

The background of the image is a close-up of an ancient Egyptian wall relief. It features a series of vertical papyrus stems, each topped with a stylized papyrus flower head. The flowers are arranged in a row, and the stems are separated by narrow vertical channels. The relief is carved into a light-colored, textured stone or plaster. The overall color palette is muted, with shades of beige, tan, and brown.

INTERPRETING ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY

A Structural Analysis of the Tale of the Two
Brothers and the Astarte Papyrus

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ČESKÝ EGYPTOLOGICKÝ ÚSTAV

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OTÁZKA VÝKLADU MYTOLOGIE

STAROVĚKÉHO EGYPTA

Strukturalistická analýza Příběhu o dvou bratřech a Astartina papyru

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Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně a že jsem uvedl všechny využití prameny a literaturu.

Martin Pehal

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PART I

FOREWORD

The main aim of my work is to investigate whether the structuralist method (as founded by Claude Lévi-Strauss and modified by Edmund Leach, Terence Turner and others) is applicable to ancient Egyptian mythological material. The most important impulse for undertaking this task was an impression which I obtained from reading standard Egyptological literature devoted to interpreting ancient Egyptian religion that Egyptology in general seems in many aspects to be a quite self contained academic discipline which often ignores the scholarly development in other fields. The high standard of archaeological and philological work, typical for Egyptology, is on the one hand a great asset because these two specialisations form the basis of any further interpretative theoretical work – they provide the essential data. On the other hand, the strong emphasis put on these classic methods can lead to an overvaluation of detail at the expense of a broader theoretical frame in which the details have to be set to enable their coherent interpretation – to see how they all fit together and show in what way they form a part of a system. This has been often too much neglected in the case of older works dedicated to ancient Egyptian Religion. Once confronted with the thought of ancient Egyptians, one is definitely baffled by the many foreign and strange ideas which it presents. Especially older authors, equipped with solid knowledge of historical methods, have naturally applied these to interpreting ancient Egyptian religious material. This, in my opinion, has proven to be ineffective in most cases since these historicising methods have not been originally designed for interpreting religious thought which is very specific and fundamentally different from that of a historian. The structural analysis, which has been introduced in anthropology in the 50s, is designed as a holistic approach to understanding human societies as systems in which all parts and aspects interact, counteract and influence each other. In its original form, as presented by Claude-Lévi Strauss, it is fallacious in many ways. Nevertheless, through adaptation and modification by others, it has been remoulded into a method which, in my opinion, respects the original material as much as possible and at the same time uncovers a system with specific rules into which all disparate units, chaotic though they might seem at first glance, fit as pieces of puzzle. It is also closest to the desired approach which Henri Frankfort in his *Ancient Egyptian religion: an Interpretation* called “the multiplicity of approaches”.

Egyptian religious thinking seems very suitable for structural analysis. The structuralist theory posits that the most elementary system in which any human mind operates is that of binary oppositions. The Egyptians themselves have formulated a strongly bipolar view of the universe: Egyptian kingdom had been the outcome of the unification of the Two Lands, each

king had been installed after the consolidation of the two opposing rivals – Seth and Horus, the ordered cosmos (Egypt) was surrounded by chaos threatening its existence (foreign countries), etc. The structuralist theory can also cope very well with the fact that divinities and other characters change their positions within the pantheon, have ambivalent characteristics and generally defy rules of logic so basic to the notion of our science. In fact, this flexibility of Egyptian deities and myths exactly has very often been the main source of amazement for students of Egyptian religion. If the traditional scholarly methods favoured by Egyptology emphasise detail, then structuralism focuses on a broader framework into which these details may be set and shows what relations the individual units have with each other.

My work tries to be multidisciplinary combining the methods used by Egyptology and Religious Studies. In this way I hope to come to conclusions which would not be obvious if I had restricted myself to solely one of these two disciplines.

INTRODUCTION

The situation which we face when studying ancient Egyptian religion is very similar to that of a scholar studying ancient Egyptian language and literary styles:

There is always a conceptual dilemma inherent in trying to write on stylistic or rhetoric devices of a culture whose views on language are very remote from our own, as is the case of ancient Egypt. We find ourselves in a quandary between two poles. On the one hand, we want to identify as precisely as possible these devices “-emically,” i.e., within the frame of reference provided by that culture’s own linguistic or literary practice. On the other hand, to help us achieve this goal, we can rely only on “-etic” hermeneutic categories derived from our own theoretical horizon. In the case of literary devices, there are categories we draw basically from Classical antiquity, mediated through the European Middle Ages.¹

In the case of studying ancient Egyptian religion, we are first confronted with the problem of clarifying what exactly do we mean by such terms as “myth” and “mythology”. The basic question is not whether we have or have not the right to impose analytical categories on foreign cultural material present or past (after all, these analytical categories are all we have got), but whether by doing so we do not distort the material too much. The problem of “emic” and “etic” categories is very well mirrored in a massive discussion between specialists on Egyptian religion concerning the question whether “myths” (an “etic” category) existed in early phases of Egyptian history or not. In Part I of this work I would, therefore, like to concentrate on summarizing what methods the Egyptologists have applied so far in studying ancient Egyptian religious material. By doing this I will have an opportunity to evaluate their asset and inquire into the nature of different methods of interpreting ancient Egyptian mythology and by doing so also into the nature of ancient Egyptian mythology itself. This will subsequently bring us to the discussion about the nature of the material pertaining to Egyptian religious thought and to an assessment of the best methodology used for its interpretation.

¹ ANTONIO LOPRIENO, “Puns and Word Play in Ancient Egypt”, in Schott B. Noegel (ed.), *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, Bethesda and Maryland: CDL Press, 2000.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

One of the widely used approaches to interpreting Egyptian religious material is the euhemeristic method.² Classic example of such interpretation is presented by Kurt Sethe.³ He interprets a New Kingdom text known as “The Contendings of Horus and Seth”⁴ by simply stating that it reflects historical events which are cloaked by the narrative of the story and consequently reconstructs the history of the early Egyptian state as far back as the fifth millennium B.C.⁵ Sethe’s conclusions were followed by J. Gwyn Griffiths⁶ and even found its proponent in the person of Jan Assmann.⁷ A slightly different but also euhemeristic in essence is the interpretation by Joachim Spiegel.⁸ This interpretative method is problematic in its essence. Claude Lévi-Strauss gives us a clue as to why when commenting on the relation of myth and reality: “The myth is certainly related to given (empirical) facts, but not as a *re-presentation* of them. The relationship is of a dialectic kind, and the institutions described in the myths can be the very opposite of the real institutions.”⁹ The euhemeristic method stems from a strictly historical (diachronic) handling of mythological/religious material. Scholars who decide to use this method are therefore very often amazed by the fact that there are several, often contradictory, versions of one myth or that one character plays different, often contradictory, roles. In order to cope with such a fact they tend to construct complicated historical reconstructions which (1) cannot be proved at all (2) do not tell

² “Euhemerism is the view, named after the fourth-century B.C. historian Euhemerus of Syros, that the gods are dead men, heroes who made such contributions to the course of civilization that they were worshiped as gods after their death.” (ROBERT A. ODEN, JR., “The Contendings of Horus and Seth” [Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 1]: A Structural Interpretation”, *History of Religions* 18.4 [May 1979]: 360–361).

³ KURT SETHE, *Urgeschichte und älteste Religion der Ägypter*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes [Abh.K.M.] 18.4, Leipzig, 1930, especially §85–93.

⁴ For the hieroglyphic text, see: ALAN H. GARDINER, *Late Egyptian Stories*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca, I, Bruxelles: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1932, p. 37–60. For a comprehensive summary of this motive throughout Egyptian history, see: J. GWYN GRIFFITHS, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth From Egyptian and Classical Sources*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960.

⁵ SETHE, *Urgeschichte*, § 110.

⁶ GRIFFITHS, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth*, p. 119–124. Needless to say, the historicising interpretation was rejected by HENRI FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948, p. 21–22, 212.

⁷ JAN ASSMANN, *Ägypten—Eine Sinngeschichte*, Munich and Vienna, 1996, p. 57 (translation by KATJA GOEBS, “A Functional Approach to Egyptian Myth and Mythemes”, *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* [JANER] 2.1 (2002): 39, n. 46): “The text can be successfully (*sehr gut*) understood as a mythical figuration of a historical situation, in which a period of two rivalling kingdoms is ended by the foundation of an all-inclusive unity. ... Horus stands, of course, for the Horian kingship of Hierakonpolis, and Seth for the kingship of Naqada.”

⁸ JOACHIM SPIEGEL, *Die Erzählung vom Streite des Horus und Seth in Pap. Beatty I als Literaturwerk*, Leipziger Ägyptologische Studien 9, Glückstadt, Hamburg, and New York, 1937, p. 68–83, especially p. 76. As summarized by GOEBS, “A Functional Approach”: 39, n. 46: “Joachim Spiegel held that the primary conflict in this myth is between the creator and the Ennead, reflecting the terrestrial conflict between state/king and nomarchs at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom.”

⁹ CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, “The Story of Asdiwal”, in Edmund Leach (ed.), *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, London: Tavistock, 1967, p. 29, see also p. 11–12 for an example – tension between the patrilocal residence of married couples in reality as opposed to matrilineal residence stressed in the myth; (reprinted in R. SEGAL [ed.], *Structuralism in Myth*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1996).

us anything about the mythical material in question (see, for example, Mercer's interpretation of sayings located in the underground chambers of Teti's pyramid as being the outcome of some type of a quarrel of the priestly "Osiris" and "Re" lobbies).¹⁰ These scholars also very often decide to select one version of a text as the "correct/authentic" version or they conflate "discrepant variations into an internally consistent narrative."¹¹

Another interpretive tradition which found its way into Egyptology was based on the presumptions of the myth-ritual school¹² and promoted mainly by Siegfried Schott,¹³ followed by Eberhard Otto¹⁴ and S. H. Hooke.¹⁵ Schott presents a theory that there once had been a period in Egyptian history when there existed rituals and "stories" or "folktales" (*Märchen*)¹⁶ with no relation to each other. Eberhard Otto extended Schott's theory and stated that there once were myth-free (*mythenfrei*)¹⁷ rituals, "which were believed to be innately efficacious, whereas during the Old Kingdom this belief withered and the rites had to be supplemented by myths which rendered them efficacious once more."¹⁸

Siegfried Schott was also the first author to have seriously raised the problem of the (non)existence of Egyptian myths in early historical phases of the development of Egyptian state.¹⁹ He argued that there is no attestation of myths in Egypt in pre-dynastic times and that the first hint of their formation (in the form of "quotations" or "fragments") could be seen in the Pyramid Texts.²⁰ Schott's thesis was rejected by Jan Assmann.²¹ As summarized by Katja Goebis,²²

¹⁰ SAMUEL A. MERCER (ed.), *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, vol. I–IV., New York: Van Rees Press, 1952, p. 30–31.

¹¹ K. R. WALTERS: "Another showdown at the Cleft Way: An Inquiry into Classicists' Criticism of Levi-Strauss' Myth Analysis", *Classical World* 77 (1984), p. 342.

¹² On the myth-ritual (or "Cambridge") school, see: ROBERT ACKERMAN, *Myth and Ritual School: J. G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists*, Routledge, 2002. Some of the proponents were Jane Harrison, Samuel H. Hooke, Gilbert Murray, F. M. Cornford, A. B. Cook and others. They were strongly inspired by the work and theories of JAMES FRAZER's, *The Golden Bough: A study in Magic and Religion*, 12 vols., London, 1917.

¹³ SIEGFRIED SCHOTT, *Mythe und Mythenbildung im alten Ägypten*, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ägyptens [UGAA] 14, Leipzig, 1945.

¹⁴ EBERHARD OTTO, *Das Verhältnis von Rite und Mythos im Ägyptischen*, Heidelberg, 1958.

¹⁵ SAMUEL H. HOOKE (ed.), *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford, 1960.

¹⁶ See, for example, SCHOTT, *Mythe und Mythenbildung*, p. 87–90.

¹⁷ OTTO, *Das Verhältnis*, p. 9.

¹⁸ JOHN BAINES, "Egyptian Myth and Discourse: Myth, Gods, and the Early Written and Iconographic Record", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* [JNES] 50 (1991): 83, see also n. 17. The idea that myths function as an interpretative instrument of rituals is explicitly formulated by SCHOTT, *Mythe und Mythenbildung*, p. 29.

¹⁹ SIEGFRIED SCHOTT, "Spuren der Mythenbildung", *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* [ZÄS] 78, 1942: 1–27, clearly formulated on p. 26. For a brief summary of his theories, see: "Die älteren Gottermythen," in B. Spuler (Hrsg.), *Literatur, Handbuch der Orientalistik*, 1.2, 2nd ed., Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970, p. 90–98. Schott's position on this matter is summarized by BAINES, "Egyptian Myth and Discourse": 83 and both S. Schott's and J. Assmann's position is summarized in: HEIKE STERNBERG, *Mythische Motive und Mythenbildung in den ägyptischen Tempeln und Papyri der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, Göttinger Orientforschungen (GOF) IV.14, Wiesbaden, 1985, p. 14–20.

²⁰ SCHOTT, *Mythe und Mythenbildung*, p. 135–136.

²¹ JAN ASSMANN, "Die Verborgenheit des Mythos in Ägypten", *Göttinger Miszellen* [GM] 25 (1977): 7–43.

²² GOEBIS, "A Functional Approach": 29.

Assmann argued that: “none of the early attestations of mythemes, such as those in the Pyramid Texts, displays a fixed structure that would allow us to infer the existence of longer, coherent narratives.” Jürgen Zeidler²³ disagreed with Assmann’s conclusions and use of methods developed by Vladimir Propp for analyzing Russian folktales and applying them on Egyptian material, “Zeidler demonstrates the (in part implicit) ‘narrativity’ of some mythemes that are attested in the Pyramid Texts, and thus argues for the existence of myths at the time when they were written down.”²⁴

For Assmann a myth is a story about the divine world which has a beginning, middle, and end.²⁵ This is an absolutely legitimate way of handling the topic since the word “mythos” stands for “word/story”. According to Assmann, the Pyramid Texts lack narrative but, at the same time, even though he does not say it explicitly, he acknowledges this bulk of written material to be of religious character and of primary importance. Many episodes which are to be found in the Pyramid Texts appear later in narrative contexts. Therefore Assmann cannot use the term “myth” or any of its derivatives but at the same time he must acknowledge that in the Pyramid Texts there is some type of interaction between numinous entities. In order to overcome this flaw in the analytical system, Assmann decides to refer to the gods and goddess and to their actions as “constellations” (*Konstellationen*). Such “constellations” express relations within a relatively fixed group of deities without the narrative context.²⁶ These “constellations” were, according to Assmann, sufficient for the builders of the pyramids because the worlds of men and gods were at that time so close that there had virtually been no space for the formulation of myths.²⁷ In accordance with the main thesis of the myth-ritual school, he claims that rituals formed an older, “pre-mythical” (*vormythischen*)²⁸ stratum in which there was no space for gods in narrative sequences but only in “constellations”, evoked when necessary.

Apart from “constellations” Assmann introduces another term – “mythical statements” (*mythische Aussagen*).²⁹ At one point it seems that for Assmann one of the main prerequisites of a myth is its narrativity (beginning – middle – end) and he states that written material which would correspond to this criterion is not attested before the Middle Kingdom and that it is only in the New Kingdom that narrative myth started being employed on a larger scale (unfortunately, he

²³ JÜRGEN ZEIDLER, “Zur Frage der Späentstehung des Mythos in Ägypten”, *Göttinger Miscellen [GM]* 132 (1993): 85–109.

²⁴ GOEBS, “A Functional Approach”: 29.

²⁵ ASSMANN, “Die Verborgenheit”: 20–21.

²⁶ *Idem*: 14.

²⁷ *Idem*: 14.

²⁸ *Idem*: 14.

²⁹ *Idem*: 28–39.

does not give any examples).³⁰ The reader is in a way reassured that at some point of history myths do appear and that it will be the period before their appearance which Assmann will try to analyze. Nevertheless, once he starts talking about the relation of mythical statements to myth a quite different concept of the term “myth” appears.³¹ In this new concept “myth” moves a level higher to a certain meta-level. Assmann creates a strictly analytical, abstract and almost Platonic concept of a myth which in the “real” world is perceivable solely through its mythical statements. In Assmann’s view the “mythical statement” relates to the “myth” itself in three possible ways³² and every mode produces texts with different characteristics (note that literary narratives – the “genre” of ancient Egyptian literature which I would consider to correspond most with Assmann’s original concept of the term “myth” – are now considered to be mythical statements and not myths themselves).

Assmann then goes on and introduces new terminology. The new “meta-myth” is called geno-text (*Geno-Text*)³³ and the mythical statements, which are in relation to the geno-text, become pheno-texts (*Phäno-Text*).³⁴ The geno-text would then represent a mythical motive latently present in the minds of individual Egyptians (which would together form “cultural memory” – a key term used by Assmann in his other works³⁵); the pheno-texts would then be expressions of this latently present pattern in individual texts (be it spells, theological treatises, folk narratives or other) through the process of “functional differentiation” (*Funktionale Differenzierung*).³⁶ As Assmann himself acknowledges, this distinction had already been made in linguistics by the structuralist scholarly tradition and, in accordance with their terminology, the geno-text would be a phenomenon on the level of *langue* and the pheno-text on the level of *parole*.³⁷ This new terminology could very well function as a liaison between one of the main points of Bains’ criticism of Assmann’s theory. Bains argues that the non-existence of a narrative in early phases of Egyptian history is not caused by the closeness of the divine and the humane, but with all probability due to a strong oral tradition which had not been preserved for us in

³⁰ *Idem*: 9.

³¹ Assmann unfortunately does not warn the reader about this shift of meaning which is a little perplexing.

