumph of order and the defeating of chaos<sup>(47)</sup>. In Spell 649 of the Coffin Texts, he

was given the title of  *Hnsw-r-sš-M3't* i.e. “*Khonsu, the scribe of Maat*”<sup>(48)</sup>. During the Third Intermediate Period, he was invoked as

 *nb-M3't* i.e. “*Lord of Maat*”<sup>(49)</sup> on the statue of Djotkhonsouefankh (CG 42211/ JdE 37159) from the Twenty-Second Dynasty. He was also given the title

 (50)/  (51)/  (52) *Hnsw-*

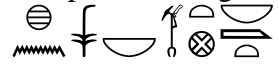
(47) Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, 2002), III: *p-nbw*, 639-640.

(48) De Buck, *Coffin Texts VI*, 272 (c); Faulkner, *Coffin texts II*, 224.

(49) G. Legrain, *Statues et statuettes de rois et de particuliers*, (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1914), III: 30; K. Jansen-Winkel, *Ägyptische Biographien der 22. und 23. Dynastie*, (Wiesbaden: Kommission bei Otto Harrassowitz, 1985), 322.

(50) G. Daressy, “Les Carrières de Gebelein et le Roi Smendès,” *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 10 (Paris, 1888): 135.

*nb-M3't* i.e. “*Khonsu, Lord of Maat*” on the Twenty-Second Dynasty stela of King Sheshonq I from Gebel el Silsila, the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty fragments of a statue from the Temple of Osiris at Karnak, and the healing statue of Hor in the Turin Museum (Turin Cat. 3030) from the late Thirtieth Dynasty respectively. Moreover, on the shaft of the twentieth column in the portico of the court of the Theban Temple of god Khonsu<sup>(53)</sup>, he bears the title

 *Hnsw-nb-W3st-nb-M3't* i.e. “*Khonsu, Lord of Thebes, Lord of Maat*”<sup>(54)</sup>.

### 3. Khonsu as a proto- punitive incarnation of the chthonic deities:

The apotropaic role of Khonsu in the destruction of the opponents could be traced in the context of the religious texts during the Middle Kingdom. Posener categorized him among the emissaries, who have the task of lassoing and butchering the victims in the Coffin Texts<sup>(55)</sup>. Meanwhile, he was identified as the burner and devourer of the hearts and decapitator of the victims. Spell 310 indicated the

(51) J. Leclant, *Enquêtes sur les Sacerdotes et les Sanctuaires Égyptiens à l'Époque dite "Éthiopienne" (XXVe Dynastie)*, (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1954), 88.

(52) L. Kákósy, *Egyptian Healing Statues in Three Museums in Italy (Turin, Florence, Naples)*, (Torino: Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 1999), 87.

(53) Budge, *Gods*, 35.

(54) The Epigraphic survey, *The temple of Khonsu*, (Chicago; Illinois: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1979), 1: *Plates 1-110. Scenes of King Herihor in the Court*, pl. 97 (Line 1).

(55) M. G. Posener, “Philologie et archéologie 65,” 343.

punitive aspect of his character together with his fiery nature through describing him as the burner of the hearts as follows<sup>(56)</sup>:




*Ḥnsw sbi dnd bhḥw ḥzt(y)w*

“*Khonsu sends out the rage, (which) burns the hearts*”.

Burning the heart into ashes was one of the most practiced apotropaic punishments in the ancient Egyptian eternal hell<sup>(57)</sup>. It was a humiliating action and resulted in the

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(56) De Buck, *Coffin Texts IV*, 65 (j); Zandee, *Death*, 134. Faulkner

translated  *bhḥw* here as “burn”. Faulkner, *Coffin texts I*, 227-228.

(57) A. Piankoff, “*Le Livre des Quererts [3]*,” *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 43 (Le Caire, 1945): 14, pl. XCVII-XCVIII; A. Piankoff, *La Création du Disque Solaire*, (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1953), 33; A. Piankoff, *The tomb of Ramesses VI*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), 33, 107-108, 244; E. Hornung, *Das Amduat, Die Schrift des Verborgenen Raumes, Herausgegeben nach Texten aus den Gräbern des Neuen Reiches, II: Übersetzung und kommentar* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), 56; E. Hornung, *Das Buch der Anbetung des Re im Westen (Sonnenlitanei): Nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches*, (Genève: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1975), I, *Text Autographiert von Andreas Brodbeck*, 146-148; E. Hornung, *Das Buch der Anbetung des Re im Westen (Sonnenlitanei) Nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches*, (Genève: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1976), II, *Übersetzung und Kommentar*, 79-80 (no. 147-148); E. Hornung, *Texte zum Amduat*, (Genève: Editions de Belles Lettres, 1987), I: *Kurzfassung und Langfassung, 1. bis 3. Stunde*, 209-210; E., Hornung, *The Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I = Das Grab Sethos' I*, (Zürich; München: Artemis Verlag, 1991), pl. 166; S. Wiebach-Koepke, *Phänomenologie der Bewegungsabläufe im Jenseitskonzept der Unterweltbücher Amduat und Pfortenbuch und der liturgischen "Sonnenlitanei"*, Harrassowitz



falling into oblivion and the loss of the chance in the eternal life. Since the heart was the center of the human thought and it was the only organ of the body that was balanced against the feather of Maat during the judgment process, it was considered as the seat of the evil or the goodness. This concept was clearly discussed in Chapter 79 of the Book of the Dead, which alludes to regarding the heart as a center of evil that should be destroyed as follows<sup>(58)</sup>:



*ii.n.i dr.n.i dwt nbt imywt ib.tn*

*"I have come to drive away all the evil that is in your heart".*

Thus, the apotropaic role of Khonsu in Spell 310 of the Coffin Texts refers to his ability in burning the hearts, the seat of the evil power. Such a mission supports the apotropaic role of Khonsu in warding off evil and protecting the dead from the evildoers in the hereafter.

Spell 311 of the Coffin Texts, which refers to the becoming of Khonsu in the netherworld, gives another remarkable evidence of his apotropaic task in swallowing the hearts of either the gods to absorb the magic and spirit powers that was included in their divine hearts or the

Verlag in Kommission, (Wiesbaden, 2003), 30-31, 406-409; D. A. Werning, *Das Höhlenbuch: Textkritische Edition und Textgrammatik*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2011), II: 320-321, 324-325.



(58) Naville, *Aegyptische Totenbuch*, pl. XC (9); Barguet, *livre des morts*, 117; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 69; Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 78.

condemned to destroy the evil that is in their hearts. The spell says<sup>(59)</sup>:



“I (will) appear as Khonsu, (who) lives on hearts”.


It seems that the retributive task of Khonsu as a devourer of the hearts of the gods was inspired from his bloodthirsty role in the “Cannibal Hymn” of the Pyramid Texts. On the other hands, he was also probably an eater of the hearts of


the adversaries on the ground of his punitive role as a   *wp(w)t(y)*-messenger in Utterance 273 (§ Spell 402c) in the “Cannibal Hymn” of the Old Kingdom and in Spell 573 of the Coffin Texts. In the case of eating the hearts of the adversaries, he would be regarded as the earlier textual reference to the eater of the hearts of the unjust. Furthermore, he could be conceived as a functional equivalent of the New Kingdom female demon Ammit, who acted in Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead as the eater of the dead and their hearts after their judgment in the Hall of the Two Truths<sup>(60)</sup>. Accordingly, the demon Ammit was the New Kingdom female counterpart and the later

(59) De Buck, *Coffin Texts IV*, 67 (r-s); Faulkner, *Coffin texts I*, 229.

(60) A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch I*, 186:17; Ch. Seeber, *Untersuchungen zur Darstellung des Totengerichts im Alten Ägypten*, Deutscher Kunstverlag, (München; Berlin, 1976), 163-186; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, 2002), II, 'b, 114; G. Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford: The University Press, 2002), 100.

pictorial figure of the Middle Kingdom male demon Khonsu. In addition, it seems that her role in devouring the hearts of the unjust was probably inspired from his Middle Kingdom apotropaic role in eating the seat of evil in the human body.

The apotropaic role of Khonsu as a chthonic torturer was also indicated in Spell 310 of the Coffin Texts, which gives an explicit identification of Khonsu as  i.e. “The slayer”<sup>(61)</sup>. In this context, Altenmüller described him as a personification of the butcher knife, which underlines his apotropaic aspect as a god of battle<sup>(62)</sup>. His role as a slaughterer of the dead became more obvious in Spell 994 of the Coffin Texts. In the latter spell, the deceased was assimilated to the aggressive slaughterer Khonsu. Furthermore, he was given the ability to behead the gods to be incorporated in the special powers of their divine thought as was supposed by Altenmüller<sup>(63)</sup>, or even to decapitate the opponents to get rid of their evil power, which could be also another plausible suggestion in this case. The spell says<sup>(64)</sup>:

  
'nh.i m tpw ink Hnsw

(61) De Buck, *Coffin Texts IV*, 66 (o); Faulkner, *Coffin texts I*, 228; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon III*, 469.

(62) Altenmüller, *Synkretismus*, 167.

(63) Altenmüller, *Synkretismus*, 168.

(64) A. De Buck, *The Egyptian coffin texts*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), VII: *Texts of spells 787-1185*, 209 (b-c); R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin texts*, (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1978) III: *Spells 788-1185*, 102.

