

Bâ as an Example of the Ancient Egypt Religious Thought in Effect on Ancient World Civilization until the Renaissance Era

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Abstract

This research article investigates the development of Bâ as an example of the ancient Egyptian compound figures throughout the ancient world civilizations up until its decline in the renaissance era. The article consists of three sections. First, it investigates the origin of the Bâ in the ancient Egyptian civilization. The second section investigates the development of the Bâ figure to the Seren in the Greco-Roman and Byzantine civilizations. The final section addresses how Seren was developed into the concept of a Harpy compound figure in Islamic civilization, from the Fatimid era, up until its decline in the era of the renaissance. This paper follows a descriptive research method, conducting a comprehensive review on the human-headed bird imagery, how it is depicted in different eras, and what their symbolic representations were. The article provides a comprehensive overview of the development of the Bâ/Seren/Harpy as an example of compound figures, which corresponds to how compound figures were perceived and theorized. Implications include understanding the purpose of compound figures and the rise and fall of such concepts in the ancient world.

Keywords

Bâ, Seren, Harpy, Human-Headed Bird, Pottery, Lusterware

1. Introduction: The Origin of the Bâ

The ancient Egyptians had a set of components and elements that played an im-

portant role in the person of the deceased and these components could be classified into material and social components, and the material can be confined to “body, limbs, corpse, ba, shadow”, while the social was “ka, name, mummy” (Assmann, 2011: p. 89). The research problem with the human-headed bird imagery is that it has acquired different names throughout different eras (Ba, Seren, Harpy), but the meaning and representations were different in each era; and hence, the research objective is to investigate the human-headed bird imagery throughout different eras and investigate how it was depicted and the symbolic representation it held in each era.

1.1. The Definition of the Bâ

At the forefront of these components and elements is “Ba”, which we call “spirit”, and in the fact that the word “spirit” is not the most accurate meaning of this complex element that is difficult to describe and define in one word to the extent that the Christians of Egypt, when they translated the “New Testament” into the Coptic language, completely abandoned the translation of this word, because they realized that it does not express the deep concept that corresponds to Christian concepts and replaced it with the word **Psyché**¹, and what makes it more difficult is what is known in the name of “Alka”, which was considered by some as “consort”, which is also an inaccurate meaning².

But we are forced to deal with them as the consort and the soul, and we can say that “Ba”, which belongs to the physical or spiritual milieu, enabled the deceased to move and pass through the world of the dead, then to the courtroom passing through the fields of Oser and then joining the compound of the sun god “Ra”, and beholding the deceased was able to return to the world of the living, it is a “free spirit” that can join and separate from the corpse at any time, and this was expressed in the coffins of the human body in the late era, which included a text on the chest of the coffin (where the site of landing Bâ to unite with the corpse).

1.2. Analysis of Texts Mentioning the “Bâ”

Many texts confirmed that “Bâ” belongs or ascends to heaven, while the body or corpse belongs or descends to the earth, and this can be read in the text directed from “Nabat Hat” (Nephthys) to “Tutankhamun”, saying: “Your Bs belong to heaven in front of Ra; your body is (Assmann, 2011: p. 88) **in the earth with Osir, daily you rest (rest) on your body**” (Piankoff & Rambova, 1955: p. 65), and here it is necessary to differentiate between the “Bâ” of the average person, and the “Bâ” of the king; the first may be judged negatively by the court of the dead, and therefore do not enjoy his immortality, but the kings must join the sky where the sun god “Ra” and the “Bâ” of the king enables him to hwork as a god

¹Daniel, F., *The civilization of Egypt pharaonic*, Paris 1987, p. 226.

²The first to know “Alka” as the “consort” was “Maspero” because of the scenes that depict another figure accompanying the king in the same form, In general, both gods and humans had “Of” But the gods and kings had several. “Kaat” Sometimes there are fourteen, for more see: *Ibid*, p. 225.

among the gods where he became ³Ax Because of his epidemic and this is confirmed by the texts of Al-Ahram.⁴

Ancient Egypt was associated with its neighbors with cultural links that grew and developed over the years, and with the expansion of the size of the Egyptian Empire in the modern state, relations increased significantly, and during the era of the third transition, Egypt was ruled in the twenty-second dynasty by kings of Libyan origins, and in the twenty-fifth dynasty Egypt fell under Kushite rule, then with the beginning of the twenty-sixth dynasty, the foreign presence in Egypt increased greatly so that they resided in their own colonies, followed by the Persian occupation of Egypt, which was reflected In the introduction to Chapter (125) of the “Annie” Papyrus of the trial, some of it concludes that the arrival of Egyptians to the courtroom also includes the arrival of different nationalities, and that the dialogue that takes place with the gatekeeper is attended by “Thoth” as an interpreter between foreigners and the guard, and therefore the foreigners were sharing the Egyptians’ concepts of the other world, and this view is supported by the recitation (1130) of the texts of the coffins (Quirke, 2013), as shown in **Figure 1(a)**: which says:


At the fifth hour of the Book of Gates, specifically in the scenes of the lower row, there is a very important text that talks about three races (Asiatics, Nubians, Libyans), the text says:

It seems from the text that the ancient Egyptians believed that the whole human race was created by “Ra”, he created them from his tears, including foreigners, and therefore they are held accountable in the court of the dead and their souls fly in the other world like the Egyptians, and if this is the thought of the Egyptians towards foreigners, did foreigners have the same thought? (Zandee, 1977: p. 239)

1.3. Geographic Locations of the Bâ


In fact, through archaeological evidence, it was found that the idea of “Bâ” has moved to the ancient country of Sudan, specifically the Meroitic civilization as shown in **Figure 1**, which developed the form of “Bâ”, where this civilization produced statues of “Ba”⁵ for the deceased in a complete human form, which was not known in ancient Egypt, so we find “Ba” in the form of a female depicted in the form of a woman Winged with drooping breasts This form is dated to the first half of the first century AD or earlier as shown in **Figure 1(b)**,


³Here a distinction must be made between “spirits Bâ”, “Powers Bâ”. The latter is the one who is depicted in the form of birds jabiru They are the ones who can be punished, but “the spirits of Bâ” Imagine next to the sun god either carrying the rope of his ship or worshipping him, and these spirits are accompanied by shadows, for more see: Nivinsky, A., the Double Structure of the Entity: the Ancient Egyptian conception of the human being reconsidered, In Proceedings of the Fifth Central European Conference of Egyptologists, Pułtusk 2009, p. 159.

