

**STUDIES IN ANCIENT ART
AND CIVILIZATION**

14

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ET CIVILISATIONE
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**STUDIES
IN ANCIENT ART
AND CIVILIZATION**

14

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Ewdoksia Papuci-Władyka

Krakow 2010

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Scarab with a representation of a sphinx and the symbol of unification of Egypt on its base. From the collection of Princes Czartoryski Foundation in Kraków (inv. no. MNK XI-1117). Photo Jakub Śliwa, courtesy of the Foundation

Photo of Professor Joachim Śliwa on page 7 by Jakub Śliwa

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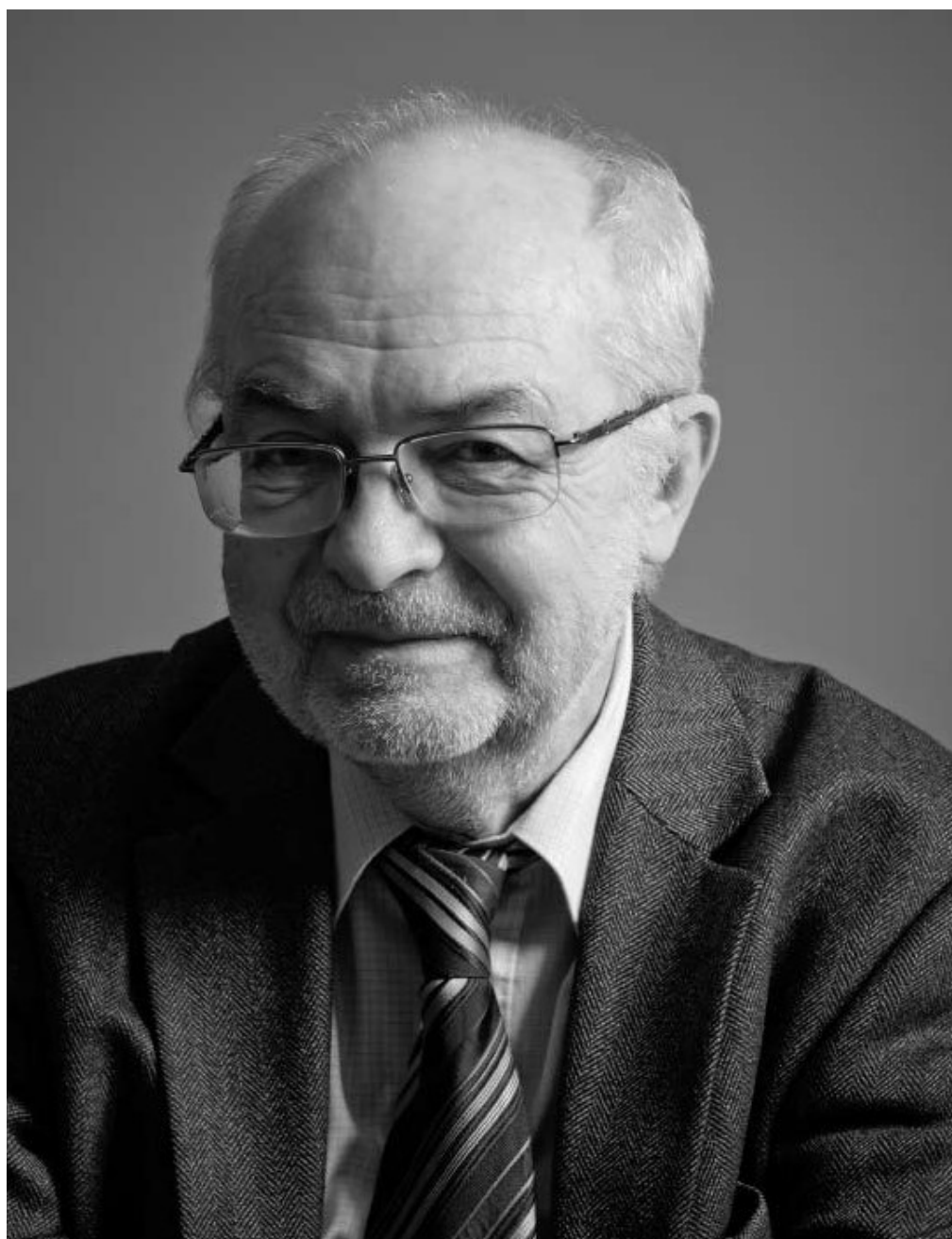
THE 14TH VOLUME OF *STUDIES IN ANCIENT ART AND CIVILIZATION*
IS DEDICATED
TO PROFESSOR JOACHIM ŚLIWA ON HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY

