

The symbolism of the Egyptian zodiacs

A new and more complete interpretation

1. CONSTELLATION SYMBOLS

In general, constellation figures one finds in the Egyptian zodiacs resemble the pictures of the very same constellations in old European astronomical tractates to a large extent.

All of the twelve zodiacal constellations in their “ancient” Egyptian rendition can usually be recognized without much effort and, fortunately, require no decipherment.

Nevertheless, we have discovered that Egyptian zodiacs possessed some distinctive characteristics of the constellation figures that we don’t encounter in European drawings, and they haven’t apparently been noticed up to now; however, they are important for the general interpretation of the zodiacs.

We are referring to the fact that the constellation figures in Egyptian zodiacs would often be united with the planetary figures, forming a complex “astronomical hieroglyph” of sorts.

We shall discuss these in more detail below, in the section that deals with the symbolism of secondary horoscopes.

In the present section we shall merely consider the Egyptian constellation symbols as such.

And so, let us go through all the zodiacal constel-

lations and list their representations as found in Egyptian zodiacs.

1.1. Aries

Let us begin with the Aries constellation. In fig. 15.1 one sees the drawings of this constellation taken from various Egyptian zodiacs, and one from the European star chart by Dürer is shown in fig. 15.2 for comparison. Nowadays it is presumed that Dürer drew the chart in 1515 ([90], page 8). Whether or not it is true is of no importance to us at the moment; the only thing that matters is that this is a late mediaeval astronomical drawing from the XVI-XVIII Western Europe.

In fig. 15.1 one sees perfectly well that all of these “ancient” Egyptian drawings of the Aries constellations are drawn in the exact same manner as Dürer’s drawing, notwithstanding the fact that in Scaligerian chronology they are separated by a monstrous gap of fifteen hundred years, which, however, didn’t stop the “ancient” Egyptians from drawing the constellation of Aries in the exact same way as it was done in mediaeval Europe. This is a result of the erroneous Scaligerian chronology. Once we correct it, everything becomes clear. It turns out that the Egyptian zodiacs weren’t created in deep antiquity, as the Sca-

ligerian version of history is telling us, but rather in the Middle Ages.

Let us remind the reader that, according to our reconstruction ([REC]), the development of astronomy in Egypt and Europe took place around the same time, in the atmosphere of constant interaction between various parts of the Great = Mongolian Empire – Europe and Egypt in particular. It was only after the decline and dissolution of the Great Empire that the ties between Egypt and Europe got severed for some 200 years, which only changed after the advent of the Napoleonic troops in the late XVIII – early XIX century.

We shall now return to the drawings of the constellations. Above we witnessed that the constellation of Aries looks just the same in the Egyptian zodiacs as it does in most of the European drawings from the Middle Ages. This appears to be true for most other zodiacal constellations as well.

And now, onwards along the ecliptic. We shall go through each of the 12 zodiacal constellations, comparing the way they're drawn in the “ancient” Egyptian zodiacs to the drawings of the mediaeval Europeans.

1.2. Taurus

The constellation that follows Aries on the ecliptic is the Taurus. In fig. 15.3 we see drawings of the Taurus constellation taken from Egyptian zodiacs and the mediaeval star chart by Albrecht Dürer. In each case the Egyptian drawings are very explicit about the fact that the figure in question stands for Taurus, and not any other animal figure, qv in fig. 15.3.

A propos, we should pay attention to the fact that every Egyptian drawing of Taurus has got the same shape of horns, qv in fig. 15.3. They all look like crescents, whereas the horns of Aries look drastically different, their shape being of an undulant shape, qv in fig. 15.1. It has to be pointed out that one often sees horned figures in Egyptian zodiacs – it is most likely that the shape of their horns wasn't chosen randomly, but rather carried a definite meaning. One encounters three kinds of horns in the Egyptian zodiacs – undulated, as is the case with Aries, crescent-like (Taurus), and omega-shaped, with the tips facing outwards.

If we are to consider planets, Egyptian artists would usually draw Saturn and Jupiter with horns; Saturn would usually have crescent-shaped horns, like Taurus, whereas Jupiter's horns are undulated, like those of Aries. See the section on the planetary symbolism in Egyptian zodiacs below.