³² ASSMANN, “Die Verborgenheit”: 37–39; summary by BAINES, “Egyptian Myth and Discourse”: 88, n. 49, 50: (i) instrumental or analogical (*handlungsbezogen*); (ii) argumentative or etiological (*wissensbezogen*); and (iii) literary or noninstrumental (*situationsabstrakt*). These types correspond to the use of mythical material in such contexts as (i) magical texts; (ii) encyclopedic or discursive material such as the “Memphite Theology”; (iii) literary narratives such as Horus and Seth.

³³ ASSMANN, “Die Verborgenheit”: 37–39.

³⁴ As the term “pheno-text” implies, this expression should be of a textual type and only in this meaning does Assmann use it in his article. Nevertheless, I would find this term more operative if it would comprise not only written material, but also objects of art, daily use, social institutions etc. – i.e. all spheres of human activity.

³⁵ JAN ASSMANN, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone, Stanford – California: Stanford University Press, 2006.

³⁶ ASSMANN, “Die Verborgenheit”: 38.

³⁷ *Idem*: 38: “Der Mythos ist in Bezug auf die mythische Aussage ein Langue-Phänomen.”

writing.³⁸ Even though this is very probable we will hardly ever be able to prove it. The same problem stands for Assmann's geno-text: an imaginary entity, not accessible to direct investigation but underlying all pheno-textual manifestations. The idea of an oral tradition common to the general cultural memory-pool of ancient Egyptians and serving as the basis for all individual representations (not only in writing but in all aspects of human expression – objects, social institutions, etc.) fits the concept of a geno-text very well and it would also go very well with the characteristics which the linguists themselves assign to *langue*.

Assmann's arguments in the latter half of his article can be summarized thus:

(1) The existence of myths implies an ontological distance between the divine and "real" worlds, and yet their inextricable involvement with each other, as shown in early rituals, is incompatible with such a distance; and (2) the detaching of divine and "real" involves disenchantment and the creation of a temporal frame between them. Assmann dates both of these assumed shifts to the First Intermediate Period and later.³⁹

In essence, then, Assmann follows the theory of the myth-ritual school. At one point, deep in Egyptian history, there were no myths because they were not needed – rituals were efficacious as such. Moving closer in history, this "golden state" started staggering due to the beginning of some form of secularization.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the two worlds ("divine" and "real") were still so close that there was no need for narrative myths and Egyptians were well off with "constellations" – small groupings of gods (such as attested in the Pyramid Texts). These constellations were fused with rituals through a process which Assmann names "sacramental exegesis" (*Sakramentale Ausdeutung*).⁴¹ Once the process of secularization reached a certain point, myths were created in order to infuse the emptied rituals with meaning.⁴² The moment of this

³⁸ The problem of textualisation of oral tradition is also very closely examined by Assmann in several of his works. Nevertheless he chooses to interpret the absence of narrativity in early religious texts from the standpoint of the myth-ritual school.

³⁹ BAINES, "Egyptian Myth and Discourse": 89; ASSMANN, "Die Verborgenheit": 23, 39–43.

⁴⁰ Baines points out ("Egyptian Myth and Discourse": 87) that it was already SIEGFRIED MORENZ who formulated the idea that some sort of secularisation occurred during Egyptian history, see *Ägyptische Religion*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960, p. 6–15, especially p. 13.

⁴¹ ASSMANN, "Die Verborgenheit": 15–25.

⁴² *Idem*: 16: "Die Riten haben ihren ursprünglichen Sinn verloren und sind erklärungsbedürftig geworden. Der mythos liefert diese erklärungsbedürftigkeit. Er bezieht sich als explanans auf das explanandum der Rituellen Handlung." Here Assmann cross-references OTTO, *Das Verhältnis*, p. 14–15. This idea would be typical for the myth-ritual school. Unfortunately, it is based on a false presumption that rituals as such are static phenomena. On the contrary rituals are dynamic, constantly shifting their meanings and modifying both actors and the society itself. See RONALD L. GRIMES, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982 and RONALD L. GRIMES, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory*, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1990.

definite separation is, according to Assmann, in the First Intermediate Period⁴³ which produced this type of disenchantment.

THE MYTH-RITUAL SCHOOL: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

In the previous section I have already expressed my criticism of the euhemeristic method (see above, p. 7–8). The other main interpretive tradition is that of the myth-ritual school. This scholarly tradition considers rituals to be static phenomena concerned mainly with sheer repetition of acts and speeches stretching all the way to *illo tempore* – to the foundations of the cosmos. Once the rituals become incomprehensible to the actors, myths have to come to the rescue with an infusion of meaning and save the rituals from demise.

This school has one basic flaw lethal to the validity of the whole theory: the assumption that rituals are static phenomena. As the works of Victor Turner,⁴⁴ James Laidlaw and Caroline Humphrey,⁴⁵ Terence Turner,⁴⁶ Ronald L. Grimes⁴⁷ and many others have shown, the relation between rituals and ritualists (a term designating people who engage in rituals) is a dialectic one. One cannot be without the other and once they merge they change each other so that not one ritual enactment is the same as the previous one. In this work I do not have the space to go into details but in order to illustrate this I will follow Victor Turner and explain the nature of the relation of rituals and ritualists on an image of a river.⁴⁸ The ritual form with all its rules and restrictions, often incomprehensible expressions, stylised actions and other features typical of ritual action would symbolize the river bed and the banks. This is the seemingly static part, the structure that is firmly embedded in the substance of the culture. The individuals with their

⁴³ This period is traditionally considered to be solely a time of havoc and chaos (see for example: JOHN A. WILSON, *The Burden of Egypt: An Interpretation of Ancient Egyptian Culture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, p. 105). This view is based mainly on Egyptian texts where it is described as a period of absolute reversal of society and its rules. One of the most often quoted texts in support of this theory are the so-called “Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage/Ipwuer”: “Verily, thieves [plunder] everywhere,/And the servant pilfers whatever he finds. [...]Verily, paupers have become men of affluence,/And he who could not provide / sandals for himself is (now) the possessor of wealth. [...]Verily, the children of the nobles are smashed against the walls,/And suckling children are thrown out onto the desert.” (RAYMOND O. FAULKNER, “Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage”, in William K. Simpson, *The Literature of ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 2003³, p. 191, 194, for references see p. 188–189.) For an alternative assessment, see: STEPHAN SEIDELMAYER, “The First Intermediate Period”, in Ian Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford history of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 118–147.

⁴⁴ VICTOR TURNER, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*, (The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1966 presented at the University of Rochester), Rochester – New York – Chicago: Aldine, 1969.

⁴⁵ CAROLINE HUMPHREY and JAMES LAIDLAW, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

⁴⁶ TERENCE TURNER, “Structure, Process, Form”, in Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg (eds.), *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2006, p. 207–261.

⁴⁷ GRIMES, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, especially chapter 4 “Defining Nascent Ritual”, p. 53–69.

⁴⁸ VICTOR TURNER, *From Ritual To Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982, p. 79

desires, doubts and longings (very often contradictory to the rules given by the society) would represent the water. The aquatic element is hard to contain, it slips between the fingers and has a life of its own. In order to speak of a “river”, we must have both – water and riverbanks. Water without being contained by boundaries is a flood but cultural river banks without water are a sign of aridity. The dynamic relation of these two elements is such that even though water must, to some extent, follow the route given by the river banks, at the same time it has the force and power to alter the river banks themselves. In this process it is obvious that there will be branches of the river which will be blocked and gradually separated from the main stream just like rituals die and whither away. Nevertheless, it is the process of constant shifting of the river banks which does not allow for the rituals to lose their meaning (not necessarily only intellectual meaning – rituals have a very specific type of physical meaning as well, see Grimes⁴⁹). The basic mistake of the myth-ritual school is that they see the ritual riverbanks cast in concrete and iron, unchanging and unalterable. Through a process of some type (Assmann sees it as a type of disenchanting secularization) the water (representing the ritualists’ enactment and understanding of the rituals) diverges from the river bed and has to be channelled back by mythology which, according to the myth-ritual school, has got the ability to intellectually explain the meaning of rituals. But as is obvious, this just does not work. In our image water surely changes its flow but *together with the riverbanks*.

The view is mistaken in one more regard: that it understands mythology as some kind of supplementary explicatory genre or a type of “savage science” which ancient peoples applied when they stopped understanding their surroundings. As I will try to explain in the second part of my work, myth as such has a cultural function of its own. In many ways myth may supplement ritual and vice versa but to say that it *only* supplements and explains is a reductionistic view.

As we have seen, Assmann relies heavily on the theory of the myth-ritual school and the same criticism applies also to his theory. This dependence is most obvious in his concept of some type of “golden age” in which the Egyptians understood their rituals not needing mythology, being so close to the divine sphere as almost merging. As Baines remarks:

In a sense, the view of early times as a period when divine and human were in close contact is an Egyptological “myth” with some of the etiological function of many ancient myths. In the modern context, such an age of innocence both legitimizes conceptions of the pristine Egyptian state and fits an analogy between the duration of Egyptian civilization and a lifespan that passes from innocence through experience to senescence.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ GRIMES, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*.

⁵⁰ BAINES, “Egyptian Myth and Discourse”: 92.

This concept, which Assmann follows, has in fact a far-reaching consequence for his theory. By pronouncing narrativity a key characteristic of myth and at the same time by not finding narrativity in early Egyptian religious texts, he must logically and correctly conclude that narrativity was not needed. To answer the question *Why was it not needed?* by stating with the myth-ritual school that back then people were closer to gods, is just not satisfactory.

The problem lies in the understanding of the word “narrativity”. If we take narrativity as a logical sequence of the content of the texts (in its simplest form beginning – middle – end which I will from now on call “semantic narrativity”) and we deny the status of myth to that material which doesn’t correspond with this criterion, then there is a great danger, which many scholars did not avoid, of depriving logical ordering of the given material in general. The outcome may then be a tendency to dissect this “illogically” ordered material into tiny parts and subsequently trying to figure the historic and political origin of each motive and its development (euhemeristic method) or postulating some sort of stronger divine presence in ancient times (myth-ritual school). The main problem with these approaches is that *they do not help us understand the religious material itself.*

The possibility I am offering is to employ and use the concept of “structural narrativity”. The concept of this term I will try to explain in the following two chapters.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PYRAMID TEXTS

We have seen that the main criterion for Assmann and others that a certain text be considered a “myth” is narrativity. According to other authors⁵¹ another very important aspect of myths is that in some way they are considered to be “sacred” or “holy” to the people who narrate them. As has been shown by William Bascom, many tribal societies apply their own (“emic”) criteria for distinguishing different types of stories (written or told) based on the level of veracity and, therefore, sanctity.⁵² In Egypt, unfortunately, we have no such concept of “true” and “false” stories.⁵³ In Egypt the level of “sanctity” of certain inscriptions was indicated by the place where they were carved or by the material used for transmission.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, starting with king Unas of the 5th dynasty, we are confronted with a substantial bulk of the so-called Pyramid Texts. Located in the inner chambers of the pyramids – feats of intellectual and material magnitude⁵⁵ – they were obviously bestowed with power which is specific for the realm of the sacred.⁵⁶ Their content pertains to the interaction of the king with the gods in the netherworld and many of the motives mentioned there are to be found in later contexts in narrative wholes, which even to Assmann’s strict requirements do meet the criteria to be considered “myths”. We are therefore confronted with a quite substantial bulk of material which, by the criterion “sacredness”,⁵⁷ must be considered a myth but at the same time it seems not to be subject to the other important criterion – we are obviously lacking a narrative. Or are we really?

⁵¹ ALAN DUNDES (ed.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1984.

⁵² WILLIAM BASCOM, “The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives”, in Alan Dundes (ed.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1984, p. 5–29.

⁵³ In fact the hieroglyphic script itself had the designation *mdw ntr*, which could be translated as “the words of god”. As such, we could see all types of writing as “holy” in a certain way.

⁵⁴ I am thankful for this note to Dr. Johanna Holaubek from the Viennese Institute of Egyptology, who pointed out this fact to me. Personal communication, 21.1.2008, Vienna. The importance of the media, which is used for the transmission of a certain text, is noted by Antonio Loprieno: “As a matter of fact, in the cases in which the same (or similar) text is transmitted both in epigraphic and in palaeographic form, the change of the channel often indicates a change in the scope of the text, including a reduction of the official character to the advantage of the literary (that is, individual and personal) dimension.” (ANTONIO LOPRIENO, “Defining Egyptian Literature: Ancient Texts and Modern Literary Theory”, in Jerrold S. Cooper and Glenn M. Schwartz (eds.), *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996, p. 224.)

⁵⁵ Or folly and haughtiness, as many ancient and modern authors have commented on them.

⁵⁶ A very important fact, mentioned in almost every work pertaining to the pyramid texts and their interpretation, proving that these inscriptions were considered to be endowed with magical potency, is the intentional mutilation of hieroglyphic signs representing potentially hostile objects, animals, people or gods. See PIERRE LACAU “Suppressions et modifications de signes dans les textes funéraires”, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* [ZÄS] 19 (1914): 1–64. For a study of the phenomena of mutilation of texts in general, see: WILLIE VAN PEER, “Mutilated Signs: Notes toward a Literary Paleography”, *Poetics Today*, 18.1 (1997): 33–57.

⁵⁷ JAMES HOFFMEIER, *Sacred in the Vocabulary of Ancient Egypt*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* [OBO] 59 (1985), Freiburg/Göttingen.

As Assmann states himself there are some examples of narrative texts from the Old and Middle Kingdoms.⁵⁸ Contemporary to the creation of the Pyramid Texts was another “genre” of ancient Egyptian literature which was, on the opposite, composed of almost solely narrative sequences. By these I mean several autobiographies⁵⁹ of dignitaries who have recorded their accomplishments on the walls of their tombs. Even though these texts follow a certain canonical layout, in other parts they are composed as *curriculi vitae* of individuals in a strictly narrative and personalised manner. “Narrative” as such was evidently known to the ancient Egyptians of that time – they were not living in some timeless union with the gods as Assmann and others would like to see them. Maybe we should approach the problem of narrativity from a different angle. Katja Goebis had had a very interesting idea:

Rather than searching for coherence and narrativity in early Egyptian mythemes in an attempt to make them conform to a potentially artificial definition of myth, we should shift the focus of inquiry to the evidence itself and investigate its meaning. If narrativity is not one of the features displayed in the early sources, then it was probably not required.⁶⁰

So we face two ideas – according to Assmann *narrativity is required* for a text to be considered a myth and from the absence of narrativity he draws conclusions about the nature of the connection between the worlds of gods and men (see above). On the other hand, according to Goebis *narrativity was not required* by the Egyptians themselves and therefore it should not be required by us. Nevertheless, I will not follow either of these statements. Rather I will try to show that it was *the absence of narrativity which was required*.

If one should characterise Egyptian culture, one aspect would stand out – the desire of the Egyptians to monumentalise their culture and contain the ever flowing current of change in their monumental cultural structure. This tendency is prevalent in all aspects of Egyptian social organization and its expressions.

We touch here on a fundamental feature of Egyptian kingship, a feature rooted deeply in the Egyptian mentality: the touchstone for all that was really significant was its permanence. That was important which had always been and would never change. [...] It derived from an attitude of mind which comprehended the universe as essentially static.⁶¹

⁵⁸ ASSMANN, “Die Verborgenheit”: 14; nevertheless, he does not give us any examples nor does he give any references, possibly because this would undermine his theory.

⁵⁹ On autobiographies in Ancient Egypt, see for example: MIRIAM LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom. A Study and an Anthology*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis [OBO] 84 (1988); ANDREA GNIRS, “Die ägyptische Autobiographie”, in Antonio Loprieno (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, Leiden – New York – Köln: E. J. Brill, 1996, p. 191–242.

⁶⁰ GOEBIS, “A Functional Approach”: 33.

⁶¹ HENRI FRANKFORT, *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961, p. 49.

In this concept there is no place for narrativity because that implies an inherent end. Pyramids and the texts which they contain are an example *par excellence* of how the Egyptian culture decided to conceptualize itself – by building monuments which would endure the ages and stand forever, unchanged and untouched by time. It is no wonder that the texts, which are an organic part of these structures, deliberately avoid narrativity.⁶² It looks like Assmann and other Egyptologists have fallen for the image the ancient Egyptians desired to create with regard to their culture – one of a static order where beginning, middle and end merge. Ancient Egyptians' desire was to contain change (chaos) within the system so as to create a seemingly unchanging (static) order, the Maat.⁶³ To do this they decided to suppress “semantic narrativity” (beginning – middle – end) in texts carved in the pyramids and stressed “structural narrativity”.

“SEMANTIC NARRATIVITY” AS OPPOSED TO “STRUCTURAL NARRATIVITY”

Some time ago Jürgen Zeidler⁶⁴ attempted to prove that we can find narrativity in the Pyramid Texts. The difference between his and my approach is that whereas he tried to prove that narrativity was inherent to the texts themselves (semantic narrativity), I will try to prove that it is mediated by the spatial disposition of the texts within the pyramid itself (structural narrativity). I dare to do so relying on (1) a brilliant analysis by James P. Allen⁶⁵ of the disposition of the texts in Unas' pyramid and to (2) the nature of hieroglyphic script itself.⁶⁶

(1) Allen understood very well the relation between the Pyramid Texts themselves and the architecture of the tomb. He saw that the ordering of the texts does have a pattern in the narration of the resurrection process of the deceased king (see also fig. 1):

⁶² I will show later on that the Pyramid Texts do actually follow a certain “narrative” order which is nevertheless given structurally and not semantically. I am grateful to my advisor Radek Chlup (Charles University Prague) for channelling my thoughts in this direction.

⁶³ JAN ASSMANN, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*, München: Beck, 1990.

