

“His Horses are like Falcons”: War Imagery in Ramesside Texts

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A characteristic feature of the historical military texts at Medinet Habu¹ is a profusion of rhetorical language² in which the king, his troops and the enemy are figuratively likened to various animals, deities and both animate and inanimate objects through the use of similes. While these similes usually present no obstacle for the translator,³ the interpretation of their significance and precise value is often a matter for deeper consideration. The difficulty lies in the ambiguity of the intention of the author as well as the uncertainty inherent in our imperfect knowledge of Egyptian cultural associations and how these are expressed linguistically in this royal ideological context. Nonetheless, concentrated analyses of the texts may allow us to gather evidence in order to draw some reasonable conclusions.

The imagery of the falcon

This case study considers one particular phrase in the Year 5 inscription at Medinet Habu involving the imagery of the falcon:

(1) KRI V 22.9 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Great inscription of Year 5: 24



ssm.wt=f mi bik.w m33=sn hp.wt [...]

His horses are like falcons when they see small birds

This phrase has been interpreted by Grapow as emphasizing the “Schnelligkeit”, the speed, of the horses.⁴ Though Grapow presents no argument, his conclusion seems

1 For the texts, see Epigraphic Survey 1930 Plates 1–54; Epigraphic Survey 1932 Plates 55–113; and KRI V 8–113.

2 See the now outdated, albeit colourfully expressed, interpretations in Wilson 1932 and especially Wilson 1928/29.

3 Edgerton – Wilson 1936.

4 Grapow 1924 90.

reasonable, given the nature of the falcon's attack: it soars through the air at a height until it catches sight of its prey. In a striking action known as "stooping", it swoops suddenly and can reach speeds estimated at more than 160 km/h.⁵ However, an analysis that takes into account vocabulary, phraseology, context and the mechanisms of the simile may yield some more precise insights.

The text accompanying this line can be considered in order to establish a context:

- (2) KRI V 22.8–11 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Great inscription of Year 5: 24
*mḥfy.wt=f wdn(.w) [...] =sn mi k3.w ḥr[=sn] [...] ḥr b3.wy ssm.wt=f mi bik.w
 m33=sn ḥp.wt [...] [iw]=w ḥrr(.w) mi m3i šḥnš(.w) ḥnd(.w) snn.yw šḥm.w mi
 Ršp.w*

His infantry are heavy [of voice], (their) [...] like bulls, [they] being ready (for battle) [...] upon the battlefield. His horses are like falcons when they see small birds [...] They roar like lion(s), agitated and enraged. The chariot riders are powerful like Resheps⁶...

We can immediately agree with the classification given to this section by Barbara Cifola in her structural analysis of this text: *D2 'f! – military sphere (= king's military qualities); Egyptian troops; expansion*.⁷ As is characteristic of the texts at Medinet Habu, the qualities and circumstances of the participants are rhetorically couched in anticipation of or even as an alternative to a description of battle.

Our phrase is the least explicit of its context: the king's troops are roaring, those which are likened to bulls are "ready", another group, lost in the lacuna, (or perhaps even the horses again) are "agitated and enraged", and the charioteers are "powerful". No adjective is given for the falcons. It is clear from the context that the horses take on a quality of the falcons through the simile, but exactly which quality is intended is not specified.

The analysis of the phrase should hence centre on the simile of the falcon and sets this paper the goal of determining its precise meaning. Unfortunately, there are no exact phraseology parallels, though the consideration of vocabulary yields at least one fruitful avenue of investigation. The word *ḥp.wt*, interpreted up to now as "small birds",⁸ is only attested at Medinet Habu and serves as a distinctive marker for this usage of the falcon imagery. The attestations, in addition to the one already cited, are:

- (3) KRI V 60.13 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Great inscription of Year 11: 4
gm=sn ḥm=f mi.tt bik [ntr.y] nšny(.w) m33.n=f ḥp.wt

They found that his majesty was like a [divine] falcon, raging, he having seen small birds.

