

# BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

## BIRDS IN ANCIENT EGYPT

*edited by*

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*with new photography by*

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## 6. BIRDS IN THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN AND COPTIC ALPHABETS

FRANÇOIS GAUDARD\*

It is a well-known fact that Thoth, often referred to as the “Lord of the divine words”<sup>1</sup> and identified with Hermes by the Greeks, was traditionally the god of scribes, wisdom, and writing.<sup>2</sup> This function is also attested, for instance, by Plato, who called him “father of letters” in his *Phaedrus*.<sup>3</sup> The common depiction of this god in the form of an ibis would explain why the Egyptians, who ascribed to him the invention of letters, named the first letter of their alphabet *hb* “ibis.” Indeed, contrary to what Plutarch stated in the following passage of his *Moralia*: “‘Hermes,’ said Hermeias, ‘was, we are told, the god who first invented writing in Egypt. Hence the Egyptians write the first of their letters with an ibis, the bird that belongs to Hermes, although in my opinion they err in giving precedence among the letters to one that is inarticulate and voiceless,’”<sup>4</sup> the Egyptians did not “write the first of their letters with an ibis,” but they gave it the name of *hb* “ibis,” standing for the letter *h*, which was indeed an “inarticulate and voiceless” consonant for a Greek.<sup>5</sup> In fact, they designated each letter of the alphabet by a bird name beginning with the letter in question. This practice dates back as early as the fourth century BC and was probably adopted for mnemonic reasons.

A number of studies have been devoted to the problem of the order in which the letters appear in the Egyptian alphabet.<sup>6</sup> Smith and Tait, followed by Buchberger,<sup>7</sup> first suggested the existence of “a tradition that identified the consonants of the Egyptian language by the names of birds,” and thought that “it may give some indication of the regular order in which the Egyptians remembered their consonants.”<sup>8</sup> The text about which Smith and Tait came to such conclusions, namely, papyrus (hereafter P.) Saqqara 27 (fourth–third century BC),<sup>9</sup> is a school text consisting of two alphabetical lists with bird names. In the first list (lines 2–7), “various birds are said to be ‘upon’ various trees or plants” with which they are

paired. In each pair, the bird and plant names always begin with the same letter. For example, in line 2, the first phrase of the list reads as follows: *[r] pꜣ hb ḥr pꜣ hbyn* “the ibis (was) upon the ebony-tree,”<sup>10</sup> in which the word *hb* “ibis” is paired with *hbyn* “ebony-tree,” both beginning with the letter *h*. In the second list (lines 9–14), “various birds are said to ‘go away’ to various places.” In line 10, for instance, one finds the sentence *šm n=f bnw r Bb[l]* “the Benu-bird went off to Baby[lon]”<sup>11</sup> in which, according to the same pattern, the word *bnw* “heron” is paired with *Bb[l]* “Baby[lon],” both names beginning with the letter *b*.

P. Saqqara 27 is in fact one of the few papyri, ranging from the Late Period to Roman times, to include letter names or words listed in alphabetical order and thanks to which the sequence of letters in the Egyptian alphabet can be established, at least partially.<sup>12</sup> In some of these papyri, such as P. Berlin 8278 and its fragments, letter names could also be placed at the beginning of a line as a way of classifying different sections of the text by using letters instead of numbers.<sup>13</sup>

The alphabetical lists found in the above-mentioned papyri follow the same model with only minor divergences consisting of the presence or absence of certain sounds or dealing with the position of some letters in two different lineages of tradition.<sup>14</sup> Although the position of several letters, such as *h*, is well established, the alphabetical list presented in table 6.1, whose reconstruction is based on the combination of the data of the lists known to this day, remains tentative. Letters whose position is not yet well attested or which have been omitted in some lists are given in parentheses. Moreover, the identification of some birds still poses problems and in some cases variant writings of the same bird name are attested.<sup>15</sup> Note that the mosquito (*hlms*) was included among birds, presumably because it is also a flying creature.

