

THE HUMAN-HEADED BIRD FIGURE IN PAINTING FROM THE BRONZE AGE TO THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The avian humanoids always seemed like fantastical creatures that mediate between heaven and earth by having human and avian features together. They mostly referred to the souls lingering between the living and the divine. There are many types of them, and this paper is specifically concerned about the human-headed bird imagery; and how it is depicted in different ways and what are their symbolic meanings in many cultures. This specific imagery appeared in many different mythologies along history; such as, the 'Ba' in the Ancient Egyptian, 'Sirens' and 'Harpies' in the Greek and the Byzantium, the 'Humayun' in the Mesopotamian and perhaps in the Islamic too; and eventually, the 'Alkonost', the 'Sirin', and the 'Gamayun' in the Slavic mythology. An analytical comparative study of this imagery in different mythologies and in the paintings by different artists, such as P. Rubens, J. Pasch, V. Vasnetsov, and M. Vrubel; will be followed.

KEYWORDS

Ba; Siren; Harpies

Avian humanoids are different forms of human-bird/bird-human imagery, which took various forms and styles in cultures around the world such as, winged-human, bird-headed human, bird-headed and winged human, and finally the human-headed bird that is the main concern in this paper. Mostly, all those imageries hold the same main characteristics mixed between those of human beings and birds', bridging between the realms of heaven and earth. The Egyptian Ba was the soul bird of the deceased, while others have shown monstrous characteristics such as sirens and harpies, and others were perceived for good omen and prosperity such as the Gamayun and the Alkonost. This paper's main objective is to represent the different styles and meanings behind this type of imagery in an analytical comparative study, while representing its depiction in different ancient cultures, followed by artworks by a few painters in Europe and Russia; and this does not include figurines nor illustrations of books and posters with such a imagery that was clearly present along history.

1. THE EGYPTIAN BA (THE SOUL BIRD)

The appearance of avian humanoid hybrid creatures began to show up as the Bird-Goddess among many other female fertility figurines in Old Europe during the Neolithic period (ca.7000-3000 BCE), as they were believed to be good omens for fertility and prosperity (Gimbutas & Dexter, 2001, P. 38.). However, the Ancient Egyptian human-headed bird representation of the Ba bird could be considered as the oldest clear representation of this

specific combination among other predating Neolithic figurines from Old Europe and Ancient Egypt that were in the form of a human body with a beaked face.

The Ba (soul bird) is one part of the human spiritual constitution, beside the Ka (the vital force), *Shuyet* (the shadow) and another three parts (Hill, 2011). Although the Ba concept started in the old kingdom of Ancient Egypt, it only started to take shape in the new kingdom; as it was represented in a human-headed bird imagery that occasionally had arms as well (Zabkar, 1968, pp. 1 & 137). In (Fig. 1, p. 3), the mural shows a detail from the Theban Tomb TT 290 of the deceased *Irynefer*, from the 19th Dynasty (1295 – 1186 BC) in Egypt, where his portrait was depicted in the human head, as the portrait always personified the soul of the deceased despite his/her gender (Jacson, 2018, p. 34).

The historian *Lesley Jacson* wrote about the various representations of the *Ba*-bird, as they were usually depicted with the body of a falcon, as it resembled the deceased with Horus. She also added that the idea behind the *Ba*-bird's flight every morning and its return to the tomb in the evening is similar to the life of another species of birds - that might be a swallow - which used to nest in tombs. Overall, this resembled the journey of *Ra* the sun god to the *Duat* (afterlife) every night, where the reunification with Osiris precedes the sun's resurrection at dawn. Moreover, Jason explained how *Irynefer's* Ba looks like in (Fig. 1, p.3); where it was represented twice, once with folded wings with its back to the deceased shadow *Shuyet* besides a black filled circle that implies leaving the netherworld. In addition to another representation with widespread wings flying towards the shadow that implies returning to the tomb (Jacson, 2018, p. 32).