- (4) KRI V 17.8 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, First Lybian War scenes: King receives trophies of victory

5 Perrins – Middleton 1993 108 and the diagram on 109.

6 Note the plural. See Edgerton – Wilson 1936 24, n. 25 d.

7 Cifola 1988. See also Cifola 1991.

8 Wb. III 258. 1; Edgerton – Wilson 1936 16, amongst others.

iw=i m-s3=sn mi bik ntr.y gmḥ.n=f hp.wt hr kr.t

I was after them like a divine falcon, he having beheld small birds at a height.⁹

- (5) KRI V 113.11 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Hunting scene: The king hunts desert game

ptpt ʿw.t [ʿk] im=w mi bik hr gmḥ hp.wt hwi(.w) m iwn.w hr s.t=sn mi ish nfr.t
 who crushes wild cattle, who enters among them like a falcon catching sight of small birds, they being beaten into heaps in their places like the mowing down of grain.

- (6) KRI V 93.12 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Triumph scene: Welcoming speech of Amun

dī=i m33=sn hm=k mi bik ntr.y ʿk m hp.wt ptpt=f hh hfn.w

I cause that they see your majesty like a divine falcon who has entered among the small birds, he crushing a million and hundreds of thousands.

- (7) KRI V 44.8 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Second Lybian war scenes: King binds captives

sw mi Bʿl m 3.t nšny.w=f mi bik m hp.wt šf.w

He is like Baal at the time of his raging, like a falcon among small birds and small fowl.

- (8) KRI V 33.8 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Sea Peoples sea battle: Speech of the king to his officers

tw=i mi bik m-hnw hp.wt bw h3i.n ʿn.t=i m tp=sn

I was like a falcon in the midst of small birds, my talon not loosening (its clutch) upon their head(s).

- (9) KRI V 30.6 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Sea Peoples land battle: King and army in land battle

mšʿ.w=f mi.tt k3.w hr.w hr b3.wy ssm.wt=f mi bik.w m-hnw h[p.wt] n hr{=f}<n> psd.t pd.t

his troops are like bulls, ready upon the battlefield, and his horses are like falcons in the midst of small [birds] befo<re> the Nine Bows

These citations are drawn from two types of royal texts: the so-called “Great Inscriptions”, which have a pseudo-historical narrative core, and the shorter, more rhetorical texts, which accompany the various representations of the campaigns. In terms of vocabulary, phrasing and usage the texts represent a unity, and no distinction is made for the purposes of this paper.¹⁰

When the attestations are considered, several observations can be made about the word *hp.wt*. While it is always used with reference to the king or, as an extension of his power, his horses, lexical and phraseological differences are obvious – only the

9 Cf. Edgerton – Wilson 1936 16 n. 46b for the interpretation of this word as *krr.t*, “hole”.

10 Note the way in which Israeli 1998 271–272 has employed the distinction. See also Spalinger 1988 107 n. 2 for the justification for differentiation on the grammatical level.

words *mi bik* are always present – while the similarity of imagery represents a common factor. Yet there is little indication as to the specific meaning of this imagery.

The structure of comparison

All of the attestations cited above constitute a comparison between two entities and hence fall under the designation “simile”. Although the nature of similes is complex, it will suffice for the purposes of this paper to simplify matters somewhat and declare the relationship between the two participants to be one of sender and receiver. One entity (the receiver, or referent) takes on a characteristic of another (the sender, or relatum¹¹) and the transmission moves in one direction only; in this case, the referent is always presented first and the relatum always introduced by the preposition *mi*. While the referent is always the subject of its clause,¹² *mi* + relatum form either the predicate of an adverbial sentence or an adverbial complement.¹³

In the consideration of any comparison there is a great deal of variation in the amount of similarity able to be interpreted between the two entities involved. Nonetheless, we can distinguish here between two types of comparison: those with and those without a *tertium comparationis* (henceforth *tertium*).¹⁴ Those which do not possess a *tertium* establish a relationship of comparison between objects or entities that have no prior relationship. Another class of similes, in addition to establishing a comparison relationship, possess a *tertium*; that is to say, there is a third concept, characteristic or entity with which both relatum and referent possess individual and sometimes discrete relationships. This “common ground” forms the link between often otherwise unrelated relata and referents and often constitutes a determining factor in the selection of the content of a simile.