1.3 Gemini

The next constellation is that of Gemini. The drawings of the constellation as seen in the Egyptian zodiacs and on Dürer's star chart can be seen in fig. 15.4. In fig. 15.5 one can also see the photograph of the Gemini drawing from the Long Zodiac of Dendera. According to the photograph, what we see in the Napoleonic album ([1100]) is a mirror reflection of the figure (however, it is possible that the image is re-

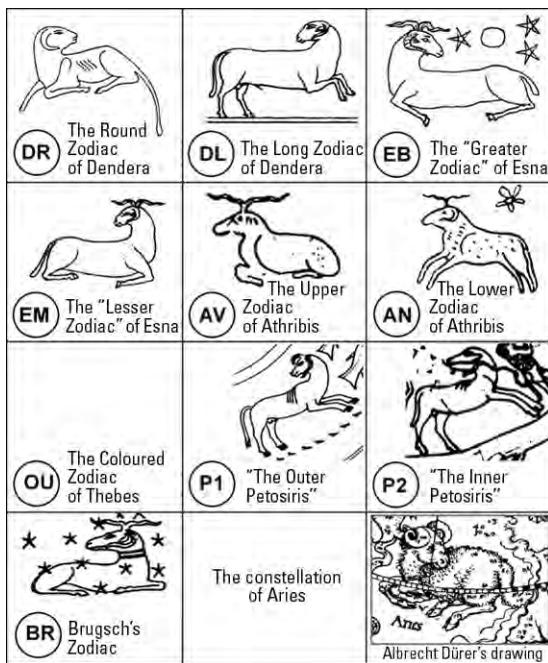


Fig. 15.1. Symbols of Aries from different Egyptian zodiacs. In the “Coloured Zodiac” from Thebes we find no such constellation, hence the blank cell. We cite a drawing of Aries from a star chart by Albrecht Dürer on the right for comparison ([90], page 8) – that is to say, a European drawing dating from the epoch of the XVI-XVIII century. One sees all of the “ancient” Egyptian symbols to be perfectly similar to the European drawing. The fragments used herein were taken from [1100], [1291], [1062], [90] and [544], Volume 6.



Fig. 15.2. Star chart of the Northern Hemisphere. Ancient engraving. This chart is presumed to have been drawn by Albrecht Dürer in 1515. Regardless of whether or not the dating is correct, we can say that what we see in front of us is a Western European astronomical drawing dating from the XVI-XVIII century. The astronomical symbols used in Europe back in the day are all represented very well in the zodiac – it is very easy to get an idea of how one drew the figures of zodiacal constellations during that epoch (alongside the ecliptic circle which we find drawn rather explicitly). Taken from [90], page 8. See also [544], Volume 4, page 204.

versed in the modern edition whence it was culled from – see [1062]).

Dürer depicts Gemini as two naked infant figures embracing, *qv* in fig. 15.4. Their drawings on the zodiacs of Petosiris are very similar, *qv* in fig. 15.4 (P1 and P2). We see the arms of the infant figures crossed as if they were embracing each other – the same as in Dürer’s drawing. In all other zodiacs, excluding Brugsch’s, Gemini are presented as a male/female couple either holding hands or keeping their arms crossed.

Let us make the following remark in re distinguishing between male and female figures. They are easy to tell apart in the Egyptian zodiacs since the width of steps is always smaller in case of female figures. This allows us to distinguish between them with enough certainty even when the drawings look too abstract or happen to be in a bad condition. As we shall witness below, the sex of one figure or another may be very important for the decipherment of their astronomical meaning.

And now to return to the ancient Egyptian pictures of Gemini. Pay attention to the fact that in both of the Esna zodiacs the couple depicting Gemini is accompanied by another male figure, one that holds a long stick in both hands. We must point out that the stick is most likely not to be a planetary staff, since the staves held by planetary figures have rather characteristic topplings, which isn’t the case with the stick in question. We see a small lamb run in front of the figure that holds the stick, *qv* in fig. 15.4. We lump this figure together with the Gemini sign, although it may possibly be another symbol of the summer solstice as mentioned above. These symbols are always located near the sign of Gemini, since that is where the summer solstice point is, *qv* above.

