The Frog in Ancient Egypt, 
with Unpublished Frog Statues, Amulets, and other Related Objects in the Agricultural and Mallawy Museums in Egypt.

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Abstract

Frogs belong to the class of 'amphibians'. They are cold-blooded animals, and they hibernate during winter. The life cycle of frogs begins with mating, laying eggs, developing into tadpoles in eggs, and then appearing as young frogs without tails. The frog was known in ancient Egypt as ębnḥ, ębnḥ, and ḋrr. The frog had a great role in ancient Egyptian mythology. It was connected with the mythology of creation. A number of gods and goddesses were connected with the frog such as Heqet, Ptah, Heh ḋḥw, Kek 꽈 Kkw, Nun ḋg nnw, and Amun ḋ g Imn. Frog amulets were worn by the living to provide fertility, and were buried with the dead to protect and rejuvenate them. Frogs were often mummified with the dead as magical amulets to ensure rebirth. An image of a frog was depicted on apotropaic wands, as its role was the protector of the house hold and guardian of pregnant women. With the official prevalence of Christianity in Egypt in the fourth century AD., the frog was still used as a Coptic symbol of resurrection and rebirth. In this paper, the author will try to publish some of the unpublished frog statues, amulets, and other related objects in the agricultural and Mallawy museums in Egypt.

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Introduction

The frog belongs to the class 'amphibia', a division of vertebrata, intermediate between reptiles and fishes. Amphibians are vertebrates that lead a double mode of life, amphi = both, of both kinds2: bios = life. They constitute a group of about 2,500 species of animals that live on land and in water. Most of them start their life as a fish-like individual, the tadpole, which breathes through gills and swims with a caudal fin. They gradually lose the gills and tail, and develop into lung-breathing, four footed animals which leap from water to land. However, most of them return occasionally to water. Hence, their body organs are adapted to both aquatic and terrestrial modes of life.3 The family of common frogs are distributed worldwide, and divided into approximately ten subfamilies, seven of these occur in Africa: it is said that the common frogs originated on this continent.4

Frogs are cold-blooded animals whose body temperature varies according to the surrounding medium. They hibernate during winter. They stop most of their activities, hide, and remain stationary among stones in pools and on river banks till the beginning of the next spring. During hibernation, pulmonary respiration stops, and breathing takes place by the skin. No food is taken by the hibernating animals, and they depend mainly on food materials stored in their bodies. The body temperature decreases, almost reaching that of the surrounding medium, but they do not frost otherwise they die.5

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5 El-Banhawy and Others, Text Book of Zoology, 6th ed., 446.
The life cycle of frogs:

Frogs lived in the marshes of the Nile in huge numbers.\(^6\) The life cycle of frogs begins with mating. Here, a pair of adult frogs engages in plexus while the female lays her eggs. Then the tadpoles develop in eggs, and then the tadpoles begin to metamorphose into juvenile frogs, developing hind legs, and forelimbs, not quite transformed into the frog. A tadpole still has its tail, but then the completely metamorphosed young frog loses its tail.\(^7\)

The frog names in ancient Egypt:

The frog was known in ancient Egypt as:

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\begin{align*}
\text{bhn}^8 &\quad \text{ or } \text{bn}^9, \quad \text{gr. } \text{bhn}, \\
\text{khnr} &\quad \text{in late period}^10
\end{align*}
\]

It seems that the word 'khnr' could have been the sound of the frog. It was written in Coptic: \text{KPOYPR}, \text{XPQYPR} \(^11\)

This word was used as a personal name: \text{p3 khnr}, the frog\(^12\).

The sign $\text{hfn}$ (tadpole) was written in ancient Egypt to express the number 100,000.\(^13\) Also, it was used as personal names as the name $\text{hfn}$ Tadpole.\(^14\)

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\(^{6}\) L. Störk, 'Frosch', in L. Ä., II (Wiesbaden, 1977), 334.


\(^{8}\) Wb. I, 178.

\(^{9}\) Wb. I, 178, (15-17)

\(^{10}\) Wb. v, 61 (15).


\(^{12}\) Wb. v, 61 (6).

\(^{13}\) A. Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar, 3rd Ed. (Oxford, 1926), 259, 475 (18).