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TABLE 6.1. The ancient Egyptian alphabet (based on Quack 2003, pp. 167 and 170, and Altenmüller 2010, pp. 95–96)

Letter	Possible Hieroglyphic Equivalent	Letter Name	Translation
h		hb	“ibis” <sup>a</sup>
r <sup>b</sup>		rt(?) <sup>c</sup>	type of heron <sup>d</sup>
h		unknown	unknown
(m) <sup>e</sup>		mnw	“dove” <sup>f</sup>
q <sup>g</sup>		unknown	unknown
w		wy <sup>h</sup>	unidentified bird <sup>i</sup>
s		smn <sup>j</sup> /smnw <sup>k</sup>	“Nile goose” <sup>l</sup>
r		unknown	unknown
b		bnw <sup>m</sup> /bny <sup>n</sup>	type of heron <sup>o</sup>
(t)		unknown	unknown
š/h		hrg[...] <sup>p</sup>	unidentified bird
(m) <sup>q</sup>		mnw	“dove”
k		kymy	“hen” or “black ibis” <sup>r</sup>

Letter	Possible Hieroglyphic Equivalent	Letter Name	Translation
n		nry	“vulture” <sup>s</sup>
h		hry <sup>t</sup> /hrm(?) <sup>u</sup> /hr <sup>r</sup> mrm <sup>l</sup> <sup>v</sup>	unidentified bird(s)
d/t		dnedne	“swan” <sup>w</sup>
p		p <sup>r</sup> ry	“quail” <sup>x</sup>
(i) <sup>y</sup>	—	—	—
c		“ne <sup>z</sup> /nene <sup>aa</sup> /r <sup>c</sup> n <sup>r</sup> y <sup>bb</sup> ”	unidentified bird
g		gm[...] <sup>cc</sup>	unidentified bird
h		hlms <sup>dd</sup>	“mosquito”
t/d		tri <sup>ee</sup> /try <sup>ff</sup> /tr-h <sup>z</sup> (?) <sup>gg</sup>	“kite” <sup>hh</sup>
i/y <sup>ii</sup>		...(?) <sup>jj</sup>	unidentified bird
(f)		fy-st	unidentified bird <sup>kk</sup>
(d)		dd	“sparrow” <sup>ll</sup>
k		knw <sup>mm</sup> /ksnw(?) <sup>nn</sup>	unidentified bird <sup>oo</sup> /“sparrow” <sup>pp</sup>