Both representations of the *Ba* in this mural appear like a young falcon in a small body with a pointed tail, with a side view of the head of *Irynefer* wearing a short hair wig and having a relatively short neck. In the upper image, the feathers of the widespread wings appear from the inside with linear repetitive divisions that divides the wings into feathers. Besides its horizontal divisions that creates parallel chromatic spaces, which begin with the shoulders in white, then blue, red, green, and followed by red again at the tips of some of the feathers from below. While the body itself acts as a vertical axis that mirrors the left and the right wings, the front of the body itself is also represented in a side view and colored with dark dots over a white background, and the back is in light yellow ochre with a pattern of pointed feather tips with thin black lines. In conclusion we can see the relation of the head to the vertical and the horizontal axes of this first image, is similar to the *Ankh* symbol in structure, which may likewise allude to the giving of life to *Shuyet* the shadow of the deceased. Then by looking at the image of the *Ba* bird below, the body seems different when the wings are aligned with the body. The left wing in view is also horizontally divided into colored spaces but with a dotted pattern instead of a linear one, and the whole body with the head lie on the same vertical axis. Generally, it is obvious that the detailed simplicity of the two-dimensional representation appears strongly in both images, which is a main characteristic of the ancient Egyptian art.

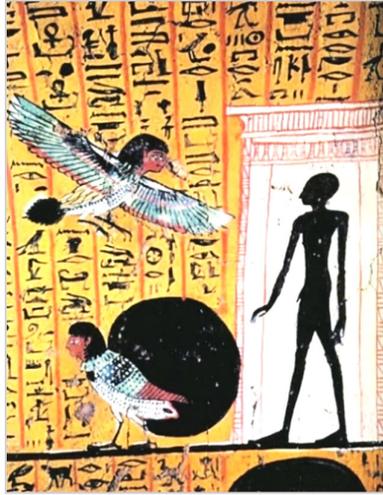


Figure 1, *The Shadow and two Ba Birds* (Wikimedia Commons: Soutekh67, 2014).

2. SIRENS AND HARPIES IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

Moving to another representation of the human-headed bird imagery, it is found that the *Ba* bird had a following resemblance in the Greek mythology as the sirens and harpies. Both appeared in different contexts and accordingly, were depicted in modeled sculptures, alone, or in scenes on ceramic plates and vases. During the Corinthian period, sirens were still depicted with men's and women's heads like the Egyptian *Ba* bird that necessarily represented the gender of the deceased. Then in later times, harpies and sirens were more likely represented having a woman's head or perhaps a woman's chest and arms as well, over a body of a bird. This overall representation seems more like the *Ba* bird than the Neolithic form of the *Bird Goddess* from Old Europe, but despite these similarities they still carry different meanings other than the Egyptian *Ba*, that we will find in the coming pages.

Generally, sirens were believed to be musical mythical creatures with human heads and thorax on the bodies of birds. They were famous in antiquity for their role in luring sailors to their death. They appeared in Homer's *Odyssey* trying with their sweet melodic rhymes to mesmerize Odysseus and his crewmen until they sail into the rocks for a fatal shipwreck, but Odysseus succeeds in overcoming such magic by asking his sailors to tie him up the ship's mast and to plug their ears with wax, look (Fig. 3, p. 5). Sirens also appeared in scenes on funerary monuments playing lyres and mourning the deceased (Siren, n.d.). They are often depicted with women's heads and upper body, however; in earlier times they appeared with men's or women's heads just like the Egyptian *Ba*, such as the bird with a bearded man's head, on the middle Corinthian plate from Boetia in (Fig. 2, p. 4).

In concept, the *Physiologus* texts which was a group of texts written by an unknown Greek author in Alexandria in the 2nd century AD. (Bestiary, n.d.), referred to sirens' luring voices, as the temptations of worldly pleasures that would trick the weak souled humans and make them totally lose their minds, and consequently the sirens would attack them and tear them into pieces. But despite that sirens are mythological creatures, *Aldrovandi*, an Italian naturalist in

the sixteenth century thought that sirens in real were nightingales with charming voices (Aldrovandus, n.d.).



Figure 2, Bearded siren. Plate, ca. 580–570 BC. Diam. 25 cm, Louvre (Wikimedia Commons: Cyrun, 2016).