⁶⁴ ZEIDLER, “Zur Frage der Späntstehung”. Summarized by GOEBS, “A Functional Approach”: 29: “Applying formalist/structuralist methods developed by Vladimir Propp to analyse Russian folk tales, which were subsequently used to study narratives of many cultures and types, to the Egyptian evidence, Zeidler demonstrates the (in part implicit) “narrativity” of some mythemes that are attested in the Pyramid Texts, and thus argues for the existence of myths at the time when they were written down.” Unfortunately, without a certain level of courage and cunning, one should not try to tackle his article which in some ways is so abstract and schematic that it might be considered to be either the work of a genius or madman.

⁶⁵ JAMES P. ALLEN, “Reading a Pyramid”, in C. Berger, G. Clerc a N. Grimal (eds.), *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, Bibliothèque d'Étude [BdE] 106.1, Cairo, 1994, p. 5–28.

⁶⁶ For a very nice and brief characterization of the nature of hieroglyphic script, see: HERMAN TE VELDE, “Egyptian Hieroglyphs as Linguistic Signs and Metalinguistic Informants” in Hans G. Kippenberg et al. (eds.), *The Image in Writing*, Visible Religion 6, Leiden – New York – København – Köln: E. J. Brill, 1988, p. 169–179.

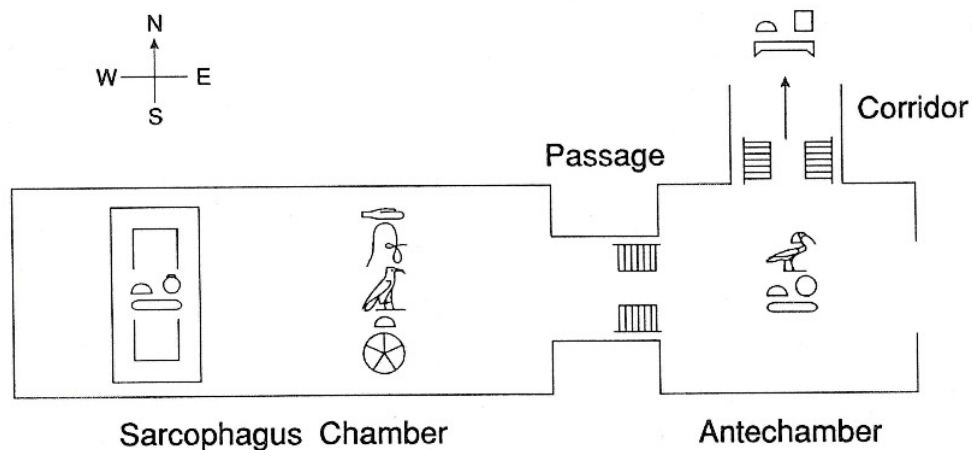


fig 1

The king's body [...] does seem to motivate the progression of the texts outwards from the sarcophagus chamber. This principle [...] reflects the king's viewpoint: the texts read in the order he would find them in moving from the sarcophagus out of the tomb.^[67]

[...]

The concept of the king's journey from death to new life enshrined in Unis's Pyramid Texts parallels that of the sun: dying in the west, uniting with Osiris in the Duat, and rising again in the east. The cosmology of this solar passage is that of the night (west to east) rather than day (east to west). It is reflected not only in the texts and their layout but also in the substructure of the pyramid itself.^[68]

The western, and innermost, room, the sarcophagus chamber, corresponds to the Duat.^[69] In the western, and innermost, part of this room the king's body lies in its sarcophagus as the body of Osiris lies in the most hidden (StA) part of the Duat.

[...]

Once released from its attachment to the body, the king's ba proceeds (with the sun) through the Duat toward sunrise. ("Like the Akhet, the antechamber lies east of the Duat/Sarcophagus chamber"^[70]). Between the Duat and the morning sky lies the Akhet. [...] it is the region through which the sun passes in the hour between its emergence from the Duat at first light and its appearance in the day sky at dawn.

[...] at the end of the antechamber [the inscription PT 311] speaks of opening "the door of the Akhet for the emergence of the day bark". This doorway is both the exit from the Akhet and the entrance to the day-sky. Architecturally it corresponds to the door from the antechamber to the corridor [...].^[71]

⁶⁷ ALLEN, "Reading a Pyramid", p. 24.

⁶⁸ *Idem*, p. 24, fig. 5.

⁶⁹ This theory is also supported by the decoration of the ceiling of the sarcophagus chamber itself. Andrzej Ćwiek notes a very important detail: "Stars decorating ceilings of the underground chambers of the Step Pyramid, re-appeared under Unis (in the meantime such a decoration occurred probably only in the temples). Stars of Unis were painted blue on white (not yellow against blue background as usually stated!) and it seems that the idea they expressed developed gradually further as later the white-on-black pattern became to be used in the pyramid chambers. At the same moment, the star-decoration on the ceilings in the temples showed yellow stars on a blue background. This difference is by no means accidental. The ceilings inside the pyramid represented the night sky or anti-sky, while those in the temples depicted the day sky. The netherworld and the earth were thus differentiated." ANDRZEJ ĆWIEK, *Relief Decoration in the Royal Funerary Complexes of the Old Kingdom: Studies in the Development, Scene Content and Iconography*, PhD Thesis, Warsaw University, 2003 (download from: http://www.gizapyramids.org/code/emuseum.asp?newpage=authors_list#C – last visited 20.8.2008), p. 297–298.

⁷⁰ ALLEN, "Reading a Pyramid", p. 27.

⁷¹ *Idem*, p. 24–28.

Allen's interpretation solves in my view another problem which Egyptologists have with the Pyramid Texts: they are very often bewildered by the fact that within this corpus references concerning the fate of the king after death are made both to the fact that he will become Osiris and that he will join Re in his bark.⁷² This, to them, seems to be an absolute contradiction. For example Samuel A. Mercer writes: "Here then were two great systems of religious thought [.....] the solar religion was essentially a royal one, while the Osirian religion was or became chiefly a religion of the people. With two related yet different systems of religion side by side there needed be a reaction, competition, and hostility."⁷³ Then he continues with the analysis of individual sayings from the pyramid of Teti and tries to show which were originally formulated by the Osiris or Re "lobby" and how these rival groups managed to infiltrate the texts of their adversaries. This interpretation is of course highly problematic; firstly, because we simply have no evidence for any of these "contending" groups; secondly, because it does not really help us to explain the meaning of the texts themselves. Edmund Leach, after his structuralist analysis of several Old Testament episodes, very aptly comments on this approach in the following way:

[The structuralist analysis] rests on the presumption that the whole of the text as we now have it regardless of the varying historical origins of its component parts may be properly treated as a unity. This contrasts very sharply with the method of orthodox scholarship. In the latter the occurrence of palpable duplication, inconsistency etc., is treated as evidence of a corrupt text. The task of the scholar, then, is to sift the true from the false, to distinguish one ancient version from another ancient version and so on. [...] I greatly wonder whether the effort can be worthwhile. The unscrambling of omelettes is at best laborious and is not likely to improve the taste!⁷⁴

(2) Egyptian script in its full hieroglyphic form⁷⁵ is in a way absolutely unparalleled because it has preserved the original forms of the signs which represent actual objects, animals, people or gods. Another level of meaning of a certain word or a group of words can be mediated by the spatial relations of the glyphs themselves as actual objects which they depict.⁷⁶ The

⁷² As we have seen in the text, the king is Osiris in one phase and in another phase he is Re.

⁷³ MERCER, *The Pyramid Texts*, p. 30.

⁷⁴ EDMUND LEACH, "The Legitimacy of Solomon", in Stephen Hugh-Jones and James Laidlaw (eds.), *The essential Edmund Leach. Volume 1 – Anthropology and society*, New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 76.

⁷⁵ As opposed to the hieratic (cursive) form and later the demotic.

⁷⁶ Sometimes even in combination with the material on which the signs were written. In his article, Antonio Loprieno illustrates this ("Puns", p. 4–5) on a text written on a scribal palette dating to the peak of the New Kingdom (around 1400 B.C.) dedicated to the god Ptah by a certain Rin-Nafir, who asks for himself "[...] life, prosperity, and health to the festive man who loves myrrh (*mrj* *ʿntjw*) and favors beauty [...]." Loprieno explains that the part of the text where the word *mrj* (to love), followed by a logogram for the word *ʿntjw* (myrrh), should occur was left blank. It was not a mistake on the side of the scribe because "parallel witnesses of the same formula clearly show that the empty space has to be decoded as a word play on its material support, i.e., on the *mrj*-wood [from which the palette bearing the text had been made – author's note] [...] the anepigraphic portion

Egyptians made use of this very often as for example in the case of a statue of the young king Ramesses IInd (see p. , fig. 2). In this picture we see the king (his name is to be found on the pedestal of the statue) depicted as a child under the protection of the falcon god Horus. There is a close connection between the deity and the king, since the king takes on one of the forms of “Horus the child”.⁷⁷ We could therefore say that the king *is* Horus. Nevertheless, this equation is highlighted by a 3D pun:⁷⁸ The child (ms) is adorned by a sun disk (ra) and is holding a plant the phonetic value of which is *sw*. If we put the signs together, we can read: *r* + *ms* + *sw* which spells the name of the king Ramesses himself.

In general, the Egyptian artist did not draw what he saw but what he knew. His picture, therefore, is not a true rendering of nature, but an intellectual composition in which he allowed himself to look at his subject from more than one angle at the same time, and to group together various subjects irrespective of locality and perspective.⁷⁹



fig 2

of text is meant to let the material substance become the vehicle of phonetic similarity and semantic ambiguity: a tridimensional pun!”

⁷⁷ RICHARD H. WILKINSON, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2003, p. 132: “Already in the pyramid texts the god [e.g. Horus – author’s note] is referred to as ‘the child with his finger in his mouth’; [...] The god was most commonly called Har-pakhered (Greek Harpokrates).”

⁷⁸ LOPRIENO: “Puns”, p. 4: “Western stylistic devices operate bi-dimensionally: the interface addressed by the word play is located between the phonetic and the semantic sphere, whereby identity – or similarity – in the former is challenged by ambiguity in the latter. For ancient Egypt we have to reckon with a third dimension: the sphere of writing. The grey zone invaded by puns partakes of sounds, meanings, and signs.”

⁷⁹ NAGUIB KANAWATI, *The Tomb and Beyond: Burial Customs of Egyptian Officials*, England: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 2001, p. 77. The Relationship between pictorial art and writing has also been maintained very close throughout Egyptian history. “The famous papyrus Lansing at the British Museum [...] contains] advice to become a scribe and [enumerates] the difficulties of other professions [...] However, the advice does not include sculptors and painters, and in fact the latter must have been regarded almost as a special branch of the scribal profession, for the word painter in Egyptian is *sesn qedwet* which literally means ‘scribe of the shapes/forms’.” (KANAWATI, *The Tomb and Beyond*, p. 73).

SUMMARY OF PART I

As we have seen in the case of the Pyramid Texts it is the spatial arrangement that is able to convey another level of meaning (structural narrative) apart from the content of the texts themselves (semantic narrative). We can also see that the idea of applying spatial relations in order to convey meaning was inherent to the Egyptian system of writing. If we start with the smallest units (individual signs) we can see that every character had not only semantic value but it also had a role within the whole structure of the decoration – signs of dangerous animals were mutilated because by being physically inscribed in the space of the pyramid chambers themselves they had a structural relationship to the deceased in that they stood in an opposition towards him and therefore had to be rendered harmless. If we go higher, individual spells or sayings of the Pyramid Texts had structural relationships to each other. Groupings of these sayings were ordered in a structure as to animate and lead the spirit of the dead king to his transformation and rebirth. Yet on a higher level the tomb itself was set in a structure of the necropolis which was in a structural relation to other necropoleis and also to the realm of the living – villages and cities. We could go on and on, always a level higher connecting not only physical places but also social institutions – the king was entombed in a lavish monument because he occupied a certain position within the structure of the society, etc. On all these levels we can clearly detect the general tendency of the Egyptians to avoid change at all costs. At the same time this does not mean that Egyptian culture was a static one (like the myth ritual school would like to see it in case of its rituals). It was as vivid and subject to change as any culture is but the Egyptians have chosen a very original way of perceiving this process. Their culture underwent standard process of successive evolutionary transformations. Nevertheless this evolution was not viewed as adopting new and better forms which correspond to changed conditions. With Egyptian culture it was as with a pre-historical fish: once faced with the threat of retreating waters it developed legs – an act of primary evolutionary importance. But its aim was not to go on land, but to *avoid* land and with the help of its legs to return to its watery milieu. And so did the Egyptians. They developed social institutions which changed throughout the history but always with the sole aim of returning into the waters they already knew and considered to be safe – the order (Maat) corresponding to the state of things at the moment of the creation of cosmos. In this case evolution is paradoxically viewed as means to avoid change.

The point of Part I is to show that there are many levels of structural coherence which a society may employ in order to express vital information about itself. If myth is a story which people narrate about gods and their deeds then this “narration” does not have to concern only the content, the semantic value of the text itself. It is the context and its position in the whole

cultural structure that provides us with the “narrative”. By focusing strictly on one type of “narrativity” as the euhemeristic/historicising method or that of the myth-ritual school does, we lose important information which the material can yield.

The objective of all the methods discussed so far is the same: to find out why a certain culture expresses itself in certain structures and why not in other forms. Nevertheless the point of departure of the method I favour is presumption. Both the historicising method and the myth-ritual school somehow suppose that the culture in question did not express itself in a certain way because the people did not have the ability to do so. In case of the problem of (non)existence of semantic narratives in the Pyramid Texts the historicist argues that the texts are the outcome of constant quarrels of antagonistic priestly groups (i.e. they were not able to come to a consensus) and the proponent of the myth-ritual school would like to see the ancient Egyptians in a certain altered state of consciousness, too close to the gods to be able to talk about them in narratives (even though they were able to carve the texts on blocks of granite brought from hundreds of kilometres away). I find it more fruitful to suppose that the pyramid builders intentionally chose not to use the narrative and examine the reason for such a decision. I am persuaded that this approach is not only more faithful to the material in question but that it does not weaken the position of the scholar by limiting his interpretive possibilities.

PART II

INTRODUCTION

In the previous part I have tried to summarize the methods applied by Egyptologists when interpreting ancient Egyptian myths. They were the euhemeristic method and the view of the myth-ritual school. I have tried to show both as inadequate and reductionistic (see Part I) . I have also tried to summarize the Egyptological discussion concerning the problem of narrativity or, more precisely, the supposed (non)existence of myths in early phases of the development of Egyptian civilisation.

Part II will deal with fragments of a papyrus which, in my opinion, contains a *myth* incorporating not only Egyptian deities but also numinous characters from the region of the Near East – Astarte, Yam and Seth-Baal. It is a unique text since one of the main roles is played by Yam – sea, which is absolutely foreign to the Egyptian pantheon.

The papyrus is from the New Kingdom – time, when, according to Assmann, we can with no effort clearly distinguish structured mythical narratives. Since narrativity is for him the crucial criterion by which he sorts different ancient Egyptian written material into categories (see above, p. 9), we may safely bypass the discussion whether pAmherst 9+pBn 202 has the right to be considered a myth or not as we have done in some length with the Pyramid Texts. We will nevertheless have to choose the interpretative method.

HISTORY OF THE ASTARTE PAPYRUS AND ITS STUDY⁸⁰

The papyrus is first mentioned in 1871⁸¹ by Samuel Birch in his report about fragments of a mythological papyrus located in “Mr. Tyssen Amhurst’s Collection”.⁸² How the papyrus came into Mr. Amhurst’s possession is not known nor is the place of its discovery. Birch, who did not try to date the papyrus, gave a short description (“The papyrus was originally about 16 feet long and had about 11 lines in each page written in remarkably clear and neat hieratic hand.”⁸³) and a short synopsis of its content and translated few fragmentary lines. Since this first mention the papyrus now called pAmherst 9 or also the “Astarte Papyrus” had gone unnoticed for 28 years until Percy E. Newberry published its photocopied edition in 1899.⁸⁴ Based on the palaeography, he dated its origin to the 19th or 20th dynasty.⁸⁵ (A few years later, G. Möller assessed,⁸⁶ according to palaeographic criteria, that the papyrus must have been written sometime during the reign of Haremheb – 18th dynasty). Concerning the content, Newberry informs us that a “certain ‘tribute of the sea’ was paid to the Phoenician goddess Astarte by (?) a messenger of Ptah.”⁸⁷ Wilhelm Spiegelberg gave a transcription into hieroglyphs and offered an interpretation which differs completely from the reading of later interpreters.⁸⁸ He was convinced that it was Astarte as one of the main protagonist who strived for the “tribute of the sea”, even though having to fight for it with the “circle of gods” (Ennead). This struggle, Spiegelberg thinks, might have been indicated by the tattered state in which Astarte arrives to the seashore and asks the Sea for help against the Ennead. The idea behind the story is, according to Spiegelberg, the act of accepting Astarte into the Memphite triad and also the ascribing of possessions for the maintenance of her cult – “the tribute of the sea”, i.e. a tax imposed on everything imported from the sea.⁸⁹

⁸⁰ In my text I do not mention every translation of the pAmherst 9 which has been made if its author does not present any new interpretative approach worth summarising or is not original in some other way. A complete and chronologically ordered bibliography is to be found below, “Bibliography to pAmherst 9: A chronological overview”.

⁸¹ SAMUEL BIRCH, “Varia”, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* [ZÄS] 9 (1871): 119–120.

⁸² BIRCH, “Varia”: 119.

⁸³ *Idem*: 119.

⁸⁴ PERCY E. NEWBERRY, *The Amherst Papyri in the Collection of the Right Hon. Lord Amherst of Hackney*, London: Quaritch, 1899, p. 47, pl. XIX–XXI.

⁸⁵ *Idem*, p. 47.

⁸⁶ GEORG MÖLLER, “Zur Datierung literarischer Handschriften”, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* [ZÄS] 56 (1920): 42.


⁸⁷ NEWBERRY, *The Amherst Papyri*, p. 47.