<sup>a</sup> For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 200 n. f.<sup>b</sup> Given the correspondence with the old South Arabian alphabet, this first *r* is in fact an *l*, but the only two texts in which it is attested, namely, the “Sign Papyrus” and P. Saqqara 27, do not make a distinction between *r* and *l* (Quack, personal communication). For discussion on the old South Arabian alphabet, see below.<sup>c</sup> P. Saqqara 27, 2 (for the reading, see Zauzich 2000b, p. 30).<sup>d</sup> Cf. *rd* Erman and Grapow 1926–82, vol. 2, p. 463/12. For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, pp. 200–01 n. h; Houlihan 1986, pp. 13–16, no. 7.<sup>e</sup> In the present list, the letter *m* occurs twice in parentheses in order to reflect its positions as attested in the two known lineages of tradition, but only one occurrence should be kept.<sup>f</sup> For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 202 n. q.<sup>g</sup> For discussion on the use of the sign in Demotic, see Vittmann 1996.<sup>h</sup> P. Saqqara 27, 3.<sup>i</sup> For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 201 n. k.<sup>j</sup> P. Saqqara 27, 3.<sup>k</sup> P. Berlin 15709 vo., line number not given (for the reading, see Zauzich 2000b, p. 30).<sup>l</sup> *Smn(w)* is most likely to be the Nile goose (*Chenalopex aegyptiaca*). For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 201 n. m; Wilson 1997, p. 847.<sup>m</sup> P. Saqqara 27, 10.<sup>n</sup> P. Berlin 15709 vo., line number not given (for the reading, see Zauzich 2000b, p. 30). Are we dealing here with a variant writing of the word *bnw* “heron” (cf. *byn*) or with the word *bny* “swallow”?<sup>o</sup> Also often referred to in the Egyptological literature as “phoenix” or “*benu*-bird.” For discussion, see, e.g., Smith and Tait 1983, p. 205 n. aj; Wilson 1997, pp. 316–17; Houlihan 1986, pp. 13–16, no. 7.<sup>p</sup> Unpublished text (reading by Quack, personal communication).<sup>q</sup> See n. e, above.<sup>r</sup> In Demotic, it is uncertain whether the word *kymy* still refers to the black ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus* [see Houlihan 1986, pp. 26–27, no. 14]; cf. the word *gm.t* “black ibis,” presumably at the origin of the *gm* phonogram: ; see Gardiner 1957, p. 470, G28) or to the hen (cf. Coptic ⲉⲗⲙⲉⲛ “hen domestic fowl”). For further discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 202 n. s.<sup>s</sup> For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 205 n. am.<sup>t</sup> P. Bibliothèque nationale 215 vo., e/1 (for the reading, see Zauzich 2000b, p. 30 n. 13; Spiegelberg 1914, pp. 34 and 129, no. 520 read *hr[.ly]*).<sup>u</sup> P. Cairo 30705, 2/2 (reading by Quack, personal communication; Zauzich 2000b, p. 30 n. 13 read *hr[?]*).<sup>v</sup> Unpublished text; *hr<sup>r</sup> mrm<sup>l</sup>* might be a partially reduplicated form of *hrm* (reading by Quack, personal communication).<sup>w</sup> For the possible identification of *dn(e)dn(e)* with the swan, see Störk 1976.<sup>x</sup> For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 203 n. w.<sup>y</sup> This is the glottal stop (like Hebrew <sup>ʾ</sup>*aleph* or Arabic <sup>ʾ</sup>*alif*); for discussion, see Quack 1993, p. 147, no. 18, and corrections in Quack 1994.<sup>z</sup> P. Carlsberg 425, 155 (for the reading, see Zauzich 2000b, pp. 30 and 38).<sup>aa</sup> P. Saqqara 27, 12 (for the reading, see Quack 1993, p. 144, no. 16) and P. Bibliothèque nationale 215 vo., e/11 (for the reading, see Zauzich 2000b, p. 30 n. 13).<sup>bb</sup> Unpublished text (reading by Quack, personal communication).<sup>cc</sup> Unpublished text; perhaps to be restored as *gm-hs* type of falcon (reading by Quack, personal communication).<sup>dd</sup> Unpublished text (reading by Quack, personal communication); cf. *hlms* unidentified bird, in P. Bibliothèque nationale 215 vo., e/6; see Spiegelberg 1914, p. 129, no. 516.<sup>ee</sup> P. Saqqara 27, 13 (for the reading, see Smith and Tait 1983, pp. 199 and 206, n. as; Zauzich 2000b, p. 30).<sup>ff</sup> Unpublished text (reading by Quack, personal communication).<sup>gg</sup> P. Carlsberg 425, 197 (for the reading, see Zauzich 2000b, pp. 30, 39, and 50–51 n. 197).<sup>hh</sup> For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 206 n. as.<sup>ii</sup> This is the semi-vowel *y*; for discussion, see Quack 1993, p. 147, no. 27.<sup>jj</sup> The reading of this name, attested both in damaged passages of P. Berlin 23537a+15662+23537d, x+5 and of an unpublished text, still poses problems.<sup>kk</sup> The name of this bird, literally meaning “one which raises/wags (its) tail,” reminds us of the name “wagtail” referring to small birds (genus *Motacilla*) with long tails which they wag frequently. However, an identification of the *fy-st* bird with the wagtail remains hypothetical.<sup>ll</sup> For references, see Gaudard 2009, p. 167 n. 17.<sup>mm</sup> Unpublished text (reading by Quack, personal communication) and P. Berlin 8278b, x+21.<sup>nn</sup> P. Saqqara 27, 7 (for the reading, see Smith and Tait 1983, pp. 199 and 203 n. ab, but Zauzich 2000b, p. 30, read *ksn*. However, a reading *knw* is not completely excluded [Quack, personal communication]).<sup>oo</sup> Designation of a swamp bird? Cf. *knw* in Erman and Grapow 1926–82, vol. 5, p. 52/6.<sup>pp</sup> For discussion, see Smith and Tait 1983, p. 203 n. ab.

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Ibis  
Istera  
pri-  
ma à  
Mer-  
curio  
inven-  
ta.