The first issue of *Studies in Ancient Art And Civilization* was published in 1991. The initiator of the series, as well as its creator and the editor of 12 volumes, was Professor Joachim Śliwa. The 14th issue is intended by the current editors as a homage to Professor, and expression of thanks for his activity so far.

Professor Śliwa is an excellent expert on archaeology and art of ancient Egypt and Middle East, as well as a prominent scholar in the field of the history of collections of antiquities and Mediterranean archaeology in Poland; he is the author of numerous books and several hundred articles. His whole career, starting with the studies under the supervision of Professor Maria L. Bernhard, up to now is connected with the Jagiellonian University. He defended his doctoral thesis here in 1969, in 1975 presented his habilitation dissertation, and in 1988 received professor's title. For many years (since 1978) he had been head of the Department of Mediterranean Archaeology, and after the reorganisation of the Institute of Archaeology became head of the Department of Egyptian and Near Eastern Archaeology; the latter post he holds until now.

The scientific activity of Professor Joachim Śliwa comprises four main topics. The first covers research on ancient Middle East and Egypt. It was in the land of the Nile, where he went for the first time in 1966 on a scholarship funded by the Egyptian government, that he made his most important discoveries. The excavations which he conducted in Qasr el-Sagha (1979-1988) resulted in the discovery and investigation of a so far unknown workers' settlement dating to the time of the Middle Kingdom. The art and culture of Egypt and Middle East became the most important topics of Professor Śliwa's books, textbooks and scientific articles.

His teaching activity is connected with this research, and he became the tutor and example of academic excellence for many generations of graduate and doctoral students. He promoted countless master's theses, more than ten doctoral dissertations, and several of his students are today professors themselves.



Professor JOACHIM ŚLIWA

Professor Śliwa's third passion is the research on history of Mediterranean archaeology and collections of antiquities in Poland. Apart from numerous articles on this subject one should recall the book *Egipt, Grecja, Italia... Zabytki starożytne z dawnej kolekcji Gabinetu Archeologicznego Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* (Kraków 2007), of which he was originator, editor, and for which he prepared the majority of texts. Thanks to his interest in the subject and Benedictine patience he restored the memory of many forgotten early researchers and collectors. He has always emphasized their achievements in the context of times in which they lived, and it would not be an overstatement to say that many of them owe their 'second lives' to the Professor.

The fourth area of Professor Śliwa's activity lies in the field of publishing. His first experience in this field was the editorial work for *Studia z Archeologii Śródziemnomorskiej* published as part of *Prace Archeologiczne*. He had redacted for many years the *Recherches Archéologiques* series, which presents in the first place field research of the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University. Professor Śliwa also edited or co-edited many books, but *Studies in Ancient Art And Civilization* became his 'most beloved child'. This periodical is an important forum for the exchange of scientific ideas; it also provides Professor's many students, as well as other scholars beginning their career, with the opportunity to publish their first scientific papers. Being always a demanding editor, Professor Śliwa never refused anyone his help and advice.

For all this we owe Him our deepest gratitude.

Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz
Janusz A. Ostrowski
Ewdoksia Papuci-Władyka

Kraków, October 2010

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Tomasz Podgórski

Kraków

SOME REMARKS ON THE PROBLEM
OF THE HORUS FALCON
IDENTIFICATION

The problem of possible identification of the sacred falcon of Horus with an actual bird species has been puzzling Egyptologists for a long time. Prior to focusing on more detailed considerations, it seems appropriate to recollect the main aspects of this bird's appearance in the ancient Egyptian iconography.