\(^{14}\) Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar, 3rd Ed. 475 (18).
The frog in the ancient Egyptian mythology:

The frog is a type of transformation as we see in its life cycle, from egg to tadpole to a frog. Hence it was connected with the mythologies of creation in ancient Egypt, and transformation from chaos to existence, and from the world of disorder to the world of order. God Ptah 'the creator', in one of his forms was portrayed as the frog headed god. The frog-headed Ptah made his transformation to rise again as the opener of the nether world.  

His dress, a tight-fitting garment as a reminiscent of the mummy's wrappings, emphasized his role on behalf of souls in the nether world. Every work of the god came about through what his heart devised and his tongue commanded. And the frog is an animal whose tongue is fixed at the beginning of its mouth. It is not fixed in its throat like all animals, so the tongue is distinguished for both Ptah and the frog.

The question now is 'Why the frog was connected with god Ptah as a god of creation'? Maybe, this was due to the idea that Ptah was the only god who created the world in ancient Egypt through his heart and his tongue. He created the world by means of his heart and tongue. Thus he fashioned the world by the power of his word.

Every work of the god came about through what his heart devised and his tongue commanded. And the frog is an animal whose tongue is fixed at the beginning of its mouth. It is not fixed in its throat like all animals, so the tongue is distinguished for both Ptah and the frog.

The connection of the frog with creation is also demonstrated by the concept that $\text{khw}$ and $\text{nnw}$ were the personifications of the primeval forces of chaos. These four of the eight members of the...
Ogdoad whose were associated with Hermopolitan creation myth, were said to be frog-headed. The doctrine of creation at Hermopolis contained eight elements; the four males were depicted as frogs, and the females as serpents swimming around in the mud and slime of chaos.

Ancient Egyptians believed that the frog was an example of spontaneous generation, self-created from the mud from which it emerged. This idea arose because of the numbers of baby frogs which must have appeared in the mud each year when the water of the inundation receded. Hence, frogs were associated with the mythology of creation.

The frog was a symbol of embryo in ancient Egypt, and it was seen in some sculptures, where it was represented bearing upon its back a palm branch. The palm branch is a symbol of the year. The association of the frog with the palm branch was used as a symbol of the beginning of human life.

During the twentieth dynasty the sign of the frog was used as a determinative for writing $\text{nh mnh}$ (live again) a well-wishing term written after the names of the deceased. It was noticed here that the sign of the frog was used as a symbol of rebirth; it shows its role in resurrection.

The question now is 'Why the ancient Egyptians associated the frogs with the resurrection' for they noticed that: during the time of hibernation in winter, frogs stopped most of their activities

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27 C. Andrews, Amulets of Ancient Egypt (Texas, 1994), 63.
29 Wb., I, 344(3).
30 R.O. Faulkner, A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian (Oxford, 1976), 64.
hid, and remained stationary among stones, in pools or on river banks till the beginning of the next spring. During hibernation, no food is taken by the hibernating animals, as if they were dead, then they became active again at the beginning of the next spring when they go out from the mud and slime. So the ancient Egyptians looked at the frogs as a symbol of resurrection and rebirth.

With the official prevalence of Christianity in Egypt during the fourth century AD., the frog was considered as a Coptic symbol of rebirth. Lamps have been found in Egypt with frog upon the upper part. One of these lamps has been known which has the legendary text: etsi eimi anastasis etsi eimi anastasis etsi eimi anastasis etsi eimi anastasis (I am the resurrection). Massey explains this scene saying: 'In this figure the lamp is an equivalent for the rising sun, and the frog upon it is the type of Ptah who in his solar character was the resurrection and the life in the mythology'. This interpretation agrees with the ancient Egyptian mythology. But in Christianity, the frog was used as a Coptic symbol of rebirth.

There are many frog-type lamps found in the sacred animal necropolis and the monastery of Apa Antinos in north Saqqara 1964-67 these lamps date back to the period from the third to the fifth centuries AD. One of them had two palm branches on its top, which are extending to encircle the filling-hole area. This lamp has a wick hole and a short nozzle, its base is probably made of marl clay (fig. 1). The palm branch which is depicted on the frog-type lamps is a symbol of the...
beginning of human life,\textsuperscript{36} or rebirth, as in the case of the frog which had a palm branch upon its back in sculptures.

There are many of these frog-type lamps which were found in Tuna el-Gebel. These date back to the Graeco-Roman period, they are now in the Mallawy Museum. For example: 1- no.541, made of red pottery, oval body, with a frog sculpture on the top, length 5.5 cm., width 4.7 cm. (fig.15). 2-no.552, made of red pottery, oval body, with a frog sculpture on the top, length 7.1 cm., width 7 cm. (fig.16). 3-no.537, made of white pottery, circular body, short nozzle, with a frog sculpture on the top, length 8.2 cm., width 7.2 cm. (fig.17).