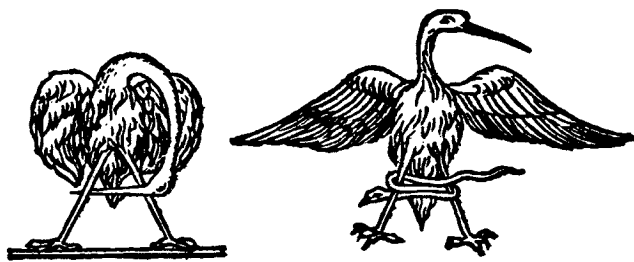


FIGURE 6.1. The ibis mistakenly understood as the source of the shape of the letter A (after Kircher 1636, p. 236)



FIGURE 6.2. The ibis as a model for clysters (after Valeriano Bolzanio 1602, p. 174)



FIGURE 6.3. An ibis attacking a winged serpent (after Valeriano Bolzanio 1602, p. 174)

Interestingly, if one keeps only one of the possible positions for the letter *m*, the Egyptian alphabet consists of twenty-five letters, as already noted by Plutarch: “The number five forms a square of itself, which is the same number as the Egyptians have of letters and as the Apis had of years to live.”<sup>16</sup>

Quack noted that the order of the ancient Egyptian alphabet followed, with some variations, that of the South Semitic alphabet, which originated in the Arabian Peninsula. By comparison, he deduced that the latter was apparently the older.<sup>17</sup> Note that the alphabetical order used in modern Egyptological publications was established by scholars in the nineteenth century and does not follow that of the original Egyptian alphabet.<sup>18</sup>

The practice of designating the letters of the alphabet by a bird name seems to have survived in Coptic. The Coptic alphabet derives from the Greek alphabet, to which the Egyptians added six letters<sup>19</sup> coming from Demotic characters, namely,  $\text{Ⲁ}$  (Shai),  $\text{Ⲃ}$  (Fai),  $\text{Ⲅ}$  (Hori),  $\text{Ⲇ}$  (Djandja),  $\text{Ⲉ}$  (Kyima), and  $\text{Ⲋ}$  (Ti), to express sounds not represented in Greek. It is worth noting that the names of at least some of these additional Coptic letters seem to be best explained as bird names:<sup>20</sup>  $\text{Ⲇ}$  (Djandja), for example, reminds us of *dn(e)dn(e)* “swan,” and  $\text{Ⲉ}$  (Kyima) of *kymy* “hen” or “black ibis.”

Plutarch’s misstatement that the Egyptians did “write the first of their letters with an ibis” gave rise to some misconceptions. Indeed, the Italian theologian Giovanni Pierio Valeriano Bolzanio (1477–1558 or 1560),<sup>21</sup> in his *Hieroglyphica sive De sacris Aegyptiorum, aliarumque gentium literis commentarii*, came to believe that the first letter of the Egyptian alphabet was depicted by an ibis.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, referring to a passage in which Plutarch states that “the ibis when hatched

... forms an equilateral triangle by the position of its outspread feet and bill,”<sup>23</sup> this author compares the first letter of the Egyptian alphabet, which according to him looks like a triangle,<sup>24</sup> with the letter A of the Greek and Latin alphabets.<sup>25</sup> In his turn, in his *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus*, the seventeenth-century German Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (1601 or 1602–1680), while discoursing on the history of the letter A and citing passages from Plutarch<sup>26</sup> and Valeriano Bolzanio,<sup>27</sup> tries to explain how the shape of that letter depicts an ibis.<sup>28</sup> In order to support his demonstration, he adds two representations of the letter A as an ibis, accompanied by the legend “*Ibis litera prima à Mercurio inventa*”<sup>29</sup> (fig. 6.1).

In the left-hand illustration, the ibis stands legs apart, forming the main shape of the letter, while the bird’s beak forms its horizontal bar. In addition to being based on the Plutarch quote already cited by Valeriano Bolzanio, this illustration also reminds us of another one used by the latter (fig. 6.2) when describing a passage from Aelian, who in his *De natura animalium* reports that “The Egyptians assert that a knowledge of clysters and intestinal purges is derived from no discovery of man’s, but they commonly affirm that it was the Ibis that taught them this remedy.”<sup>30</sup>

In the right-hand illustration of figure 6.1, the horizontal bar of the letter A is formed this time by a snake which, as noted by Aufrère (2009, p. 43), alludes to another of Aelian’s statements also illustrated by Valeriano Bolzanio (fig. 6.3) and according to which the ibis was famous for protecting Egypt from snakes: “The Black Ibis does not permit the winged serpents from Arabia to cross into Egypt, but fights to protect the land it loves, while the other kind encounters the serpents that come down the Nile when in flood