On the Corinthian plate in (Fig. 2) above, an image of a siren with a bearded man's head. Here it's depicted with the same color of the plate in thin beige lines, and filled with black and dark purple colors in three different types of application: plain black, plain purple, and alternatively filled stripes with black and purple by the ends of the wings and tail. It is represented as having overlapped widespread wings, but the main tangential lines contouring the bird here form a smooth elliptical shape instead. This siren appears on its own surrounded with different sizes of flowers, and it will most likely refer to the funerary artefacts where sirens are depicted mourning the deceased souls.

On another artefact, a scene of *Odysseus* and his sailors on an attic red-figure clay vase from the Greek Archaic period, three sirens appear taking different positions, look (Fig. 3 p. 5) The one on the right is standing with its wings aligned with the body, the one in the middle flying with its wings spread backwards in an attacking posture; while the one on the left seems standing with its wings a bit spread in attempt to fly. Unlike the *Ba* bird, here the sirens are shown only in a single color with narrow black lines and dots defining the feathers and the texture details. Moreover, by analyzing the image of the siren in the middle, we identify the difference of the body proportions, where we find a longer neck that moves freely up and down, a curvier shoulder with a thicker wing, and a long wider feathery tail. Despite the type of bird that might be the original species behind that image, it was intended to be represented as a strong adult form. Besides, the widespread wings here overlap forming one unit. And by connecting the main tangential lines contouring the bird, we almost get an equilateral triangle creating a dynamic motion pointing downwards in an attacking posture.

Harpies are another Greek representation of the human-headed bird imagery, they look like sirens but mostly appear as birds of prey with female heads, chest and arms to carry off souls. (Harpy, 2009) The word originally comes from the Greek *Ἄρπυια* (Harpuia), which means snatchers. (Harpy, n.d.), and thus they appear in the legend of Jason and the Argonauts from

the Greco-Roman classical mythology, as disgusting monsters snatching food from the table of *Phineus*, the Thracian king, that were sent to him for his punishment for mistreating his children (Harpy, Mythology, 2019). However, in (Fig. 4) on the right side below, the British Museum shows a tomb frieze from the acropolis of Xanthus – in Turkey - in Asia Minor. The harpy sculpted here on that frieze does not seem any monstrous with its finely made hair and how it seems carrying the human figure delicately as a child. In conclusion, it seems that this type of imagery took different conceptual phases, where it first started in a bit similar way after the Ancient Egyptian Ba, by mourning the deceased's soul, then it was coined with punishment, and finally with fatal attraction. It is very clear that all these representations were associated with death in one way or another.



Figure 3: *Siren Vase*, 480–470 BCE, British Museum, London. (Siren, Definition, Legend, & History, 2019).



Figure 4: *Harpy from a tomb frieze*, c. 500 BC; the British Museum, Hirmer Fotoarchiv, Munich. (Harpy, mythology, 2019).

3. THE BABYLONIAN QUEEN OF THE NIGHT AND THE HUMAN-HEADED BIRD IMAGERY IN ISLAMIC ART.

Various similitudes of the Human-Bird imagery were present as the Mother Goddess and the Bird Fertility Goddess, between Crete, Cyprus, Syro-Hittite, and the Mesopotamian lands. One of those examples is the *Burney relief* or what's known as the *Queen of the Night*, made of fired clay, originally painted red on a black Background and is represented as a female human nude body, with wings and feet of a bird. This dates back to the time of Hammurabi's reign in the eighteenth century B.C.E. and archeologists have not decided yet whom exactly does it represent, but there are probabilities that it might be an older version of *Ishtar* the Mesopotamian Mother Goddess of fertility, or *Ereshkigal* the queen and guardian of the dead. Despite that this piece does not represent painting; it is important to mention that the idea of this hybrid was present in the Middle East early in history, look (Fig. 5, P. 6) (Mark, 2017).

Much later in thirteenth century, the Motif of the human-headed bird was also common in Islamic art with different variations, and although it might have been driven through several sources such as the depictions of the Ba bird on the Coptic textiles in Egypt by the 8th century

(Peck, 1980, pp. 65-66), or through Greek resources, in translations done by the Arabs that started in the Abbasid Caliphate (Jones, 2017), or through later influence of Persia and Central Asia; after all it appeared on Islamic artifacts in a totally different sense and its meaning can only be defined in context of each representation.