⁴CT I, 789a;  This power has become an Akh because of his Bâ Zabkar, L., A study of the Bâ Concept, p. 71.

⁵Turkish, L., Between Two Worlds: the frontier region between ancient Nubia and Egypt, 3700 BC-AD 500, Leiden 2009, pp. 422-424.

I created the gods from my sweat, and human (people) from the tears of my eye⁶
 (Faulkner, 1978: p. 167).


shpr.n.i ntr(w) m fdt.i iw rmt m rmwt irt.i
 (a)


*ntn rmwt 3ht.i m rn.tn n rmtw 3mw n shpr in.tn m rn.tn n
 3mw hpr n.sn shmt nts ndt b3w.sn ntn nn hwi.i r. sn htp.i m
 hh pry im.i m rn.tn n nhsyw hpr n.sn n Hr ntf nd b3w.sn*

*hhy.n.irt.i hpr.n.tn m rn.tn n tmhw hpr n.sn shmt nt(s) ndt
 b3w.sn*

you are tears of my eye, in your name of mankind
 (human beings)¹¹, great water of creation, you say in your
 name of Asiatics, “Sakhmet” came into being, she
 protects their *b3w*-souls, you are these against whom I hit,
 I am satisfy with the million (who) came forth from me,
 in your name of “Nubians”, Horus come into being, he is
 protects their *b3w*-souls, I searched for my eye, (when)
 you came into beings, in your name of “Libyans”,
 Sakhmet come into being, she protects their *b3w*-souls.



(b)

Figure 1. (a) The quote in hierographic language and transliteration showing the introduction to Chapter (125) of the “Annie” Papyrus of the trial. (b) Ba-shaped limestone woman from the Meroitic civilization, second century AD, British Museum.

⁶CT VII, 1130.

which means that the form of “Bâ” continued in the country of Sudan until the first millennium AD, and it is of course an evolution from the Egyptian “Bâ” form, which was usually depicted in the form of a full “jabiru”, and this sign means soul or Bâ. With the beginning of the modern state, it was sometimes depicted with human arms and hands, and the falcon became one of the birds that symbolize the “Ba” idol “Soccer” according to the book “Alami Duat”, and when this body ends with a devotee of a god, it refers to the spirit of God (Gardiner, 2007: p. 471).

And during the late era in Egypt appeared “Bâ” on some funerary paintings. For foreigners Egyptians like a tombstone found in Saqqara for the Phoenician Syrian “Khe - Love”, that pictures sitting in the upper row with hair, beard and clothes Greek. Despite its Semitic origin⁸ and in front of him is a bird. “Bâ” in an Egyptian body traditional as shown in **Figure 2**.⁹ This clearly indicates the leakage of Egyptian religious ideas among foreigners. At that time, and perhaps with time these ideas moved to neighboring countries. We may notice that considering the religious beliefs of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia when they believed that human a composite object of two elements, the physical element that it is expressed by the body, and the second is a spiritual or invisible element and is expressed by the soul, and this belief is consistent with ancient Egyptian beliefs, even if the concept of the soul is multiple among the Egyptians, and the Sumerians have launched the word GIDIM on the deceased and his soul, but Akkadians they expressed the soul with a word *etemmu* that is separated from the body at death (Hanoun, 1986).



Figure 2. Upper part of the painting “Kha-hab”, Berlin Museum.

⁷Turkish, L., *Between Two Worlds*, p. 423. It continued to say the least until the end of the third century and the beginning of the Fourth Gregorian, perhaps the indication and understandable their “Bâ” has begun faded over time.

⁸He’s a foreigner. Who is it Semitic origin lived according to the text Demotic accompanying the painting in the period between 273 and 203 BC, he bore the title of “chief of the army of the Medes”, and the name of an important place is mentioned on this painting: “With - Up - Yahet” means “the land of Yahu” or “the land of the Jews” and perhaps it refers to the ghetto in the city of “Memphis”, and therefore this painting and its owner confluence for several different civilizations and nationalities, see: Vittmann, G., *Egypt And the Strangers in First BC Millennium*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern 2003, p. 70, Abb. 33.

⁹Review a museum Berlin turns out the painting was destroyed during World War Second However, the museum still retains the figure used here.

The epic of “Gilgamesh” expressed this in the framework of a wonderful dialogue text in which he tells “Enkidu”. His brother Gilgamesh had his vision of dying during his illness, saying:

Oh Khali, last night I saw a vision, it was poison. He thundered, and the earth responded to her, and he stayed. I was standing alone, and a scary, faceless creature appeared in front of me, his face was like that of a thunderbolt bird. “Zou”, and his claws Like Allen’s nails Secret, he has stripped me of my clothes and my dwelling bomb Claw And he took my throat until my breath subsided, ...He has switched He looked at me and led me to the abode of darkness, to the dwelling place (Arkala), to the abode from which no one who entered it returns, to the irreversible path of the traveler, to the abode whose inhabitants were deprived of light, where the dust is their food and the mud is their strength, and they are clothed like a bird with a cloth of wings. Feathers, living in darkness do not Ron Nora, ... (Baqer, 2016: p. 70). In general, it makes sense to portray gods and spirits as pure birds or as human beings with wings, as only these two forms enable any creature in the other world. From flying and moving freely (Hanoun, 1986).

From this point of view, we will find that a number of the gods of the East Ancient Dana has been depicted with wings such as the goddess Ishtar and the Persian god. “Ahuramazda”, so that the spirits Evil which is used in magic had wings (Pinch, 1994)¹⁰, and it is the Jedir with to note that such spirits touch “Goblins” have found one of them in “Tanis”. It is a bronze statue of an Assyrian goblin called “Pazuzu”. It has a votive inscription in Semitic as shown in **Figure 3** (Vittmann, 2003), and knew “Pazuzu” in Mesopotamia as one of the demons of the wind.



Figure 3. Bronze statue of Pazuzu.