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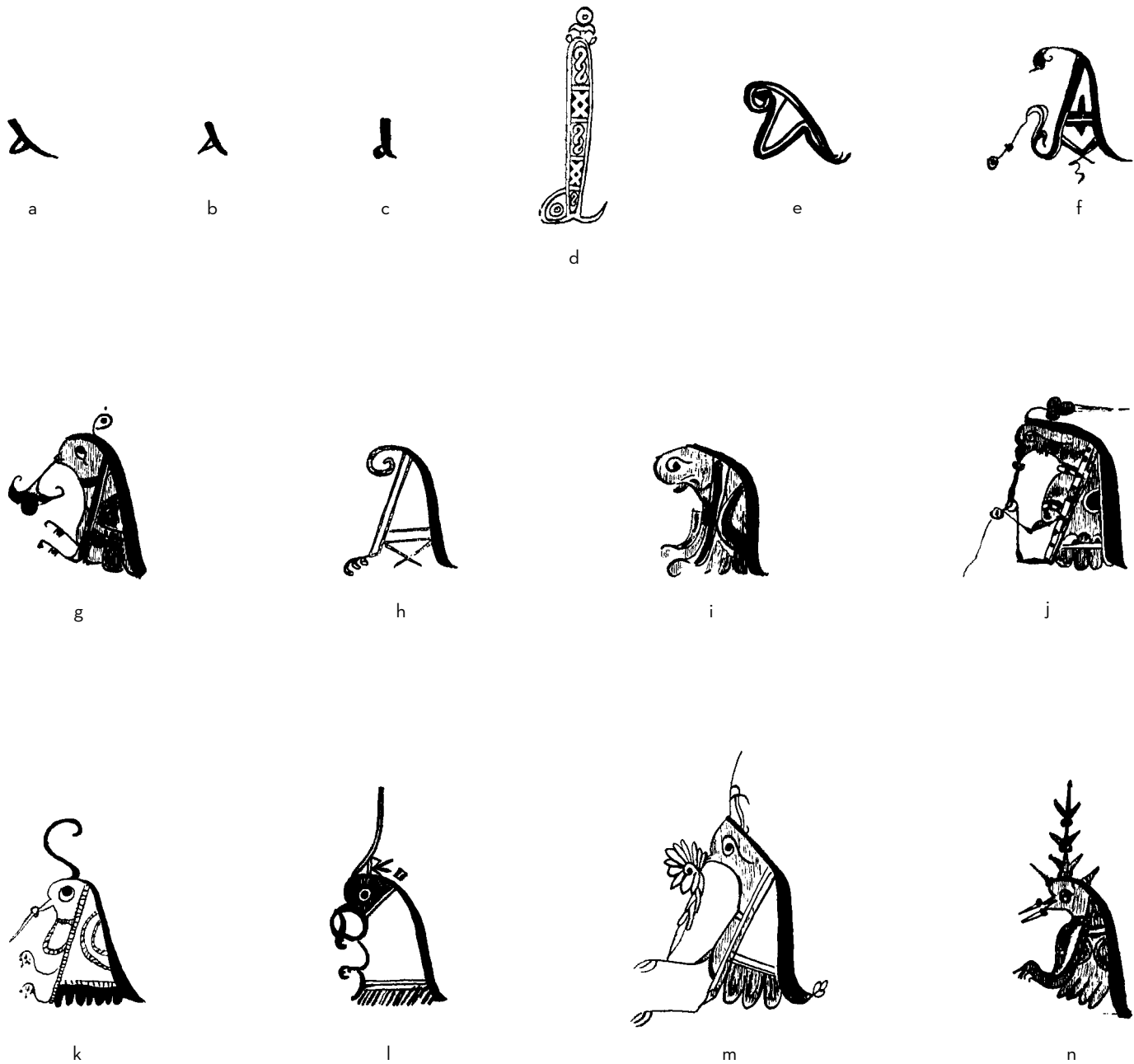