Let us now explain why in many of the Egyptian zodiacs one of the Gemini figures is male and the other female. Pay attention to the following significant detail – rather often, in three cases out of nine, the head of the female figure is topped by a circle (sometimes also a snake), whereas on the head of the male figure we see a feather, *qv* in fig. 15.4. We shall jump ahead and explain the meaning of these symbols. What we see is a secondary summer solstice horoscope united with the drawing that depicts the constellation of Gemini. Its meaning is as follows:

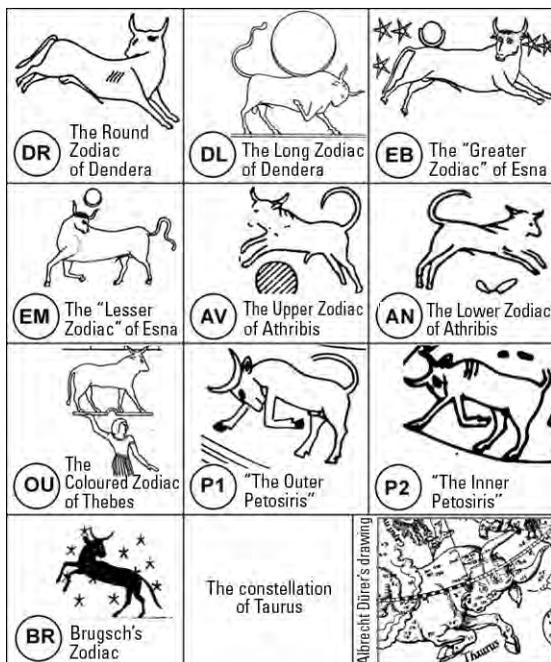


Fig. 15.3. Symbols of Taurus from different Egyptian zodiacs. A drawing of the same constellation done by Albrecht Dürer is presented on the right for comparison ([90], page 8). One sees all of the “ancient” Egyptian symbols to be perfectly similar to the European drawing. The fragments were taken from [1100], [1291], [1062], [90] and [544], Volume 6.

what we see in Gemini is the Sun and the two planets which are the closest thereto, Venus and Mercury. The secondary symbols for the Sun, Venus and Mercury are presented as a single “astronomical hieroglyph” that also depicts the constellation of Gemini. The actual Gemini figure here is nothing but a pair of figures holding hands. The feather on the head of one of the figures represents Mercury. It has to be pointed out that the figure of the “Gemini figure with a feather” is always male, which corresponds to the male gender of Mercury, whereas the other figure (the female one) stands for Venus, whose gender is female. The symbolism of Venus in Gemini is emphasized even more in the Long Zodiac of Dendera – she is drawn with a leonine head, which is a sign for Venus in the Egyptian zodiacs, as we demonstrate below. Finally, the Sun is represented by the circle on the head of Venus (in Gemini).

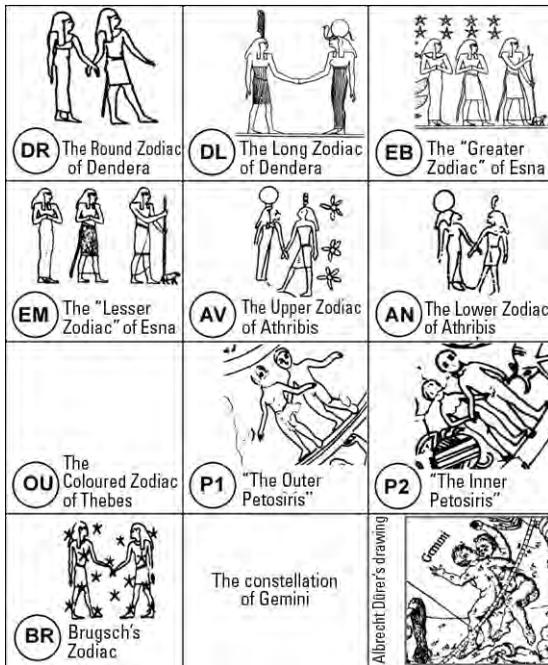


Fig. 15.4. Symbols of Gemini from different Egyptian zodiacs. We don't find this constellation in the "Coloured Zodiac" from Thebes, and the respective cell was therefore left empty. A drawing of the same constellation done by Albrecht Dürer is presented on the right for comparison ([90], page 8). One sees that all of the "ancient" Egyptian symbols resemble the European drawing. Fragments taken from [1100], [1291], [1062], [90] and [544], Volume 6.