¹⁰The ancient Iraqis believed that there were good and evil spirits which were the most numerous, mostly the souls of the dead who died a violent death, lived on earth unhappy, or the dead who were not properly buried. They were known as “goblins”. It is somewhat similar to the concepts of the Egyptians who sought help with evil spirits to inflict damage some neighborhoods, and for this reason the Egyptians resorted to amulets, for more about magic and evil spirits in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Bâ seems to have met Sought with Foreigners residing in Egypt during the Late Era, so much so that one of them depicted “Bâ” in a new and rare form on an Egyptian Aramaic painting of a person named “Habi Men” Ibn “Akhamnish” It is a name that indicates the intersection of cultures. The first name is Egyptian and means “Apis Baq” (Pinch, 1994), while the second sounds Persian and means “has the usefulness of a friend has filmed the painting is a mummy lying on a bed with stamp Egyptian. In front of him and behind him are the wailers, and the mummy is surmounted by a winged sun disk from which hangs an upright cobra serpent, and here it replaces “Bâ” when it lands to unite with the corpse, It is worth mentioning that “Bâ” in Egyptian beliefs sometimes appeared in a living form with the head of a falcon and means “the sacred Bâ of the pioneer of the Westerners.” (Zabkar, 1968: p. 84) And because the disk of the sun represented to the Persians an important signifier represented in their main idol “Ahuramazda” Perhaps the artist here tried to combine “Bâ” into a living form, and “Ahuramazada” in the form of a sun disk to produce this unique shape as shown in **Figure 4**.

One of the unique scenes that date back to the late era also and greatly emphasize the mixing of ancient civilizations with the Egyptian civilization, and the influence of those civilizations by the idea of “Bâ” is what appeared on the tombstone of Memphis of one of the Persian nobles depicting him as a deceased lying on a bed subject to Near Eastern styles, and standing behind his head two wailing, while at his feet two men also wailing, and on both sides of the painting depicted two mythical beings, the upper half of which is a woman, while the lower half of a bird, and they look very similar to “Bâ” and seem to mourn the deceased as well. As their arms are above their heads as shown in **Figure 5** (Gallo & Masson, 1993: p. 269). It is worth noting that this body of composite beings has been known to the Greeks as “Syrines”, and it seems that this tombstone is the best evidence of the emergence of “Syrines” in Egypt, and this may have happened through the Persians, as it seems that the Persians and other foreigners who resided in Egypt have been greatly influenced by Egyptian religious and funerary customs and traditions, including, of course, “Bâ” (Bissing, 1930).



Figure 4. Egyptian Aramaic painting preserved in the Gustav Museum - Lübcke” in Hamm, Germany.



Figure 5. Tombstone of a late Persian notable, preserved in the Berlin Museum.

2. The Development of Bâ to Seren in the Greco-Roman and Byzantine Civilizations

2.1. Circus in Greek Civilization

2.1.1. Seren's Cultural Background

Seren is a hybrid being whose body is the body of a bird and a human face for a female or a human torso for a female mostly has the ability to sing and play, and its origin goes back to the civilizations of the East precisely because this hybrid form did not appear in the Minoan civilization or the Mokyan civilization, and it was often depicted with arms to hold musical instruments and carry the dead (Luker, 2004), the seren was mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey* where the witch told Cyrce Adissius would sail near the island of Serenat and in order to survive he and his crew must block the ears of his sailors with wax and tie himself to the ship's mast so that he could hear their singing without responding to them and die (Godby, 2011). But rather deceive their heart with their singing and push it to meet its edges, and their danger lies in the beauty of their singing, their extensive knowledge and their promises to their victims to give them this knowledge¹¹.

2.1.2. Seren in Greek Art

Their first appearance was in the 7th - 8th century BC and was depicted with other fairy animals Sphinx and Algarvin on pottery vessels and with the sixth century BC their depiction became something familiar, as in a three-legged pottery box dating back to 575 - 600 preserved in the British Museum No. (1851, 5507, 7) depicted with opposite serens, including a lotus flower and around it flowers, and the cover of the box with opposite predators as shown in **Figure 6** (Padgett, 2003)¹², and at first the serenity was depicted feminine or masculine.

¹¹Oldfield, The sound of serens: Seren Stelae in Classical Attic Cemeteries, Master Thesis, Victoria university of Wellington, 2014, pp. 24-25.

¹²Islands, The encyclopedia of spirits—the ultimate Guide to the magic of fairies, Genies Demons, Ghosts, Gods and Goddess Harper Collins e-book, 2009, p. 1507.



Figure 6. Three-legged pottery, depicted on the belly of opposite serens, including a lotus flower, and on the lid predators, preserved in the British Museum under the number (1851, 5507, 7) and dating back to 575-600 BC old field, 2014, Figure 17.

The serens was executed in the form of pottery and bronze vessels to preserve perfumes, as in **Figure 7**, which posits a bronze statue dating back to half.

I of the 5th century BC. m found in southern Italy and kept in a museum (92. Ac.5 paul Getty) in the form of a flying body, the head of a woman with hair flowing and above the head a crown is the opening of the aromatic bottle¹³ (Oldfield, 2014: p. 90).

The beginning of the appearance of the Serens in the epic of Odysseus of the 6th century BC. As in the Attic pottery with red shapes dating back (475-460) BC. m and engraved in stamnas and preserved in the British Museum under the number 1843.11.3.310 depicted on the body of the pot a ship with five sailors rowing and another tied to the mast of the ship and looking up which is certainly Odysseus and was depicted three serenates body bird and the head of a woman and put a strip on the hair and stand one on each side and the third fall towards the ship and at the bottom a strip of decoration of the maze and from the sides a strip of circular geometric decoration as shown in **Figure 8** (Padgett, 2003: p. 27), some have suggested that she attacks sailors,¹⁴ but it is noticeable that she closes her eyes during her fall and may therefore sail as a result of her failure to seduce Odysseus¹⁵. As for its presence in funerary art, it appeared extensively on tombstones and on funerary vessels or associated with funerary rituals (Kecn, 1992).

¹³Oldfield, The sound of serens: Seren Stelae in Classical Attic Cemeteries, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁴The-Helw. R, The human Headed Bird Figure in painting from the Bronze Age to the Early twelfth century, on. cit., p. 88.

¹⁵Oldfield, The sound of serens: Seren Stelae in Classical Attic Cemeteries, on. cit., p. 27.



Figure 7. Seren-shaped aromatic vessel made of bronze found in southern Italy 5th century BC preserved in a museum Paul Getty under No. 92. AC.5: Old Field, 2014, Figure 22.



Figure 8. Red painted vessels depicted by Odysseus and his crew facing three Attic syllables preserved in the British Museum under number 11 - 3.31 (E-440) - 1943 Quoted in Padgett, 2003: p. 77, Figure 4.