⁸⁸ WILHELM SPIEGELBERG, “The Fragments of the ‘Astarte’ Papyrus of the Amherst Collection”, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* [PSBA] 24 (1902): 41–50.

⁸⁹ Even though this interpretation is original in many ways, I do not agree with Spiegelberg in the basic presuppositions. As I will try to explain below, the main role of Astarte is that of a marginal figure. From this position and from this position alone is she able to act as mediator between different levels. Her integration into the heart of order (the Memphite triad) would be against her character. See below, p. 105–106.

Adolf Erman's translation into German,⁹⁰ is far from being continuous, nevertheless he attempted to translate all the fragments from Newberry's edition. In their re-worked edition (1926) of translated texts pertaining to the Old Testament, Gressmann and Ranke acknowledge Erman's translation, give a very sketchy commentary and present their own German translation of several fragments.⁹¹ Günther Roeder's German translation (1927) gives yet another complete rendering of the text – he even tried to fill in the many lacunae with which the text is punctured. Many of Roeder's reconstructions were later criticised by Alan H. Gardiner.⁹² What is misleading is the title which Roeder gave to his translation: "Astarte auf der Insel des Meeres". This is based on a false rendering by Spiegelberg of a hieratic group from line I, X+7 as "island" instead of "region", which Roeder adopted and which was later corrected by Alan H. Gardiner.⁹³ Roeder (also following Spiegelberg) wanted to see Astarte as the main figure of the whole story.

Alan H. Gardiner in his *Late Egyptian Stories* in 1932⁹⁴ presented another but more detailed transcription of the hieratic text of the "Astarte papyrus" into hieroglyphs with commentary and in the same year also a translation and commentary.⁹⁵ Gardiner managed to have the fragments of the papyrus rearranged in their correct order, found out that several of the fragments attributed by Newberry did not belong to the ensemble at all and also published some other fragments which Newberry had omitted. Gardiner accepted Möller's datation of the papyrus to the reign of Haremhab (see above) and his assessment of the original length (based on the surviving fragments of the bottom part of the papyrus) was 4.2 m with the height of 27 cm and consisting of "at least fifteen pages of text on the *recto*, with five or six more on the *verso*."⁹⁶ As Gardiner put it: "In its restored condition the Astarte papyrus presents itself to us as the lamentable wreckage of a most magnificent manuscript."⁹⁷ Whereas Roeder (following Spiegelberg) stressed in his translation the role of Astarte, Gardiner adopted a different stance and asserted that it was not Astarte who is the main focus of the story but that "another personage has a far better claim to

be the real protagonist, namely  'the sea' (first mention, I, x+6)."⁹⁸ It was already Spiegelberg who had noticed before Gardiner that in the story the sea is actually personified, thus

⁹⁰ ADOLF ERMANN, *Die Literatur der Aegypter: Gedichte, Erzählungen u. Lehrbücher aus d. 3. u. 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat, 1923 [1978²], p. 218–220.

⁹¹ HUGO GRESSMANN und HERRMANN RANKE (Hrsg.), *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder zum alten Testament*, 1926² [1909¹, 1927³], p. 7–8.

⁹² GARDINER, *Late Egyptian Stories*, p. 76–81.

⁹³ *Idem*, p. 81, n. 1.

⁹⁴ *Idem*, p. 76–81.

⁹⁵ ALAN H. GARDINER, "The Astarte Papyrus", in Alan H. Gardiner, H. O. Lange et al. (eds.), *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, London: Oxford University Press, 1932, p. 74–85.

⁹⁶ *Idem*, p. 76.

⁹⁷ *Idem*, p. 75.

⁹⁸ *Idem*, p. 77.

becoming the Sea. Gardiner took this point as the basis of his interpretation and using the scanty remains of the story he quite convincingly argued that “[...] the central theme was the conflict between the gods of Egypt and the sea with regard to the tribute demanded by the latter.”⁹⁹ This means that the “tribute of the sea” was definitely not given by the Sea to Astarte (as Newberry argued, see above). Gardiner also wanted to identify the Sea with “the Ruler” to which several references are made throughout the story. This proves a very important conclusion because in Egyptian mythology there is no autochthonous divine personage representing the sea as an element.¹⁰⁰ What immediately springs to mind is that this motive had had to be imported and borrowed by the Egyptians. Gardiner proposed a parallel to the Babylonian creation account from the *Enuma elish* in which Tiamat (the sea) is slaughtered by Marduk. A year later Gardiner published a short notice in the JEA mentioning that he managed to find in the Hearst medical papyrus a passage (11, 12/4) which mentions Seth’s contendings with the Sea as part of a medical incantation.¹⁰¹

A year following Gardiner’s article A. H. Sayce published a translation of a fragment of a Hittite legend¹⁰² in which we meet the supreme god Kumarbis of the city state of Urkis and the Sea.¹⁰³ In the fragment we find them at a banquet together with the “Father” or primeval gods. The gods of the earth and the sun gods did not answer the summons ([...] But to thee the sun gods and gods of earth came not. [...])¹⁰⁴ and Sayce is persuaded that the subject of the banquet was to arrange an attack of all the allies against these opposing deities. He does not conclude what sort of connection there should be between this text and pAmherst 9 – he simply states that: “Kumarbis corresponds to Ptah, and ‘the word’ of the ‘Mukis gods’ takes the place of Astarte in the Egyptian account^[105], while in both accounts mention is made of the throne upon which ‘the Sea’ took its place.”¹⁰⁶

Gustave Lefèbvre included a translation (which happened to be the first in French) in his anthology of Egyptian stories.¹⁰⁷ Even though he did not venture much into interpretative depths (he limited himself to giving mainly an overview of the contents of the story), at the end he pointed out several new and important details. First of all he connected them with the

⁹⁹ *Idem*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁰ For discussion about aquatic deities and especially Syro-Palestinian Yam in Egypt, see p. 40–44.

¹⁰¹ ALAN H. GARDINER, “Notes and News”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* [JEA] 19 (1933): 98.

¹⁰² According to Sayce the text was published in Keilschriftkunden aus Boghazköi [KUB], XII, 49.

¹⁰³ ARCHIBALD H. SAYCE, “The Astarte Papyrus and the Legend of the Sea”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* [JEA] 20 (1933): 56–59.

¹⁰⁴ SAYCE, “The Astarte Papyrus”: 57, lines 7–8.

¹⁰⁵ The Mukis gods function as intermediaries between the Sea and Kumarbis in the same way as Astarte between the Sea and the Egyptian Ennead.

¹⁰⁶ SAYCE, “The Astarte Papyrus”: 58.

¹⁰⁷ GUSTAV LEFÈBVRE, *Romans et contes égyptiens de l’époque pharaonique*, Paris: Maisonneuve 1949, p. 106–113.

mythological texts from the coastal town of Ugarit/Ras Shamra.¹⁰⁸ He showed that the Sea (Yam) had a very similar physiognomy (that is being lecherous, terrifying and imperious) in both the text originating from Ugarit and the pAmherst 9 pointing out that his adversary was Baal in the Ugaritic version¹⁰⁹ and Seth in the Egyptian version of whom we find a mention in one of the fragments. Lefèbvre also brought attention to another Egyptian text in which Yam plays a similar (brutal) role – *The Tale of Two Brothers* –¹¹⁰ in which the Sea attacks Bata’s wife.

John A. Wilson published a new English translation of the whole story in 1950, trying to fill in as many lacunae as possible so as to enhance the narrative coherency of the fragments.¹¹¹ He did not offer any new interpretative possibilities. Meanwhile, the scholarly work on translating and interpreting the Ras Shamra texts has proceeded a bit further allowing Theodor H. Gaster in 1952 to publish an article in which he advocates a direct dependence of the Egyptian text on its Ugaritic model.¹¹² He tries to prove this by analysing several details which he finds strikingly similar and also by showing that the Egyptian text preserved “several typically Ugaritic clichés.”¹¹³ He then goes on and draws our attention to two Hittite-Hurrian myths which draw on a very similar motive – the so-called Legend of Hedammu¹¹⁴ and the Story of Ullikummi.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ These texts were discovered in 1929 and along with Sumerian, Acadian, Hittite and Hurrian texts, tablets inscribed with cuneiform script but in an up-to-then unknown language were revealed. This language was later named “Ugaritic” and after its decipherment provided a wealth of administrative and mythological texts. An accessible editions the religious literary texts would be: SIMON B. PARKER (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, Society of Biblical Literature (Writings from the Ancinet World Series, Vol. 9): Scholars Press, 1997; NICOLAS WYATT, *Religious Texts from Ugarit. The Words of Ilimilku and His Colleagues*, The Biblical Seminar 53, Sheffield: Sheffield academic Press, 1998.

¹⁰⁹ The texts which all present Baal as the main character include “six tablets and various fragments [CAT 1.1–1.6] variously called the Baal text, the Baal Cycle, or the Epic of Baal, were excavated between 1930 and 1933 [...] The original length of the cycle is unknown. The physical remains of the attested tablets total about 1,830 lines, but estimates for the original text go as high as 5,000 lines. The date of the Baal Cycle has been fixed to about 1400–1350 B.C.E. based on textual and archaeological evidence.” (MARK S. SMITH, “The Baal Cycle”, in Simon B. Parker (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, Society of Biblical Literature (Writings from the Ancinet World Series, Vol. 9): Scholars Press, 1997, p. 81).

¹¹⁰ See below, p. 64–69.

¹¹¹ JOHN A. WILSON, “Astarte and the Tribute of the Sea”, in James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* [ANET], Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950, p. 17–18.

¹¹² THEODOR H. GASTER, “The Egyptian ‘Story of Astarte’ and the Ugaritic Poem of Baal”, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* [BiOr] 9.3/4 (1952): 82–85. His article is very inspirational in many ways but absolutely not by Gaster’s fault complicates the work of a contemporary scholar. The problem is that in 1952 Gaster could not work with the standard edition of the Ras Shamra texts known as the KTU or the today preferred CAT (MANFRIED DIETRICH, OSWALD LORETZ and JOAQUÍN SANMARTÍN, *Die keilalphabetischen Texten aus Ugarit* [KTU], Kevelaer & Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976; English version: *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* [CAT], Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995², enlarged edition) and therefore his references to Ugaritic texts follow publications of older date – trying to unify the references from these publications with the CAT system can become a bit tedious. For concordances of different editions, see for example: PARKER (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, p. 229–230.

¹¹³ GASTER, “The Egyptian ‘Story of Astarte’”: 84.

¹¹⁴ HARRY A. HOFFNER, JR., *Hittite myths, Writings from the Ancient World Series*, vol. 2, edited by Gary M. Beckman, Atlanta (Georgia): Scholars Press, 1998² [1990¹], p. 50–55.

¹¹⁵ HOFFNER, *Hittite Myths*, p. 55–65.

Whereas Gaster tried to show the dependence of the Egyptian text on some foreign model, Georges Posener¹¹⁶ tried to safeguard the originality of the text and has postulated the existence of some long lost forerunning autochthonous Egyptian myth with the main theme of the conflict between the gods and the sea as early as the First Intermediate Period, when the Instruction for Merikare was composed. “The New Kingdom legend of the hostile and greedy sea is thus only superficially akin to West Semitic accounts through the inclusion of the West Semitic goddess Astarte, the substitution of Seth, the equivalent of Baal, for Re, and the use of a Semitic word for sea to describe the liquid element. In this way an ancient myth was modernized for the more cosmopolitan Egyptian of the Empire period.”¹¹⁷

Rainer Stadelmann analysed the papyrus solely in connection with the Near Eastern cultural context refusing Posener’s suggestion of an autochthonous Egyptian origin of the myth and interpreting it as a cultural import with its model in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle.¹¹⁸ A few years later in his entry for the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* Stadelmann added another reference to a passage in the pBerlin 3038 (21/2–3) which could be an allusion to a mythological motive of the struggle between Seth and the Sea.¹¹⁹

Wolfgang Helck¹²⁰ adopted a somewhat compromising attitude towards the possible foreign literary prototypes of the pAmherst 9. He pointed out that “(...) his two oxen [...]” (I, x+1), which are mentioned at the beginning of the first fragment of Gardiner’s edition, have a direct relation to the two bulls which are an attribute of the Hittite-Hurrian weather god.¹²¹ The *Interpretatio aegyptiaca* would have had the god Seth in his place even though god Seth did not have any bulls as his emblem animals. Another motive originating, according to Helck, in the same cultural region is the part in which Astarte goes naked down to the shore of the sea singing and laughing (2, x+17–18).¹²² He draws on the parallels from the Hittite-Hurrian mythology¹²³ in which Astarte/Ishtar uses her physical charms to fulfil her goals. Nevertheless, Helck would also like to see a Syro-Palestinian influence in the Egyptian text and that in the last part of the

¹¹⁶ GEORGES POSENER, “La légende égyptienne de la mer insatiable”, *Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire orientales et slaves* [AIPHOS] 13 (1953/5): 461–478.

¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, I have not been able to obtain Posener’s text. Summary taken over from E. F. Wente’s introduction to the translation of the Astarte papyrus in SIMPSON (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, p. 133.

¹¹⁸ RAINER STADELMANN, *Syrisch-palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten*, Probleme der Ägyptologie [PrÄg] 5, Leiden, 1967, p. 125–131.

¹¹⁹ RAINER STADELMANN, “Astartepapyrus”, in Wolfgang Helck und Eberhard Otto (Hrsg.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975, col. 509–511.

¹²⁰ WOLFGANG HELCK, “Zur Herkunft der Erzählung des sogenannten ‘Astartepapyrus’”, in Manfred Görg (ed.), *Fontes atque pontes: Eine Festgabe für Hellmut Brunner, Ägypten und Altes Testament* [ÄAT] 5, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983, p. 215–223

¹²¹ HELCK, “Zur Herkunft”: 217.

¹²² Needless to say, this part of the papyrus was badly damaged and it is not entirely clear whether the text “(...) sang and laughed at him (...) / saw Astarte, as she sat upon the shore(?) [...]” does indeed refer to Astarte coming down to the sea shore.

¹²³ HELCK, “Zur Herkunft”: 220–221.

surviving fragments (8, y–15, y) which to him resemble a threat of an upcoming fight between Seth and Yam just as we find it described in the Baal Cycle from Ugarit.¹²⁴

Emma Brunner-Traut offered solely a new translation into German,¹²⁵ nevertheless, as she had done with other texts in her *Altägyptischen Märchen*, she used other sources, context, her knowledge of ancient Egyptian literature and her fantasy, to connect the fragments with a story as she imagined it might have once been. Not strictly academic as her approach might be, she nevertheless gave hints and suggestions for the interpretation of the whole story.

Even though Donald B. Redford in his article from 1990¹²⁶ does not present any new views directly in connection with the pAmherst 9 (although he speaks of it on p. 833–834), he gives a very useful overview of mythopoetic traditions from the Near East which employ the theme of the voracious sea/monster – female (goddess) – male god/hero.

Robert K. Ritner offered in 1997 a new translation into English and briefly summarized the conclusions of previous scholars.¹²⁷

In 2001 Philippe Collombert and Laurent Coulon published an article in which they matched a previously known fragment located in the archive of the Bibliothèque nationale de Paris under the number 202 with the pAmherst 9. Based on the structure and palaeography of both ensembles they proved that the Paris fragment constitutes the “missing” upper section of the first page of pAmherst 9.¹²⁸ Their edition (and French translation) of the pBN 202 and of the pAmherst 9 as one whole has become the new *editio princeps*. Originally the pBN 202 had been part of the Rollin collection (W. Pleyte published it under the name pRollin 1887)¹²⁹ which has proved to contain more fragments of papyri which complement the fragments from the Amherst collection.¹³⁰ Thanks to the fact that the pBN 202 constitute the incipit of the ensemble we now know that the text was written in the fifth regnal year (and third month of the Peret season, day 19) of the pharaoh Amenhotep II and therefore it is by some hundred years or so older than Möller (see above) followed by Gardiner and others have previously supposed. Collombert and Coulon have also tried to assess, in the light of the new discovery, the extent of the original work and they have come to the conclusion that it was probably composed of 20 pages containing 25

¹²⁴ *Idem*: 222.

¹²⁵ EMMA BRUNNER-TRAUT, *Altägyptische Märchen, Mythen und andere volkstümliche Erzählungen*, München, 1989.

¹²⁶ DONALD B. REDFORD, “The Sea and the Goddess”, in Sarah Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichtheim* (I, II), Jerusalem, 1990, p. 824–835.

¹²⁷ ROBERT K. RITNER, “The Legend of Astarte and the Tribute of the Sea: P. Amherst (Pierpont Morgan) XIX–XXI”, in William W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture/Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, vol. I, Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1997, p. 35–36.

¹²⁸ PHILIPPE COLLOMBERT et LAURENT COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer: Le début du papyrus d’Astarte (pBN 202)”, *Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale [BIFAO]* 100 (2001), 193–242.

¹²⁹ W. PLEYTE, *Le Papyrus Rollin, de la Bibliothèque impériale de Paris*, Leyde, 1868, p. 23–24, pl. xv.

¹³⁰ For a detailed discussion see COLLOMBERT et COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer”: 193–199.

lines each which would make it one of the longest literary papyri of the New Kingdom.¹³¹ Concerning the contents of the text, the beginning has shown that the pivotal theme of the work was the possible clash of the Ennead (represented by Seth) with the Sea (Yam) Astarte playing only an episodic even though important role.