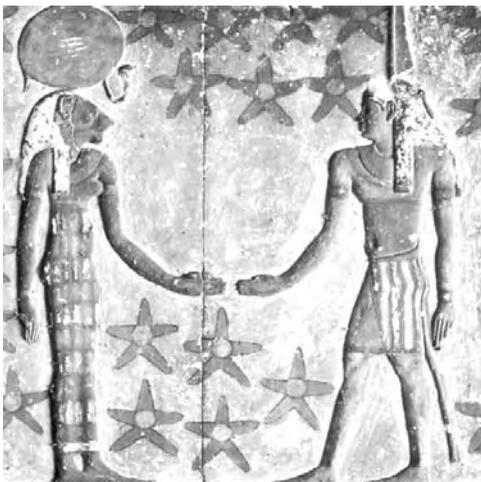


Fig. 15.5. Gemini in the Long Zodiac of Dendera (DL). Modern photograph. Taken from [1062], photograph on front cover.

What we have in front of us is a secondary horoscope of summer solstice in Gemini. In the present case it only includes Venus and Mercury, or the planets one always finds near the sun. Other planets which were accidentally close to the Sun around the summer solstice could be represented specifically, yet not included in the "astronomical hieroglyph" of Gemini.

We shall discuss the secondary horoscopes of equinox and solstice points in more detail below. For the meantime, let us just bear in mind that the couple of a man with a feather on his head and a woman with a circle on hers stands for the constellation of Gemini in Egyptian symbolism. This shall aid us greatly later on, when we shall be confronted with the problem of deciphering the Lesser Zodiac of Esna (Em), which is one of the most complex Egyptian zodiacs inasmuch as the astronomical symbolism is concerned.

Now let us consider the sign of Gemini as seen in Brugsch's zodiac (BR). Here we see the sign of Gemini drawn as two male figures holding hands, qv in fig. 15.4. The concept is virtually the same as in Dürer's drawing, the only difference being that both figures are clothed and not naked in this case. However, there are no naked figures in Brugsch's zodiac whatsoever. Even Nuit, who we usually see naked in Egyptian zodiacs, is wearing a tunic, qv in fig. 12.17.

This makes the zodiac of Brugsch somewhat different from all the other ancient Egyptian zodiacs where one usually encounters naked figures. This could result from the fact that Brugsch's zodiac is more recent than all the other ancient Egyptian zodiacs in question. The astronomical dating of Brugsch's zodiac demonstrates that it was drawn as recently as in the XIX century, qv below. It appears that by that time there weren't any naked figures left in the "ancient" Egyptian funereal zodiacs. Dürer, on the other hand, drew his constellation of Gemini a great deal earlier, in the XVI-XVII century. Incidentally, the Scaligerian dating of Dürer's lifetime might be erroneous; it is likely that he had really lived a whole century later than what is assumed today – in the XVII century and not the XVI. See CHRON7, Chapter 18:8, for more details.

1.4. Cancer

Let us move on to the next constellation, which is Cancer. Different representations of the constellation