“I (will) live on the heads (for) I (am) Khonsu”.

Beheading was one of the most frequent and severe torment in the Books of the Otherworld during the New Kingdom<sup>(65)</sup>. The cannibal mission of the demon Khonsu in

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(65) See for example: E. Lefébure, *Les Hypogées Royaux de Thèbes. Troisième division. Tombeau de Ramsès IV*, (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1889), pl. IX; F. Guilmant, *Le tombeau de Ramsès IX*, (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1907), pl. XXIV; Ch. Maystre and A. Piankoff, *Le livre des portes. I: Texte*, (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1939-1946), 108; A. Piankoff, “Le Livre des Quererts [1],” *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 41 (Le Caire, 1942): 10, pls. VIII-IX; A. Piankoff, “Le Livre des Quererts [2],” *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 42 (Le Caire, 1944): pl. X; Piankoff, “Quererts [3],” 14-15, 24, 36, pls. XCVII, XCVIII, XCIX, CXVIII, CXXXII; A. Piankoff, *Les chapelles de Tout-Ankh-Amon*, (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1951-1952), 76-77 (cols. 18-20); Piankoff, *Ramesses VI*, 53, 107-108, 115, 128, 182, 309-310, figs. 80, 86; A. Piankoff, *The shrines of Tut-Ankh-Amon*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), 58; A. Piankoff, *The Litany of Re*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 27; E. Hornung, *Ägyptische unterweltsbücher*, (Zürich; München: Artemis Verlag, 1972), figs. 97, 107-108; Hornung, *Sonnenlitanei I*, 74 (no. 65); Hornung, *Sonnenlitanei II*, 71 (no. 65); E. Hornung, *Das Buch von den Pforten des Jenseits nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches*, (Genève: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1979), I: *Text*, 262-263; E. Hornung, *Das Buch von den Pforten des Jenseits nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches*, (Genève: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1980), II: *Übersetzung und Kommentar*, 183; W. Barta, *Komparative Untersuchungen zu vier Unterweltsbüchern*, (Frankfurt - Bern: Peter Lang, 1990), Abb. 29, 30; E. Hornung, *Texte zum Amduat*, (Genève: Editions de Belles Lettres, 1994), III: *Langfassung. 9. bis 12. Stunde 779-786*; G. Roulin, *Le Livre de La Nuit: Une Composition Égyptienne de L'au-delà*, (Fribourg - Göttingen: Editions Univ. Fribourg - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), I: *Traduction et commentaire*, 291, fig. VI; Wiebach-Koepke,

the Pyramid Texts could be summarized in beheading the lords and cutting their throats to absorb their magical strength.

It seems that the history of Khonsu in practicing the decapitation since the time of the Pyramid Texts and his aggressive character in decapitating the gods that was firstly attested during the Old Kingdom was a source of inspiration to the dead during the Middle Kingdom. Meanwhile, all the justified departures preferred to assimilate his apotropaic role in cutting the heads to ward off the evil of the opponents that might oppose them in the afterlife. This assumption leads to think about Khonsu as a prototype, role model, and prototype version of the New Kingdom chthonic demons and cruel messengers, who appeared in abundance in the Books of the Otherworld in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. Both of Khonsu and the chthonic deities, who were apotropaically employed in cutting the heads and removing the hearts of the damned and condemned in the royal tombs, tended apotropaically to

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*Unterweltbücher*, 172-175, 290-291, 391 (no. 65); J. A. Roberson, “The Book of the Earth: a study of ancient Egyptian symbol -systems and the evolution of New Kingdom cosmographic models,” PhD Thesis, (College University, 2007), 678-679, 709, 718-719; Werning, *Höhlenbuch*, 34-39, 320-321, 324-325, 366-367, 422-423; E. Hornung, *The egyptian book of gates*, (Zurich: Living Human Heritage Publications, 2014), 254-255. For further discussion about decapitation in ancient Egypt, see: N. S., Picardo, ““Semantic Homicide” and the So-called Reserve Heads: The Theme of Decapitation in Egyptian Funerary Religion and Some Implications for the Old Kingdom,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 43 (Cairo, 2007): 221-252.

remove the evil power of the opponents and destroy their malevolent spirits.

#### **4. Khonsu as a moon-god:**

Perhaps it comes to mind the idea that Khonsu, who played apotropaic roles as a patron of cannibalism, bloodthirsty messenger, and violent punisher in the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, and the Book of the Dead, was a different being from the moon-god Khonsu of the New Kingdom, who served as the third obedient member in the Triad of Thebes. However, this assumption is completely unacceptable because of several reasons. The first and most important reason is that in addition to acting as a prominent god with divine titles for the first time during the New Kingdom, he was also worshipped as an earlier local god during the Old Kingdom and he began to be responsible for the moon and air by the time of the Middle Kingdom<sup>(66)</sup>.

The apotropaic function of god Khonsu in his form as a moon-god was clearly indicated in the iconography since the time of the New Kingdom and in the textual context of the Third Intermediate Period. It seems that the Egyptians saw the gods as personifications of the various aspects of nature, so that, Khonsu derived many apotropaic features from his lunar origin<sup>(67)</sup>. In this context, Bleeker stated that the ambivalent character of Khonsu was probably derived from the two contradictory aspects of the moon, which

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(66) Otto, E., *Topographie*, 31; Dégardin, "Khonsou Hypostase," 316.

(67) W. S. Smith, *Ancient Egypt as Represented in the Museum of Fine Arts*, (Boston: Museum of fine arts, 1952), 30.

characterizes his good and evil influences<sup>(68)</sup>. Just like the moon exerted harmful actions at certain times, Khonsu played brutal apotropaic roles against the evil spirits to protect the dead and repulse the progression of the evil in the hereafter at the same time<sup>(69)</sup>.

As two moon-gods, there was a close association between Thoth and Khonsu as was discussed by several scholars<sup>(70)</sup>. Boylan viewed in the equivalence between the two moon gods, Thoth and Khonsu, a source of thinking about them as defenders of light against darkness and as a symbol of the victory of order over disorder<sup>(71)</sup>. Hornung and Staehelin related the possible sharp aspect of the crescent moon above the heads of the two moon gods, Thoth and Khonsu, to the weapon that could slice through evil and survive from death<sup>(72)</sup>. Similarly, Helck compared between the dangerous knife of god Thoth that chops off the heads and cuts out the hearts in Utterance 477 (§ Spell 962a-963a)<sup>(73)</sup> of the Pyramid Texts and the cannibal role of Khonsu in slaughtering the gods and cutting their throats in

(68) Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 116-117.



(69) M. G. Posener, "Philologie et archéologie 66," 339, 342.


(70) Boylan, *Thoth*, 205; M. G. Posener, "Philologie et archéologie 65," 342; Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 116; Brunner, "Chons," 962; Armour, *Gods*, 148.

(71) Boylan, *Thoth*, 71, 206.

(72) E. Hornung, and E. Staehelin, *Skarabäen und andere Siegelamulette aus Basler Sammlungen*, (Mainz: von Zabern, 1976), 95.

(73) K. H. Sethe, *Die Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte: nach den Papierabdrücken und Photographien des Berliner Museums*, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1910), II: *Spruch 469-714 (Pyr. 906-2217)*, 37-38; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 172; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 165 (§962-963).

Utterance 273 (§ Spell 402a)<sup>(74)</sup>. Thus, the apotropaic roles of Khonsu were supported in the New Kingdom iconography through surmounting him with a dangerous knife-like crescent emphasizing his bloodthirsty nature against the evil power **Fig. (2)**. Kees and Altenmüller viewed in this crescent-moon a stylized knife that was used in cutting the throats of the victims in the sky<sup>(75)</sup>. Moreover, the shape of the  *ḥpš*-sickle sword<sup>(76)</sup>, which is always written with the determinative of the scimitar <sup>(77)</sup>, probably derived from the curved sickle shape of the moon

. This assumption is strengthened through employing the sickles as weapons in the annals of King Thutmosis III at Karnak, which can be read as follows<sup>(78)</sup>:



“The sickles (are) within the battle-axes”.

(74) W. Helck, “Mond,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* IV (Wiesbaden, 1982): 193.

(75) H. Kees, “Zu den Ägyptischen Mondsagen,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 60 (Berlin; Boston, 1925): 3; Altenmüller, *Synkretismus*, 167.

(76) Gardiner, *Egyptian grammar*, 513, 584; Faulkner, *Concise dictionary*, 190; A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch III*, 270:1-5; S. Schoske, “Krummschwert,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* III (Wiesbaden, 1980): 819-822; Wilson, *Ptolemaic lexikon*, 724; Hannig, *Ägyptisches wörterbuch II*, 1873.


(77) Gardiner, *Egyptian grammar*, 513 (Sign-list: T 16).

(78) K. H. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie, Historisch-Biographische Urkunden*, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1909), IV: 726: 17.



Surmounting the head of the moon-god Khonsu with a knife-like crescent, which might also recall the shape of the sickle sword, is presumably an abridged pictorial expression of his responsibility as a patron of punishment particularly during the Middle Kingdom. Furthermore, it is an indication to his apotropaic role in gaining a triumph over the symbols of chaos and the destruction of their evil in heaven since the Old Kingdom and throughout the whole Dynastic Period.