The representation of the falcon in Egyptian art displays, apart from some minor variations, amazing stability in the course of about two millennia, and this statement applies both to the squatting and hovering falcon. A classic shape of the former was invented as early as the 1st Dynasty, as testified by a fine example on the stela of King Djet (Fig. 1), and ever since a reposing falcon appeared in innumerable instances to the very end of the pharaonic Egypt, mainly as the crowning of the royal Horus name, as is the case of the rock relief of King Snofru from Wadi Maghara (Fig. 2), or as a hieroglyphic sign. Exquisite examples come from the New Kingdom. A painted falcon from the temple of King Thotmes III at Deir el-Bahari on block F 6639 (Fig. 3), according to the epithet *s3b šwt*, has the abdomen and part of the head cream-white, whereas the wings are bichrome, with blue speckles scattered on greenish background. The long tail feathers (always six in this temple) have identical colours, but their tips are red. Parts of the head and nape are adorned with a specific pattern of blue arrowheads and speckles on green background. The bird has a peculiar facial moustache. This entire combination of colours was of immense magical significance.

Another example of a monumental hieroglyphic falcon comes from the tomb of King Ramses IX (Fig. 4). Here again the wings, back and

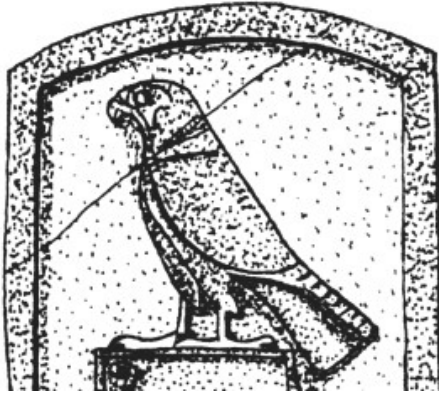


Fig. 1. Reposing falcon on the stele of Djet. 1st Dynasty, c. 2870 BC. Drawing T. Podgórski

the dynamism of the scene. The falcon shows some archaic features, such as only four tail feathers and ten relatively short pointed primary feathers in the wings.

Hovering falcon was very often represented in the art of the Middle Kingdom, and a mature form of this depiction should be noted here, as it became the model for the images of this bird in the New Kingdom. Fine examples come from the temples of King Mentuhotep-Sankhkare from Armant and Abydos (Fig. 6).

The word for falcon as a bird in ancient Egyptian is *bik*. Nowadays in Egypt four falcon species can be found, which share the physical features with the Horus falcon known from iconography. Among them, the Eleonora's Falcon (*Falco Eleonora*) and the Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) are migrating birds, while the Lanner Falcon (*Falco biarmicus*) is a permanent resident in the Nile valley, the Delta and parts of the Western and Eastern Deserts, as well as the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), which inhabits the area from Aswan, through Luxor and Fayum, to the Delta. Moreover,

tail are dominated by green, but the speckles are black. The top of the head and neck are blue, while the moustache is black. The tail consists of eight feathers, polychromed similarly to the wings.

The hovering falcon in its earliest classical form is known from the South Tomb in the complex of King Djoser (Fig. 5), where the bird protects the king during the ritual run which formed part of the *Sed* festival, and its presence emphasizes



Fig. 2. Falcon on Horus name of Snofru. 4th Dynasty, c. 2580 BC. Drawing T. Podgórski after M. Saleh and H. Sourouzian 1986, *Das Ägyptische Museum Kairo. Offizieller Katalog* 24. Mainz



Fig. 3. Falcon from the temple of Thotmes III at Deir el-Bahari. 18th Dynasty, c. 1450 BC. Drawing T. Podgórski

other residential or migrating species of falcon should be mentioned here, such as the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*), the Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), the Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and the Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*). All these species belong to the order of *Falconiformes* and *Falconidae* family.

French Egyptologist Victor Loret (1903, 1ff) tried to prove that the falcon of Horus was to be identified with the Peregrine Falcon, but the very concept of identification of any particular species with the sacred bird was approached with reservations by Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen

(1930, Tab. IV: 7) in his comprehensive and detailed study on Egyptian birds. Similarly, Samuel A. B. Mercer (1942, 96) remarks that there is no proof that ancient Egyptians distinguished precisely among the falcons of similar appearance. It should be also noted that Egyptological literature on this topic shows no consistency as far as terminology goes; in many English texts a general term hawk is used to describe falconiform diurnal birds of prey as distinct from eagles and vultures.