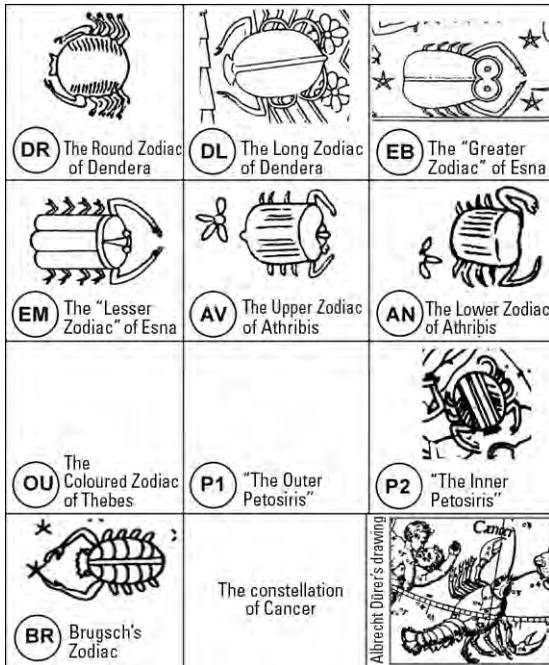


Fig. 15.6. Symbols of Cancer from different Egyptian zodiacs. We don't find this constellation in the "Coloured Zodiac" from Thebes. In the P1 zodiac (the outer chamber of the Petosiris tomb) Cancer wound up in the destroyed part of the zodiac. The respective cells were therefore left empty. A drawing of the same constellation done by Albrecht Dürer is presented on the right for comparison ([90], page 8). One sees that all of the "ancient" Egyptian symbols resemble the European drawing. Fragments taken from [1100], [1291], [1062], [90] and [544], Volume 6.

in question can be found in fig. 15.6, likewise Dürer's drawing. One sees that Dürer's rendition is a lot more realistic than that of the Egyptian artists, who made the figure resemble a bug or a crab with a pair of human hands or some such instead of claws, qv in fig. 15.6. Nevertheless, the figure of Cancer as encountered in Egyptian zodiacs is more or less uniform and easily recognizable.

By the way, the sign of Cancer isn't part of the constellation row in the Dendera zodiacs – for instance, in the Round Zodiac of Dendera all of the constellations form a circle, whereas Cancer is located sideways, closer to the middle of the drawing, qv in figs. 15.7 and 15.8. One might think that the Egyptian artist simply made a wrong estimation about the amount

of space available, and thus had to draw Cancer in a different spot. However, this doesn't appear to be the case, since in the Long Zodiac of Dendera the sign of Cancer is outside of the zodiacal constellation sequence, and even more explicitly so, being near the knees of "Nuit the goddess", qv in fig. 15.9.

The reason for Cancer being drawn in this odd manner on the zodiacs of Dendera remains unknown to us. Apparently, the ancient Egyptian artist intended to communicate something in this manner, but it remains unclear what exactly that might be. We should mark that emphasizing Cancer in this manner is a trait that is only inherent in the Dendera zodiacs, and doesn't manifest in any other Egyptian zodiacs.

At any rate, it is clear that Cancer's being outside of the ecliptic sequence in the Round Zodiac isn't a consequence of an error or inaccuracy from the part of the Egyptian artist, as N. A. Morozov assumes in [544], Volume 6, for instance. On the contrary, one gets the impression that the astronomical symbols were introduced into Egyptian zodiacs with the utmost accuracy – however, nowadays we often find ourselves unable to comprehend the minor details of ancient Egyptian symbolism, which isn't actually a necessity for the purposes of astronomical dating.

The fact that the Egyptian zodiacs apparently neither contain errors, nor minor astronomical imperfections, is, on the contrary, very important for the decipherment and the astronomical dating of the Egyptian zodiacs. Bearing this in mind, below we shall try to find absolutely precise astronomical solutions for the Egyptian zodiacs. This approach shall prove justified, since we shall indeed arrive at precise solutions.

By the way, one used to think that Egyptian zodiacs contained artists' errors, which would periodically surface – N. A. Morozov, for one, adhered to this opinion, allowing for minor discrepancies between an Egyptian zodiac and is astronomical solution, and often resorted to such presumptions in his work ([544], Volume 6), alleging that the Egyptian artists may have been inaccurate, erring since they weren't professional astronomers, or for some other reason. Such ideas of the zodiacs would lead to an altogether different approach to the search of a given zodiac's finite astronomical solution. As a result, N. A. Morozov and a number of other authors would often stop halfway through their research, with no hope of