This concept is clearly indicated in Utterance 674 (§ Spell 1999c) of the Pyramid Texts, which identifies his

equivalent, god Thoth, as  *Dḥwty mds* i.e. “*Thoth the sharp*”<sup>(79)</sup>. Similarly, Chapter 95 of the Book of the Dead refers to the crescent on the head of Thoth as a sharp knife in his hand and it can be read as follows<sup>(80)</sup>:



*srd.i ds imy ' Dḥwty m nšny*

“*I have aroused the sharp knife that is in the hand of Thoth in the rage*”.

In his discussion, Barguet stated that Thoth wields his lunar crescent as a weapon<sup>(81)</sup>. This notice supported the idea of

(79) Sethe, *Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte II*, 483; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 296; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 288 (§1996).

(80) Naville, *Aegyptische Todtenbuch*, pl. CVII (4-5); Barguet, *livre des morts*, 130; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 77; Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 88.

(81) Barguet, *livre des morts*, 130, (chapitre no. 3).

thinking about the transforming of his crescent moon into a sharp knife in his hand in the danger times to apotropaically destroy the evil powers.

The aggressive attitude of the moon-god Khonsu was clearly persistent in the textual context during the Late Periods<sup>(82)</sup>. On the Third Intermediate Period stela of King Piye (JdE 48862)<sup>(83)</sup> of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, which was discovered in the temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal in Sudan (Tempel B 500), Khonsu was described as





\* *Hnsw mds* i.e. “*Khonsu the sharp*”<sup>(84)</sup>. The latter identification refers to his crescent moon that transferred into a sharp knife to confirm his violent

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(82) C. Traunecker, *Coptos. Hommes et dieux sur le parvis de Geb*, (Le Caire: Departement Oriëntalistiek - Uitgeverij Peeters, 1973), 354.

(83) K. H. Priese, “Der Beginn der kuschitischen Herrschaft in Ägypten,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 98 (Berlin; Boston, 1970): 24-28; K. H. Priese, “Zur Sprache der ägyptischen Inschriften der Könige von Kusch,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 98 (Berlin; Boston, 1972): 99-124.

\* There is a transpose between the two signs  and  in the original text.

(84) G. A. Reisner, “Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal: The more important inscriptions,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 66 (Berlin; Boston, 1931), 90, 92; T. Eide, T. Hägg, R. H. Pierce, and L. Török, eds. *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum. Textual Sources for the History of the middle Nile Region between the Eighth Century BC and the Sixth Century AD*, (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1994), I, *From the Eighth to the Mid-Fifth Century BC*, 57; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon III*, 470; K. Jansen-Winkel, *Inschriften der Spätzeit. 2. Die 22.-24. Dynastie*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2007), 351 (15).

character and apotropaic fighting against the evil powers. This assumption leads to believe that this sharp form of Khonsu could be compared to the stereotype theme of the New Kingdom chthonic demons, who frequently employed their knives against the condemned in the Books of the Otherworld in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings<sup>(85)</sup>.

### 5. Khonsu as a lunar equivalent of the solar punitive deities:

As was discussed by Pinch, god Khonsu was considered as the lunar equivalent of the violent Eye of Re<sup>(86)</sup>. It is well known that the solar eye was of a fiery aspect and it was

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(85) See for example: J. Bonomi and S. Sharpe, *The alabaster sarcophagus of Oimeneptah I, king of Egypt: now in Sir John Soane's Museum, Lincoln's Inn fields*, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864), pls. 9-11; Lefébure, *Ramsès IV*, pl. X; Guilman, *Ramsès IX*, pls. XLIX, LXVI, LXXIII; Hornung, *Das Amduat*, 23 (no. 54), 48 (no. 141), 52-53 (no. 173), 54 (nos. 185-186), 66 (no. 200), 72 (nos. 258-262, 264), 115 (no. 423), 182 (nos. 807, 809, 811, 813, 815), 134 (no. 518-519, 521), 557 (no. 520); H. Goedicke, *Nofretari: A documentation of her tomb and its decoration*, (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1971), figs. 75-76, 81-82, 85; Piankoff, *Shrines*, figs. 29, 31, 35, pl. 39; Hornung, *Seti I*, pls. 47-48, 89, 163, 166-169, 181; G. Roulin, *Le Livre de La Nuit: Une Composition Égyptienne de L'au-delà*, (Fribourg - Göttingen: Editions Univ. Fribourg - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), II: Copie synoptique, fig. VI; G. Lecuyot and A. Hassan, *La Tombe du Prince Khaemouaset [VdR n° 44]. Etude architecturale*, (Le Caire: Conseil supérieur des antiquités, 1997), pl. LVII, LVIII, LX, LXI, LXII, LXIII, LXIV, LXV; Roberson, "Book of Earth." 718-719; M. Müller-Roth, *Das Buch vom Tage*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 201-202, 362-366, 373-374, 419-421, 425-428, 432-433, fig. XI; Werning, *Höhlenbuch*, 100-101, 418-419.

(86) Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology*, 166.

always personified in the form of severe goddesses representing either the solar mother as Neith<sup>(87)</sup> or several solar daughters<sup>(88)</sup> like Hathor<sup>(89)</sup>, Sekhmet<sup>(90)</sup>, Isis<sup>(91)</sup>,

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(87) R. Schlichting, "Neith," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* IV (Wiesbaden, 1982): 393; Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses*, 157-158; Graves-Brown, "Spitting Goddess," 234, 240.

(88) R. Clark, *Myth and symbol in ancient Egypt*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), 220; Ph. Derchain, *Elkab. I: Les Monuments religieux à l'entrée de l'ouady Hellal*, (Bruxelles: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1971), 16; S.-H. Hoenes, *Untersuchungen zu Wesen und Kult der Göttin Sachmet*, (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag GmbH, 1976), 185, 202; U. Köhler, "Löwe, L.-Köpfe, L.-Statuen. I. Generell," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* III (Wiesbaden, 1980): 1083; Ph. Germond, *Sekhmet et La Protection du Monde*, (Genève: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1981), 316; H. Sternberg, "Sachmet," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* V (Wiesbaden, 1984): 327; H. Te Velde, "Mut: The Eye of Re," in *Akten des Vierten Internationalen Ägyptologen Kongresses*, ed. S. Schoske (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1985), 3: 397-399; L. Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*, (Uppsala: Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1986), 21-23, 25-27, 71; J. C. Darnell, "The Apotropaic Goddess in the Eye," *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 24 (Hamburg, 1997): 35-37; B. S. Lesko, *The great goddesses of Egypt*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma press, 1999), 144; Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses*, 144, 174, 176-183, 154-155, 227.

(89) Naville, *Aegyptische Tottenbuch*, pl. CCXII (5 lower); Sethe, *Altaegyptischen pyramidentexte I*, 384; H. Junker, *Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1911), 16-19; K. H. Sethe, *Zur Altägyptische Sage vom Sonnenaugen das in der fremde War*, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1912), 18, 20; É. Chassinat, *Le temple d'Edfou*, (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1933), VIII: 35: 11; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 137; Barguet, *livre des morts*, 272; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 132 (§705); S. West, "The Greek Version of the Legend of Tefnut," *Jouranal of Egyptian Archaeology* 55 (London, 1969): 161-163; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 209; Hoenes, *Sachmet*, 177; E. Hornung, *Der Ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh*, (Freiburg - Göttingen: Universitätsverlag

Bastet<sup>(92)</sup>, Mut<sup>(93)</sup>, Nekhbet<sup>(94)</sup>, and Wadjet<sup>(95)</sup>. Germond supposed that as this furious eye was an extension of the

Freiburg - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 4-5, 38, 112 (nos. 47-48); Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 185; H. Eilenstein, *Hathor und Re I: Mythen und Magie im Alten Ägypten*, 2nd ed. (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2015), 104; Backes, *Der "Papyrus Schmitt" (Berlin 3057): Ein Funeräres Ritualbuch der Ägyptischen Spätzeit*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 57, pl. 76 a (14).

(90) E. Newberry, "The Sekhmet statues of the Temple of Mut at Karnak," *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 25 (London, 1903): 221 (50); H. W. Fairman, "Notes on the Alphabetic Signs Employed in the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of the Temple of Edfu," *Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 43 (Le Caire, 1943): 203; De Buck, *Coffin Texts IV*, 328 (b-c), 329 (k); C. De Wit, *Le Rôle et le Sens du Lion dans l'Égypte Ancienne*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), 288, 317; G. Fecht, "Die Form der Altägyptischen Literatur. Metrische und stilistische Analyse," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 91 (Berlin; Boston, 1964): 45-46; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 160; Faulkner, *Coffin texts I*, 270; Hoenes, *Sachmet*, 35-66, 176-179, 202, 254; Zandee, *Death*, 214; Germond, *Sekhmet*, 286- 309; Sternberg, "Sachmet," 327; Wilson, *Ptolemaic Lexikon*, 1819-1820; Troy, *Patterns*, 24; Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses*, 176-183; C. A. Graves-Brown, "The Spitting Goddess and the stony eye: Divinity and flint in Pharaonic Egypt," in *Current Research in Egyptology 2003: Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium. University College London 2003*, eds. K. Piquette and S. Love (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 63, 234.