The characterisation of any given simile as either in possession of a *tertium* or not is, it must be said, a particularly interpretive process – especially so in the Egyptian context, where the intention of the author is so very often unclear. Furthermore, the associations drawn between any two objects are often, if not always, culturally specific and it is very difficult to declare confidently that any Egyptian simile *does not* possess a *tertium*. Furthermore, even when one can be identified, it is again difficult to assert whether it was intended by the author or merely constitutes a happy coincidence.

Nonetheless, the application of this understanding of the functioning of similes suggests a preliminary elucidation of the line which forms the case study of this paper

11 The terms referent and relatum are borrowed from Miller 1993 partic. 371–375. The contributions in Ortony 1993 are useful for defining the nature of the simile.

12 Excepting KRI V 93.12, though its context is more formulaic; cf. KRI I 26–7 and Urk. IV 614.13–618.3

13 See the discussion in Bürgle 2000 partic. 21 and 26–28.

14 See Grapow 1924 10–14; Bürgle 2000 (and the references given therein) and again Ortony 1993.

and its surrounding similes (KRI V 22.8–11). One characteristic of this part of the text (and indeed of Ramesside royal monumental inscriptions) is that the troops are freely though often figuratively described. In our case, they form a comparison relationship with various animals (bulls, falcons, lions) and a goddess (Reshep) through the mechanism of the simile. In addition, a *tertium* can be found in the king. He at once owns the troops and can also claim possession of the animals and goddess, since their figurative use is closely associated with royal ideological imagery. Indeed, it is through this *tertium* that both the content of the imagery is determined and the extension of the power of the king through these agents is recognized and manifested; i.e. that the content of the imagery is taken from the royal context highlights the connection of the troops to the king.

These considerations form the background to the analyses of the falcon imagery.

The attack of the falcon

There are two variations of imagery represented: the falcon prior to its attack, which will be dealt with later, and the attack of the falcon, which is presently under consideration.¹⁵

The objective of this analysis is to clarify the sense of the imagery and to this end further parallels must be sought. One particularly distinct feature in the examples given is in KRI V 93.12–13: *ʕk*, “to enter” as either an adjectival perfective participle describing *bik* or an Old Perfective of a verb of movement forming the predicate of the sentence; both options express a completed action and consider (implicitly, in the case of the participle, or explicitly, in the case of the Old Perfective) the state resulting from the movement. This harmonises well with the other examples in presenting the falcon as already amongst its prey, fighting. Thus *m(-hnw)* can be considered to be an abbreviation of *ʕk m(-hnw)* in this context.

This phrase, *ʕk m* (or *ʕk m-hnw*) is to be understood as the charge into battle and is characteristic for this military context. It is found at Medinet Habu as well as in historical inscriptions of the predecessors of Ramses III, for example Ramses II and Seti I. These examples show that the sense is consistent, though variation flourishes. The king (or his agents) can “charge into” many things:

(10) KRI I 12.3 – Seti I, first Beth-Shan stela

ʕh3.wty kni m hr-ib p3 sk.w B3st.t shm.t m ʕh3 ʕk m wm.t n(w) St.tyw iri sn m hdb.yw

Valiant fighter in the midst of the battle; powerful Bastet in battle, who enters into the thick of Asiatics, who makes them into heaps