It appeared in a tomb in Asia Minor in (LXCIA) in the southwest of Antolia, one of the tombs of the local ruling family, and Herodotus mentioned that the owner of the tomb is kypernis, the leader of the expedition of the Persian emperor (481-479 xerxes) BC. AD and the tomb dates (470-480) BC. Many elements, including serens, have been depicted mostly outside the funerary context, perhaps to fill the void and give a more intimidating appearance to the tomb, which is inspired by Greek funerary sculptures¹⁶, and it has been depicted with a bird's body and the head of a woman with arms holding human forms resembling children with her arms and feet, as if carrying them in care, and human forms cling to the serenne with their arms like small children as shown in **Figure 9**. It is made of limestone on the south side of the sarcophagus and dates back

¹⁶Oldfield, The sound of serens: Seren Stelae in Classical Attic Cemeteries, on. cit., p. 38.



Figure 9. CERN depicted with bas-relief on a frieze from the tomb of the harpy found in the Acropolis Xanthus in Turkey is preserved in the British Museum Citing Elhelw, 2020, p. 190, Figure 4.

to (460-470) BC. Archived in the British Museum (20.10.848) Some¹⁷ have suggested that it is a representation of the kidnapping of the daughters of the Thracian king Pandareus for what he committed¹⁸, but it is probably a decorative work to give awe to the tomb. The appearance of seren on the tombstones either alone or in the company of sponx was coupled with the need of the deceased's family for a more influential and striking form on the tombstones. It was portrayed in a state of grief and more feminine as if it were a substitute for the grieving family of the deceased or May the kindness and love of passers-by turn to stop to remember the deceased.

It should be noted that the goddess Ishtar, the goddess of love, beauty and fertility in Mesopotamia, was depicted as a with wings and feet of a bird, as in **Figure 10** in a sculpture 49.5 cm high, 37 cm wide and 4.5 cm thick found in southern Iraq and preserved in the British Museum in London. She appears standing on the back of two crouching lions looking at the confrontation and on the right and left his bubble looking at the confrontation and the goddess Trendy hat and holding the ring and stick symbol of authority goddess and stands In a devotional position, bird-like feet standing on the back of two crouching lions¹⁹ appear in a seren-like manner in Greece on tombstones. The seren was depicted in the funerary sculptures free in the form of a flying body and the trunk of a beautiful Badi features of sadness and holding in her left hand the shell of his turtle (Lyra) as if she is playing to relieve the deceased or his loved ones the pain of separation, as in **Figure 11**, which depicts marble statue dating back to

¹⁷The-Helw. R, The human Headed Bird Figure in painting from the Bronze Age to the Early twelfth century, on. cit., p. 190.

¹⁸Oldfield, The sound of serens: Seren Stelae in Classical Attic Cemeteries, on. cit., p. 42.

¹⁹The-Helw. R, The human Headed Bird Figure in painting from the Bronze Age to the Early twelfth century, on. cit., p. 190; <http://www.Britishmuseum.com>.



Figure 10. A stone plaque depicted with the goddess Ishtar on the backs of two lions found in southern Iraq with dimensions of 49.5 cm height, 37 cm width, and 4.8 cm thickness preserved in the British Museum [Elhelw, 2020: p. 191, Figure 5.](#)



Figure 11. A free sculpture of CERN carrying a lyra (harp) of marble found near the Delphi Gate and dating back to 370 BC, and preserved in the National Museum of Antiquities of Athens under number 774 Old field, 2014, Figure 52.

370 BC. It is preserved in the National Museum of Athens under the number 774²⁰ and we note the Greek hair in the form of braids and legs of the animal part of the seren, blinded feet like ducks and geese.

2.2. Seren in Roman Art

The Seren appeared as an extension of its presence in Greek art and had such a religious status that the Emperor Tiberius (14 - 37) revered it as it was believed to be highly knowledgeable about what was happening throughout the earth, everywhere and at all times²¹.

²⁰Oldfield, The sound of serens: Seren Stelae in Classical Attic Cemeteries, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

²¹Islands, The encyclopedia of spirits, the ultimate Guide to the magic of fairies, Genies Demons, *op. cit.*, p. 1505.

It is depicted on a ship with three sailors, although there are seven oars indicating the loss of four sailors, three serens, three dolphins, wingless serens, which is rare to appear without wings, and the bird's part of the serene in the form of a long-legged waterfowl such as swans and bushrush, and the three horns were depicted buzzing on the ship, one of them carrying a harp (**Figure 12(b)**), and the second serene carrying a flute (**Figure 12(c)**), and Adisius tied in the mast of the ship as stated in the advice of the witch Kirki, but here the details of the Odyssey are not adhered to, where it appears that four sailors who have died after being charmed by the Serenat sing it, and the sailors appear frustrated and desperate, where the third appears on the left opens his mouth in frustration and the other bends in exhaustion, it takes them more effort and endurance, and the Serenat laugh as if they are expecting a near victory, their singing will force the sailors to surrender to meet death (Mourão, 2015).



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 12. (a): a mosaic in a fountain; (b): Seren carrying a harp; (c): Serene carrying a flute.

Figure 12(a) shows a part of a mosaic in a fountain dimensions $60 \times 98 \times 260$ cm belonging to Cherchell Algeria and preserved in the Cherchell Museum in Algeria (Mourão, 2015).

Here Odysseus overcomes the serenans not only thanks to following the advice of the witch Kirki but also helping the dolphins, the friend of man, who appear in front of the ship as if guiding her to escape the serens, and in this mural she feels that they are the parabola of life, death, creation and destruction, the creation represented by the sea from which Aphrodite was born. As for the destruction, it is represented in the serens, even the serenans are part animal barbarian killer and part human in which the talent of singing as one of the ways of creativity and the witch Kirki is the benevolent female who helps men to overcome the temptation of women and the mural also represents an example of the ability of men to resist the seduction of women (Mourão, 2015).

2.3. Serenas in Byzantine Art

The writings of the fathers scorned the pagan inheritance of Roman civilization In the book of St. Nicophoric Antirrhetic in the early 9th century AD he pointed out that mythical beings are imaginary and pure illusion In the 10th century AD in the book The Life of Basil I was referred to the centaur with contempt and decided that the composite forms and Greek and Roman myths are in general symbols of evil and that this is what interests him As for the poets, they can mention them in their poems as they wish, and in the life of St. Andrew the fool was standing one day staring at Santo and its superstitious beings and giants, so a passerby slapped him on the nape, and told him that he was a fool, the saint father decided that this passerby is a crooked foolish spirit and that these forms for him are symbols of evil, and despite that superstitious forms have been dealt with in abundance in the art of daily life as models of evil, as in an ivory box It is preserved in the Dumbarton Oaks Museum in Washington with decorations of animals and fairy creatures, including a serene with a human head and a falcon-like flying body that comes out from behind the human head an animal head.