It should also be stressed that in the iconographical terms the falcon of Horus is greatly different from that of the kestrel (Fig. 7), the latter bird often found in the Nile valley, Delta, Fayum, in the vicinity of the Suez Canal and in the oases of Dakhla, Siwa and Kharga. The role of the kestrel was very different from that of the falcon, and a representation of this particular bird from the tomb of Sennedjem at Deir el-Medineh, shows Isis in the form of the kestrel, as a divine mourner (*drt*) guarding



Fig. 4. Falcon from the tomb of Ramses IX. 20th Dynasty, c. 1120 BC. Drawing T. Podgórski after Houlihan and Goodman 1986, Fig. 61

the mummy of the deceased with her sister Nephthys. The plumage of the kestrel in the painting is reddish-brown, while the speckles are dark brown. The kestrel was very well known to ancient Egyptians, since it was the most common bird species in the land, as well as the one which was most often mummified. Fine specimens of the kestrel come from the tomb of Queen Nefertari. It is worth mentioning that the kestrel was sometimes replaced by the Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) in the role of a divine mourner.

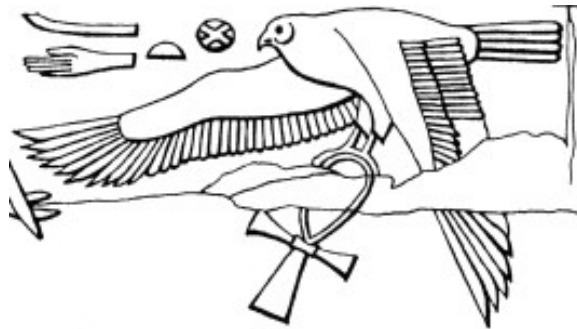


Fig. 5. Hovering falcon from the South Tomb at Saqqara. 3rd Dynasty, c. 2620 BC. Drawing T. Podgórski after C. M. Firth and J. E. Quibell 1935. *The Step Pyramid II*, Tab. 42. Cairo



Fig. 6. Falcon from the temple of Mentuhotep-Sankhkare at Abydos. 11th Dynasty, c. 2005 BC. Reproduced from W. M. F. Petrie 1901. *The Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties II*, Tab. XXV. London

The investigation of frequency of particular falcon species among the examined mummies of these birds leads to very interesting conclusions. According to the results published by F. Bodenheimer (1960, 127), the most commonly mummified falcon was the kestrel (72 cases for Upper Egypt and 24 for Giza and Saqqara), then the Lanner Falcon (five for Upper and one for Lower Egypt), while the Eurasian Hobby is attested twice and once respectively. The Peregrine Falcon is known from one case in Upper Egypt. Birds were massively mummified in the Late and Ptolemaic Periods. There is also evidence that falconry was practised in Egypt (Keimer 1950, 52ff).

Most authorities on the subject agree that it may be impossible to identify the falcon of Horus with any particular bird species. It seems most likely that shape and plumage features of several species of large falcons native to Egypt were combined to form the ideal image of the falcon of Horus. The present author is inclined to share this view, but would like to point

out that apparently the characteristics of the Peregrine Falcon were pronounced most strongly. This similarity is well illustrated by the comparison of the actual bird (Fig. 8) with a magnificent specimen of Horus-falcon from the temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari (Fig. 9). Indeed, his representation matches his name 'the Lofty One'.

One has to bear in mind that the portraying of the most characteristic features of the falcon in a synthetic and conventionalized way was of foremost importance for the Egyptians. Also, the colours used in the depictions had little in common with the actual plumage, since their function was predominantly magical. It is an indisputable fact that the silhouette of a hovering falcon, known already from the South Tomb at Saqqara, remained basically unchanged, apart from very slight modifications, at least to the end of the New Kingdom. The same is valid for the reposing falcon, whose classical form as seen on the stela of King Djet crowned the Horus name in the royal titulary to the end of the pharaonic state.



Fig. 7. Kestrel from the tomb of Sennedjem. 19th Dynasty, c. 1290 BC. Drawing T. Podgórski after Houlihan and Goodman 1986, Fig. 60



Fig. 8. Peregrine Falcon. Drawing T. Podgórski after *Birds of Prey. Wildlife Collection*, BBC Wildlife: www.bbcwildlifemagazine.com



Fig. 9. Horus-falcon from the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari. 18th Dynasty, c. 1465 BC. Photo T. Podgórski

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