(11) KRI II 141.4 – Ramses II, Kadesh reliefs: King inspecting booty

15 The phrases included under the first are: KRI V 93.12–13; 44.8; 33.8; 30.6.

nsw ꜥni m hr.w n(n) wn iri n=f sn.wy ꜥꜥ m ꜥš3.t n(.t) ḥ3s.wt nb.wt iri.t(w)=sn m ꜥbꜥb.wt

A king valiant in battle, there being none who acts as an equal to him; who enters into the multitudes of all foreign lands, they being made into heaps

- (12) KRI II 165.1 – Ramses II, Undated Karnak War scenes: King slays defenders of a fort

ꜥni sw r ḥfn.w dmd(.w) r dbꜥ.w hr pg3 wr ph.ty ꜥꜥ m ꜥš3.t nn ꜥḥꜥ r-ḥ3.t=f
He is brave against hundreds of thousands united, and against tens of thousands upon the battlefield; great of power, who enters into multitudes, without there being one who (can) stand against him.

- (13) KRI V 57.8 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Second Lybian War prologue text
ḥt ḥḥ šhrꜥ ḥḥ.wy mn ib ꜥꜥ m ḥfn.w k3 rnpi ph.ty m sk.w mi Bꜥl ḥft nšny=f
who laughs at a million, and regards two million as nothing; firm of heart, who charges among hundreds of thousands, young bull, powerful in battle like Baal when he rages.

While there are a great many attestations of this sort displaying many nuances with a great array of lexical variation, the meaning is consistent. Primarily, it is the king's ability to deal with vast numbers of enemies and, secondly, that he acts alone. A line from the Beth Shan stela of Ramses II encapsulates this meaning very succinctly:

- (14) KRI II 150.16 – Ramses II, Beth Shan stela

ꜥꜥ wꜥi(.w) m wm.t ski.y irr st m ḥdb.ywt
who enters alone into the thick of battle,¹⁶ who makes them into piles (of corpses).

This is a motif not unknown for Ramses II; we are reminded of the battle of Kadesh, in the Egyptian accounts of which much is made of the Pharaoh's solitary and ultimately successful stand against innumerable enemies. Certainly, the same end is achieved: extolling the prowess of the king in battle.

The Medinet Habu texts use the phrase in the falcon simile, simply replacing the collective designation of the enemies with *ḥp.wt*. In the light of what has been demonstrated about *ꜥꜥ m*, it can be seen exactly how the falcon simile enhances the standing of the king, for the same emphasis is placed: the falcon acts alone and enters into a flock of birds, that is to say, a plurality of enemies.

¹⁶ It is worth noting the close parallel in KRI V 37.16.

A reconsideration of *hp.wt*

This realization brings about a reconsideration of *hp.wt*. If it replaces a collective like $\text{ḥ}3.t$, one could expect that it is also a collective noun. Indeed, *hp.wt* is never found without plural strokes. Do they indicate plurality (postulating a theoretical singular, *hp.t*) or is it singular collective, like $\text{ḥ}3.t$? If the latter is to be preferred, a more appropriate interpretation might be “flock”.¹⁷ This imagery is directly attested at least once for Ramses II:

- (15) KRI II 151.11 – Ramses II, Beth Shan stela

iw ḥm=f m-s3=sn mi k3 Nb.ty mi bik m ḥ.t-p.t n(.t) 3pd.w mi m3i ḥs3 m ihy n ḥ.w.t

His majesty was after them like the bull of Ombos, like a falcon in a flock of fowl, like a terrible lion in a pen of small cattle.

This assumes that *ḥ.t-p.t* is equivalent to *hp.t* i.e. a term designating a collective of animals.¹⁸

- (16) KRI II 173.7 – Ramses II, Undated war scenes, Ramesseum: Speech of the enemy

wr=f ḥr n b3.w=k tw=n mi ḥp.t n.t ḥdr.wt ḥdg.n st m3i ḥḥ

(The land of Hatti,) its chief is prostrate because of your reputation. We are like a herd (*hp.t*) of small cattle when the ferocious lion has seized them.