**Gods and goddesses in relation with the frog:**

Goddess Heqet was worshiped in the form of a frog, a typical primordial creature which, at certain times of the year, was observed to emerge from the Nile.\textsuperscript{37} She was also represented in the form of a human body with a frog head. She was already noticed in the personal names during the first two dynasties. Since then, Heqet was venerated as a symbol of life and resurrection.\textsuperscript{38} It was noticed that when the frog was venerated it was given the name Heqet a divine or a theological name. She was not called by any of her other animal names.

In ancient Egypt, the frog was the prophet 'forerunner' of the inundation. Hence Heqet was a consort of Khnum, the lord of inundation. She with other gods assisted in fashioning the child in the womb and presided over the birth in her capacity of midwife.\textsuperscript{39} When Khnum became a potter, the goddess Heqet supplied life to

\textsuperscript{38} M.Barta, 'The Title 'Priest of Heqet 'in The Egyptian Old Kingdom', *JNES* 58(2)(1999), 111
gods and men whom he fashioned through his wheel (fig.2). On account of her life-giving powers she was classified at Abydos among the Osirian family of deities. Heqet took part in burial ceremonies at Abydos, and she was figured also on the coffins as a protective deity of the dead.

Heqet was also the goddess of rebirth. She is said to have assisted in the journey of the dead king to the sky. The frog statuettes of faience, stone or ivory which were excavated in great numbers in most of the area of the temple of Khenti -amentiu at Abydos could have been votive offerings to Heqet.

Moreover the frog was mentioned in connection with later representations in which she was a companion of the Nile-God Hapi who assured fertility. This relation can be interpreted by its connection with water and mud its environment, and by being a foreteller of the coming of inundation and water. Similarly Heqet was the crier for the water, and the foreteller of its coming. As prophesier of rain, or inundation, she was the herald of new life to the land of Egypt, and this would be one reason for her relationship with resurrection. One of the oldest centers of the cult of the frog-goddess Heqet was near the island of Elephantine, where the caverns through which the Nile entered Egypt were situated. During the twenty second to the twenty fourth dynasties Heqet was called ḫt mw nb (Heket 'mistress' of all water).

Heqet was the mistress of Egypt during the New kingdom and the Late period ḫt idbw (Heqet 'mistress' of the two

\[ \Delta \text{mrs} \approx \text{Hqt mw nb} \]

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banks 'Egypt' ), she was also the mistress of the East and the West during the Graeco-Roman period. Heqet was connected with happiness during the Graeco-Roman period  $\Delta^{\gamma}_{\gamma}$ ḫkt 3wt ib (Heqet 'mistress' of happiness).  

Besides, the frog came in connection with other gods as well. Wilkinson says that the frog- headed god was probably, a form of Ptah, the creative power, in some inferior capacity. Massey mentions that the creator god Ptah 'in one of his forms' was portrayed as the frog-headed god and this form justifies his transformation to rise again as the opener of the nether world. The frog was a symbol of the sun Atum-Re, the god of creation in the mythology of Heliopolis. Similarly Heqet was the mistress of the Ennead of Heliopolis in Graeco-Roman period $\text{Hqt Awt ib}$ (Heqet 'mistress' of the Ennead) . She was the mistress of the gods of the sky $\text{Hqt ntrw pt}$ (Heqet 'mistress' of gods of the sky). She was mistress of the flame island acting as the eye of Re during the New kingdom and the Graeco-Roman period.

In this capacity she was a protective goddess. One can say that: the frog was connected with most gods of creation in ancient Egypt like Atum-Re, Ptah and Amun 'in the Hermopolitan mythology'. Her transformation from one stage of existence to another shows this logical idea.