Even though the possible Hittite-Hurrian and West-Semitic motives in the pBN 202+pAmherst 9 have already been noticed (see above), it was Thomas Schneider who gave these theories a firm scholarly frame.¹³² He makes a reference to a Hittite text in which the gods are bid to bring tribute to the Sea (god) consisting of a certain *ku(wa)nnan* rock, lapis lazuli, *parašhaš* rock, silver (and) gold.¹³³ Regarding the date with which the pBN 202 fragment starts (king Amenhotep II, 5th regnal year, 3rd month of the *peret* season, day 19), Schneider concludes that it was in some connection with the official acknowledging of the cult of the goddess Astarte: in the 4th regnal year of king Amenhotep II the quarries of Tura have been reopened in order to support material for the building of a shrine dedicated to Astarte of Perunefer (with all probability a war-port located in Memphis) and that a year later the building had been finished.¹³⁴ Schneider also managed to find a third mention of Seth and the Sea in ancient Egyptian medical texts¹³⁵ (the first two were found by Gardiner and Stadelmann, see above). In his article he also drew attention to other Egyptian texts in which the Egyptian storm god Seth demonstrates strong affinities with his West-Semitic counterpart – Baal. In another article¹³⁶ he defends the idea that the pBN 202+pAmherst 9 is a copy of a West Semitic model (such as the Baal Cycle from Ugarit or the like) and this he takes as proof of the ability on the side of ancient Egyptians to innovate their religious and political ideas.¹³⁷

The last article dealing with pBN 202+pAmherst 9 by Anthony Spalinger focuses on the royal influence which is, according to the author, in the root of this story as well as that of The

¹³¹ COLLOMBERT et COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer”: 199. To make the assessment more imaginable, they estimated that the complete papyrus would have occupied about 70 pages of Gardiner’s Late Egyptian Stories whereas the longest composition of the “Contentings of Horus and Seth” occupy 24 pages!

¹³² THOMAS SCHNEIDER, “Texte über den syrischen Wettergott aus Ägypten”, Ugarit Forschungen [UF] 35 (2003): 605–627.

¹³³ In the Egyptian text we find (I, X+12): “[...] And Renut [brought?] his tribute in silver and gold, lapis lazuli [and turquoise]....the tribute of the sea [...]”

¹³⁴ SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 608, 610 n. 15.

¹³⁵ *Idem*: 611 n. 16 (pLeiden I 343 + 345 recto IV 9 – v 2).

¹³⁶ THOMAS SCHNEIDER, “Foreign Egypt: Egyptology and the Concept of Cultural Appropriation”, Ägypten und Levante 13 (2003): 155–161 (specifically p. 160–161).

¹³⁷ Below (see below, p. 106–108) I will argue that even though superficially the narrative of the Astarte papyrus looks like a direct copy of a foreign myth, it has been paired in the Egyptian mind with traditional religious and political concepts. This does not refute the fact that Egyptian civilisation was subject to change just as any other cultural complex, but it has got grave consequences for the possible reconstruction of the missing text and its position within Egyptian mythology.

Doomed Prince and The Tale of the Two Brothers (all three stories being inspired by contact with the Near Eastern cultural region).¹³⁸

The pBN 202 was first published in 1868 by W. Pleyte¹³⁹ (demotic) and later received only brief mentions by a few authors (see “Bibliography to pBN 202: A Chronological Overview”). It was generally referred to as “hymn to Amenophis II”.

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1899tr 1st photocopied edition:

PERCY E. NEWBERRY, *The Amherst Papyri in the Collection of the Right Hon. Lord Amherst of Hackney*, London: Quaritch, 1899, p. 47, pl. XIX–XXI.

1902 WILHELM SPIEGELBERG, “The Fragments of the ‘Astarte’ Papyrus of the Amherst Collection”, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* [PSBA] 24 (1902): 41–50.

1920 GEORG MÖLLER, “Zur Datierung literarischer Handschriften”, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* [ZÄS] 56 (1920): 42.

1923tr ADOLF ERMAN, *Die Literatur der Ägypter: Gedichte, Erzählungen u. Lehrbücher aus d. 3. u. 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat, 1923 [1978²], p. 218–220.

1926tr HUGO GRESSMANN und HERRMANN RANKE (Hrsg.), *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder zum alten Testament*, 1926² [1909¹, 1927³], p. 7–8.

1927tr GÜNTHER ROEDER, *Altägyptische Erzählungen und Märchen: Ausgewählt und übersetzt von Günther Roeder*, Die Märchen der Weltliteratur XXII, Jena: Diederichs, 1927, p. 71–73.

1932tr 2nd corrected photocopied edition:

ALAN H. GARDINER “The Astarte Papyrus”, in Alan H. Gardiner, H. O. Lange et al. (eds.), *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, London: Oxford University Press, 1932, p. 74–85.

1932 ALAN H. GARDINER, *Late Egyptian Stories*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca I, Bruxelles: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1932, p. 76–81.

1933 ALAN H. GARDINER, “Notes and News”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* [JEA] 19 (1933): 98.

1933 ARCHIBALD H. SAYCE, “The Astarte Papyrus and the Legend of the Sea”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* [JEA] 20 (1933): 56–59

¹³⁸ ANTHONY SPALINGER, “Transformations in Egyptian Folktales: The Royal Influence”, *Revue d’Égyptologie* [RdE] 58 (2007): 137–156 (specifically p. 151–152).

¹³⁹ PLEYTE, *Le Papyrus Rollin*, p. 23–24, pl. xv.

¹⁴⁰ To indicate which bibliographic entries are translations, I have included a small “tr” next to dates in bold located on the left side of the bibliographic list.

- 1949tr** GUSTAV LEFÈBVRE, *Romans et contes égyptiens de l'époque pharaonique*, Paris: Maisonneuve, 1949, p. 106–113.
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¹⁴¹ Unfortunately, I have not been able to acquire this text. Quotation taken over from SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 610.

¹⁴² Unfortunately, I have not been able to acquire this text. Quotation taken over from SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 610.

¹⁴³ Unfortunately, I have not been able to acquire this text. Quotation taken over from SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 619, n. 56.

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- 1869 F. Chabas, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache [ZÄS]* 7 (1869): 92.
- 1920 GEORG MÖLLER, “Zur Datierung literarischer Handschriften”, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache [ZÄS]* 56 (1920): 36.
- 1965 DONALD B. REDFORD, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology [JEA]* 51 (1965): 121, n. 3.
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Since the association of the pBN 202 with the pAmherst 9 in 2001, the bibliography is identical for both papyri (see above “Bibliography to pAmherst 9: A Chronological Overview” year 2001 and further).

SIGNS USED IN THE TRANSLATION

1,1	First page, line one of the original.
•	Dots placed by the Egyptian scribe above the line of the hieratic script to indicate the end of a verse.
[...]	1–5 square groups ¹⁴⁴ destroyed.
[he]	Text not to be found in the original papyrus but necessary for fluent translation or obvious from the context.
(I want to celebrate) strength/victory	Hypothetical reconstruction of the missing passage. More possible renderings of the passage.
[... ..]	6 and more square groups destroyed.
X	Lines lost at the beginning of the page.
Y	Lines lost at the end of the page.
(GROUP OF MEN)	Standard usage of the preserved (traces of) the determinative following a missing word which can at least help us guess its general meaning.

TRANSLATION¹⁴⁵






pBN 202

DATE AND ROYAL PROTOCOLE

1,1	The 5 th year, 3 rd month of the of the <i>peret</i> season, day 19 ^{•146} May the king of Upper and Lower Egypt [...] live, LPH ^{•147} The son of Re, Amenhotep the Ruler of Heliopolis, LPH [•] May [he] be given eternal and everlasting ¹⁴⁸ life [•] May [he] appear [... ¹⁴⁹]
1,2	As his father Re every day [•]

TITEL

Re[renewal^(?)...] which he did for the Ennead^{•150}

¹⁴⁴ The Egyptians usually ordered the hieroglyphs into neat square or rectangular groups with either large signs occupying the whole group ( or ), two tall signs next to each other (), two flat signs above each other () sometimes supplemented by small signs (). According to this rule it is possible to estimate the number of destroyed groups.

¹⁴⁵ I have based my translation on the new editio princeps (photocopic edition and hieroglyphic transcription of the pBN 202 and pAmherst 9, see below pl. 1–9) published by COLLOMBERT et COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer”: 194, 196, 230–241. Since the aim of my work is not philological but interpretative, I have limited myself to only the most necessary commentaries of basic aspects which might not be clear to a non-Egyptologist or to places where the interpretation allows for various interesting possibilities. For more detailed and erudite references and discussions I refer the reader to the *editio princeps* (see above) and to most interesting commentaries in: SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 610–617.

¹⁴⁶ Egyptian scribes sometimes used rubric instead of black ink to emphasize certain passages of texts (beginnings etc.).

¹⁴⁷  AWS (*nh.w, wd^c.w, snb.w*) = a standard Egyptian abbreviation regularly placed after the name of the king and wishing him “life, prosperity and health”.

¹⁴⁸ Here the Egyptian original uses two words designating eternity: *dd* and *nhh*. For a coherent explanation of these terms, see: GERTIE ENGLUND, “God as a Frame of Reference: On Thinking and Concepts of Thought in Ancient Egypt”, in: Gertie Englund (ed.), *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians: Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions, Proceedings of Symposia in Uppsala and Bergen 1987 and 1988*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis Boreas [Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations 20], Uppsala, 1989, p. 7–28 (specifically p. 7–19); JAN ASSMANN, *Ägypten: Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984, chapter 3.4.

¹⁴⁹ SCHNEIDER (“Texte”: 610 n.14) suggests “auf dem Thron des Geb”; COLLOMBERT et COULON (“Les dieux contre la mer”: 200) suggest “sur le trône d’Horus”.

so as to combat with Yam [...]

INTRODUCTION

- (I want to celebrate)
1,3 your strength/victory[•]
[I] want to extol [...] recounting[•]
That which you did when you were a child[•]
Your heroic deeds¹⁵¹ [...]
1,4 teachings for me.[•]

CREATION OF THE HERO

- He did [...] Where [Sh]ay and Renenut [are²]/[Sh]ay and Renenut are extolled[•]
Decide for her did Shay and Renenut¹⁵² [...]
1,5 By that which he built in me.[•]
Sur[pass^(?) ...]
His garments are armour and bows.[•]
He created
1,6 the mountains and mountain-tops.[•]
[...]
And greatness resembling the sky has been predestined for him[•]
And mon[uments...] constructed
1,7 haste^{(?)153}
The two [mount]ains¹⁵⁴ were created[•]
To trample your enemies[•]
[...]
1,8 just as *gš.w*¹⁵⁵ are trampled[•]
[...the s]ky and the earth[•]
To gladden the Ennead[•]
Construct [...]
1,9 his head[•]
And his horn[s...¹⁵⁶]
[...] his enemies[•]
And his adversaries.[•]
When [...]
1,10 [...]
The [...] was found [...]

¹⁵⁰ The term “Ennead” (i.e. the nine gods) designates the whole Egyptian pantheon (3×3 = a plural of plurals) or a certain grouping of gods not always regarding their actual number even though the most famous Ennead of Heliopolis did comprise nine deities (see: WILKINSON, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses*, p. 78–79).

¹⁵¹ According to SCHNEIDER (“Texte”: 611 n. 17) this is a loan-word from Hurrian.

¹⁵² Together Shay and Renenut(et) were linked with the function of appointing destiny and Renenut was moreover a protective deity associated with (divine) birth (for details see: WILKINSON, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses*, p. 128–129, 225–226). Even though this passage is very unclear and translations are only very approximate, in general we witness the birth of the hero(?) and/or the appointing of his destiny by Shay and Renenut.

¹⁵³ This word represents a *hapax legomenon* and the determinative of the feet in motion and its onomatopoeic nature (*rwq3rwq3*) reminds of some sort of fast movement. For details see: SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 611, n. 18; COLLOMBERT et COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer”: 205, n. “t”).

¹⁵⁴ For commentary, see below, p. 40–42.

¹⁵⁵ SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 611 translates “Schilf” whereas COLLOMBERT et COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer”: 200 translate “roseaux”.

¹⁵⁶ For commentary, see below p. 40–42.

[... ..]
 [...] in rejoicing [...]
 1,11 The [... ..]
 [... ..]
 [...] she was furious[•]
 V[enerate]/S[star] [... ..]

pAmherst 9


PAGE 1


1, x+1 [...] his two bulls^{•157}
 I want^(?) to praise yo[u... ..¹⁵⁸](GROUP OF MEN)[•]
 I want^(?) to praise [...]
 1, x+2 I want^(?) to praise the sky [...] dwelling^(?)-place [... ..] the earth [... ..]
 1, x+3 The sky
 When [... ..] the earth
 And the earth was satisfied/pacified [... ..]
 1, x+4 (May) I uncover/take away its [... ..] then they bent as š3q3^{•(?)159}
 [... ..]
 1, x+5 Then [each] man embraced [(his fellow)... ..] after s(eve)n/f(ort)y days[•]
 The sky [... ..]
 1, x+6 Descended upon [... ..] the Sea[•]
 Then [... ..the ea]
 1, x+7 -rth gave birth^(?) [... ..] four regions of the [(world)... ..]
 1, x+8 In its midst[•]
 As if suspended [... ..] his throne of Ruler LPH[•]
 Then he [... ..]
 1, x+9 To bring him tribu[te... ..] to the assembly[•]
 Then Renut¹⁶⁰ brought [... ..]
 1, x+10 As Ruler LPH [... ..(the sk)]y[•]
 And behold, one brings to him tribute¹⁶¹ [... ..]


¹⁵⁷ For commentary, see below, p. 40–42.

¹⁵⁸ SCHNEIDER (“Texte”: 612, n. 25) would like to see in this part not the beginning of an independent pronoun for second person singular (*tj*) but that of the name of Teshub (Teššob). He also restored the lacuna which follows as: “[ich will verehren Astarte-die-Zornigste-der-Wüten]den”.

¹⁵⁹ SCHNEIDER (“Texte”: 613, n. 30) remarks that this must be a Semitic loan-word and refers to a passage in the Baal Cycle (CAT 1,2, 21–26) in which the gods assembled together on a feast bow low to the messengers of Yam – except for Baal who is vexed by this act.

¹⁶⁰ What is interesting here is the different spelling of the goddess’ name  (Re[ne]nut) in connection with bringing tribute (in this case her name ends with a determinative used for male gods or deities in general).

as compared to  (Renenut, 1,4) in connection with birthing and destiny (the cobra indicates a female goddess). May it be that in the latter case it was not her connection with fertility and femininity which was required but her role as the producer of wealth that have caused the changed spelling? See also COLLOMBERT et COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer”: 203, n. “I”. For further discussion on the role of Renut, see below, p. 101, 105, n. 332.

¹⁶¹ The word used in this context is  (*jn.w*) – gifts. For a very comprehensive work on the meaning and cultural implications of “gifts”, see: EDWARD BLEIBERG, *The Official Gift in Ancient Egypt*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996; VON DIAMANTIS PANAGIOTOPOULOS, “Tributabgaben und Huldigungsgeschenke aus der Levante: Die Ägyptische Nordexpansion in der 18. Dynastie aus Strukturgeschichtlicher Sicht”, *Ägypten und Levante* 10 (2000): 139–158. For these references I would like to

1, x+11 [...] he or he will take us as cap[tive... ..]
 1, x+12 Our own to [...] Renut his tribute in silver and gold[•]
 Lapis lazuli [...] the boxes[•]
 Then they said to
 1, x+13 the Ennead[•]
 G[(ive)^(?)... ..]the tribute of the Sea[•]
 So that he may hear our words [... (the eart)]h[•]
 Protects from him[•]
 Will he

PAGE 2: *about 6 lines lost*

2, x+1 Then they are afraid of [...]
 2, x+2 Of the Sea[•]
 Give [...]e tribute of The S[ea... ..]
 2, x+3 evil[•]
 Then Renut took a [...] Astarte[•]
 Then said [...]
 2, x+4 The birds:¹⁶² “Hear what I have to say”[•]
 Do not depart [...] another. Go to Astarte [...]
 2, x+5 Her house
 And shriek below [...] she sleeps[•]
 And say to her:[•]
 “If [(you)... ..]
 2, x+6 “If you are asleep[•]
 I will w[(ake you up)... ..]The S]ea as a Ruler upon [...]
 2, x+7 The sky[•]
 Come to them at this [...]
 2, x+8 [...] ^(FOREIGNERS)[•]
 Then Ast[arte... ..]
 2, x+9 [...]
 2, x+10 [...] ^(STRENGTH) the daughter of Ptah
 The[n... ..]
 2, x+11 [...] of the Sea[•]
 The [...]
 2, x+12 Go your self[•]
 With the tribute of [the Sea... ..]
 2, x+13 [...th]en Astarte we[pt... ..]
 2, x+14 [...hi]s Ruler LPH was silent[•]
 2, x+15 [...li]ft up your face [... ..]
 2, x+16 [...li]ft up your face[•]
 And [it is] you [... ..]out]
 2, x+17 Of[•]
 Lifting is th[at which...] [the] [... ..] sang and tittered at him [...]
 2, x+18 Saw Astarte sitting on the seashore¹⁶³[•]

thank Jana Mynářová from the Czech Institute of Egyptology of the Charles University in Prague, personal communication 25.8.2008. For more references, see p. 104, n. 329.

¹⁶² Astarte (and her divine transformations in other traditions Ishtar, Innana, Sauska etc.) is traditionally connected with birds as her emblematic animals. For example in a Hittite translation of an originally West Semitic myth of “Elkunirša and Ašertu” (A ii 4’-16’) we read that: “Astarte [...] became an owl and perched on his wall. [...] Astarte flew like a bird across the desert.” (GARY BECKMAN, “Elkunirša and Ašertu”, in William W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture/Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, vol. I, Leiden – New York – Cologne: Brill, 1997, p. 149).