Figure 5: Burney Relief/ Queen of the Night, South Iraq, Babylonian, 18th century B.C.E., Height 49.5 cm, Width 37 cm, Thickness 4.8 cm, British Museum, London. (Nguyen 2012)



Figure 6: Fatimid Bowl with a Harpy. c. 1200-1250. The Jameel Gallery, case 2W. (V and A Collections, 2017)

It was defined by the Muslim Poet *Sadaqa b. Abu'l Qasim Shirazi* in the 14th century as birds that resemble peacocks with multicolored feathers, wings and claws, which have human heads and could speak like humans (Peck, 1980, pp. 65-66). This motif appeared in the Islamic world from Cordoba in the west to Samarqand in the east. It was shown as luster decoration on bowls during the Fatimid period in Egypt and in Syria that mostly depicted the royal themes and the court's joyful life. An example of that is a bowl with a human-headed bird, found at Tell Minis in Egypt that was the origin of the *mina'i* technique. This technique was the rarest of the Fatimid period during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Egypt and Syria, while its shining effect and outstanding imagery represents one of the best techniques in ceramic history (Invaluable, 2010).

The Fatimid bowl with a harpy in (Fig. 6) shown above on the right, was possibly made in Egypt or in Syria and the artist is unknown. It is made of earthenware and follows that technique of luster painting on an opaque white glaze. The brilliant decoration of the human-headed bird was executed with a free and fluid hand (V and A Collections, 2020). Olderr denoted that most probably it depicted an angel or souls of the faithful resting on the tree of life (Olderr, 2017, pp 30 & 31). The image here appears in a two-dimensional drawing as a bird with a man's head wearing a turban, with wide brows and almond shaped eyes, a pointed nose, thin lips, and a wide jawline. Unlike the earlier representations of human-headed birds that were shown in feathered bodies, the body in the example seems to be covered with details like Fatimid textiles that was characterized with decorative inscriptions and is wearing a necklace. The whole representation shows the luxury of the Fatimid period. The shape of the turban and the elegance

of the garments reminds us with the Hoopoe, the messenger of the prophet Solomon that spoke of knowledge that the prophet did not know about.

4. FIVE EXAMPLES OF HUMAN-HEADED BIRD IMAGERY IN PAINTING BETWEEN THE 17TH AND THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY.

Moving forward in history to discuss other representations of the human-headed bird imagery, we find from the seventeenth century the painting *The Persecution of the Harpies* by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) in (Fig. 7) below, where he portrays the scene that filled in as a preliminary sketch for a painting by Erasmus Quellinus (1607 – 1678), which is hung in the *Torre de la Parada*. One of the interpretations of that work was the expulsion of the night, or as angels chasing demonic spirits away (Museo Del Prado, n.d.). Here there are two types of avian humanoids painted in a realistic figurative style, the first that is the winged human bodies representing angels, and the other which concerns this paper's objective that is the human-headed birds in the upper right corner. In an ant's eye view, the birds are in pale monochromatic grades of sepia and the legs are depicted as the first to come in perspective to give the feeling of dull birds of prey. Besides the one on the left that is still inside the cadre shows having a female human chest; which reminds us with the imagery of harpies in the legend of Jason and the Argonauts.



Figure 7: P. P. Rubens: The Persecution of the Harpies, (1636 – 1637), Oil on Panel, H:14.4 cm x W: 14 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado (Museo Del Prado, n.d.).