Maybe a sheep or a dog, and we notice here the features of the face full of cheeks, the snub nose, the relatively long tail of the bird, and short legs, perhaps the bird is a falcon or a bird of prey as shown in **Figure 13(a)** (Maguire, 1999: pp. 192-194).

Figure 13(a) depicts an ivory box has a lid with a carving of warriors, one with a shield and a sword and the other is a marksman, and in the side part of the cover is a tape depicted by a man without a beard and a woman in medals, and in the middle of them is a depiction of an emperor inside a medallion and on the body of the box from the front is a depiction of warriors with a depiction of a horse, and in the back is a depiction of three hunters, one of them with a bear and a tape of flower decoration, and the front and back panels are made of elephant ivory, while the side panels are of bone as shown in **Figure 13(a)** and depicted by sernat with the head of a man with curly hair and a long neck and



Figure 13. (a) An ivory box depicted with fairy animals, including a serenne with a human head from which comes the head of a dog or sheep dating back to the 12th century and preserved in the Dumbarton Oaks Washington Museum Quoted in Maguire, 1999. (b) Ivory box depicted with a carving on the side of two cerennaces, corresponding dimensions of height 19.3 cm, width 19.5 cm, and length 26 cm, dating back to (11 - 12) m preserved in the Museum of Victoria and Brit under No. AB 8-1927 (Williamson, 2014).

the body of a bird of prey was surrounded by opposite sernat tape of plant and fruits of grapes and behind each sern a leaf height of 19.3 cm and length of 26 cm and width of 19.5 cm and the box is preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum under the number 1927 - ADB and dated to the 11th century - 12AD (Williamson, 2014: pp. 95-99).

As in Figure 14 on a ceramic dish from Corinthia and preserved in a museum in the Archaeological Museum of Kunthe under No. 2.31.5 dimensions 7.1 cm height 20.8 cm and diameter 20.8 depicted on it Cyrne mostly male with curly hair and look back with sharp features and the body of an aquatic bird with long legs and catches a waterbird, which in turn catches a fish and the scene in its entirety represents dominance and power Valsern controls the bird and the bird controls the fish²².

Figure 15 depicts a ceramic incense burner preserved in the Museum of Byzantine Art in Athens under the number 1676 t 125, Bm dating back to the 12th century was found in Corinthian depicted with a serne with a male face with short hair and the face looking back and the body of the bird with relatively short legs standing on a plant branch and surmounted by a curl decoration²³.

²²Maguine. E.D, Cat 189 "Bowl with shore science" (EdS) Helen, Evans, Wixom the Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of Middle Byza utine Era A.D 843-1261, 1997, New York, pp. 267-268.

²³Jonathan Alex. Y, Two unique seren/Harpy Figured Gramics in the Karatay Province madrasah Tile works museum the journal of Anatolian Archaeological studies theft 4, 2021, p. 131.



Figure 14. Ceramic dish depicted with a seren attacking a seabird MAGUIRE, 1997, 267, **Figure 18.**



Figure 15. ceramic incense burner depicted with CERN belonging to Corinthia and preserved in the Museum of Byzantine Antiquities in Athens under No. T125/Bm 1676 Quoting: Özdemir, 2021: p. 131.

Perhaps the seren appeared in the areas surrounding the Byzantine Empire, which fell under the influence of Byzantine culture and the religious spiritual thought of Orthodoxy, including Kiev and Trey in a golden earring inlaid with enamel dimensions 6.4×5.4 cm belonging to Kiev and preserved in the Metropolitan Museum in New York on one side of the throat Photograph of two circular serents looking in front of the face with a halo of light in the middle of them the ball of life and on the other side a depiction of two birds facing each other with similar plants as shown in **Figure 16**. From the Seren saints anchor the tree of life here the Seren in a decorative and spiritual context.²⁴

²⁴Brown, Temple pendants, (Ed.) Evan S, Wixon, The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of Middle Byzantine It was AD 843-1261, 1997, 309-310.



Figure 16. Round golden earrings enamelled in the form of cerens, including the tree of life on the other side, facing birds and floral motifs dating back to the 11th-12th century AD and preserved in the Metropolitan Museum Quoting: Brown, 1997, 309311 fig.

It appears from the above that the sernet is linked to art in the context of daily life, especially in expensive goods for women such as ivory boxes, but it is remarkable that the illustrated serenne has a masculine face.

2.4. Seren at in Coptic Art

The Copts viewed the pagan inheritance as a way to express their religion in a hidden way in the early ages of Christianity before Christianity was recognized as a religion of the Roman Empire, so the sign of the gankh was used as a cross and the fish symbolized Christ and the god Aphrodite symbolized purity because it was born from a shell in the sea, and Daphne symbolized victory over evil, and with the progress of time and in the era of Emperor Theodisius I, persecution of paganism appeared, and one of its most important manifestations was according to Ruvinius in his History of the Church (402-403 AD). What Theophilus did after finding a pagan altar beneath a Christian church was to display his tools (Davis, 2017).

Holy in a procession in the streets of Alexandria as a kind of humiliation for the pagans, which provoked their anger and prompted them to confrontations with Christians, and for their small number compared to the Christians, they took refuge in the temple of the Ciprabium, and as a result Emperor Theodinosos issued an order to pardon the pagans and considered the Christians who were killed in that conflict as martyrs, and later Theophilus instigated the Christians and invited the Egyptian monks to Alexandria, who were his effective tool in the demolition of the Serapeum, and he inaugurated the church of Mahalla and the assembly of this monastic and established a church in the Canopus area (Abu Qir current) near the destination of a pagan pilgrimage and persuaded the monks to establish a monastic gathering there, and this indicates in its entirety his religious and political policy to try to liquidate paganism and end its existence by establishing Christian places of worship on the ruins of pagan temples, but the manifestations of paganism in art, especially in the minor arts, continued to use pagan artistic elements from Greek and Roman legends, especially in textiles and minor arts in general, where the seren as appeared as in **Figure 17**.