FIGURE 6.4. Evolution of the letter  $\lambda$  into a bird

- a. Thompson 1924, fol. 50 (ca. AD 300) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:1)
- b. BM Codex Alexandrinus, fol. 81b (fifth century AD) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:3)
- c. BM Ms. Or. 5000, fol. 73b (sixth century AD) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:5)
- d. Pierpont Morgan Ms. 588, fol. 8 vo. (AD 842) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:7)
- e. BM Ms. Or. 1320 (AD 1006) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:9)
- f. Ms. of the Monastery of St. Macarius, Wadi Natrun (twelfth-thirteenth century AD) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:10)
- g. BM Codex Add. 5997 (AD 1273) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:11)
- h. Vienna, Cod. Copt. 6, fol. 94 (ca. AD 1300) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:13)
- i. Vienna, Cod. Copt. 9, fol. 15 ro. (AD 1547) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:14)
- j. Vienna, Cod. Copt. 10, fol. 14 ro. (AD 1828) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:15)
- k. Vienna, Cod. Copt. 10, fol. 107 vo. (AD 1828) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:16)
- l. Vienna, Cod. Copt. 10, fol. 69 vo. (AD 1828) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:17)
- m. Vienna, Cod. Copt. 10, fol. 252 vo. (AD 1828) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:18)
- n. Date uncertain (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35:19)

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and destroys them. Otherwise there would have been nothing to prevent the Egyptians from being killed by their coming.”<sup>31</sup>

Although this does not relate to the use of birds to name the letters of the Egyptian alphabet, noteworthy is the fact that in Coptic manuscripts from about the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, the letter  $\Delta$  (alpha) could be depicted as a bird when placed in an initial position, for example, at the beginning of the first word of one of the first lines of a text (fig. 6.5) or in the Christian symbol  $\Delta \Omega$  (alpha-omega) used to refer to God.<sup>32</sup> Noticing this peculiarity, Schwartze (1843, p. 2106) already stated: “I have come across the picture of the bird in Coptic manuscripts only for the ‘A.’ Whether the latter contains a reminiscence of the hieroglyphic   $\beta$ , I leave the question entirely open.” As noted by Cramer (1957, p. 139), although Schwartze’s idea seems odd, it should not be completely discounted since in Armenian and Georgian manuscripts the figure of the bird, which occurs in a form similar to that found in Coptic texts, is used only as border decoration. The examples in figure 6.4 illustrate some stages in the evolution of the letter  $\Delta$  into a bird.<sup>33</sup>

Note that in most cases the shape of the original letter  $\Delta$  (alpha) is still perfectly visible within the figure of the bird. Examples similar to that of figure 6.4:i are described by Cramer as “fish-birds” due to the shape of the head (Cramer 1957, pp. 140 and 144). Figure 6.5 displays ornithomorphic writings of the letter  $\Delta$  at the beginning of a word, namely,  $\Delta \Upsilon \text{MOY} \Upsilon$  “They called” (Perfect I), and  $\Delta \text{MHINI}$  “Come!” (Imperative pl.). These two examples also illustrate very well the fully developed bird shape of the letter  $\Delta$ .

In Coptic manuscripts, birds were also very commonly used as decoration and not only as letters.<sup>34</sup>

This popularity of birds in Egyptian script and culture can probably be attributed to the important role they played in religious beliefs.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> That is, “Lord of hieroglyphs.”

<sup>2</sup> On the fact that other gods such as Re, Shu, and Geb knew how to write, see Aufrère 2009, p. 42 n. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 59 (274 C–275 B); cf. also Plato, *Philebus* 18 B. For a similar tradition, as attested in the writings of other classical authors, see, e.g., Aufrère 2009, pp. 40–41.

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 9.3.2 (738 E); translation in Minar et al. 1969, p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> See Zauzich 2000a, pp. 151–52.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Kahl 1991; Quack 1993 and 1994; Tropper 1996; Zauzich 2000a and 2000b; Kammerzell 2001; Quack 2003; Altenmüller 2010, pp. 89–96; cf. also Vittmann 1998, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> See Buchberger 1986, cols. 1046–47.

<sup>8</sup> See Smith and Tait 1983, pp. 212–13; H. S. Smith 1975, p. 258.

<sup>9</sup> For the dating, see Quack 2003, p. 165, no. 4; Smith and Tait 1983, p. x.

<sup>10</sup> Transliteration and translation by Smith and Tait 1983, pp. 199, 208, and 209.

<sup>11</sup> Transliteration and translation by Smith and Tait 1983, pp. 199, 208, and 209. For the identification of the *benu*-bird with the heron, see, e.g., Smith and Tait 1983, p. 205 n. aj.