The striking parallel in imagery is not the only thing significant here. The phonetic (if not graphic) similarity in between *hp.t* and *hp.wt* suggests a direct link.¹⁹ Indeed, both Hannig²⁰ and Meeks²¹ infer the link between the two in making connections between (though not commenting on) the entries in their respective works.


An important attestation of *hp.wt* in connection with this appears in the text of an Abu Simbel stela (and its partner) of Ramses II:

- (17) KRI II 319.5 – Ramses II, Abu Simbel stelae

bik ntr.y šps.y ḥpr m3.t ḥk m ḥp.wt wr.w di=f ḥm.w=sn

Divine noble falcon, ready of wing, who enters into *hp.wt* and great ones, he causing that they not be known.

Here the familiar expression $\text{ḥ}k m$ is introduced by a falcon metaphor. What is preyed

upon is *hp.wt*, with plural strokes and a seated man determinative: . On this

17 Piccione 1980 109 does indeed translate the *hp.wt* found in KRI V 17.8 as “flock of small birds”. However, he has transliterated the word as *ph.wt*, taking up the suggestion of Edgerton – Wilson 1936 16, n. 46a, that the word might actually be the Old Egyptian word *ph.t* “duck”.

18 Černý 1958 81, n. aa

19 Černý 1958 81, n. aa

20 Hannig 1997² 632. Note that neither *Wörterbuch* entries (Wb. III 258.1 and 365.10) make this suggestion.

21 Meeks 1982 214.

point, Edgerton and Wilson give a note which reads: “The human determinative in both recensions of the Ramses II text is a more or less conscious admission of the fact that the “birds” referred to are actually humans.”²² And Grapow, Spalinger, and the *Wörterbuch* all express the same opinion.²³ It is clear that this interpretation was reached by working chronologically backwards: the meaning of *hp.wt* in this context may have been transposed from the later, similar Medinet Habu attestations and consequently assumed a diminutive sense.

To engage in a reconsideration of this attestation of *hp.wt*, the phraseology might be observed – it is introduced by *ḳ m*. It has already been demonstrated how this phrase is used in historical texts in a military context, and how in this connection *hp.wt* can be seen to occur where a collective noun is expected. Considering this word as a collective gives rise to the conclusion that the plural strokes are necessary, while the seated man further determines the word, without further phonetics; the Abu Simbel attestation could hence be transliterated as *hp.t* and translated literally as “a group (of men)”.²⁴ This interpretation is supported by the all-too-common writing of *ḳ3.t* in this context, for example:

(18) KRI II 141.4 – Ramses II, Kadesh reliefs: King inspecting booty

ḳ m ḳ3.t n(.w) ḥ3s.wt nb.wt

who enters into the multitudes of all foreign lands

The same could apply for *hp.wt* at Medinet Habu. The bird determinative (Gardiner G38) may merely add further specificity to the plural strokes determinative,²⁵ hence *hp.t*: a group (of small birds), i.e. a flock.

If indeed the Medinet Habu *hp.wt* and the Abu Simbel *hp.wt* are related, it could be the case that the word originally meant “group”, having originated from *hp.t*, “herd or flock”, and, once transplanted in the falcon analogy and supplemented with the G38 determinative, instantly took on the signification of “birds”. However, one cannot underestimate the unpredictability of Ramesside texts and the issue remains open.

22 Edgerton – Wilson 1936 16, n. 46a.

23 Wb. III 258.1–2; Grapow 1924 89; Spalinger 1986 143, n. y. It should be noted that the article cited in support of this interpretation (Fischer 1973) actually suggests the opposite, i.e. that the ordering great to small is usual. Furthermore, of the examples given as further evidence, the first does not exist (KRI V 417.16 – presume a simple referencing error?) and the others (pHarris 75.4, 91.1 and KRI II 269.5–8) also attest the ordering great to small. Either the reading “small to great” is simply irregular, or, as is argued above, the interpretation of *hp.wt* as “small” may be erroneous!