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49. Leitz, Lexikon der Ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen, v, 539.
50. Leitz, Lexikon der Ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen, v, 537.
54. Leitz, Lexikon der Ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen, v, 543,545.
55. Leitz, Lexikon der Ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen, v, 538.
Frog amulets and other related objects:

In ancient Egypt, an image of a frog was depicted on apotropaic wands\textsuperscript{56} (fig.3).\textsuperscript{57} These wands were laid above the wombs of women or new born children as a sort of protection.\textsuperscript{58} Upon one of these wands that dates back to eighteenth century BC,\textsuperscript{59} one can see a frog placed upon a nb sign, with a knife under its right foreleg. This scene could be interpreted $\text{ḥ år nb(t)}$ ds (The frog is the mistress of the knife ) as a symbol of protection. The figure which was depicted on the temple of Dendara emphasizes this meaning. Here, one can see a male human body with a frog head and a long tail holding two knives in his hands as a symbol of protection (fig.4).\textsuperscript{60}

The hieroglyphic sign of the frog was found engraved on a blue fiancé or a green stone such as malachite or green crystal.\textsuperscript{61} These were used as amulets. Frog amulets were worn by the living to provide fertility, and were buried with the dead to protect and rejuvenate them.\textsuperscript{62} Frog amulets were also especially favored by living women. For them, the frog served as a powerful symbol of fecundity .One of these amulets made of green glass (fig.5) ,was probably worn by a woman to ensure fecundity and to protect her during child birth.\textsuperscript{63} The green color was a symbol of resurrection in ancient Egypt.\textsuperscript{64} But this color in this amulet was

\textsuperscript{56} apotropaic means something that turns away evil, particularly evil spirits.
\textsuperscript{57} G. Pinch ,\textit{Magic in Ancient Egypt} (Texas ,1995),40,fig.19.
\textsuperscript{59} Davies and Friedman ,\textit{Egypt},Fig.p.172.
\textsuperscript{60} Ė . Chassinat , \textit{Le Temple de Dendara} , V-2(Le Caire ,1947),Figs. 431-432.
\textsuperscript{61} C. Eason ,\textit{Fabulous Creatures ,Mythical Monsters ,and Animal Power Symbols}( New York ,2007),131.
probably connected with green plants and the young babies as a symbol of growing. Frog amulets were also made of stones, like diorite (fig.6)\(^\text{65}\), a symbol of durability and eternity.\(^\text{66}\)

Many of these unpublished amulets are in the Agricultural Museum in Cairo.

1- no.535, made of carnelian,\(^\text{67}\) Middle kingdom, length 2.5cm., (fig.7).
2- no.2516, made of bronze, Late or Roman period, length 3.5cm., (fig.8).
no.536, made of fiance, Late period, length 1.6cm., (fig.8).
no.2517, made of fiance, Late period, length 1.0cm., (fig.8).
no.2518, made of blue fiance, Late period, length 0.8cm., (fig.8).
no.2519, made of grey fiance, Late period, length 1.2cm., (fig.8).
no.2520, made of dark fiance, Late period, length 1.2cm., (fig.8).
no.2521, made of dark-green fiance, Late period, length 1.0cm., (fig.8).
no.2522, made of grey fiance, Late period, length 1.1cm., (fig.8).
no.2523, made of grey-greenish fiance, Late period, length 1.0cm., (fig.8).
no.2524, made of grey-greenish fiance, Late period, length 1.2cm., (fig.8).

Similarly a number of unpublished frog statues are exhibited in the Agricultural Museum.

1- no.134, with a broken head, it is mentioned that it was made of fiance in the agricultural museum catalogue, but it was made of limestone, Middle kingdom (fig. 9).
2- no.736, made of red pottery, undated, from its style of industry the author can date it to the New kingdom period like figure no. 11, which bears the same industrial features and was dated to the same period, length 5.0cm. (fig.10).

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\(^{65}\) Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*, fig.28.
\(^{67}\) carnelian symbolized life in Ancient Egypt.
3- no.2513 made of diorite, New kingdom, length 8.0cm. (fig.11).

4- no.2514, made of red pottery, undated, from its style of industry the author can date it to the Middle kingdom period like figure no.9, length 6.2cm., (fig.12).

5- no.2515, made of alabaster, undated, but it can be attributed to the New kingdom period comparing it with an alabaster vase and an ornamental alabaster boat, which were found in the tomb of Tutankamen; both were figured with animal forms, and had the same artificial features, length 13.6cm., (fig.13). These statues could have been votive offerings to Heqet.

In addition, frogs were often mummified with the dead as magical amulets to ensure rebirth. Two of these unpublished mummies are in the Agricultural Museum, no.690, length 7 cm. uncertain period, and no.2512, length 6.5cm., undated, but the author can attribute them to the New kingdom period comparing them with frog mummies which were found in the tombs of Thebes (fig.14).