Another representation of the human-headed bird imagery that is totally different in form and concept took place in the eighteenth century, which is the *Hönstavlan* or the 'Hen Picture' by the Swedish painter Johan Pasch (1706 -1769), (Fig. 8, p.8). It was commissioned by Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695 - 1770) to display for the first time within small private circles of initiates of a social order called the *Little Master's Academy* in a court party in 1747. The scene was some sort of a joke after an event during the summer of the former year, where Tessin imagined himself with the other ladies as a joyful rooster between a group of chicken who were excited

to see him. *Tessin* gave it to himself as a Christmas gift. Here the painting depicts six court ladies with *Tessin* in an event in a green field, in French Rococo style that *Pasch* was a pioneer to introduce it to Sweden (The Hen Picture, 2018). The ladies' fair skin tones and finely made hair on feathery chicken bodies are depicted, while *Tessin* himself is shown as a rooster in the Background on the left. To depict animal-headed people or human-headed animals was a fashion that came from France to Sweden (Johan Pasch, n.d.).



Figure 8: Johan Pasch: *Hönstavlan /The 'Hen Picture'* 1747, oil on canvas, 72.5 cm x88 cm, Framed: H: 93.5 cm x W: 109 cm, Depth: 6.5 cm. Collection of National Museum Stockholm, Sweden. (Nationalmuseum - The 'Hen Picture',2018)

By the end of the 19th century, the Russian painter *Viktor Vasnetsov* (1848–1926) also used the human-headed bird imagery, in three different forms and concepts based on Russian legends and folklore; which are *Sirin*, *Alkonost*, and *Gamayun*, the three heavenly birds with heads of maidens. Each of the three representations symbolizes a different concept, and before having a look at the paintings with the representation of each it is important to understand the differences between them.

First, *Sirin* is another variation of the Greek Siren, but its voice is considered as a reward to the virtuous few who hears it, instead of the siren's luring voice that leads the sailors to their death with their enchanting voices. But although it was considered as a heavenly bird of joy, it is still related to death as these voices make their listeners forget everything instantly and then die. It seems that the imagery entered the Russian folklore after the Persian, where the creature had a pretty girl's face on the body of a peacock with a long tail (Bane, 2016, p.293).

Then comes the *Alkonost* the bird of sorrow, the word comes originally from the Greek *άλκυών* (*Alkyón*) that means the kingfisher, which was an Alcyone maiden turned by the gods into a

sea bird that could control the winds and the waves of the sea while it nested during the winter solstice, according to a Greek myth. It was believed as a bird of paradise that is often depicted with *Sirin* (Halcyon, 2018).

Finally, the *Gamayun* bird, which is often depicted on its own known as a prophetic bird, it shows with black feathers and a woman's head living on an island near paradise; it symbolizes knowledge and wisdom. The *Gamayun* bird comes from a Persian origin that is the *Hamayun/Humayun* bird which promised a great fortune for whomever it sheds its shadow on (المصري، ٢٠٠٤، ص ١٥٢). However, the Russian *Gamayun* is perceived on the contrary by which, it is a mournful bird that screams out predictions of misfortune (Bane, 2016, p.132).

Eventually after knowing the differences between the concepts behind the human-headed birds in Egypt, Greece and in Russia; the coming paintings would be clearly explained. *Vasnetsov*. represented the three human-headed heavenly birds in a realistic style in the two following paintings. In (Fig. 9, p.10) below, he depicted *Sirin* and *Alkonost* in a painting entitled *Birds of Joy and Sorrow*, which shows the two creatures resting beside each other on a tree, moving in an emotional and lively way (Keating, 2016, p.285). The *Alkonost* with the dark loose hair and dark feathers on the left is having a sad portrait weeping the souls of the deceased. While *Sirin* with her light toned colorful feathers and brown hair on her back, seems to be chanting happily while moving her wings widely promising her listeners with joy. The painting's composition is divided into two vertical halves, which symmetrically compares the two concepts of joy and sorrow in a smooth dynamic motion led by the directions of the wings and eyes of both creatures.

Then in (Fig.10, p.10), *Vasnetsov* used the imagery of the human-headed bird in the painting entitled *The Bird Gamayun / The Prophetic Bird* in 1898. He also depicted it with a maiden's head and short brown hair that seems to be in a free fiery motion. Its pale strict face is looking forward with lips seeming to be speaking out a dark prophecy. The bird is standing on a bare tree that has a dynamic 'S' shape in the center of a warm colored space that appears to be a vast empty lake by sunset. With very few traces of greenery giving an overall sense of fear and sadness, there is a blooming flower above the head of the *Gamayun* and another three white lotuses that are about to bloom underneath it, which probably indicates purity and clairvoyance of the prophetic bird.