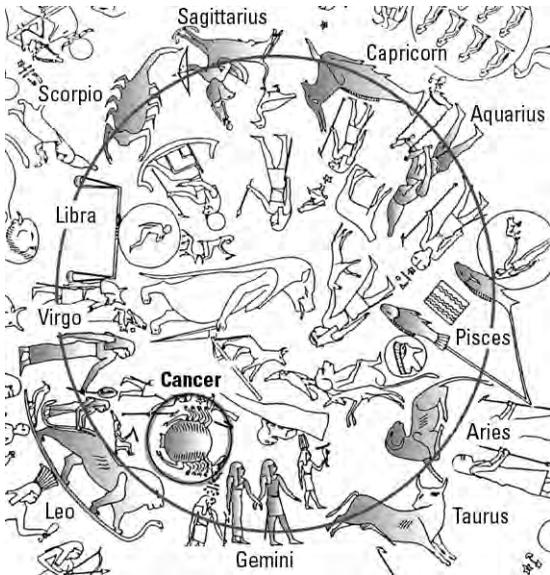


Fig. 15.7. The Round Zodiac of Dendera (DR). The signs of all twelve zodiacal constellations are shaded. All of them form a circle, with the sole exception of Cancer, whose sign is moved sideways for some reason. Based on the drawn copy from [1062], pages 9 and 71.

finding precise solutions. They could come to an “almost precise” solution and consider it the final answer, assuming there were none of higher precision and easily explaining the discrepancies between the zodiacs and the solutions in question by references to the inaccuracy of the Egyptian artists who drew these zodiacs. However, we already mentioned the fact that this is not the case with the Egyptian zodiacs, which contain no astronomical errors and allow for perfectly precise solutions. However, finding such solutions is anything but an easy task, and requires a volume of calculations too great to be performed without modern computer technology, which N. A. Morozov had no access to.

1.5. Leo

The next constellation in the Egyptian zodiacal sequence is that of Leo; its drawings as seen in Egyptian zodiacs and on Dürer’s star atlas can be seen in fig. 15.10. As one can see from the drawing, Leo is easy to recognize on almost all of the Egyptian zodiacs.

Leo as drawn by the Egyptian artist has two distinctive characteristics that one has to bear in mind for the decipherment.

Firstly, Egyptian artists would often draw a female figure as a part of the constellation. The woman usually rides on Leo’s tail or holds on to it, *qv* in fig. 15.10. This figure is usually drawn on the side of Virgo, the neighbouring constellation, and so one could initially confuse it for Virgo; however, this isn’t the case with most of the Egyptian zodiacs where the constellation of Virgo is explicitly drawn separately, as a woman holding an ear of wheat. It is only in the Higher Zodiac of Athribis that the figure holding Leo’s tail is that of Virgo, the tail also being the ear of wheat in her hand, *qv* in figs. 15.10 and 15.11 (cell AV). However, in the other zodiacs the female figure near Leo’s tail does nevertheless appear to be related to the constellation of Virgo in some way.

The matter is that in the Egyptian zodiacs the respective figures of Leo and Virgo are drawn in their natural position, standing on the ecliptic line in the exact same way as they do on Earth; therefore, Leo occupies a great deal more place on the ecliptic than Virgo. Leo stands on four paws, with its body stretched horizontally parallel to the earth (the ecliptic). Thus, we see Leo occupy a substantial segment of the ecliptic, whereas Virgo stands on two feet and occupies a relatively small amount of ecliptic space.

However, if we are to turn to the real position on the star chart, we shall witness the exact opposite of this picture. Virgo occupies a great deal more space on the ecliptic than Leo, being the longest of all 12 ecliptic constellations, *qv* in fig. 14.14, for instance, according to which the Sun stays in Virgo for a whole 45 days, whereas it spends only 38 in Leo. This is also a large number on the average, yet it is smaller than in the case of Virgo. In other words, the constellation of Virgo takes up a 45-degree arc on the ecliptic, which is bigger than that of any other zodiacal constellation.

A propos, this is why A. Dürer depicts Virgo as laying on the ecliptic and not standing on it, since a standing human figure simply isn’t wide enough to occupy as many degrees as the constellation of Virgo occupies. Egyptian artists appear to have found another way out of this predicament drawing Virgo standing in the natural manner, not really minding the fact that it occupies too narrow a space on the