(91) G. Daressy, *Cercueils des cachettes royales*, (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1909) 14, 175; H. Grapow, "Die Inschrift der Königin Katimala am Tempel von Semne," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 76 (Berlin; Boston, 1940): 26, Taf. 3; Pinch, G., *Mythology*, 108.

(92) Fairman, "Alphabetic Signs," 288; De Wit, *Rôle et le Sens du Lion*, 288; K. A. Kitchen, *Ramesside inscriptions: translated & annotated: translations*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1982), IV: *Merenptah & the Late Nineteenth Dynasty*, 348: 11; K. A. Kitchen, *Ramesside inscriptions: translated & annotated: translations*,

power of the sun, god Khonsu was regarded as a personification of the power of the moon<sup>(96)</sup>. He was also viewed as the son of the fierce goddess Sekhmet, from whom he inspired his role as burner of the hearts of the victims during the Middle Kingdom<sup>(97)</sup>. Thus, god Khonsu could be conceived as a lunar equivalent of all the violent solar goddesses. Moreover, he was the male counterpart to goddess Tefnut, who was considered as the daughter of the sun-god Re and a lunar female personification of the Eye of Ra due to her connection to the night sky and all what relates to it including the rain, moisture, and mist<sup>(98)</sup>. On the

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(Malden; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1989), VII: *Addenda*, 96: 14; Lesko, *great goddesses*, 267.

(93) Fairman, "Alphabetic Signs," 350; K. H. Sethe, *Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis : eine Untersuchung über Ursprung und Wesen des ägyptischen Götterkönigs*, (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1929), 28; De Wit, *Rôle et le Sens du Lion*, 288; H. Te Velde, "Mut," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* IV (Wiesbaden, 1982): 247; Te Velde, "Eye of Re," 397-399; J. Seyfried, *Das Grab des Djehutiemhab (TT 194)*, (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 57 (Text 89), Taf. 30.

(94) Derchain, *Elkab*, 13, pl. 33.

(95) J. Vandier, "Oudjet et l'Horus léontocéphale de Bouto. À propos d'un bronze du Musée de Chaalis," *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 55 (Paris, 1967): 58; H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, "Uto," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* VI (Wiesbaden, 1986): 907; K. Martin, "Uräus," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* VI (Wiesbaden, 1986): 865.

(96) Germond, *Sekhmet*, 20-21.

(97) De Buck, *Coffin Texts IV*, 65 (i); Faulkner, *Coffin texts I*, 227-228; Altenmüller, *Synkretismus*, 167.

(98) H. Kees, "Ein alter Götter Hymnus als Begleittext zur Opfertafel," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 57 (Berlin; Boston, 1922): 108; De Buck, *Coffin Texts I*, 63 (d); Fairman, "Alphabetic Signs," 327; De Wit, *Rôle et le Sens du Lion*, 288, 327; K.R. Lepsius, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopen*, (Genève:

ground of his equivalence with the several divine personifications of the Eye of Re, the apotropaic role of Khonsu in destroying the evil power could be completely compared to the merciless role of the solar goddesses against the enemies of the sun-god<sup>(99)</sup>.

Since the right and left eyes of the falcon-god Horus were equated to the sun and moon respectively, scholars viewed the moon as the deputy of the solar eye, which assumed its apotropaic tasks in saving the deceased from darkness and death at night<sup>(100)</sup>. The crescent moon would also be conceived as the surrogate of the sun-disc and its rays that were mineralized, compared with the stone spear, and employed as a sharp weapon<sup>(101)</sup>. Such mineralization

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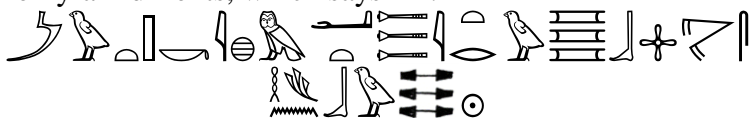
Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1972), III: pl. 221; K. R. Lepsius, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, (Genève: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1972), VII: pl. 207 (b); Faulkner, *Coffin texts I*, 12; Hoenes, *Sachmet*, 185; U. Verhoeven, "Tefnut," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie VI* (Wiesbaden, 1986): 297.

(99) S. West, "Tefnut," 161-163; Germond, *Sekhmet*, 20-21; Hornung, *Ägyptische Mythos*, 4-5, 38, 112 (nos. 39-48).

(100) R. A. Parker, *The calendars of ancient Egypt*, (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1950), 32; G. Rudnitzky, *Die Aussage über «Das Auge des Horus»: eine altägyptische Art Geistiger Äusserung nach dem Zeugnis des Alten*, (Kopenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1956), 12; A. Roccati, *Papiro Ieratico N. 54003: Estratti Magici e Rituali del Primo Medio Regno*, (Torino: Edizioni d'Arte Fratelli Pozzo, 1970), 28; Hornung, *Sonnenlitanei II*, 116, no. 156; Helck, "Mond," 194.

(101) For the concept of mineralization for destruction purposes, see: C. A. Graves-Brown, "The Ideological Significance of Flint in Dynastic Egypt," PhD Thesis, (College University, 2010), 235-236.

process was inscribed in Utterance 519 (§ Spell 1212b-c) of the Pyramid Texts, which says<sup>(102)</sup>:

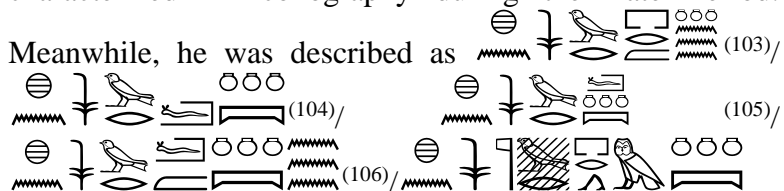


*mꜣwt.k iḥm 't itrww bwn.s ḥnbw R'*

“Your spear (which) seizes the rivers, whose points (are) the rays (of) the sun”.

### 6. Khonsu as a creator-god:

The apotropaic role of Khonsu as a creator-god was characterized in iconography during the Late Period.



(102) Sethe, *Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte II*, 180; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 201; Faulkner, *R Pyramid Texts*, 193 (§519).

(103) B. Gunn and R. Engelbach, “The Statues of Harwa,” *Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale* 30 (Le Caire, 1931), 798.

(104) A. Klasens, *A magical statue base (socle behague) in the Museum of antiquities at Leiden*, (Leiden: Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, 1952): 35-37; R. V. Lanzone, *Dizionario di Mitologia Egizia*, (Torino: Litografia Fratelli Doyen, 1881), 5 (2), 982-983, pl. CCCXLI; Kákosy, *Healing Statues*, 85-86, pl. XXVI (back pillar, register XII).

(105) Fr. W. von Bissing, *Denkmäler Ägyptischer Sculptur. Tafeln II*. (58-125), (München: F. Bruckmann, 1914), pl. 68A.

(106) Kákosy, *Healing Statues*, 66, 67, fig. 23, pl. III (left side, register VII).





<sup>(107)</sup> *Hnsw-wr-pr(i)-m-nw* i.e. “*Khonsu, the great-(one), who comes forth from the primordial water*”<sup>(108)</sup> on the statue of Harwa from the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty in the Egyptian Museum (CG 48606/ JdE 36711), the magical healing statue of Hor in the Turin Museum (Turin Cat. 3030) from the Thirtieth Dynasty **Figs. (3-4)**, the healing statue of a priest of goddess Bastet in the Louvre Museum (E 10777) from the Thirtieth Dynasty **Fig. (5)**, the healing statue of Psammetikseneb in the Florence Museum (Turin Suppl. 9 + Florence 8708) from the Thirtieth Dynasty **Fig. (6)**, and in the inscription of *Mentuemhat* in the temple of goddess Mut at Karnak from the end of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty and the beginning of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty respectively.

In his form as the creator-god, who emerged from the primordial water, he was sometimes represented as a double hawk-headed man with four wings standing on two crocodiles as a symbol of his triumph over chaos **Figs. (3-5)**<sup>(109)</sup>. Alternatively, he was rarely represented as a creator god in the form of a crocodile provided with the head of a hawk and lying on a pedestal recalling the façade of the

(107) J. Leclant, *Montouemhat: Quatrième Prophète d’Amon, Prince de la Ville*, (Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1961), 200, 200.

(108) Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon III*, 65.

(109) M. J.-F. Champollion and M. L.-J.-J. Dubois, *Panthéon Égyptien: Collection des Personnages Mythologiques de l’Ancienne Égypte, d’Après les Monuments*, (Paris: F. Didot, 1823), pl. 14 f. ter; Budge, *Gods*, fig. opposite to 37; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 767; Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses*, 114.

temple **Fig. (6)**<sup>(110)</sup>. According to Armour, the two heads of the hawk represent the sun and moon<sup>(111)</sup>. They also probably symbolize Khonsu as a divine lunar equivalent of the creator sun-god. In this form, he gathers between the sun and the moon in a single creature, thus, he could be conceived as a mythical complex personification of the death and rebirth simultaneously.