Then he said to her: “From [where] did you come, daughter of Ptah[•]
 You angry goddess of the Furious
 2, x+19 Ones^(?)”[•]
 “Have you ruined your sandals which were [on] your feet?”[•]
 “Have you torn your clothes which were on you,
 By coming and going in the sky and in the earth?”^{•164}
 Then he said

PAGE 3: *about 22 lines lost*

3, Y-2 [... ... the Go]ds[•]
 If you give me your^(m) [... ...] they, what will I do
 3, Y-1 Against you, just me alone? Astarte heard that what the Sea had said and she got up to
 leave and [appear][•]
 Before the Ennead on the place where they were gathered[•]
 And the mighty ones saw her[•]
 3, Y They rose up before her[•]
 And the small ones saw her[•]
 And they lay on their bellies[•]
 And he throne was given to her[•]
 And she sat down[•]
 And they brought to her the

PAGE 4: *about 22 lines lost*

4, Y-2 The earth [... ...]
 4, Y-1 The pea[rls... ...] and the pearls [... ...]
 4, Y The messenger of Ptah left to report these words to Ptah and Nut[•]
 Then Nut untied the pearls which were around her neck[•]
 Behold, she put (them) on the balance

PAGE 5: *about 23 lines lost*

5, Y-1 [...] Astarte. O my [... ...]
 5, Y [...(contention)] it is with the Ennead (and) then he sent and demanded [... ...] the seal of
 Geb [...] in which the balance [is]. So

PAGE 6: *about 24 lines lost*

6, Y ^(ABSTRACTUM) of [... ...]

PAGE 7: *about 24 lines lost*

7, Y [...] his with [... ...] my basket of [... ...]

PAGE 8: *about 24 lines lost*

¹⁶³ A similar motive is also to be found in the Hurrian myth, belonging to the Kumarbi cycle, the Song of Heddamu. Heddamu is a monster begotten by the god Kumarbi and the daughter of the sea god. The monster is a sea serpent with an enormous appetite for everything living. It is the Hurrian storm god Teshub who must fight this monster. His sister Sauska (Hurrian version of Ishtar) tries to help her brother. She develops a plan very similar to that of Astarte in the pBN 202+pAmherst 9. She washes and anoints herself with fine perfumed oil, enhancing her already seductive qualities. Accompanied by music, she goes down to the seashore and tries to seduce the monster Heddamu with her charms (HOFFNER, *Hittite Myths*, p. 50–55).

¹⁶⁴ As SCHNEIDER (“Texte”: 615, n. 38) remarks, Egyptians distinguished the phrase *hr t3* (on earth) and *m t3* “in the Underworld”. This reminds us of the descent of Innana/Astarte into the netherworld in the Mesopotamian mythology. See for example: STEPHANIE DALLEY, “The Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld”, in William W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture/Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, vol. I, Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1997, p. 381–384.

8, Y her and he [...]

PAGE 9: *the whole page lost*

PAGE 10: *about 24 lines lost*

10, Y [... the tribut]e of the Se[a...]^(VERB OF MOTION) through the gates [...] the gates goes

PAGE 11: *about 24 lines lost*

11, Y [...] the [...]if they come [...]

PAGE 12: *the whole page lost*

PAGE 13: *the whole page lost*

PAGE 14: *about 24 lines lost*

14, Y [...]the Se]a and he will cover the earth and the mountains and

PAGE 15: *about 22 lines lost*

15, Y-1 [...]h]is throne

15, Y [...] of [...] you [...to com]e and to fight with him, then he sat down coolly. He will not come to fight with us. Then Seth sat down

PAGE 16+X: *about 24 lines lost*

16, Y you me and your^(m) [...]

PAGE 17+X: *about 24 lines lost*

17, Y [...] the Sea [...]

PAGE 18+X: *about 24 lines lost*

18, Y [...] and he [...]

PAGE 19+X: *about 24 lines lost*

19, Y [...] the (seven) [...] and the sky [...]

COMMENTARY: FOREIGN CHARACTERS (SETH-BAAL, YAM, ASTARTE)

The first question which is the enigmatic hero of whose birth, set in cosmographic settings, we hear at the beginning. Since the whole papyrus seems to be a eulogy of the young king Amenhotep II it is very probable that it will be him. However, the whole story has got a theological setting and we can therefore expect that the pharaoh will be praised in the guise of a deity. One of the main themes of the fragments are the repeated threats from the Sea (Yam) towards the Ennead. Yam, representing the force of the sea, is a mighty opponent and only a mighty god-pharaoh could actually stand up to him and resist. This god would then be in the position of a protector of order on behalf of the Ennead (Egypt) which is, of course, the main duty of a strong pharaoh. The ideal candidate for this role is the mighty and masculine god Seth,

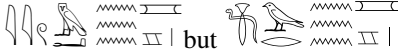

the vanquisher of Apophis on the prow of the sun god's bark.¹⁶⁵ This god has also been associated with chaos and through this connection also with foreign deities (see below). The Astarte papyrus has been obviously inspired by similar works of West Semitic origin such as the Baal Cycle from Ugarit in which the mighty and powerful storm god Baal vanquishes his foe Yam, the Sea.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, Seth and Baal were regularly associated in the Egyptian tradition.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, there are other attestations in the Egyptian material of a conflict between Seth and the Sea.¹⁶⁸ The Astarte papyrus, therefore, is not the only case. For example in the Hearst medical papyrus (11.12–14) in a spell directed against the Asiatic malady we read: “Who is knowing like Re? Who is knowing like Re? Blacken the body with charcoal so as to capture the god on high. Even as Seth contended with the Sea,¹⁶⁹ so doth Seth contend with thee, thou Asiatic one, so that thou shalt not pervade the limbs of X, the son of Y.”¹⁷⁰ In fact, the profile of Seth-Baal exactly corresponds with the epithets and attributes stated in the Astarte papyrus as belonging to the hero (especially in 1,5–1,9 and 1, x+1). Thus he is obviously a warrior god (“His garments are armour and bow” – moreover the word *tryn* – armour is of Syrian origin¹⁷¹). The phrase “He created the mountains and mountain-tops” seems more like a literary ellipse expressing his closeness to this feature more than recognizing him as the actual creator but Baal has always been connected with mountains and mountain tops (his abode has been on the mount Sapan¹⁷² north of Ugarit). The mention of “the two mountains” might reflect the epithet *hry-tp dww* which is often attributed to Baal in Egyptian texts¹⁷³ and even the pharaoh was sometimes compared to Baal: *sw mj Bcr hb=f dww* (“He is like Baal when he treads the mountains”).¹⁷⁴ The mention of “his two horns” reminds us of a standard attribute of the Near Eastern storm gods¹⁷⁵ which was also taken by Seth (see fig. 3, p. 130). At the beginning of the pAmherst 9 we hear of “his two

¹⁶⁵ HERMAN TE VELDE, *Seth, God of Confusion*, Probleme der Ägyptologie [PÄ] 6, Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1967, p. 99–109.

¹⁶⁶ SMITH, “The Baal Cycle”, p. 81–180.

¹⁶⁷ TE VELDE, *Seth*, p. 109–134.

¹⁶⁸ For reference on the relevant papyri and ostraca, see COLLOMBERT et COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer”: 206–207, n. 27–34.

¹⁶⁹ The Egyptian word used in this case is not  but  (the Great green). For the discussion about these terms, see below.

¹⁷⁰ GARDINER, “Notes and News”: 98.

¹⁷¹ JAMES E. HOCH, *Semitic Words in Egyptian texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 366 – 367, n. 546.

¹⁷² CAT 1.3, third tablet, col. 3, lines 28–31 (SMITH, “The Baal Cycle”, p. 110): “Come and I will reveal it/in the midst of my mountain, divine Sapan,/in the holy mount of my heritage,/in the beautiful hill of my might.”

¹⁷³ STADELMANN, *Syrisch-palästinensische Gottheiten*, p. 39, n. 4; p. 40, n. 4 and 17.

¹⁷⁴ K. A. KITCHEN, *Ramesseide Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical* I–VII, Oxford, 1969–1990, I, 21, 3–4. Quotation after COLLOMBERT et COULON, “Les dieux contre la mer”: 208, n. 42.

¹⁷⁵ IZAK CORNELIUS, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Baal: Late Bronze and Iron Age I Periods (1500–1000 BCE)*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis [OBO] 140, Fribourg: University Press Fribourg; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994, p. 247.

bulls”. Schneider pointed out¹⁷⁶ that this could concern the two bulls Serisu and Tella which in the Ullikummi myth accompany Teshub,¹⁷⁷ the Hurrian storm god – analogy to the West Semitic Baal. We can see that the physiognomy of the hero is ideally suited for a storm god of some sort (Baal, Teshub or other) – in the *interpretatio aegyptiaca* always associated with Seth.

The principal opponent of the Seth-Baal-Pharaoh hero is the Sea – Yam. What defies the ancient Egyptian ideas most is the fact that Yam acts as an aggressive god in his own right – the ancient Egyptians did not have an autochthonous term for a marine aquatic deity. The only two important aquatic deities which could be considered would be Nun and Hapy. However, the former represents the primeval “waters” which were before creation, surround the created world and are source of un-ordered potency.¹⁷⁸ Nun is therefore more passive than active (and definitely not aggressive), he was considered as the primeval abyss and in this way very often thought of more as a location than a deity.¹⁷⁹ Hapy is a direct personification of the yearly flooding of the Nile. In this aspect he was considered a benign deity, maintainer of order in the cosmos. The only aspect which might connect him to Yam is his sexual power. The Late Period Famine Stela expresses the yearly swelling of the waters of the Nile as an act of copulation.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, he was never associated with the sea in any way.

The exact meaning of the word *ym* in ancient Egyptian is a matter of heated discussions among the Egyptologists. Claude Vandersleyen would like to see the word as synonymic to *nwy* and *w3d wr* (“the Great Green”) designating the waters of the Nile or specifically those of the inundation.¹⁸¹ Alessandra Nibbi also contradicts the statements that the *w3d wr* could have meant “the sea” and favours the interpretation that it designates the vast uncultivable marshlands of the Nile delta into which the Nile disappeared some 160 kilometres before reaching the shore of the Mediterranean.¹⁸² At the same time she agrees that the word *ym* does stand for “the sea” on many occasions.¹⁸³ Florence Friedman argued against Alessandra Nibbi and by quoting ancient Egyptian texts tried to prove that the translation of the term *w3d wr* varied in different contexts

¹⁷⁶ SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 612, n. 24.f

¹⁷⁷ HOFFNER, *Hittite Myths*, p. 61, §38–39.

¹⁷⁸ OTTO KAISER, *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel*, Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1959.

¹⁷⁹ WILKINSON, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses*, p. 117–118.

¹⁸⁰ *Idem*, p. 106–109.

¹⁸¹ CLAUDE VANDERSLEYEN, “*Ym* désignant l’eau de l’inondation”, in Tomás A. Bács (ed.), *A Tribute to Excellence, Studies Offered in Honor of Ernő Gaál, Ulrich Luft, László Török*, Studia Aegyptiaca XVII, Budapest 2002, p. 473–475.

¹⁸² ALESSANDRA NIBBI, “Henu of the Eleventh Dynasty and *w3d-wr*”, *Göttinger Miszellen* [GM] 17 (1975): 39–44.

¹⁸³ ALESSANDRA NIBBI, “Further remarks on *w3d-wr*, Sea Peoples and Keftiu”, *Göttinger Miszellen* [GM] 10 (1974): 35–40 (specifically p. 35).

meaning “generally waters, both fresh and salt water, covering the Delta, Nile, Red Sea^[184] and later the Mediterranean and Aegean”.¹⁸⁵ The word *ym* is obviously a loan-word from the Semitic languages of the Near-Eastern coastal cities meaning explicitly “the sea”.¹⁸⁶ For example Wenamun¹⁸⁷ [2, 74–75] in his travel to the Near-Eastern ports departs from the harbour of the sea (*ym*) at Byblos. Since the text of the pBN 202+pAmherst 9 demonstrates strong influence of the Syro-Palestinian cultural sphere, this fact strongly favours the rendering of the word *ym* as “the Sea”.

Another important actor of our narrative is Astarte from whom the papyrus takes its name. This is because the earliest interpreters have considered Astarte as the main character of the whole narrative (see above, p. 25–32). In the further analysis I will show that even though her role was important, it is always a mediatory role and not that of the main character. Astarte is not an autochthonous Egyptian deity.¹⁸⁸ She has been probably imported with other foreign gods in the 18th dynasty after Egypt begun its imperialist expansion in the Near East.¹⁸⁹ She is mentioned in connection with Amenhotep II (the hero of the Astarte papyrus, ruled approx. 1424–1398 B.C.) on a stela alongside Resheph celebrating the virtuosity with which the pharaoh drives his chariot.¹⁹⁰ Astarte has always been very closely connected with the pharaoh, horses and especially with warfare.

¹⁸⁴ For an overview of other terms connected with the Red Sea, see: WILHELM SPIEGELBERG, “Die ägyptischen Name für das Rote Meer”, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* [ZÄS] 66 (1930): 37–39.

¹⁸⁵ FLORENCE FRIEDMAN, “On the meaning of *w3d wr* in Selected Literary Texts”, *Göttinger Miszellen* [GM] 17 (1975): 15–21.

¹⁸⁶ For a linguistic analysis of the origins of the word Yammu, resp. Eblaitic *wammum*, see: PELIO FRONZAROLI, “Ebl. *wammum* « watercourse ; stream »”, *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* [N.A.B.U.] 3 (1998): 83. For this reference I thank Pavel Čech from the Institute of Comparative Linguistics at the Charles University in Prague, personal communication, 2004.

¹⁸⁷ E. F. WENTE, “The Report of Wenamon”, in SIMPSON, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, p. 154; for the hieroglyphic text, see GARDINER, *Late Egyptian Stories*, p. 74.

¹⁸⁸ For general information about Astarte in Egypt, see for example: WOLFGANG HELCK, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, *Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* [ÄA] 5, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962, p. 456, 490–499; JEAN LECLANT, “Astarte à cheval d’après les représentations égyptiennes”, *Syria* 37 (1960): 1–67; CHRISTIAN LEITZ et al., *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* [OLA] 111, Leuven-Paris-Dudley, 2002, p. 212–213; IZAK CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: the Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qedeset, and Asherah c. 1500-1000 BCE*, Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004; SAKKIE CORNELIUS, “The Egyptian Iconography of the Goddesses Anat and Astarte”, in K. M. Ciałowicz and J. A. Ostrowski (eds.), *Les civilisations du Bassin méditerranéen. Hommage à Joachim Sliwa*, Cracovie, 2000, p. 71–77; and many others.

¹⁸⁹ LECLANT, “Astarte à cheval”: 4. The oldest written record of her name (a toponym containing her name) comes from the temple at Karnak (sixth pylon) from the lists of the Syro-Palestinian cities subjugated by the pharaoh Thutmose III during his first campaign in this area. See: JAN J. SIMONS, *Handbook for the Study of Egyptian Topographical Lists Relating to Western Asia*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937, p. 111–128 a., b., c.; SHMUEL AHITUV, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents*, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 72–73.

¹⁹⁰ K. SETHE, W. HELCK, H. SCHÄFER, H. GRAPOW, O. FIRCHOW (Hrsg.), *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* [Urk.], 8 vols., Leipzig/Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1955–1957, IV 1282, 15.

In the West Semitic context, Astarte was closely associated with the goddess Anat. In the surviving texts from the coastal city of Ugarit (Ras Shamra), Astarte and Anat accompany the storm god Baal in his battle against Yam (the Sea). The close connection between Anat and Astarte is also obvious from the Egyptian material. In the *Contendings* (3,4) we hear an order from Neith to the Ennead to: “Enrich Seth in his possessions. Give him Anat and Astarte [the daughters of the Universal Lord] and install Horus in his position of his father Osiris.”¹⁹¹ In the Syro-Palestinian tradition these two goddesses are connected with war and aggression¹⁹² but also with love and sensuality.¹⁹³ Both Anat and Astarte have got the epithet “Maiden” or “Girl” which is a way to emphasise their eroticism.¹⁹⁴

INTERPRETATION: A QUESTION OF METHOD

In 1899 P. E. Newberry stated that “the papyrus is unfortunately too fragmentary to permit of any connected translation being made.”¹⁹⁵ Even though at present we have a larger part of the text at our disposition, still both the translation and the interpretation of the contents of pBN 202+pAmherst 9 are at least difficult. There are two main approaches to interpreting ancient texts. They have to be used both and in succession. The first phase is the translation accompanied by a linguistic analysis followed by a historical analysis with commentaries of separate motives within the story, the *Sitz im Leben* etc. Collombert and Coulon were very successful in uncovering the historical context of the origin of the pBN 202+pAmherst 9. They have very convincingly shown that the identity of the hero is the personage of Seth-Baal with a eulogical reference to king Amenhotep II. Their work is a beautiful example of erudite and detailed approach, even though it is possible to supplement their views in many aspects as Schneider had done.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless a second phase must follow and at this point most Egyptologists either stop or stay with the well tried interpretative methods. In the first part of my

¹⁹¹ SIMPSON, *The Literature of ancient Egypt*, p. 111.

¹⁹² CAT 1.16, third tablet, col. 6, lines 54–57: “May Horon crack, my son,/may Horon crack your head./Astarte-named-with-Baal, your skull!” (EDWARD L. GREENSTEIN, “Kirta”, in PARKER (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, p. 42). CAT 1.3, third tablet, col. 2, lines 3–16: “The gates of Anat’s house are closed,/she meets youths at the foot of the mountain./And look! Anat fights in the valley,/battles between the two towns./She fights the people of the se[a]-shore,/strikes the populace of the su[nr]ise./Under her, like balls, are hea[ds,]/above her, like locusts, hands,/like locusts, heap of warrior-hands./She fixes heads to her back,/fastens hands to her belt./Knee-deep she glea[n]s in warrior-blood,/Neck-deep in the gor[e] of soldiers./With club she drives away captives,/with her bow-string, the foe.” (SMITH, “The Baal Cycle”, p. 107)

¹⁹³ CAT 1.14, first tablet, col. 3, lines 41–45 (Kirta is imagining how his ideal wife should look like): “Who’s as fair as the goddess Anath,/who’s as comely as Astarte;/whose eyes are lapis lazuli/eyeballs, gleaming alabaster;/who’ll transfix (?) me [...];/I’ll repose in the gaze of her eyes [...].” (SMITH, “The Baal Cycle”, p. 17)

¹⁹⁴ In CAT 1.10 and 1.11 Anat is depicted (in the form of a heifer) as engaging in a love play with the storm god Baal. An Egyptian parallel to this text exists in which a very sensuous description of Seth’s sexual act with Anat is described. See: VAN DIJK, “Anat, Seth and the Seed of Pre”, p. 31–51 and SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 619–622. In the CAT 1.92, first tablet, lines 25–32 the epithet “Maiden” belongs to Astarte bearing identical sexual meaning.