In the papyrus of Ebers, about 1500BC., the frog was 'warmed in oil and rubbed' on the patient's skin as a treatment for inflammation, but the modern medicine proved that it was a wrong treatment for inflammation, because it is evident that, with this method, the burns usually suppurate.

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71 Revise: Störk, in *L Ä*, II,33
72 P. Sipos and Others, 'Special Wound Healing Methods used in Ancient Egypt and the Mythological Background' *World Journal of Surgery* 28 (Budapest, 2004), 211.
The figures.

(Fig.1) a frog- type lamp from Saqqara ,north Saqqara ,sector 3 ,south-east corner .


(Fig.2) The frog -goddess 'Heqet' providing 'life' for newly fashioned children.
E.A.W.Budge ,From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt(New York, 1988),fig.p.97.
(Fig. 3) an apotropaic wand, made of ivory nineteenth to seventeenth centuries BC, among the beings depicted are the lion demon Bes, the hippopotamus goddess Taweret, the double sphinx known as Aker, and a frog is sitting upon a nb sign. It is inscribed with a formula promising protection to the lady of the house Seneb. G. Pinch, Magic in Ancient Egypt (Texas, 1995), 40, fig. 19.

(Fig. 4) a male human body with a frog-head and a long tail holding two knives in his hands as a symbol of protection, the temple of Dendara. Ē. Chassinat, Le Temple de Dendara, V-2 (Le Caire, 1947), Figs. 431-432.
(Fig.5) Frog amulet, glass, provenance unknown, New Kingdom. H: 0.95 cm., Cincinnati Art Museum, no. 1947.283. 

(Fig.6) Diorite squatting frog, sacred to Heqet, New Kingdom. C. Andrews, Amulets of Ancient Egypt (Texas, 1994), fig. 28.

(fig.7) Frog amulet no. 535, Agricultural Museum, Dokki, length 2.5 cm., made of carnelian, Middle kingdom, published for the first time. (The author).
(fig.8) Many amulets are exhibited in the Agricultural Museum, Dokki, up, no.2516, length 3.5 cm. made of bronze, Late or Roman period. Down from right to left, no.536, length 1.6 cm. made of fiance, Late period, no.2517, length 1.0 cm. made of fiance, Late period, no.2518, length 0.8 cm. made of blue fiance, Late period, no.2519, length 1.2 cm. made of grey fiance, Late period, no.2520, length 1.2 cm. made of dark fiance, Late period, no.2521, length 1.0 cm. made of dark-green fiance, Late period, no.2522, length 1.1 cm. made of grey fiance, Late period, no.2523, length 1.0 cm. made of grey-greenish fiance, Late period, no.2524, length 1.2 cm. made of grey-greenish fiance, Late period. Published for the first time. (The author).
(fig.9) frog statue, Agricultural Museum, Dokki, no.134, with a broken head, it was mentioned that it was made of fience in the Agricultural Museum catalogue, but it was mad of limestone, Middle kingdom. Published for the first time. (The author).

(fig.10) frog statue, Agricultural Museum, Dokki, no.736, length 5.0 cm.made of red pottery, New kingdom period. Published for the first time. (The author).
(fig.11) frog statue, Agricultural Museum, Dokki, no.2513, length 8.0cm. made of diorite, New kingdom. Published for the first time. (The author).

(fig.12) frog statue, Agricultural Museum, Dokki, no.2514, length 6.2cm. made of red pottery, the Middle kingdom period, published for the first time. (The author).
(fig.13) frog statue, Agricultural Museum, Dokki, no.2515, length 13.6cm., made of alabaster ,New kingdom , published for the first time . (The author).

(fig.14)Two frog mummies, Agricultural Museum, Dokki, right no.690, left no.2512.uncertain period perhaps New kingdom period, published for the first time . (The author).
(fig.15) a frog- type lamp, Mallawy Museum, no.541, red pottery, oval body, with a frog sculpture on the top, length 5.5 cm., width 4.7 cm. Graeco-Roman period, published for the first time. (The author).

(fig.16) a frog- type lamp, Mallawy Museum, no.552, red pottery, oval body, with a frog sculpture on the top, length 7.1 cm., width 7 cm. Graeco-Roman period, published for the first time. (The author).

(fig.17) a frog- type lamp, Mallawy Museum, no.537, white pottery, circular body, short nozzle, with a frog sculpture on the top, length 8.2 cm., width 7.2 cm. Graeco-Roman period, published for the first time. (The author).