In the ancient Egyptian beliefs, the crocodile was said to have an ambivalent character. Brunner-Traut argued that the crocodile was treated as a solar enemy in the mass of the texts of the later period of Egyptian history<sup>(112)</sup>. On the other hand, it was generally conceived as a symbol of fecundity and regeneration<sup>(113)</sup>. In this context, Hornung cited that the crocodile was also closely associated with the primordial water, from which emerges the regenerated sun<sup>(114)</sup>. Roulin added that this association motivated the

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(110) Kákosy, *Healing Statues*, 66-67, fig. 23.

(111) Armour, *Gods*, 150.

(112) E. Brunner-Traut, "Ägyptische Mythen im Physiologus [Zu Kapitel 26, 25 und 11]," in *Festschrift für Siegfried Schott zu seinem 70. Geburtstag am 20. August 1967*, ed. W. Helck (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1968), 36.

(113) G. Daressy, "Statue de Basse Époque du Musée de Gizèh," *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 15 (Paris, 1893): 157, no. 1; E. F. Wente, "Hathor at the Jubilee," in *Studies in Honor of John A. Wilson*, ed. G. Kadish (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1969), 88, no. 39; E. Hornung, and E. Staehelin, *Skarabäen*, 123-125; E. Doetsch-Amberger, *Ägyptische Sammlung*, (Köln: Ellen Doetsch-Amberger, 1987), Cologne, 61, no. 130.

(114) E. Hornung, *Zwei ramessidische Königsgräber: Ramses IV und Ramses VII*, (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1990), 66-67.

choice of crocodile-headed guides for the last three hours of night in the Book of the Night<sup>(115)</sup>.

As a god of water, the crocodile-god Weny played a role in the creation process and the conception of giving birth to the sun by the crocodile or the emerging of the sun out of the chaotic forces<sup>(116)</sup>. This mythical creation legend was portrayed in the versions of the Book of the Earth in the Tomb of King Ramesses VII (KV 1) and the Tomb of King Ramesses IX (KV 6) **Fig. (7)**<sup>(117)</sup>. In this religious composition, the beneficial effect of the crocodile-god Weny was characterized. His creative role was employed in swallowing the dead sun at night and vomiting it in a live form every morning to ensure the procreation of the solar disc and the continuity of the universe. In the point of view of Piankoff, this positive aspect in the character of the crocodile symbolizes the solar regeneration and connects to the diurnal (living) and nocturnal (died) phases of the sun<sup>(118)</sup>. Moreover, it is a source of the predominance of the beneficial qualities of the crocodile over his evil nature.

Another evidence of engaging the hostile creatures in the creation process was depicted on the middle register of the

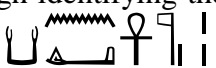
(115) Roulin, *Livre de La Nuit I*, 291.

(116) E. Iversen, *Egyptian and Hermetic Doctrine*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum press, 1984), 43.

(117)Guilmant, *Ramsès IX*, pl. XCII; Piankoff, *Création*, 67-69; Piankoff, *Ramesses VI*, 350-351, fig. 108; Hornung, *Ramessidische Königsgräber*, 66-67; F. Abitz, *Pharao als Gott in den Unterweltsbüchern des Neuen Reiches*, (Freiburg - Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 34-35; Roberson, "Book of Earth." 227-230.

(118) Piankoff, *Création*, 69, no. 1.

last nocturnal hour in the Book of the Amduat **Fig. (8)**. In the core motif of this hour, the sacred bark of the sun-god has been pulled with a long rope passing through the head of a serpent. Hornung explained this gravity as an act to bring the bark out of the mouth of the serpent, directly into the open arms of the air-god Shu, which lifts the sun to the heaven at the end of the scene<sup>(119)</sup>. This assumption is strengthened through identifying the creator-serpent therein

with the epithet  *k3-n-di-'nh-ntrw* i.e. “The vital essence (which lets) the gods live”<sup>(120)</sup> as an indication that he preserves all the divine life forces and keeps the sun in motion.

In spite of his previous beneficial role in the creation of the sun, the crocodile was also considered as the faithful animal, follower, and son of the evil-god Seth<sup>(121)</sup>. Thus, as his father, he was seen as a universal enemy of the gods and his danger was warded off in Chapters 31 and 32 of the

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(119) E. Hornung, *Die Nachfahrt der Sonne: Eine Altägyptische Beschreibung des Jenseits*, (Düsseldorf; Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 1998), 186.

(120) Piankoff, *Ramesses VI*, 314, fig. 87; Hornung, *Das Amduat*, 189 (869); Hornung, *Texte III*, 829 (869); Hornung, *Unterweltbücher*, 186-187, 189-190, Abb. 14; E. Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 41, 53, fig. 25; A. Schweizer, *The Sungod's Journey through the Netherworld: Reading the Ancient Egyptian Amduat*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 192; Wiebach-Koepke, *Unterweltbücher*, 186-187.

(121) E. Brunner-Traut, “Krokodil,” *Lexikon der Ägyptologie III* (Wiesbaden, 1972): 796; R. K. Ritner, “A Uterine Amulet in the Oriental Institute Collection,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (Chicago, IL, 1984): 216.

Book of the Dead, which form a unity aiming to disable the hostile nature of the crocodiles<sup>(122)</sup>.

The ambivalence in the qualities of the crocodile was personified in iconography in each of the two forms of god

Khonsu as  *Hnsw-wr-pr(i)-m-nw* i.e.

“*Khonsu, the great (one, who) comes forth from the primordial water*”. The two variant iconographical

representations of the creator-god Khonsu apotropaically

symbolize the concepts of turning non-existence into

existence, returning to the creation through the primeval

forces, emerging the beneficial power from the force of

chaos, triumph of order over chaos, and possessing absolute

power over the evil effects. It was through the standing of

god Khonsu upon the crocodile that he could symbolically

emerging from the watery abyss as a kind of the daily

triumph over the chaotic forces and the setting of the order

of the universe at the moment of creation. Similarly, the

emerging of a hawk head from a watery reptile in the form

of a crocodile invokes the idea of the returning to the

primeval creative force of the water and its aquatic

creatures. This idea was clearly indicated in the creation

myth of Hermopolis, which referred to the four male frogs

and four female snakes, who were responsible for

producing an egg, from which the sun arose to enlighten the universe<sup>(123)</sup>.

The apotropaic function of Khonsu, who emerges from the primordial water, recalls the myth of the creator-god Atum, who was also said to have come forth from the watery abyss to start the creation of an organized world. This idea was discussed in an inscription written on the right wall of the third corridor in the Tomb of King Ramesses IX (KV 6) and says:



*ʾtm m hpr.n.f.w 'w m Nwn*

“At(u)m, as he came forth alone from the primordial  
water”<sup>(124)</sup>.

It seems that the theme of god Khonsu, who emerges from the primordial ocean, is a clear evidence predicated his later role in the creation of the world. This role was described in the later Khonsu cosmogony that was recorded in the Temple of Khonsu at Karnak, where he was assimilated with the creator-god Ptah, who came forth from the primordial water<sup>(125)</sup>. It is now clear that the trampling of the creator-god Khonsu on two crocodiles and describing

(123) Sethe, *Amun*, 50; D. Budde, ““Die den Himmel durchsticht und sich mit den Sternen vereint”. Zur Bedeutung und Funktion der Doppelfederkrone in der Götterikonographie,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 30 (Hamburg, 2002): Abb. 13.

(124) J. C. Darnell, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity: cryptographic compositions in the tombs of Tutankhamun, Ramesses VI and Ramesses IX*, (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 337, pl. 35.

(125) Cruz-Urbe, “Khonsu,” 171, 173.


him as coming forth from the primordial water emphasize his apotropaic role in subduing the evil power at the time of creation and transformation from death to vitality.

### 7. Khonsu as a magical-god:

The apotropaic protective role of the magical-god Khonsu appeared in the iconography of the Late Period. As a god of magical protection, he played a great apotropaic mission on the so-called cippus of Horus, that used to be erected to eject the devils, fiends, and evil spirits from the houses, places, and domains and to protect from the bites, poisons, and lickings of the scorpions, snakes, and other venomous animals<sup>(126)</sup>.

(126) This kind of stela appeared from the Eighteenth Dynasty and continued until the Roman Period. Their core motif represents the child-god Horus, in his form as a savior god. He tramples crocodiles, in reference to throttle them, and holds firmly a harmful animal, including scorpions, snakes, desert gazelle, and lion, as a magical indication of seizing them and appropriating their power. The stela of this kind always include magical spells, which have an apotropaic function. The skill of god Horus appears in reciting magical spells to curse the harmful animals and thus repel their poison. These stela were also used as amulets to avoid the toxic bites by sealing the mouths of the wild animals and dangerous reptiles. E. A. W. Budge, *The Mummy: A Handbook of Egyptian Funerary Archaeology*, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1925), 471; W. R. Dawson, "The Writing of the Name Hike," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 24, no. 1 (London, 1938): 128; W. D. Wijngaarden-Stricker and B. H. Stricker, "Magische Stèles," *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 22 (Leiden, 1941): 6-38; J. Vandier, *La religion égyptienne*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1944), 230-231; K. C. Seele, "Horus on the Crocodiles," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6, no. 1 (Chicago, IL, 1947): 43-52; *Génies, anges et démons. Égypte - Babylone - Israël - Islam - Peuples altaïques - Inde - Birmanie - Asie du*

On a magical Horus stela from the end of the Late Period and the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period in the British Museum (BM EA 36250)<sup>(127)</sup>, the magical-god Khonsu appears standing in the form of a falcon-headed mummy topped with a sun disk and carrying two diagonal snakes before his body **Fig. (9)**. He bears the title

 *Hnsw-nb-bhdt* i.e. “*Khonsu, lord of Behdet*”, who, according to Pinch, was conceived as a protective deity in the Egyptian pantheon<sup>(128)</sup>.