Figure 9: Viktor Vasnetsov: *Sirin and Alkonost Birds of Joy and Sorrow*. 1896. Oil on canvas
H: 133xW: 250 cm, Russian Museum. (Bakharev, 2005).



Figure 10: Viktor Vasnetsov: *The bird Gamayun / The prophetic bird*, 1898, oil on canvas,
H: 214 cm x W: 135 cm, Daghestan museum of fine arts. (Kazakh, 2016)

Later in the early twentieth century, there was another hybrid creature that was sometimes represented as a human-headed bird, which is the *Swan Maiden*. According to a Russian folk tale *Tale of Tsar Saltan - The Swan Princess* and other various European ones as well, it is a swan that could completely transform into a human and back to a swan (Ashliman (Ed.), 2013). The *Swan Princess* is the courageous woman from the *Tales of Tsar Saltan* by the Russian poet *Alexander Pushkin* (1799 – 1837), inspired by the imagery of old Slavic legends. In the year 1900, the Russian composer *N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov* (1844 – 1908) wrote a drama with a similar

name inspired by *Pushkin's* fairytale, and *Mikhail Vrubel* (1856-1910) who was a praised proto-symbolist artist, designed its performance. Although the role of the swan princess was played by his wife *Nadezhda Zabela-Vrubel* (1868–1913), he did not depict her portrait in *The Swan Princess* painting, (Fig. 11, p.11). The princess here was showed in her dual nature that represented two opposite factors with the whole scene, the gloomy dim light and cold water and her attempt to move in the direction towards heaven. The swan was symbolic for inspiration that transcends the spirit besides guiding it to the dark knowledge of life (Tretyakov Gallery, 2020).

Kathleen Keating, explained that *Vrubel* was attempting to catch the magnificent moment of the swan's transformation into a lady by the last rays of sunset, while taking a glance over her shoulder at the person who is watching her by the side of the lake. The soft feathery edges of her overall silhouette make her appearance very delicate and ethereal, as though she may blur away into the fog just like a soul. The swan's body appears like a rich feathery gown and a veil adorned with silver lace by the edges, and the transformation seems as if the lady is taking off her gown. Besides, there is a bejeweled silver crown over her head, known as the *kokoshnik* that *Keating* believes that is there to emphasize the Russian identity. Her long hair, pale face, and wide eyes shining with tears, and her arm's gesture stress on her lady's perfection having beauty, compassion, elegance, sensitivity and delicacy, which connects her with the symbolist concept of the "eternal femininity" that was in favor in the beginning of the twentieth century. (Keating, 2016, p. 285)



Figure 11: The Swan Princess: Mikhail Vrubel, 1900, Oil on canvas, H: 142.5 cm × W: 93.5 cm. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia. INVENTORY NUMBER F-42. (Skripnik, 2019).

Consequently, by passing through the analysis of the different types of human-headed bird imagery from the Bronze Age to the early twentieth century, it is important to summarize the similarities and the differences between them. As we have seen earlier, the *Ba* bird example

from Irynefer's tomb from the bronze age in Ancient Egypt, depicted the soul after death as a young falcon's body with the deceased head, despite the gender if it's a man or a woman, in a colorful and minimalist two-dimensional design. The *Ba* in return to the tomb with its wide-spread wings has two perpendicular axes, this resembles the shape of the ankh and might be intentional as for giving life back to the deceased. Similarly, sirens in ancient Greece were also depicted in minimalist two – dimensional designs but with two to three colors only and were often depicted with wide-spread wings overlapping each other giving a dynamic sense for the overall shape. Sirens imagery were either for mourning the deceased like the one on the Corinthian plate with the *Bearded Siren*, or in other terms symbolized worldly temptations like the sirens on the *Siren Vase*.