¹⁹⁵ NEWBERRY, *The Amherst Papyri*, p. 47.

¹⁹⁶ SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 605–619.

work I have discussed and criticized these interpretative methods, traditionally promoted by Egyptology – the historicising method and the view of the Myth Ritual School.

For example the fact that in the pChester Beatty 1 Seth is once addressed as uncle of Horus and later as his brother has been by some Egyptologists interpreted as a remainder of matriarchy in ancient Egypt.¹⁹⁷ As such, this approach is absolutely legitimate (it is a basis of a possible scientific discussion) – the problem is that if we take such a historicising theory as the explanation of why we find two seemingly contradictory statements in one text, we in fact rule out the possibility that these statements were *meant* to be there. The text might have a well built structure of its own in which these statements are either not contradictory at all or if they are that their inclusion creates an intentional tension which propels the inner dynamics of the story. What if it is the contradiction itself which bears the meaning? The question now is what method should we use to discover these inner dynamics? Why did the tradition choose to pick these certain personages to narrate the story? What does it tell us about the society itself? How come, in case of the pBN 202+pAmherst 9, we meet a Near Eastern plot in an Egyptian setting? How are myths translatable from culture to culture?

Even though these questions might seem to be too general and one might argue that this is not the work for an Egyptologist, I am persuaded that answering these questions will help us to a more coherent and holistic interpretation of the surviving written and pictorial evidence and conclude something for the study of the Egyptian society itself.

The method which I will be advocating for falls into the tradition of the structuralist interpretative approach as started by Claude Lévi-Strauss and continued by others. I will be trying to ground the few fragments of the pBN 202+pAmherst 9 within a broader framework of Egyptian literary tradition and show in what way did this story, replete with foreign characters, vocabulary and concepts, fit in the horizon of Egyptian thought. In order to do this, I first have to summarize and present the basic concepts of the structuralist theories, show its weaknesses and then perform the analysis on Egyptian mythological material.

¹⁹⁷ URSULA KÖHLER, “Enigie Überlegungen zu den verwandschaftlichen Beziehungen zwischen Horus und Seth im Pap. Chester Beatty No. 1”, *Göttinger Miszellen* [GM] (1972): 19, n. 1.

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS AND STRUCTURALISM¹⁹⁸

Lévi-Strauss' theory is based on the structuralist linguistic theory as proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure and later developed by the PLK (Linguistic Circle of Prague).¹⁹⁹ The crucial asset was the formulation of the rule of the “arbitrary character of the linguistic signs” posed by Saussure. This rule states that “[...] it is the combination of sounds, not the sounds themselves, which provides the significant data.”²⁰⁰ In other words, Saussure rejects the theory “that a sound possesses a certain affinity with a meaning: for instance, the “liquid” semi-vowels [r and l, author’s note] with water [for example flow, fluid, river, author’s note].”²⁰¹ This theory is shown as unsustainable by the fact that “the same sounds were equally present in other languages although the meaning they conveyed was entirely different.”²⁰² On the level of the study of mythology, Lévi-Strauss compares this theory to the one proposed by Jung who wants to see “archetypes” as symbolic representations common to all mankind – that is, having meaning in themselves regardless of the cultural context.²⁰³

Lévi-Strauss draws on Saussure further and says that myth, just like language, has got two temporal dimensions, the synchronic and the diachronic, or *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* represents the language as a system which serves as the basis for all speakers whether they are aware of its structure or not. *Parole* is one specific oral expression which is guided by syntax.

As a system the *langue* belongs to the *synchronic* (or for Saussure *paradigmatic*) reversible time structure whereas *parole*, guided by its syntax, belongs to the diachronic (or for Saussure *syntagmatic*) irreversible time structure (something is said in a specific time and place). In actual life it is the *parole* that interests people – by this we communicate with others. The linguists, on the other hand, preoccupy themselves with the *langue*, which they regard as a system of all possible *paroles*. Mythology is analogous language, while each separate myth or mythical motif would

¹⁹⁸ In 1955 Claude Lévi-Strauss' published an article in which he defined his basic concepts. I worked with a reprint: CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. from French by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, New York, London: Penguin Books, 1977, Chapter XI, p. 206–231. In structuring my summary of Claude Lévi-Strauss' theory I have been strongly influenced by a yet unpublished article by RADEK CHLUP, “Claude-Lévi Strauss po sto letech”, *Religio*, in print. His précis is coherent, accurate and understandable and I would like to thank him for allowing me to work with his text before it has been submitted to print.

¹⁹⁹ The Circle was founded in 1926 and among the founding members were such personalities as Vilém Mathesius (President of PLK until his death in 1945), Roman Jakobson, Nikolay Trubetzkoy, Sergei Karcevskiy, Jan Mukařovský, and many others (<http://www.praguelinguistics.org/>, last visited 23.8.2008)

²⁰⁰ LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural Anthropology*, p. 208.

²⁰¹ *Idem*, p. 208.

²⁰² *Idem*, p. 208.

²⁰³ Even though Jung's method is in a way opposed to that of Lévi-Strauss, he also assumed a collective unconscious quality of the human mind in that it works in structures even though the content of these varies in different societies. On the similarities of the psychological and structuralist approach, see: JOHN RAPHAEL STAUDE, “From Depth Psychology to Depth Sociology: Freud, Jung, and Lévi-Strauss”, *Theory and Society*, 3.3 (1976): 303–338.

correspond to *parole*.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Lévi-Strauss' endeavour was to uncover the synchronic structure of myths which forms the basis of all individual mythical expressions (parallel to the notion of *langue*).

In order to identify the synchronic structure of myth, we must first recognise what are the basic motives which are repeated in myths again and again. These basic units of a myth are called *mythemes*.²⁰⁵ “Because the structure of myth is synchronic in its essence, it manifests itself through *repetition*. [...] Paradoxically, the most meaningful aspect of myth is its redundancy. This rule has got significant methodological consequences: in order to discover the structure, it is necessary to work with as many versions of a single myth as possible. [...] Each separate version is equivalent to that of an individual act of *parole*; we are, nevertheless, interested in language as a repertoire of all linguistic possibilities and therefore it is in our interest to examine as many versions as possible.”²⁰⁶ Lévi-Strauss exemplifies this “mythical redundancy” in his famous but also very controversial analysis of the Oedipus myth²⁰⁷ and of other myths also belonging to the so-called Theban Cycle. The first mytheme, which Lévi-Strauss identifies, is the *overrating of blood relationships*. This is manifest in Oedipus' marriage with his mother Jokasta, in the almost obsessed effort of Cadmos to find his sister Europa in the course of which he travels from Phoinikia to Central Greece where he founds Thebes, and also in Antigone's persistent demand to bury her brother Polynices even though he came as an enemy to conquer Thebes.

The second mytheme is an inversion of the first one and consists of a series of acts of *underrating of blood relationships*. The separate *paroles* would be Oedipus murdering his own father, the fratricidal fight between the Spartoi, the men of the “dragon seed”,²⁰⁸ and also another fratricidal episode whose actors are Oedipus' sons Eteocles and Polynices.

However, mythology does not only repeat mythemes throughout different myths, it also *transforms* them. An example of such a transformation was given by Edmund Leach. He takes a myth in which the hero Hippolytos plays the main role. Seemingly, there is in no relation to the myth of Oedipus – characters have different names. However, from a structural point of view it is a direct transformation of the myth of Oedipus:

²⁰⁴ This concept is precisely the same as in Assmann's *Phänotext (langue)* and *Genotext (parole)*. Assmann, nevertheless, decided to use these “new” terms instead of using the established structuralist terminology. See: ASSMANN, “Die Verborgenheit”: 37–39.

²⁰⁵ Here again, Lévi-Strauss has been inspired by the linguistic theory which distinguishes *phonemes* (the smallest linguistically distinctive units of sound) *morphemes* (the smallest linguistic unit that has semantic meaning: in spoken language composed of phonemes and of *graphemes* in written language) and *semantemes* (a combination of morphemes creating a meaningful utterance). *Mythemes* stand even a level higher being formed by a combination of semantemes.

²⁰⁶ CHLUP, “Claude-Lévi Strauss”: 8.

²⁰⁷ LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural Anthropology*, p. 210–213.

²⁰⁸ Originating from the teeth of Areus' dragon sowed into the ground by Cadmos during the foundation of the city of Thebes.

Story: Hippolytos is the son of Theseus by Antiope, Queen of the Amazons. Phaidra, daughter of Minos, is wife to Theseus and step-mother to Hippolytos. Phaidra falls in love with Hippolytos, who rejects her advances; Phaidra then accuses Hippolytos of having tried to rape her. In revenge Theseus appeals to Poseidon to slay Hippolytos, and Hippolytos dies. Phaidra commits suicide. Theseus discovers his error and suffers remorse.

Comment: This is very close to being the inverse of the Oedipus story. Here the father kills the son instead of the son killing the father. The son does not sleep with the mother, though he is accused of doing so. The mother commits suicide in both cases; the surviving father-son suffers remorse in both cases. [...] ²⁰⁹

Leach goes on and adds other ancient Greek myths which are only transformations of the Oedipus myth. ²¹⁰ To get a gist of his comparison, we can show the transformations on the different renderings of the father-son relationship: “*Oedipus*: son kills father and becomes paramour; *Agamemnon*: paramour kills father inviting vengeance from the son; *Odysseus*: father merges with son and destroys the would-be paramours. Odysseus has no descendants; *Menelaos*: paramour (Paris) is destroyed by a third party and there is no heir (son); *Hippolytos*: innocent son, falsely accused of being paramour, is killed by father.” ²¹¹ What the structuralist method does is that it pairs material which very often has little or no affinity in content (for example different names of the main actors) but recognises them as transformed versions of a single mytheme.

Within each culture, we can distinguish “sets” (or as Lévi-Strauss calls them “transformation groups” ²¹²) of such transformational variants of a certain mytheme. Nevertheless, these sets are not closed, as Leach remarks, but can be linked with an indefinite number of other sets through reference to the same characters, place names or other. ²¹³ “Individual myths share these themes but each myth shifts them to a different level by completely or partially inverting their structure. It is only in their mutual transformations that the mythical structures fully reveal themselves [...]” ²¹⁴

The main point of the structuralist analysis (and also of the myth system itself) is not the identification (or creation) of mythemes themselves, but showing their structural relationships – it is these that bear the meaning, individual elements are exchangeable and therefore meaningless in themselves.

²⁰⁹ EDMUND LEACH, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989² [1970¹], p. 84–85.

²¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 78–87.

²¹¹ *Idem*, p. 87.

²¹² CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, vol. 1, New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969, p. 2–3. [Originally published in French as *Le Cru et le Cuit*, Paris: Plon, 1964.]

²¹³ LEACH, “The Legitimacy of Solomon”, p. 48.

²¹⁴ CHLUP, “Claude-Lévi Strauss”: 11.

The basic assertion, which Lévi-Strauss makes, is that human mind has got a natural ability (or is even compelled) to creating categories by which individuals organise the world around them. The elementary type of structural relationships between these categories is that of binary oppositions.²¹⁵ This principle is so basic, that it exhibits itself on all levels and spheres of existence with which man is concerned and which he is able to discern (geographic, social, cosmological, alimentary, etc.). And because myths are also products of the human mind, the binary opposites work as the basic principle of their structure as well. In his analysis of the Story of Asdiwal²¹⁶ (a myth narrated by a Tsimshian Indian group from North America) Lévi-Strauss gives an example of what he means. The oppositions are framed by four various orders: (1) physical and political geography of the Tsimshian country (east × west; north × south; upstream × downstream; etc.); (2) economic life of the natives (mountain-hunting × sea-hunting); (3) social and family organization (mother × daughter; elder × younger; man × woman; endogamy × exogamy; patrilocality × matrilocality; etc.); (4) cosmology (heaven × subterranean home of the sea-lions). In some cases, these opposites pervade several levels at one time (famine × plenty – a cosmological concept and at the same time a fact of the economic reality of the natives, etc.).²¹⁷

These sets of oppositions are, each within its own order, “being used according to the needs of the moment, and according to its particular capacity, to transmit the same message.”²¹⁸ The “same message” would then be some kind of paradox with which the given culture is confronted – there are many paradoxes in one culture. Edmund Leach gives some examples of such irresolvable paradoxes of logic or fact: “How could there be a first man and a woman who were not also a brother and a sister?”; “How can one fit a desire for immortality with a knowledge of the certainty of impending death?”; “How is it that human beings are on the one hand animals (natural) and on the other hand not-animals (cultural)?”²¹⁹

We have seen that myths work with basic cultural paradoxes and that the mechanism is that of transformation of individual motives paired as binary oppositions. The last question we have got to answer is: What is the relation of myth and its constituent parts to these basic cultural and existential paradoxes? The relation is twofold, each possibility offering a different solution. What connects these two solutions is the fact that myth in both cases strives to cope with the troubling character of the inherent paradoxes. What differs is the way it is achieved.

²¹⁵ Unfortunately, I do not have the space in my work to go into details as to why it is so. For more details, see LEACH, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, p. 16–33.

²¹⁶ LÉVI-STRAUSS, “The Story of Asdiwal”, p. 1–47.

²¹⁷ *Idem*, p. 7, 14.

²¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 14.

²¹⁹ LEACH, “The Legitimacy of Solomon”, p. 48.

The first mechanism lies in the already mentioned transformations of individual mythemes throughout different myths. The outcome of the never ending permutations which myths undergo leads to the conclusion that the basic opposition (which is formulated at the end of the myth as the outcome of integrating separate smaller oppositions throughout the narrative) is, in fact, insurmountable. This is shown on the level of the repeated failure of the main characters to overcome the individual oppositions. These oppositions, at the same time,

[...] do not have to do anything with the reality of structure of the [...] society, but rather with its inherent possibilities and its latent potentialities. [...] [As] extreme positions, [they] are only *imagined* in order to show that they are *untenable*. This step, which is fitting for mythical thought, implies an admission (but in the veiled language of the myth) that the social facts when thus examined are marred by an insurmountable contradiction. A contradiction which, like the hero of the myth, [...] society cannot understand and prefers to forget.²²⁰

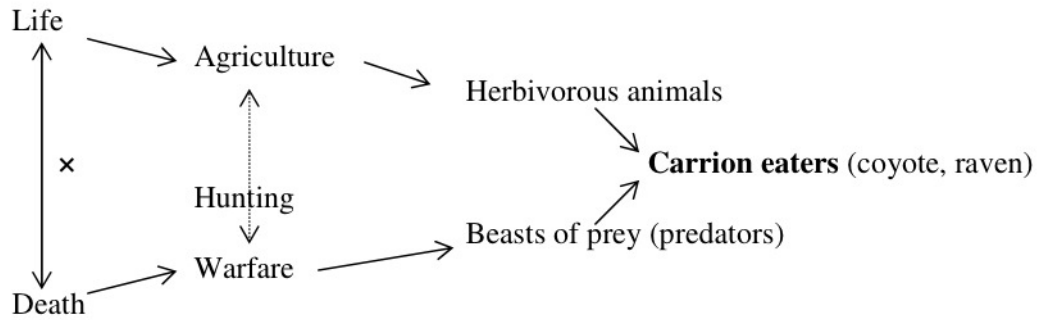
But how does the myth help the people to “forget”? As put by Leach, “the “variations on a theme” which constantly recur in mythological systems serve to blur the edges of such “contradictions” and thus to remove them from immediate consciousness.”²²¹ Myths work with different sets of oppositions and through the transformational process connects them with different oppositions. The outcome is that the oppositions do not disappear – they cannot for they are inherent to society – but these oppositions become structured (they create relations with each other) and thus the fact of their existence becomes bearable. They are not chaotic oppositions anymore but structured oppositions. Disorder (paradoxes) still lurks in the background but for that certain moment it is integrated into order.

The other possibility is that myths through the process of transformation relate those paradoxes (expressed by oppositions) which originally did not have direct connection with each other, and then gradually mediates between them. This is done by the character of a *mediator* (or mediating actions). A mediator can equate an extreme opposition with a milder one and at the same time the narrower oppositions can be said to ‘mediate’ the great contradictions. A mediator is always a “liminal” character, somewhere in between the worlds or the contraries with which the myth deals. If we imagine myth as a pendulum (to this comparison we shall return later), theirs is the space between the swings. The so-called “tricksters” (not-good and at the same time not-bad) appearing in mythologies of almost all cultures are an example of such mediators. To give an example, Lévi-Strauss draws from the tradition of the Indian cultures of the Americas. He draws a table:²²²

²²⁰ LÉVI-STRAUSS, “The Story of Asdiwal”, p. 30.

²²¹ LEACH, “The Legitimacy of Solomon” p. 48.

²²² LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural Anthropology*, p. 224.