This apotropaic representation definitely ensures the magical triumph of order over chaos through vanquishing the noxious reptiles to spread a general protection from their harm. Ritner explained that the Egyptian magical practice of grasping a serpent staff could magically protect the person from the danger of the poisonous snakes<sup>(129)</sup>. Thus, god Heka, the god of magic, was often depicted holding two wavy snakes crossed in his arms as a kind of

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*Sud-Est - Tibet - Chine*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971), 57; R. K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 106-107, 151.

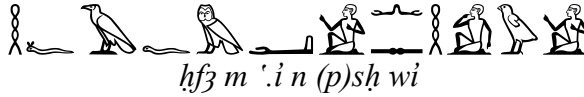
(127) Budge, *Mummy*, pl. XXXIII; H. Sternberg-El Hotabi, *Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Horusstelen: Ein Beitrag zur Religionsgeschichte Ägyptens im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1999), 55.

(128) Pinch, *Magic*, 143, fig. 7; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 761.

(129) R. K. Ritner, “And Each Staff Transformed into a Snake’: The Serpent Wand in Ancient Egypt,” in: *Through A Glass Darkly: Magic, Dreams, and Prophecy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. K. Szpakowska (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 205-225.

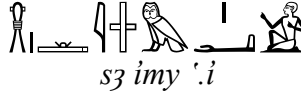


appropriating their evil power **Fig. (10)**<sup>(130)</sup>. The concept of driving away the evil power through seizing the coils of the serpent by the gods was also discussed in Spell 885 of the Coffin Texts, which includes a recitation to drive off the snake saying<sup>(131)</sup>:



“The snake (is) in my hand and cannot bite me”.

Similarly, the vignette of Chapter 182 of the Book of the Dead included several demons grasping serpents as a kind of submitting them and turning their evil power into protective ones **Fig (11)**. The same point was also discussed in the spell of the chapter, which says<sup>(132)</sup>:



“The (magical) protection (is) in my hand”.

It is through clutching the undulations of the serpent and turning its evil power into a powerless staff that the apotropaic function of god Khonsu, as a god of magical protection was activated. This function gives a special

(130) E. A. W. Budge, *The Greenfield papyrus in the British Museum : the funerary papyrus of princess Nesitanebtāshru, daughter of Painetchem II and Nesi-Khensu, and priestess of Amen-Rā at Thebes, about B. C. 970*, (London: British Museum, 1912), 82, pl. CVIII; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 254;.

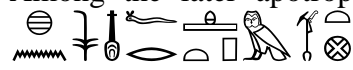
(131) De Buck, *Coffin Texts VII*, 97 (o); Faulkner, *Coffin texts III*, 49, 51, no. 49.


(132) Naville, *Aegyptische Todtenbuch*, pls. CCVII (12-13)-CCVIII; Bargaet, *livre des morts*, 268-269; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 197; Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 181.


reference to his merciless character and apotropaic magical ability in overcoming the dangerous creatures and evil powers. Since this apotropaic role was portrayed on the Cippus of Horus, it conferred protection on their owners from snake bites and other forces of chaos.

### 8. Khonsu as a healer-god:

The apotropaic role of Khonsu as a healer-god could be traced in the religious textual context of the Late Period. Among the later apotropaic forms of god Khonsu was


*Hnsw-nfr-htp-m-W3st* i.e.  
 “Khonsu, (is) Perfectly Gracious in Thebes”<sup>(133)</sup>. Khonsu  
 also was conceived as


*Hnsw-p3-ir-shrw*  
 i.e. “Khonsu, who makes plans”<sup>(134)</sup>, whose name has other  
 several translations such as “Khonsu, the provider”<sup>(135)</sup> and  
 “Khonsu, who determines fates”<sup>(136)</sup>. The latter form  
 probably refers to his special skill in matters of oracles,  
 protection, and determining the death date of the demons as

was discussed by Posener<sup>(137)</sup>. In his form as  *nfr-htp*

(133) Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 768.



(134) Boylan, *Thoth*, 206; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 763.

(135) M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California press, 1980) III, *The Late Period*, 91-93.

(136) M. Lichtheim, M., *Egyptian Literature III*, 94, no. 10.

(137) M. G. Posener, “Philologie et archéologie égyptiennes,” *Annuaire du Collège de France: Résumé des Cours et Travaux* 68 (Paris, 1968): 402, 405-406.

i.e. “*Perfectly Gracious*”<sup>(138)</sup>, the Theban god Khonsu played an important apotropaic role during the Late Period. This role was inscribed on the so-called Bentresh Stela, from Karnak, that dates back to the end of the Late Period and the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period and preserved in the Louvre Museum (Louvre C 284)<sup>(139)</sup>. The inscription on the stela describes the healer-god Khonsu in his form as

 *nfr-htp* i.e. “*Perfectly Gracious*” and invoked him to bestow his magical protection over his other form of  *Hnsw-p(3)-ir-shrw* i.e. “*Khonsu, who makes plans*”<sup>(140)</sup>. Moreover, the latter was also invoked to practice his apotropaic role to expel the enemy demon that possessed the body of princess Bentresh, the daughter of the prince of Bakhtan<sup>(141)</sup>. This invocation text says<sup>(142)</sup>:



(138) A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), II, 255: 12; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 764-765.

(139) B. Porter and R. L. B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*, (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1972), II: *Theban Temples*, 254-255.

(140) Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 763-764.



(141) Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 117; Armour, *Gods*, 150-151.

(142) K. H. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie, Historisch-Biographische Urkunden*, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1909), II: 726: 17, 285:15-286:2; Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature III*, 92.



'h'.n dd.n hm.f m-b3h Hnsw-m-W3st-nfr-htp p3 nb nfr i ir  
 di.k hr.k r Hnsw-p(3)-ir-shr ntr- '3 shr-šm3w rdi šmi.f r Bhtn  
 hn (dp) wr sp-2 'h'.n dd.n hm.f m sz.k hn'.f di.i šmi hm.f r  
 Bhtn r nhm s3t n wr n Bhtn

“Then his Majesty (i.e. King Ramesses II) spoke to Khonsu  
 in Thebes, the Perfectly Gracious: O perfect Lord, if you  
 turn your face to Khonsu, who makes plans, the great god,  
 who drives away the demons of disease, he (will be) sent to  
 Bakhtan. Great approval twice. Then his Majesty said:  
 (May) your (i.e. Khonsu in Thebes, the Perfectly Gracious)  
 magical protection (be) with him (i.e. Khonsu, who makes  
 plans). I (will) send his Majesty (i.e. Khonsu, who makes  
 plans) to Bakhtan to save the daughter of the Prince of  
 Bakhtan”.


In his form as  Hnsw-p3-ir-  
 shrw-m-W3st i.e. “Khonsu, who makes plans in Thebes”<sup>(143)</sup>,  
 god Khonsu played an important apotropaic role during the  
 Late Period. In general, he was a god of healing and  
 considered as the Theban image of  
 Hnsw-p3-ir-shrw  
 i.e. “Khonsu, who makes plans”<sup>(144)</sup>. Moreover, he was a

(143) Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 763-764.

(144) Sethe, *Urkunden II*, 108: 13; *Les Réserves de Pharaon. L'Égypte  
 dans les Collections du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon. (Exposition,  
 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, à du 15 décembre 1988)*, (Lyon, : Musée  
 des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, 1988), 46; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon V*, 764.

specialized in hunting the demons and he had a supernatural power over the evil spirits, which used to receive people with an evil intention in the form of disasters, illness, soreness, and troubles<sup>(145)</sup>.

On the Bentresh Stela, god Khonsu, in his forms as

 *Hnsw-p3-ir-shr* i.e. “Khonsu, who makes

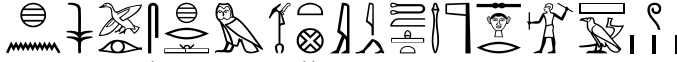
plans” and  *Hnsw-p3-ir-shrw-m-W3st* i.e. “Khonsu, who makes plans in Thebes”, was described as

the one who apotropaically fight against the demons to smite their evil spirits and to declare the defeating and withdrawal of the possessing spirit as follows:



*Hnsw-p3-ir-(s)hr ntr-'3 shr-šm3w*


“Khonsu, who makes plans, the great god, expeller of demons of illness”<sup>(146)</sup>.



*Hnsw-p3-ir-shr-W3st ii t(w) m htp ntr-'3 shr-šm3w*

“Khonsu, who makes plans in Thebes, welcome in peace, (you) great God, drives away demons of illness”<sup>(147)</sup>.


According to the text of the Bentresh Stela, the two forms

of the healer-god Khonsu,  *Hnsw-p3-ir-shr*

(145) M. G. Posener, “Philologie et archéologie égyptiennes,” *Annuaire du Collège de France: Résumé des Cours et Travaux* 67 (Paris, 1967): 345.