Figure 17. A piece of fabric with a leaf-shaped decoration with a peacock surmounted by a bird's body and a human face with geometric motifs of points and zigzag calligraphy, found in Fayoum and preserved in the Louvre Museum under the number (E26370) and dating back to the century (395-641 AD). Quoting: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010045447>.

3. The Development of Bâ to Harpy in Islamic Civilizations

3.1. Harpy in the Fatimid Era

Harpy was a creature with a female face, a vulture body, and nails. He depicts violent fighting and death (Nouri & Hashem, 2018). The Harpy motif, which depicts the lady bird in the shape of a male person, may be seen on pairs of lusterware ceramics from the Fatimid Period in Egypt. As a result, the Harpy is a composite figure with human heads and bird-like bodies that has completely changed in meaning after the arrival of Christianity in Egypt, when it went from being a religious to a decorative figure (Nouri & Hashem, 2018).

Additionally, the Harpy theme emerged across the Islamic world, from Samarqand in the east to Cordoba in the west (Elhelw, 2020). During the Fatimid period, it was displayed as lustrous decoration on bowls in Egypt and Syria, primarily illustrating royal themes and the joyous life of the court. A bowl with a human head was discovered in Tell Minis in Egypt, the site of the invention of the mina'i method, as an illustration of this (Elhelw, 2020). Although this method was the most uncommon of the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt and Syria in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, its brilliant impact and exceptional imagery make it one of the greatest in ceramics history (Invaluable, 2010).

In a two-dimensional picture, **Figure 18** is depicted as a bird with a man's head wearing a turban, almond-shaped eyes, broad brows, a pointed nose, thin lips, and a wide jawline. The body of the figure appears to be covered in details like Fatimid textiles that were distinguished by beautiful inscriptions, in contrast to prior portrayals of human-headed birds that were featured in feathery bodies and are wearing necklaces. The entire depiction demonstrates the wealth of the Fatimid era (Elhelw, 2020).



Figure 18. Fatimid Bowl with a Harpy. c. 1200/1250. The Jameel Gallery, case 2 W. (V and A Collections, 2017).

The following wooden board in **Figure 19** decorated the Fatimid western palace in the hall of Set Al-Mulk, his son Al-Aziz Billah Al-Fatimid and the sister of the Fatimid Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, who lived between 985 AD to 1021 AD, and this board contains many forms of Baa or Harby with other composite objects, which reflects the skill of the artist in the Fatimid era.

Reused in the decorations of the monumental architectural ensemble constructed by the Mamluk Sultan Al-Mansur Qalawun in Al-Muizz Street in the year 684 AH/1285 AD.

Another example could be found in **Figure 20** depicting the Victoria and Albert Museum of a courtyard from the Fatimid era depicts the object of war clearly surrounded by floral motifs and the abdominal area decorated with Arabic semi-letters in the Kufic script characteristic of this stage, which is not any Arabic word, but only its purpose is decoration.

3.2. Harpy in Ayyubid Era

The majority of the animal painted vessels in the aforementioned museums exhibit bird themes, which are typically shown as duck, peacock, duckling, pigeon, eagle, crane, parrots, and roosters (Ghasemi & Ghasemi, 2020).

In addition, the epithet Saladin upon conquering Egypt and Syria, aimed to change the official Islamic cult throughout the country from Shia to Sunni, which was accompanied by the introduction of the Sufiism. The Sufists, however, considered all compound figures (combining two or elements, such as Harpy) as forbidden by sharia or haram. Based on that, we find diminishing examples of Harpy and all compound figures throughout the Islamic world at that period, as they treated each element as separate from another, and allowed no merge or conflation between plant, animal, and human figures (Abdel Rahim, 2000). This explains why we find rare instances of Harpy in Ayyubid era, followed by the Mamluk era in which Harpy figures almost disappeared.

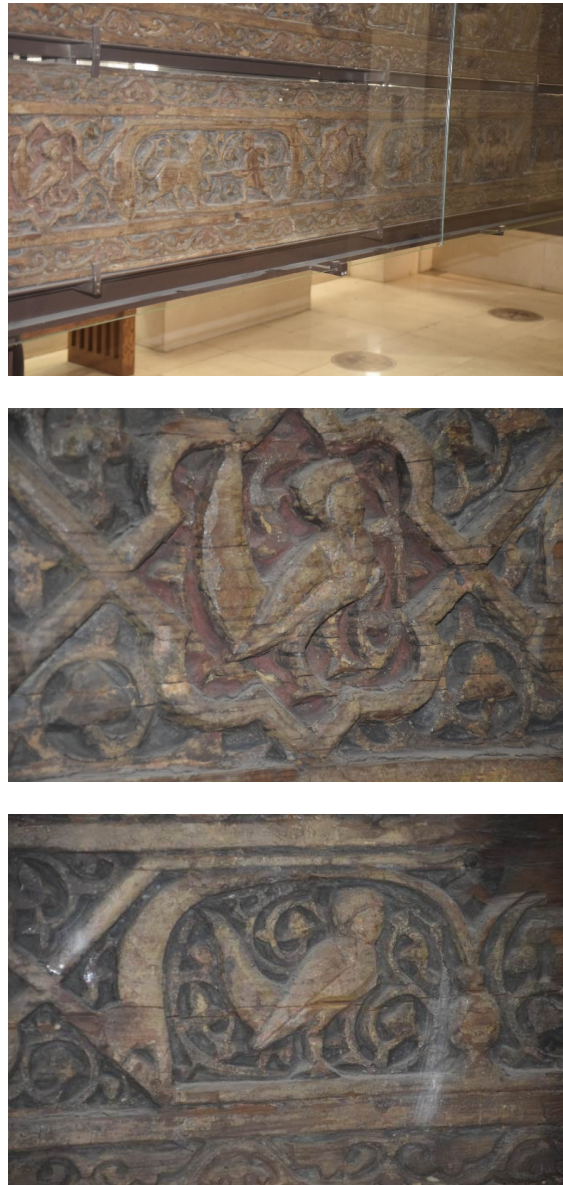


Figure 19. A wooden lusterware with engravings of human, plant, and animal compound shapes, including a harpy-like figure.



Figure 20. Harpy-containing ceramic lusterware at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.

Pope also discusses how these animals look aboard ships: Harpies were drastically included into the pottery as soon as they had the necessary technique, whereas the phoenix or harpy is seen as a typical theme in the Islamic art of the twelfth and thirteenth century (Ghasemi & Ghasemi, 2020).