24 The corollary here is that the interpretation of KRI II 319.5 may be emended to “Divine noble falcon, ready of wing, who enters into a multitude of great ones”.

25 Nothing can be concluded from the differing order of placement of the determinatives. Cf. KRI II 7.1–4 for *ḳ3.t* in the same phrase showing a different ordering of determinatives.

Whether or not *hp.wt* means “flock” or “small birds”, what is important, given its connection to the phrase *ʕk m*, is that the primary expression of *hp.wt* seems to be the plurality of the enemy. Secondary is the equation of the enemies of the king with “small birds”. This relationship between small birds and large predatory falcon calls attention to and figuratively explains the relationship between him and his foes: he is all-powerful and his enemies become nothing more than helpless, easy prey.²⁶ This is a common theme, for example:

- (19) KRI V 98.1–2 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu: Welcoming speech of Amun-Re-Harakhte

di=i m33=sn hm=k mi m3i sknd ʕfk ʕn=f hr=f šnb.t ʕw.t

I cause that they see your majesty like an enraged lion, whose claw and tooth tear apart the breast of small cattle.

- (20) KRI V 23.7 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu: Great inscription of Year 5: 33

hm=f pri(.w) r-r=sn mi.tt sd.t gmi.t [h]nr.t m k3k3 wmt [...]

His majesty went forth against them like a flame found scattered in thick brush wood [...]²⁷

- (21) KRI V 64.9 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu: Great inscription of Year 11: 42

[sw m-]s3=n hr wʕwʕ mi bik ntr.y i-iri n m kni.w mi ish nfr.w

[He is af]ter us, slaughtering like a divine falcon who makes us into sheaves like the reaping of (ripe) grain.

All of these similes make reference to the relationship between strong and weak entities and thus emphasise not that the enemies are able to be dispatched easily, but rather that it is *the king* who can dispatch them easily. Victory is assured beforehand, for the relationship between king and enemy is the same as that between predator and prey; such is his power. Hence the aggrandizement of the king is the express purpose of the rhetorical tradition in which *hp.wt* is located.

So far it has been shown, through analyses of phraseology describing the attack of the falcon, that the simile aggrandizes the power of the king with reference to his capability. Just like the falcon, he fights by himself and takes on multiple enemies.

26 Given the determinative, the *hp.wt* birds are most probably a narrower classification of birds which falls under the wider category of *3pd*. This is perhaps suggested in the similarity of contrast of *3pd* with *bik.w* in the Pyramid texts: see Faulkner 1952. For the motif of *3pd.w* as helpless and weak, see Grapow 1924 91.

27 For parallels to this imagery compare with KRI II 151.11 and 319.9–12.

The falcon prior to its attack

All of the instances of *hp.wt* and the falcon simile are not yet fully explained. There is a second variation that characterizes this imagery: the state of the falcon immediately prior to its attack.²⁸

The key words in these attestations describing the actions of the falcon are *m33*²⁹ and *gmh*³⁰. Again, loose parallels are drawn upon that carry the same significance *without* employing the falcon analogy. They are one degree of approximation removed from more valuable direct parallels, which are once again absent.

- (22) KRI V 79.1–2 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Syrian War scenes

šhm hpr.w m33.n=f sk.w nh3 hr hr gmh hfn.w

terrible of forms when he has seen the battle, wild of face when he sees hundreds of thousands

The above employs both *m33* and *gmh*, while the example below serves as a close parallel to KRI V 17.8.