<sup>12</sup> These papyri, composed mainly in Demotic but also in hieroglyphs and hieratic, include P. Saqqara 27 (Ptolemaic, fourth-third century BC), P. Carlsberg 425+P. BM 10852+10856 (Ptolemaic, fourth-third century BC), P. Berlin 8278a, b, c+15662+15677+15818+23536+23537, a, b, c, d, e, f, g (Ptolemaic, dated year 35 [Ptole]my



FIGURE 6.5. Ornithomorphic writings of the letter  $\Delta$  at the beginning of a word. (a) Vienna, Cod. Copt. 3, fol. 82 vo. (AD 1486) (after Cramer 1957, fig. 35, top left); (b) Ms. Karcher 1, fol. 1 ro. (fifteenth-seventeenth century AD)

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VI = 147 BC), P. Bibliothèque nationale 215 vo., col. e (Ptolemaic), P. Cairo 30705 (Ptolemaic), P. Cairo 31169 vo. (Ptolemaic), P. Berlin 15709 vo. (late Ptolemaic or early Roman), the so-called “Sign Papyrus” from Tanis (Roman, first–early second century AD), P. Carlsberg 7 (Roman, second century AD), P. Carlsberg 43 (Roman, second century AD[?]), and P. Berlin 23861 (Roman). For discussion and references, see Quack 2003, pp. 164–66; Zauzich 2000b, pp. 27–30; Gaudard 2009, p. 166.

<sup>13</sup> For discussion, see Gaudard 2009, pp. 166–68.

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion, see Quack 2003, p. 168.

<sup>15</sup> References to the texts are given only for variant, problematic, or single attested writings of a letter name.

<sup>16</sup> Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 56 (374 A); translation in Griffiths 1970, p. 209. For discussion, see Quack 2003, p. 169; cf. Griffiths 1970, pp. 509–10.

<sup>17</sup> For further discussion, see Quack 1993, 1994, and 2003; cf. Altenmüller 2010, pp. 89 and 94.

<sup>18</sup> For discussion, see Vycichl 1990, p. 4; Steindorff 1892.



<sup>19</sup> Or seven or more, depending on dialect.

<sup>20</sup> For discussion, see Zauzich 2000a, pp. 152–54.

<sup>21</sup> Also known, among others, as Giovan Pietro della Fosse and Pierius Valerianus.

<sup>22</sup> See Valeriano Bolzanio 1602, pp. 175 and 507.

<sup>23</sup> Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 4.5.2 (670 C); translation in Clement and Hoffleit 1969, p. 355.

<sup>24</sup> Ironically, the shape of the first letter of the Egyptian alphabet, namely, *h*, looks indeed like a triangle when written in Demotic and somehow recalls the position of the ibis depicted in the left-hand illustration of figure 6.1:  (for hieroglyph  “reed shelter in fields,” see Gardiner 1957, p. 493, O4), but this is to be seen as pure coincidence.

<sup>25</sup> See Valeriano Bolzanio 1602, p. 507.

<sup>26</sup> Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 4.5.2 (670 C) and 9.3.2 (738 E); see above.

<sup>27</sup> Valeriano Bolzanio 1602, pp. 174 and 507.

<sup>28</sup> See Kircher 1636, pp. 235–36.

<sup>29</sup> That is, “Ibis, first letter invented by Hermes.”

<sup>30</sup> Aelian, *De natura animalium* 2.35; translation in Scholfield 1958, p. 133.

<sup>31</sup> Aelian, *De natura animalium* 2.38; translation in Scholfield 1958, p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Cramer 1964a, p. 48, fig. 39, and p. 50, fig. 45.

<sup>33</sup> For further examples of the ornithomorphic initial letter  $\alpha$  (alpha), see, e.g., Cramer 1964a, p. 45, fig. 33; Cramer 1964b, pls. 58, 67, 88; Leroy 1974, pls. 6, 25; Badawy 1978, p. 280, fig. 4.56.

<sup>34</sup> For discussion and examples, see, e.g., Cramer 1957, p. 127, fig. 10, p. 130, fig. 21; Cramer 1964a, pp. 51–52, p. 27, fig. 46, p. 45, fig. 32, p. 51, fig. 47, p. 53, fig. 48; Cramer 1964b, pls. 49, 53, 57, 76, 77, 87, 89; Leroy 1974, pp. 68, 70–71, and 76–85, pls. 2/1, 3/2, 8/1, 11/1–2, 12/1, 13/1, 14/1–2, 15/1–2, 17/2, 18/1–2, 19/1, 21/1–2, 22/1–2, 24, 25.



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