Later in the eighth century, the human-headed bird imagery was introduced to Islamic art through different sources like the *Ba* on Coptic textiles in Egypt, the Greek sirens and harpies during the great movement of translation of the Greek philosophy into Arabic, or through the Babylonian Queen of the Night deity from southern Iraq. Despite that, the *Fatimid Bowl with a Harpy* represented the imagery in a totally different sense. It appears in a two-dimensional drawing as a bird with a man's head wearing a turban and dressed in luxurious ornaments that were characteristic of the Fatimid period, unlike the earlier representations that were shown in feathered bodies. Most probably it was to resemble the hoopoe messenger of the prophet Solomon beholding knowledge and wisdom.

Then by moving to the seventeenth century, we find that *Rubens* depicted this imagery from Greek mythology in *The Persecution of the Harpies* as birds with female upper body and heads. He chose them to appear in a dull monochromatic and three-dimensional representation, besides using aerial perspective to emphasize their ugly appearance from below while in flight.

Further in the eighteenth century in Sweden, *Pasch* introduced the French rococo style, and in his painting the *Hen Picture*, he represented the human-headed bird imagery in a detailed realistic way that depicts the court ladies in hen's bodies and finely made hair. The whole representation is an echo of the joyous *Fête Galante* in the French Rococo. Moreover, *Vasnetsov* presented the human-headed bird imagery, in the nineteenth century in three different symbols of heavenly birds that are: *Sirin*, *Alkonost*, and *Gamayun* the prophetic bird. In his paintings *Sirin and Alkonost Birds of Joy and Sorrow* and the *Gamayun* he mastered the realistic technique while emphasizing the emotional aspect, which was characteristic of the romantic art in Russia at the time. Conceptually, those three heavenly creatures of the Russian traditions were originally other variations of older representations from other neighboring traditions. It was found that the Greek siren is the older version of both *Sirin* and *Alkonost*, while *Hamayun* the Persian mythological bird is the older version of the *Gamayun*. However, those original versions got mixed with the Russian folklore along time, which was reflected in appearances and meanings of the newer versions. Each of the three creatures became a source of a different type of prophecy. And finally, *Vrubel's* painting in the early twentieth century that is *The Swan Princess*, was the last example of human-headed bird imagery in this paper. This symbol was present in different fairytales around Europe and Russia, where the swan was symbolic of the inspiration that guides the spirit to transcendence

through encountering the secrets of life. This topic was interesting for *Vrubel* as a symbolist, where he could combine the realistic with the imaginary in a perfect way.

Generally, the avian humanoids imagery appeared in different places around the old world, where various traces were found in Old Europe, Ancient Egypt, the Middle East, and Central Asia, but the human-headed bird imagery in specific was a visual metaphor that took various meanings in different traditions. Those represented in the old civilizations referred to some religious metaphysical meaning, while in the Islamic Fatimid art it might have inherited the original shape but certainly not the concept. Then by the beginning of the eighteenth century, details in various forms took place, and meanings changed according to traditional fairytales and folklore around Europe and Russia; despite that the origins of most of these varieties go back to the Greek Sirens and Harpies, which originally belong to the Ba bird in ancient Egypt. The researcher advises further research in following the historical origins of any symbol for artists to use in their artwork in delivering new rich aesthetics and content.

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شكل الطائر برأس إنسان في التصوير من العصر البرونزي وحتى أوائل القرن العشرين. THE HUMAN-HEADED BIRD FIGURE IN PAINTING FROM THE BRONZE AGE TO THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY.

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الملخص

شكل الإنسان - الطائر كان دوما مصدر إلهام للعديد من الثقافات حول العالم، فأشكاله تحمل صفات تجمع مشتركة لتقوم بدور الوسيط بين العوالم الأثيرية في السماوات والعوالم المادية في الأرض. هذا اتخذ العديد من التراكيبات، وعلى سبيل المثال وليس الحصر؛ الإنسان المجنح، الإنسان برأس طائر، أو الإنسان المجنح برأس طائر. هذا البحث معني بنوع واحد فقط وهو شكل جسم الطائر برأس إنسان. ظهر هذا الشكل في مختلف الفنون؛ لكن هذا البحث يهدف إلى تقديم نماذج من أشكال الطائر برأس إنسان الموجودة في العديد من أعمال التصوير منذ العصر البرونزي في مصر القديمة، والرسم على الخزف الإغريقي، ثم مروراً بالفن الإسلامي، والروكوكو، والرومانتيكية، وحتى الرمزية في مطلع القرن العشرين في روسيا. فيقوم البحث بالتحليل والمقارنة بين طرق الرسم والتصوير المختلفة، وبين ما يرمز إليه الشكل حسب الثقافة التي ينتمي إليها. وتقع أهمية هذا البحث في معرفة تأثير الحضارات القديمة على الثقافات التي تليها ومدى اختلاف الشكل والمضمون للرموز التي كانت مصدر إلهام لها.