He also described the role of this motif in the vessels like shown in **Figure 21** as follows: “In these vessels, there is a large figure painted on a simple background surrounded by motifs of flowers and bushes”. In most cases, the edges of the vessels have a strip of Kufic script (common decorations in vessels painted on Raqqa liner glaze). Apart from the difference in technique, these vessels are very similar to the enamel dishes painted on Iranian glaze in terms of the iconography. The species that was first recorded in the 1180s, shows that Syrian potters were inspired by Persian pottery of that period (Khalili & Group, 2005: p. 229). This motif’s link to magical ideas is another point of connection. Irwin claimed that although painters, potters, and metalworkers employed the harpy motif, it was unclear whether they did it for amusement or because they had an interest in odd and fantastical artefacts. But the idea of a harpy also conjures up joy (Ghasemi & Ghasemi, 2020).

3.3. Harpy in Mamluk Era

According to the question about the use of Harpy’s figure in the context of Tree of Life on pottery and metallic containers in fifth to eighth century A.H (eleventh to fourteenth century A.D), this hypothesis can be proved that Harpy’s figure in Islamic period is used not only as a decorative pattern but also as a way of expansion of Islamic Sufism and development of Sufism theories in this period; ancient concepts were effective factors in the presence of these symbols on works of art. It seems that the application of Harpy’s figure or “Human-Bird image” is associated with Sufism concepts related to freedom of soul from body as its prison, flying to human’s real place and reaching to the perfect human being degree, but the personification in the forms of Harpy was considered Haram or unlawful by the Sufists; therefore, no Harpy-containing figures are found in the Mamluk era. It is crucial to note that the Harpy in Egypt and Syria has completely disappeared and was ended by the time of the Mamluk era, as Mamluks considered it to be Haram.



Figure 21. Dish. A Seren in low relief under coloured glazes. Made of blue, green, manganese-purple glazed and incised pottery.

3.4. Harpy in the Andalusia

As Harpies were prevalent in Roman and Byzantine art, and they first appeared in Andalusia across the Byzantine churches as a form of art, the Harpies were introduced to the Western Islamic world through Egypt through the Roman occupation at the time. In Andalusia's Islamic civilisation, harpies also made their appearance (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). Harpies add the tail of a snake or scorpion to the feminine face and the bird body of mermaids, as shown in **Figure 22(b)** and **Figure 22(c)**, despite the fact that they are often connected with bird-mermaids due to their function in winged emblems. Harpies are sometimes seen in pairs, with their bodies connected and their heads twisted in a menacing manner. It is a threatening or aggressive stance that may be influenced by an improved adaption to the support as well as the oriental impact on the compositions organized around an axis of symmetry. In addition, they can be presented headdresses with a Phrygian cap (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007).



Figure 22. (a): Capital with harpies facing each other. Cover of church of San Martín de Artaiz. (b): Harpies on the sides of a stem that tangles in their necks. Capital of the west gallery of the cloister of Santo Domingo de Silos. (c): Harpies with Phrygian cap on the backs of lions. Capital of the arcaded gallery of San Pedro Apostol. (d): Balaguer: Information about the decoration in the stucco. An early Islamic castle near Balaguer, which is thought to have existed between the ninth and the middle of the eleventh century, still has a considerable portion of its wall and towers standing. The forces of Merida are compared to the cut-stone wall, which consists of single, double, and triple stretchers and headers in an arbitrary rhythm. For instance, a Harpy may be seen inside a leafy tendril in the left picture (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007).

The harpies are usually shown in the colossal sculpture found in the capitals, corbels, and other architectural features of Romanesque buildings, as shown in **Figure 22(a)**. The harpies that emerged in the plasterwork of the vaults of the San Fernando cloister of the Royal Monastery of Las Huelgas de Burgos are just one of the later instances we have like shown in **Figure 22(a)**. Additionally, it has been feasible to identify its presence in ceramic and eboraic artefacts, texts, and engravings. Later illustrations combine the harpies' and the bird-representations. mermaid's In Formo's fortress, which was constructed in Balaguer (1040-1045) during the Spanish Islamic Middle Ages, as shown in **Figure 22(d)**, harpies may also be seen (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007).

3.5. Harpy in the Seljuk Empire

In the Eastern side of the Islamic world, Harby appeared clearly in the arts of the Seljuk empire, but they did not only draw it on dishes or carve it on wood, but they made its own statues, such as the ancient Greek civilization, and transferred it to Turkey directly during the ancient Greek occupation. For example, these figures with harpies were generated out of the existing figural repertoire as in **Figure 23**, especially from those, which are regarded as powerful or virtuous such as **Figure 24**. The most common mythical creatures in the Seljuk empire were the simurgs and harpies as in **Figure 25**. **Figure 26** also shown that harpies existed in potteries such as ceramic of a blue and white glazed, or in pottery alabastron decorated with harpies such as **Figure 27**.



Figure 23. Reconstruction of a tile panel with depictions of various animals, simurg and human figures. from Great Palace in Kubadabad, Konya.



Figure 24. Bowl with harpies and seated figures, Mina'i ware, Central Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th century AD, earthenware with polychrome enamels over a white glaze and colors - Cincinnati museum.

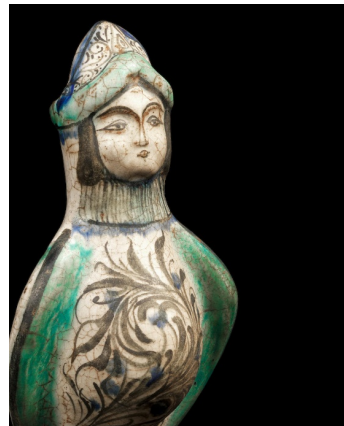


Figure 25. A Large Intact Kashan Underglaze-painted moulded pottery pouring vessel in the form of a Harpy. Persia, AD 1150-1220 and colors.



Figure 26. Seljuk, Kashan. A beautiful ceramic of a blue and white glazed "harpy". Nice and delicate facial features with porous and slightly faded patina.



Figure 27. Pottery alabastron decorated with a harpy to left, with outspread wings. Found in the British Museum. Item number 1877, 0930.6.

3.6. Harpy in Ottoman Era

The Ottoman Empire (1299 AD until 1922 AD) was distinguished by the Iznik Ceramics, in which harpies were continued to manifest themselves as a prominent artistic representation. Harpies manifested in the Ottoman arts in Iznik, perhaps because it was a common art in the Seljuk state and the subsequent Mongol occupation of the region, so it remained present until the middle of the Ottoman Empire, although it seems completely cut off from the original impregnable Egypt, so no traces of it were found in the Mamluk state (Gökçe, 2018).