(146) Sethe, *Urkunden II*, 726: 17, 285:15; Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature III*, 1980, 92.

(147) Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature III*, 91-92.

i.e. “*Khonsu, who makes plans*” and  *Hnsw-  
m-W3st-nfr-ḥtp* i.e. “*Khonsu in Thebes is Perfectly  
Gracious*”, were invoked to fight the demon, who seized  
the body of the daughter of the prince of Bakhtan in the  
form of a disease<sup>(148)</sup>. In addition to describing god Khonsu  
as the one who possessed a magical protection, he bears the  
title of the expeller of the evil demons on the Bentresh  
stela. He also practiced his apotropaic role against the  
disease demons to drive away their evil power and put the  
demons to death on one hand, and to bring the possessed  
princess to a sound life, preserve her from evil attacks, and  
determine a new fate for her on the other hand.

### **Conclusion:**

One of the fiercest beings in the Egyptian doctrine was Khonsu, whose aggressive behavior always directed towards the destruction of the evil powers in addition to spreading ultimate protection to the livings and the dead. It seems that he had an ambivalent personality in the ancient Egyptian religion. Moreover, he was a multi-character being, whose apotropaic roles had the primary aim of spreading blood to ward off evil power, protect the justified dead, and creating devastation with no mercy between the opponents of Maat. Generally, he was a henchman to the justified dead and played different harmful actions *designed to ward off evil*, drive away the bad spirits, and protect the livings and the dead.

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(148) Sethe, *Urkunden II*, 286:7; Lichtheim, *Egyptian Literature III*, 92.

After examining several textual and iconographic evidences, it seems that Khonsu appeared in different forms and played several apotropaic roles meant to destroy the evils and maintain the order of the universe. All his apotropaic functions in Dynastic Egypt were complementary to each other since the time of the Pyramid Texts and up to the Late Period. They were also characterized by having two contradictory aspects; positive and negative. The positive aspect of his apotropaic duties intended to protect the livings and the dead while employing their negative aspect in destroying the evil powers that might oppose their way.

It is logic to adopt the concept of the ambivalent character of Khonsu and his apotropaic roles in the Egyptian religion depending on the circumstances. As a multi-character and apotropaic being, his initial image had demonical traits and served as a patron of cannibalism and cruel messenger. Afterwards, he apotropaically acted as a god of moon, creation, magical protection, and healing in the ancient Egyptian pantheon. In all of his characters, he served as a staunch supporter of Maat and expeller of the malevolent spirits and evil forces. He also acted in favor of the safeguard of the universe and defended the order to destroy the evil powers and restore the harmony of the cosmos.

The Dynastic Period spanning from the Old Kingdom to the Late Period witnessed different forms and apotropaic roles of Khonsu in eliminating the enemies of the ordered cosmos on one hand and providing the justified dead with great magical power necessary for their protection and

survival on the other hand. During the Old Kingdom, he functioned as originator and supporter of the positive aspect of cannibalism, so that he killed the ancestral deities to help the king in absorbing their magical, physical, and moral powers to safely join the train of the gods in the heavenly world. In addition to his apotropaic role in the cannibalism myth, he also acted as a dangerous punitive envoy for the first time during the Old Kingdom. The same apotropaic role of Khonsu as a retributive messenger continued as long as the Middle Kingdom. Meanwhile, he punished the opponents and was conceived as a proto-punitive incarnation of the New Kingdom chthonic deities. With the passage of time, he retained his role as a supporter of cannibalism during the New Kingdom. The New Kingdom also witnessed his entry into the Theban triad and gave a greater attention to his role as a moon-god and Theban equivalent of the Ashmounion god of moon, Thoth. As a moon-god, he was always provided by a crescent as a resemblance of either the sharpness of the knife or the curved shape of the sickle. During the Late Periods, he was also conceived as a god of creation, magic, and healing. As a creator-god, he stood on the back of the crocodiles to subdue their evil power. Furthermore, he emerged from the primordial water as a kind of engaging the symbol of chaos in the act of creation. He was also the magical-god, who disabled the evil power of the serpents. In his form as a healer-god, he played a great role in expelling the demons of diseases and healing the possessed people.



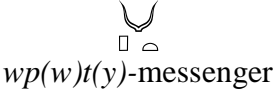

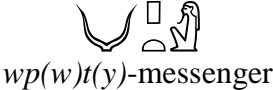




The apotropaic roles of Khonsu during the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms was only limited to the textual context. On the other hand, it is only during the Late Period, that his



















apotropaic roles was employed in texts and iconography. It seems that, although Khonsu became a major god during the New Kingdom, he retained his demonical nature and apotropaic roles. Thus, his characters probably expressed a combination and overlapping imagery and ideas of different contexts rather than manifesting individual creativity. Additionally, all the characters of Khonsu as a patron of cannibalism, severe messenger, torturer, moon-god, creator-god, magical-god, and healer-god probably shared combined identity and common attributes that overlap over the ages.

Noteworthy is that, Khonsu was considered the only deity in the ancient Egyptian pantheon, who has an apotropaic demonical origin before his ascension to the rank of the major gods. As for all the other deities, who played apotropaic roles in addition to their divine characters, they differ in their origins. They were either major deities since their inception and enjoyed demonical characteristics as well, such as Re, Atum, Osiris, Seth, and Thoth or they were pure demons with demonical origin from the beginning of their existence and could be regarded in the same rank of the deified persons and the demi-gods and minor deities.

Apotropaic Roles of Khonsu in the Ancient Egyptian Religion during the  
Dynastic Period

Period	Name of <i>Hnsw</i> “Khonsu”	Special Form	Apotropaic Role	Evidence	Fig.
Old Kingdom		-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patron of cannibalism</li> <li>• Assisting the king in consuming the magical power of the gods</li> </ul>	Utterance 273 (§ Spells 402a-b) of the Pyramid Texts	-
Old Kingdom		 <i>wp(w)t(y)-messenger</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bloodthirsty messenger</li> <li>• Punisher</li> </ul>	Utterance 273 (§ Spells 402c) of the Pyramid Texts	-
Middle Kingdom		 <i>wp(w)t(y)-messenger</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dangerous envoy</li> <li>• Punisher</li> </ul>	Spell 573 of the Coffin Texts	-
Middle Kingdom		-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burner of the hearts</li> </ul>	Spell 310 of the Coffin Texts	-
Middle Kingdom		 <i>mds-slayer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slayer</li> </ul>	Spell 310 of the Coffin Texts	-
Middle Kingdom		-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devourer of the hearts</li> </ul>	Spell 311 of the Coffin Texts	-

Period	Name of <i>Hnsw</i> "Khonsu"	Special Form	Apotropaic Role	Evidence	Fig.
Middle Kingdom		-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eater of the heads</li> </ul>	Spell 994 of the Coffin Texts	-
New Kingdom		-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patron of cannibalism</li> <li>Assisting the king in consuming the magical power of the gods</li> </ul>	Chapter 83 in the Book of the Dead	-
Third Intermediate Period		 <i>Hnsw mds</i> "Khonsu the sharp"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting as a sharp one</li> </ul>	Stela of King Piye, Egyptian Museum (JdE 48862)	-
Late Period		 <i>Hnsw-wr-pr(i)-m-nw</i> "Khonsu, the great-one, who comes forth from the primordial water"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subduing the evil power of the crocodile and turning it into a creative force</li> </ul>	Statue of Harwa, Egyptian Museum (CG 48606/ JdE 36711)	-
Late Period		 <i>Hnsw-wr-pr(i)-m-nw</i> "Khonsu, the great-one, who comes forth"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subduing the evil power of the crocodile and turning it into a creative</li> </ul>	Statue of Hor, Turin Museum (Turin Cat. 3030)	Figs. (3-4)

Period	Name of <i>Hnsw</i> "Khonsu"	Special Form	Apotropaic Role	Evidence	Fig.
		<i>from the primordial water</i> "	force		
Late Period		 <i>Hnsw-wr-pr(i)-m-nw</i> "Khonsu, the great-one, who comes forth from the primordial water"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subduing the evil power of the crocodile and turning it into a creative force</li> </ul>	Statue of a priest of goddess Bastet, Louvre Museum (E 10777)	Fig. (5)
Late Period		 <i>Hnsw-wr-pr(i)-m-nw</i> "Khonsu, the great-one, who comes forth from the primordial water"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subduing the evil power of the crocodile and turning it into a creative force</li> </ul>	Statue of Psammetikseneb, Florence Museum (Turin Suppl. 9 + Florence 8708)	Fig. (6)
Late Period		 <i>Hnsw-wr-pr(i)-m-nw</i> "Khonsu, the great-one, who comes forth from the primordial water"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subduing the evil power of the crocodile and turning it into a creative force</li> </ul>	Inscription of Mentuemhat, Temple of goddess Mut at Karnak	-
Late Period and beginning of		 <i>Hnsw-wr-pr(i)-m-nw</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destroyer of dangerous serpents</li> </ul>	Magical Horus stela, British	Fig. (9)