يعرض البحث في الجزء الأول طائر البالمصور على جدار مقبرة إرينفر، ويوضح مدى بساطة وإتقان التصميم وارتباطه برمزية الحياة والبعث في العقيدة المصرية القديمة. ثم تم الانتقال في الجزء الثاني إلى طائري السيرين والهاربي في الأساطير الإغريقية، وتم توضيح أوجه التشابه والاختلاف مع طائر البالمصري في المعنى والتصميم. الجزء الثالث عرض نموذجاً من الفن الفاطمي يتناول هذا الشكل بطريقة تتم عن غنى وفخامة هذه الحقبة. ثم في الجزء الرابع تم عرض خمسة نماذج من أعمال المصورين من القرن السابع عشر وحتى مطلع القرن العشرين، فيبدأ هذا الجزء بعرض أسلوب الفنان ب. روبنز في تصوير طيور الهاربي والتعبير عن مظهرها القبيح في أسطورة (جاسون والمغامرين) اليونانية وذلك في لوحة (طرده طيور الهاربي). ثم قدم البحث لوحة (صورة الدجاج) للفنان السويدي ي. باش من القرن الثامن عشر، والتي اتبع فيها أسلوب الروكوكو الفرنسي الذي يعبر عن المظاهر الاحتفالية في تصوير بعض السيدات المرموقات في شكل طيور الدجاج برؤوس سيدات منمقة. بعدها يعرض البحث عملين للمصور الروسي ف. فاسنيتسوف من القرن التاسع عشر، حيث يقوم بتقديم ثلاث نماذج من شكل الطائر برأس إنسان مستوحاة من الفلكلور الروسي الذي يعتبر الجنة موطن هذه الطيور الثلاثة. أتقن فاسنيتسوف في لوحة (سيرين والكونوست طائري السعادة والأسى) ولوحة (جامايون/الطائر النبوي) التصوير بشكل واقعي مع إبراز الجانب العاطفي الذي كان سمة للفن الرومانسي في روسيا في ذلك الوقت. وأخيراً، يتناول البحث لوحة (الأميرة البجعة) للفنان الروسي م. فرويل في أوائل القرن العشرين، لتقديم آخر نموذج في هذا البحث بأسلوب المدرسة الرمزية. فقد كانت البجعة رمزاً للإلهام وسمو الروح موجوداً في العديد من القصص الخيالية في أنحاء أوروبا وروسيا.

نتج البحث عن أن ظهور هذا الشكل بمعانيه المختلفة في الحضارة المصرية القديمة وفي الأساطير الإغريقية كان له مدلولاً عقائدياً بالرغم من الاختلافات الرمزية. لكن هذا الشكل في الفن الفاطمي ابتعد في الهيئة والمضمون تماماً عما سبقه. أما بداية من القرن الثامن عشر فأصبحت الأشكال تختلف في تفاصيلها ومعانيها باتباع القصص الخيالية والتراث الشعبي في أوروبا وروسيا بالرغم من رجوع أصول معظم هذه التنويعات إلى طيور السيرين والهاربي الإغريقية ومن قبلها طائر البالم. وتتضح الباحثة بالمزيد من البحث في الأصول التاريخية لأي رمز لتوفير المادة المناسبة للفنانين لإبداع أعمالهم وتقديم جماليات ومحتوى فني غني وجديد مبني على التراث.

الكلمات المفتاحية

باء؛ السيرين؛ الهاربي