Iznik has always been an important centre of ceramic art creation. Iznik gained notoriety when the Ottoman Empire was established in the 15th and 16th centuries as a result of the expansion of the ceramic industry (Gökçe, 2018). Iznik ceramics are a magnificent technological accomplishment in Turkish ceramic art history. The finest examples of Ottoman ceramic art were the Iznik vessels and tiles, which combined Ottoman design elements with those from China, Asia, the Balkans, and even Europe. The palace's support for Iznik's pioneering pottery industry encouraged and nurtured its expansion. This study describes the peculiar Iznik ceramic production and decorative features that may be found in various literary sources (Gökçe, 2018).

Additionally, harpies were frequently found in Iznik pottery and ceramics like in **Figure 28** and **Figure 29**. Some of the last remnants of Harpy have been discovered in Iznik, under the Ottoman era in dishes such as **Figure 30**. Some of them, including the following images, may be seen at the British Museum.



Figure 28. Bottle. Grotesque animals, harpies and gambolling lions, bull's head, flutes, frieze of quails and cable band.



Figure 29. Bowl. Two pairs of harpies, tubular dragons, phoenixes and grotesque animals, lion, hyena, pig.



Figure 30. Dish. Wheel marks. Lobing and wave and rock scroll at rim, central medallion of harpies with central flower vase.

3.7. Harpy Decline in Renaissance Era

The emergence of Al-Harbi continued significantly until the Renaissance, particularly through the Iznik as the gateway of this forms of art, and perhaps the reason for its creation to this period is its expression of different concepts such as expressing evil and good at the same time, or perhaps for its beauty as a decoration or ease of painting as it appeared in some paintings, or perhaps for other reasons that we do not know were in the reason for its spread until the Renaissance, and these are examples of its appearance in the Renaissance in different countries. The trade in ceramic manufacturing between Italy in Europe and the Islamic world, as represented by Iznik in Turkey, flourished and gained shape with the appearance of a distinctive style of ceramic plates with Italian tradition in Iznik (Zidan, 2019). Around 1500-1530 A.D., Tondino dishes, a sort of ceramic plate, were popular in Italy. Similar examples were also manufactured in the modern era by Iznik workshops (Zidan, 2019). Therefore, examples of harpy started to become less pronounced such as in **Figure 31** and **Figure 32**, or very pronounced but rarely present such as **Figure 33**, and **Figure 34**. Only in the museum of Rome, one sees the remaining figures containing harpies such as **Figure 35** and **Figure 36**.

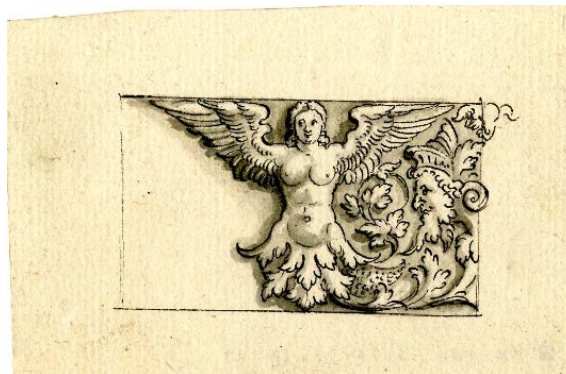


Figure 31. In British Museum. Ornamental panel with a harpy and a mask, one of several sheets inserted in “A Jeweller’s Pocket Book” Pen and black ink, with grey wash.



Figure 32. Alder box, covered with gesso, gilding and white lead pastiglia, Venice, ca. 1510. Decorated covered lid with confronted harpies. In Victoria & Albert museum.



Figure 33. In British Museum. Figure in lead-glazed earthenware of a harpy seated on a four-lobed oval base, maker unknown, made in Staffordshire, ca. 1780-1790.



Figure 34. In British Museum. A harpy approaches from the right, to steal food from a table, while King Phineus sits looking away, to the left; finished proof. 1896.



Figure 35. The Four Part Being with human head and bird body, the museum of Rome.



Figure 36. The four Pedestals (c. 1461-1466), made of marble showing harpies on four corners, designed by assistants of Donatello, the museum of Rome.

Iznik pottery was influenced by Chinese porcelain in the first half of the 16th century A.D. in terms of colours (blue and white), Italian maiolica in terms of forms (such as “tondino” plates), and harpies as well. Additionally, although they were not utilised in figurative settings, Italian figural portraits were included into the creation of Iznik ceramics, featuring complex forms like Harpies. We find over-glazed and under-glazed figures of Harpy common in the renaissance era. Below are some examples of Harpies found during renaissance.

4. Conclusion: The Purpose behind Human-Headed Bird Figures

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the notion of the human-headed bird in different eras to stand upon its depiction and symbolic representation in each era presented. Overall, the results showed a high diversity in the depiction and representation of the human-headed bird imagery throughout different eras, suggesting a clear development of the notion of Ba to Seren to Harpy. Our investigation has revealed that Islamic literary tradition and folklore acknowledge that the Harpy creature had its own literary tradition, each more or less independent of the other era. Although the motif of a human-headed bird in Islamic art may have been thought to signify a single fantastic creature, however, these traditions share a few characteristics.

Furthermore, it has been shown that the Muslim artist used a single common type to depict these four animals in pictures, which is roughly based on the decorative arts figure of the time. One seeks in vain for any characteristics that might distinguish a specific Harpy creature, such as a beak, claws, bulges on the neck or chest, a scared demeanour, and so on. The creature shown is none other than the man-bird (harpy), and the illustrator paid little to no regard to the finer points of the literary works they accompanied.

They merely supplied the picture of a bird with which they were familiar in the decorative arts in order to illustrate any of the human-headed birds of Muslim folklore. The crowned heads, pearl diadems and necklaces of the birds and the voluted tips of their wings are a part of the Islamic heritage as in the case of the Islamic sphinxes are a mere representation of that folklore. Furthermore, compound figures such as sphinxes and harpies due to combining human-bird personifications and body-soul metaphors, have been frequently used in magic to conduct magic-related rituals, as it was believed to possess supernatural powers that are divine in nature, since the concept of harpy goes back to the Greek mythology that incorporated the personifications of gods.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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