- (23) KRI V 63.13 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Great Inscription of Year 11: 36

iw=f m-s3=n mi Sth hr m33 p3 sby

He is after us like Seth when he sees the snake (Apothis) (i.e. raging and ready to fight)

This final example parallels and further explains KRI V 60.13:

- (24) KRI V 37.14–15 – Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Great inscription of Year 8: 3

3 f3w nšnt[y].tw³¹ m33.n=f³² sk.w mi Šhm.t nšnty(.t) m 3.t knd=s

great of reputation, who rages when he has seen the battle, like Sekhmet raging in the instant she becomes enraged

It is clear that the focus is the fearsome nature of the king, becoming angry and assuming a terrible appearance in preparation for battle. Nowhere is this motif more explicit than in the Kadash Bulletin of Ramses II, lines 83–87:

- (25) KRI II 119.7–120.1 – Ramses II, Kadash Bulletin: 83–87

*ḥḥ.n inh p3 hrw n.w p3 hrw n.y Ht n3 šms.w n.w hm=f n.ty r-gs=f ḥḥ.n gmh
st hm=f wn.in=f hr ḥḥ 3s ḥḥr.w r=sn mi it=f Mnt.w sšp.n=f hkr.w ḥ3 t3i=f
sw m p3y=f tryn sw mi Swth m 3.t šhm=f*

Then the forces of the enemy of Hatti surrounded the followers of his majesty who were at his side. Then his majesty saw them, and he arose,

28 The relevant attestations here are: KRI V 22.9; 60.13; 17.8; and 113.11.

29 For KRI V 22.9 and 60.13.

30 For KRI V 17.8 and 113.11.

31 A strange writing, albeit recurrent. cf. Hannig 1997² 435 and Wb. II 341.19–22. The final *-tw* indicates in this case the Late Egyptian Old Perfective ending.

32 Note the falcon's eyes used to write *m33* here. Is this suggestive of a link to the behaviour of the falcon, or even its imagery? For an explanation of this unusual writing, see Edgerton – Wilson 1936 32 n.61b.

quickly, and raged against them like his father Montu, he (the king) having taken up the adornments of battle and attiring himself in his armour. He was like Seth in the moment of his power.

At Medinet Habu, the falcon simile is a vehicle for this expression.

It can be concluded from this analysis that there are two different aspects emphasized in the imagery of the falcon at Medinet Habu: a. the capability of the attacker (i.e. the king or his troops), and b. the rage and ferocity which precedes the attack. It is the difference between *what* he can do and *how* he does it. However, the two aspects are inevitably always linked in this imagery. Even if one or the other is not especially intended, it is brought to mind by the associations of the imagery.

Returning to the original phrase in the Year 5 text, KRI V 22.9, it can be concluded that, given the usage of this phraseology and the context here, what is emphasized is the ferocious appearance and intense fury that the horses have assumed in preparation for battle.

The identification of tertium

The analyses have thus far shown the significance of the content of the imagery, but it remains to be resolved why the falcon, and not another animal or entity, is chosen in these cases to express these aspects of royal ideology. For this, we must return to the considerations about the nature of the simile and the referent-relatum relationship outlined earlier. Hence, we can observe in the attestations a variation in referents: those which specify the horses and those which specify the king.

In the consideration of those attestations of falcon imagery which specify the horses as referents,³³ the conclusions already reached must be remembered: firstly, the imagery is taken from the royal context in order to highlight that the horses are an extension of the king's power; secondly, given the context and phraseology, the characteristics transmitted are fury and aggression. Given these parameters, the horses are likened to falcons and it is indeed “speed” which suggests itself as the *tertium*,³⁴ for it is the distinctive way in which both horses and falcons express their fury when fighting, rendering the imagery of this comparison easier to understand. That is to say, the horses receive the characteristics of ferociousness and fury from the falcons but the link in imagery is made possible through the *tertium* of speed (see Fig.1).