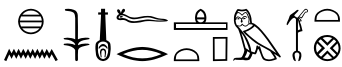


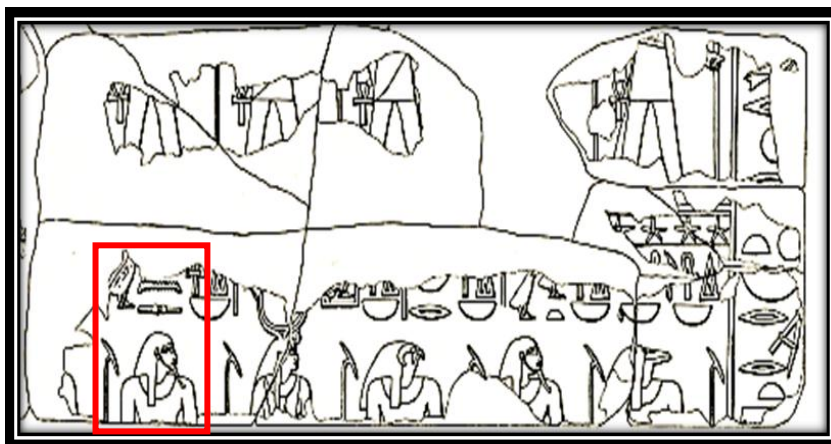
Period	Name of <i>Hnsw</i> “Khonsu”	Special Form	Apotropaic Role	Evidence	Fig.
Ptolemaic Period		<i>Hnsw-nb-bḥdt</i> “Khonsu, lord of Behdet”		Museum (BM EA 36250)	
Late Period and beginning of Ptolemaic Period		 <i>Hnsw-nfr-ḥtp-m-W3st</i> “Khonsu, (is) Perfectly Gracious in Thebes”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healing god</li> <li>• Destroyer of demons of disease</li> </ul>	Bentresh Stela, Louvre Museum (Louvre C 284)	-
Late Period and beginning of Ptolemaic Period		 <i>Hnsw-p3-ir-shrw</i> “Khonsu, who makes plans”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healing god</li> <li>• Destroyer of demons of disease</li> </ul>	Bentresh Stela, Louvre Museum (Louvre C 284)	-

Table (1): Summary comparison between the apotropaic roles of Khonsu

## Figures



**Fig. (1).** God Khonsu sitting in the company of a group of deities.

Funerary monument of King Pepi II.

Saqqara, Sixth Dynasty.

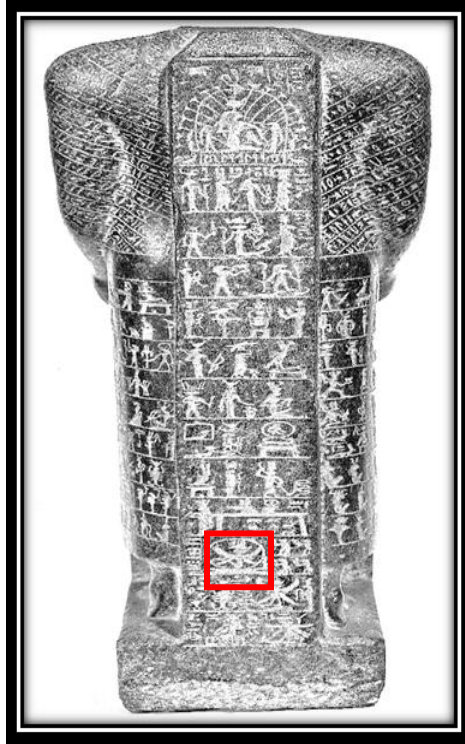
After: Jéquier, *Monument Funéraire*, pl. 21.




**Fig. (2).** God Khonsu crowned with the crescent-moon.


Temple of Khonsu,  
Karnak, Twenty-First  
Dynasty.

After: The Epigraphic  
survey, *Khonsu*, pl. 58.



**Fig. (3).** God  *Hnsw-wr-pr(i-m)-nw*  
i.e. “Khonsu, the great-one, who come forth (from) the  
primordial water” appears in the form of a double hawk-  
headed man standing on two crocodiles.  
The magical healing statue of Hor, Turin Museum (Turin  
Cat. 3030), Thirtieth Dynasty.  
After: Kákosy, *Healing Statues*, pl. XXVI (back pillar,  
register XII).




**Fig. (4).** Detail of the representation of  
god  *Hnsw-wr-pr(i-m)-nw* i.e.  
“*Khonsu, the great-one, who come forth (from) the  
primordial water*” appears in the form of a double hawk-  
headed man standing on two crocodiles. The magical  
healing statue of Hor, Turin Museum (Turin Cat. 3030),  
Thirtieth Dynasty.

After: Lanzone, *Dizionario*, pl. CCCXLI.





**Fig. (5).** God  *Hnsw-wr-pr(i-m)-nw* i.e. “Khonsu, the great-one, who come forth (from) the primordial water” appears in the form of a double hawk-headed man standing on two crocodiles. The healing statue of a priest of goddess Bastet, Louvre Museum (E 10777), Thirtieth Dynasty. After: von Bissing, *Sculptur*, pl. 68A.

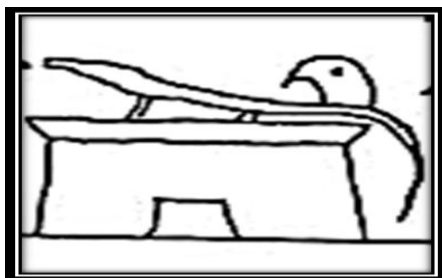


Fig. (6). Detail of the representation of god



*H*ns<sub>w</sub>-wr-pr(*i*-m)-nw i.e. “Khonsu, the great-one, who come forth (from) the primordial water” appears in the form of a crocodile reclining on a pedestal and provided with head of a hawk.

The healing statue of Psammetikseneb, Florence Museum (Turin Suppl. 9 + Florence 8708), Thirtieth Dynasty.

After: Kákosy, *Healing Statues*, p. 66, fig. 23.

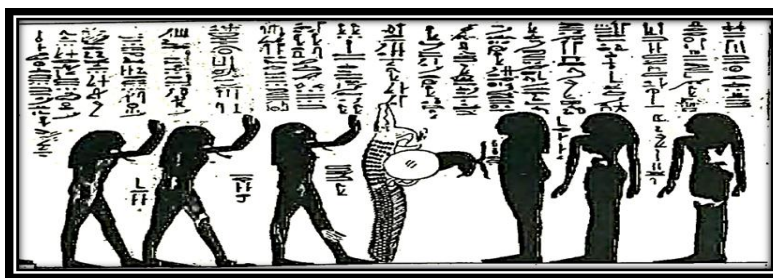
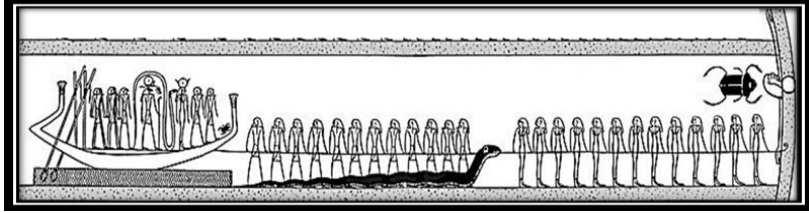


Fig. (7). The crocodile-god Wenty giving birth to the sun-god in the Book of the Earth.

Tomb of King Ramesses VII (KV 1) and Tomb of King Ramesses IX (KV 6), Thebes, Twentieth Dynasty.

After: Guilmant, *Ramsès IX*, pl. XCII.



**Fig. (8).** Pulling the solar barge with a long rope passing through the head of a serpent in the last hour of the night in the Book of the Amduat, Tomb of King Ramesses VI (KV 9), Thebes, Twentieth Dynasty.  
After: Piankoff, *Ramesses VI*, Fig. 87.



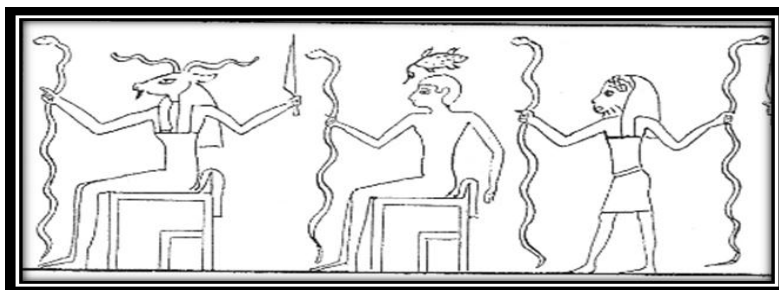
**Fig. (9).** God Khonsu appears standing in the form of a falcon-headed mummy and carrying two diagonal snakes before his body.  
Magical Horus stela, The British Museum (BM EA 36250), the end of the Late Period and the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period.  
After: Pinch, *Magic*, fig. 7.



**Fig. (10).** God Heka standing and holding two snakes  
crossed diagonally across his chest.

Papyrus of Nesitanebtâshru, The British Musuem,  
(EA10554,88), the end of the Twentieth Dynasty and the  
beginning of the Twenty-First Dynasty.

After: Budge, *Greenfield papyrus*, pl. CVIII.



**Fig. (11):** Vignette of Chapter 182 of the Book of the Dead  
representing protective demons grasping serpents.

Papyrus of Muthetepti, The British Museum (EA10010,3),  
Third Intermediate Period.

After: Naville, *Aegyptische Todtenbuch*, pl. CCVIII.

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