In those attestations of falcon imagery which specify the king as referent, the *tertium* can be seen to be the god Horus (see Fig. 1). The king has a pre-existing and well-attested relationship with this god, while the relationship between Horus and the

33 KRI V 22.9; 30.6.

34 See Grapow 1924 82 for attestations of the link between horses and speed, wherein the horses are the relatum in the comparison relationship.

falcon centres on form: Horus manifests himself in the form of the falcon. That the god Horus is indeed the *tertium* for this imagery is evidenced in these attestations by the repeated appearance of the adjective *ntr.y* to qualify *bik*.³⁵

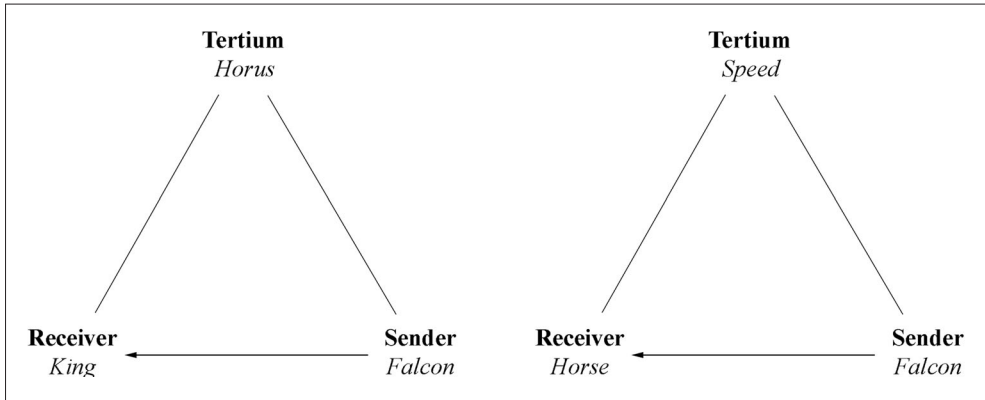


Fig.1. Illustration of the functioning of the similes.

The arrow represents the direction in which the attributes are transmitted.

Furthermore, that those attestations which specify the horses do not make reference to the divinity of the falcons suggests what a meagreness of sources does not allow us to prove: a “divine” aspect would never feature in the simile of horses and falcons because the *tertium comparationis* is different.

Therefore, it can be said that in the falcon imagery at Medinet Habu there exist similes featuring two different *tertia*. While these *tertia* play an important role in determining the content of the imagery, they are incidental to the *impetus* of the simile. Hence the characteristics that the horses adopt through the simile are indeed fury and ferociousness. However, it should also be noted that the imagery is intentionally inexplicit and the nuances between *relatum*, *referent* and *tertium* would probably not have been so important to a reader caught up in the colourful imagery describing the exploits of the king. Nonetheless, the analysis in this section has been useful in elucidating the exact rationale behind the selection of particular elements of the similes as well as in providing us with an insight into the composition process that was undertaken for these texts.

35 KRI V 17.8; 60.13; 93.12.

Conclusion

The results of this case study allow the imagery of the falcon in the Medinet Habu historical inscriptions to be defined much more clearly than it was in Grapow’s survey. One aspect emphasizes the power of the king and his ability in battle, drawing on the comparison of the relationship between falcon and small bird. He faces a great many enemies, but his power is such that his victory is assured, and hence his enemies are considered his prey. Another aspect highlights the rage and ferocity of the king in preparation for battle. Ultimately, both aspects are simultaneously represented in the Medinet Habu imagery and the difference in emphasis in any particular example is but nuanced. These are the characteristics that are transmitted to the king (and his horses) and their expression forms the primary impetus for the composition of the similes.

This compositional endeavour still leaves scope for variation in form and it seems that this form was guided by the selection of a *tertium*. It cannot be ascertained whether particular efforts were made to select appropriate *tertia* or whether the associations naturally suggested themselves to the Egyptian mind, but it is clear, particularly in the use of *ntr.y* to highlight the *tertium* of Horus, that the scribes were indeed aware of these associations.

It is hoped that this case study has broadened the understanding of the expression of the cultural associations inherent in the royal ideology as represented in Ramesside texts. It is, however, only a small contribution and the material offers yet further possibilities for study.

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