As we can see, the fact of life and inevitable death is an insurmountable opposition. But the opposition can be assimilated to economic activities which support life by means of killing, and to this extent lie somewhere between the two extremes of the initial opposition. Agriculture supports life by producing plant life and partakes of death only in the sense that harvesting kills the crops. It can be opposed to hunting, which sustains life through killing a life one has not produced, and an animal life obviously alive with a life like our own. A further opposition can be added by the opposition hunting/war. War is like hunting that it involves chase and killing, but it sustains life only indirectly, while it takes a human life and so produces a more serious form of death. To this triad of economic activities, one can compare the economic activities of animals. Herbivores harvest plants and so practice a kind of agriculture; though they do not themselves bring the plants to life. Predators are like hunters in that they kill what they eat, but also little like warriors in that they can kill men. Midway between these extremes stand carrion eaters, which are like predators in that they eat flesh, but like herbivores in that they do not kill what they eat.²²³

As mediators, the raven and the coyote occupy a very important position in the mythological complexes of the Indians.

In ancient Egypt, the importance of binary oppositions and gradual mediation between them was made evident by the Egyptians themselves.

The temple material works very much with opposites. It constantly opposes concepts like **chaos** and **cosmos**, **night** and **day**, **death** and **life**, **Osiris** and **Re**, **female** and **male**. In this binary thinking the two opposed concepts are considered to be complementary and each pair of concepts forms a unit. [...] it is the relation and interaction between these two poles and the integration of them (*coincidentia oppositorum*) that constitutes the unity, a living, creative, and life-giving unit.²²⁴

We will return to the role of mediators in the interpretation of Egyptian material (see p. 60–106).

²²³ ERIC CSAPO, *Theories of Mythology*, Malden: Blackwell, 2005, p. 227–228.

²²⁴ GERTIE ENGLUND, “The Treatment of Opposites in Temple Thinking and Wisdom Literature”, in Gertie Englund (ed.), *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians: Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions, Proceedings of Symposia in Uppsala and Bergen 1987 and 1988*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis Boreas [Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations 20], Uppsala, p. 77–88.

The greatest advantage of Lévi-Strauss' approach is at the same time his greatest weakness. In his attempt to discover the aspects of myth which are not obvious at first sight (synchronic structure of myth),²²⁵ he has done away with the diachronic aspect of myth too abruptly. As accurately expressed by Eric Csapo: "Lévi-Strauss merely treats the syntagmatic chain as a means to the end of establishing the paradigmatic relations."²²⁶

To let Lévi-Strauss speak for himself: "[...] every syntagmatic sequence must be judged meaningless: either because no meaning is immediately apparent, or because we think we see a meaning, but do not know if it is the right one."²²⁷

As we have seen in Part I, "narrativity" is by many Egyptologists taken as being a prerequisite to considering some material to be a myth in the first place. We have now ended up with Lévi-Strauss' assertion that narrativity is actually meaningless in itself. Further, I will try to argue that neither of these positions is correct, but before that, we have to give space to critical evaluation of Lévi-Strauss' structuralist method.

CRITICISM AND MODIFICATIONS OF THE STRUCTURALIST METHOD

Many objections have been raised against the structuralist method. From all of them I will comment only on the one concerning the treatment of the diachronic aspect (or narrativity) since this was also the main topic of Part I of this work. Above, I have noted that Lévi-Strauss reduces myth to its synchronic structure. Two basic problems result from this: (1) Is it possible to apply the structuralist method to "civilised" societies which acknowledge some type of "history" (i.e. they see meaning in gradual progress in time)? (2) Isn't the narrative in some way important after all?

(1) Paul Ricoeur objected²²⁸ that Lévi-Strauss concentrates on investigating mainly the so-called "primitive" societies and except for one case, when he analyses the myth of Oedipus, does not apply his method to more complex ("civilised") cultures. This is also one of the main objections raised by the Egyptologist E. F. Wente²²⁹ in his reply to a structural interpretation of

²²⁵ In this point Lévi-Strauss follows Troubetzkoy when stating that: „Structural linguistics shifts from the study of conscious linguistic phenomena to study of their unconscious infrastructure [...].”LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural Anthropology*, p. 33.

²²⁶ CSAPO, *Theories of Mythology*, p. 235.

²²⁷ CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, *The Raw and the Cooked*, p. 313. Quotation by: CSAPO, *Theories of Mythology*, p. 235.

²²⁸ PAUL RICOEUR, "Structuralisme et herméneutique" *Esprit* 322 (1963): 596–627. Quotation and summary after: LEACH, "The Legitimacy of Solomon" p. 41–42.

²²⁹ EDWARD F. WENTE, "Response to Robert A. Oden's 'The Contendings of Horus and Seth' (Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 1): A Structural Interpretation", *History of Religions* 18.4 (1979): 370–372.

the New Kingdom narrative known as the Contendings of Horus and Seth²³⁰ by Robert A Oden, Jr.²³¹ Wenté wrote:

As far as methodology is concerned, how valid is it to apply the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, derived from studies of primitive religions, to the religion of a highly civilized culture? If anything, in the sophistication of its ritualism and symbolism Egyptian religion is perhaps more akin to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which I doubt can be easily reduced to the algebraic equations of structuralism.

This criticism is twofold. First it points to Lévi-Strauss' emphasis which he put on interpreting solely the myths of "primitive" peoples. From this fact both Ricoeur and Wenté deduce that the whole structuralist method is questionable because it has not been applied to "civilised" cultures such as the Judeo-Christian tradition. Ricoeur's criticism prompted Lévi-Strauss to react replying that "Old Testament mythology has been 'deformed' by the intellectual operations of biblical editors and he seems to imply that, on this account, a structural analysis of such materials must prove to be largely a waste of time." By this Lévi-Strauss means that mythology of "primitive" peoples is alive (mainly because it is transmitted orally and therefore does not lose contact with the living substratum of the given society) and can demonstrate well its synchronic structures. The mythology of the more civilised nations, on the other hand, is somehow distorted because it has been cut off from the oral tradition, codified by only a few editors who have forced it into the boundaries of the media on which they are written, thus extinguishing their force to carry the synchronic structure of thought. We can see that there is a certain discrepancy between Lévi-Strauss' theory and its implementation. Lévi-Strauss would like to get to the basic unconscious level on which any human mind whether "primitive" or "civilised" operates. He considers nevertheless the analyses of solely the "primitive" cultures to be of some value. It was Edmund Leach who showed that a structuralist analysis of the Judaic tradition is also possible.²³² His main argument was that even though the sacred text underwent a long process of editing the point of which was to eliminate the contradictions which were unwanted by the editor, new contradictions arose and "It is precisely the all-pervasiveness and random incidence of such inconsistency which makes these 'historical' texts appropriate material for structural analysis for, under these randomised conditions, the underlying structure of the story ceases to be under the rational control of the editors and generates a momentum of its own."²³³ The text lives a certain life of its own, independent of its editors' intent for they cannot grasp all

²³⁰ For the hieroglyphic text, see: GARDINER, *Late Egyptian Stories*, p. 37–60.

²³¹ ODEN, "The Contendings": 352–369.

²³² LEACH, "The Legitimacy of Solomon", p. 40–79. A similar approach has been adopted by KARIN R. ANDRIOLO, "Structural Analysis of Genealogy and Worldview in the Old Testament", *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 1657–69.

²³³ LEACH, "The Legitimacy of Solomon", p. 51.

its meanings and possible implications at once and in this way it moulds the editors without them knowing.

The fact that even the “civilised” traditions can be structurally analysed has been, in case of the Greek tradition, shown by the works of Jean Pierre Vernant²³⁴ and Marcel Detienne.²³⁵

Inherent to Ricoeur’s criticism is also the objection that Lévi-Strauss strongly undervalues the diachronic aspect in myths (see above) since, for example, the whole of the “civilised” Judeo-Christian tradition takes diachronic sequencing in its myth as a central mode of the pronunciation of God’s will – it is a sacred history. In case of Ancient Greece, we perceive the immense importance that the Greeks paid to the genealogical sequences inherent in their mythical narratives²³⁶ which, again, are diachronic in nature. What Edmund Leach tries to show in his article is that even though the Judaic tradition values a “linear” concept of time and therefore sees reason in a sequential ordering of events it is still nothing else but another type of structure.

For ordinary men, as distinct from professional scholars, the significance of history lies in what is *believed* to have happened, not in what *actually* happened. And belief, by a process of selection, can fashion even the most incongruent stories into patterned (and therefore memorable) structures.²³⁷

A very illuminating example illustrating this quotation can be taken from the ancient Egyptian culture itself. In the mortuary temple of the pyramid of Sahura on the southern wall of the *wsxt* we find the relief depicting the smiting of a Libyan chieftain by the pharaoh.²³⁸ At the very bottom of the relief, the wife of the smitten chief and his two sons are shown in desperate poses, begging for mercy. They are named *hw(j)t-jt(j).s* (the woman), *Ws3* and *Wnj* (the boys). This exact scene, which could be rendered as a historical record of Sahura’s military conflict with the Libyans, has been copied many times in the pyramid complexes of later pharaohs (including the exact names of the Libyan and his family) which renders the historicity of this scene as highly questionable.²³⁹ This is not some kind of a deceit from the side of the ancient Egyptians. What was important for them was the fact that the *relation* of the ruling pharaoh (whoever that might have been at the given time) is exactly that which the Egyptians expected – that of supremacy

²³⁴ JEAN-PIERRE VERNANT, “Between the Beasts and the Gods” and “The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod”, both in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, tr. by Janet Lloyd, London: Methuen, 1982 (French original 1974), p. 131–185.

²³⁵ MARCEL DETIENNE, *Les jardins d’Adonis*, Paris: Gallimard, 1972.

²³⁶ ERIC CSAPO, *Theories of Mythology*, Malden: Blackwell, 2005, p. 237–245.

²³⁷ LEACH, “The Legitimacy of Solomon”, p. 76.

²³⁸ LUDWIG BORCHARDT, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sahure*, Bd. II, Die Wandbilder: Abbildungsblätter, Leipzig: Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1913, Bd I, figs. 11,12 (photos), Bd II, pl. 1; DAGMAR STOCKFISCH, *Untersuchungen zum Totentempel des ägyptischen Königs im Alten Reich: Die Dekoration der königlichen Totenkultanlagen*, Bd. 2, Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2003, Dok. 5.2.10.

²³⁹ ĆWIEK, *Relief Decoration*, p. 200–201.

over the foreign chieftain, representative of disorder. This is the history which is *believed*. What was absolutely unimportant was whether a certain pharaoh *actually* did battle the Libyans and what were their names – the units themselves are exchangeable and unimportant in themselves. It is their relationship which renders the message. A truly structuralist approach shown by the Egyptians themselves!

(2) “For Lévi-Strauss the narrative of a story is only a practical costume which does not have a meaning in itself but in which the mythemes are clothed in order to attract the attention of the listener.”²⁴⁰ It is true that mythical stories or fairy-tales contain many situations not connected by rules of logic, but based on our childhood experience with bedtime stories we cannot get rid of the feeling that there is an inherent meaning in their narrative development. There is a reason why a certain character starts from the beginning while another appears in the middle of the story, etc. Lévi-Strauss, on the other hand, would not agree and by considering the syntagmatic structure of myths as only a means to randomly order the paradigmatic structure, he obviously fails to grasp an important aspect of mythical thought. A very original but unfortunately inadequately acknowledged article written by an American anthropologist Terence Turner manages to present an ingenious solution to the problem of Lévi-Strauss’ undervaluation of narrativity in myths.²⁴¹ Turner’s intention is a “partial reformulation and extension of the structuralist approach. Its major difference from earlier structuralist treatments of myth is that *it lays great emphasis on the temporal structure of the narrative as well as the logical structure of relations between its component elements.*”²⁴² In other words, just what we are looking for.²⁴³

Turner concluded that the diachronic aspect of myth is not expressed by the plot of the story as Lévi-Strauss assumed. “Narrative patterns are in themselves highly structured forms, analogous in many ways to the syntactic level of language.”²⁴⁴ Therefore the narrative cannot represent the historical time (diachrony) for that is *unorderly* in its essence. “The relation between the story and the mythematic structure therefore does not represent the relation between diachrony and synchrony but a relation between two types of synchronic structures.”²⁴⁵ Turner’s

²⁴⁰ CHLUP, “Claude-Lévi Strauss”: 29.

²⁴¹ TERENCE TURNER, “Oedipus: Time and Structure in Narrative Form”, in R. Spencer (ed.), *Forms of Symbolic Action*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, p. 26–68. Turner’s view has been strongly influenced by the work of a Swiss Psychologist Jean Piaget. See TERENCE TURNER: “Piaget’s Structuralism”, *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 351–373.

²⁴² TURNER, “Oedipus: Time and Structure”, p. 26, italics mine.

²⁴³ I would like to apologise to the reader in advance because the following paragraphs which are the summary of T. Turner’s theory might seem a bit abstract and difficult to understand. Further (see p. 60–85) I will incorporate his theoretical approach in my analysis of ancient Egyptian textual material. Once confronted with actual situations, the theory should become clearer. Nevertheless, it is important to get acquainted with the basic terminology and concepts before we proceed.

²⁴⁴ TURNER, “Oedipus: Time and Structure”, p. 32.

²⁴⁵ CHLUP, “Claude-Lévi Strauss”: 30.

thesis is “[...] that the synthetic aspect of narrative form is a cultural model for the process of interaction and synthesis between another pair of antithetical elements: the individual and the collective order.”²⁴⁶ Turner also describes the principle of the ordering of events and relationships in myths – we could say the “mythomotrics”. At the beginning we start either with a passive state of inertia (classic example would be the beginning of all creation myths) in which everything is in its potentiality, or with a state of fixed order. In both cases, things are in some kind of equilibrium.

[Then] an action or event violates or mediates the structure of the prevailing order, giving rise to a situation in which actors and elements stand in ambiguous or contradictory relationships to each other. The “plot” of narrative sequence proceeds from this point through a series of permutations of the relations between these actors and elements toward a final state of equilibrium in which all elements again stand in unambiguous (synchronic) relations to each other. The beginning-middle-end phase structure of such traditional narrative genres thus manifests itself at the level of content as a dialectical alternation between synchronic order and diachronic disorder.²⁴⁷

This dialectical alternation has the classical Hegelian form of a thesis – antithesis – synthesis. Every such triad is considered to be an “episode”. These episodes then combine again on a higher level, still following the triadic pattern, forming new episodes and so on and so forth. “The narrative thus proceeds in terms of a series of complementary distortions of the fundamental “synchronic” set of principles, each deviation engendering its compensatory negation until the final synthesis is reached.”²⁴⁸

The two basic modes of this dialectic motion are “affirmation” and “negation”. “‘Affirmation’ is regularly expressed as a double negative or ‘negation of negation’, or alternatively as a re-separation of improperly combined or ‘synthesized’ relationships.”²⁴⁹

“Negations” either behave “in the opposite way to that normatively required in a given relationship (e.g., infanticide)” or combine “both incompatible poles of binary oppositions in a single unviable relationship (e.g., incest).”²⁵⁰

The last questions we have to answer are: In what way are the two synchronic structures (the mythematic system and the narrative) related and what is, then, the diachronic aspect if not the narrative?

Concerning the question of diachrony, Turner states that it is the experience of individuals who perceive the society

²⁴⁶ TURNER, “Oedipus: Time and Structure”, p. 34.

²⁴⁷ *Idem*, p. 33.

²⁴⁸ *Idem*, p. 63.

²⁴⁹ *Idem*, p. 62.

²⁵⁰ *Idem*, p. 62.

[...] as a temporal flow of acts and events which diverges at many points form the ideal, synchronic structure of categories of relationship and rules of behavior. [...] his temporal experience of society presents him with continual problems of reorienting and reintegrating himself with relatively disorderly aspects of his objective situation in terms of the ideal forms and categories provided by his culture. This experience is typically laden with anxiety, especially at times of life crises. Society, for its part, can of course only sustain itself by insuring that the individual's efforts at reintegration (together with the integration of new individuals) will be successful. [...] The temporal forms of social organization (ritual, judicial process, domestic group cycle, etc.) are cultural devices for the mediation of this process.²⁵¹

At this moment the myth with its two types of synchronic structures steps in. The mythematic system with its constant transformations of its basic units represents the structure in its ideal form: it is subsistent in itself in that it can create infinite number of permutations of a few types of basic relationships and in this respect it has a life of its own (though it must always be a person who narrates or writes down the myth). On the other side we have got the individual with his often very chaotic emotions, longings and wishes, which must very often be suppressed because their realisation would be in direct contradiction to the moral rules and etiquette of the given society. It is the function of myth in the form of a narrative to mediate between the individual and the order. The narrative is, to some extent, similar to the diachronic level in that it also has got a beginning – middle – end. But at the same time it is a strictly organised structure which follows the same rules as the self-subsistent mythematic system. The narrative provides a matrix into which individuals project their own chaotic notions. At the same time the narrative organises the unordered personal experience into meaningful structures. By “meaningful” I mean the sheer fact that something disorderly becomes integrated into a working system. Myths, in fact, do not give any solutions to the problems of individuals because most of the time these anxieties stem from the fact that within a given society there exist basic paradoxes which, essentially, cannot be solved. The relation between myth and individuals is of a dialectic character – without individuals there would be no myths, no disorderly “fuel” allowing the synchronic structure of myth to pursue the never ending structural permutations of its mythemes, but at the same time, once the individual integrates his own feelings into the system, he is moulded by the very same structure which he has helped to create. In this respect, myths have the same function as rituals of transition. These, too, help the individual to be re-integrated into the structures of society from which he had been intentionally or by accident excluded. It is exactly for this reason that we meet the characters of mediators in myths around the world: one of the functions of mythical narrative is to mediate, and these characters represent the personalisation of this function.

²⁵¹ *Idem*, p. 35.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS IN EGYPTOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

The structuralist method has got a very weak position in Egyptology, indeed. In fact I have been able to find only three articles by four authors (two of which were not Egyptologists at all), who utilize this method to analyze ancient Egyptian written (mythological) material. They are the following scholars: Edmund Leach,²⁵² Robert A. Oden, Jr.,²⁵³ Jürgen Zeidler,²⁵⁴ and Katja Goebis.²⁵⁵ These scholars have one thing in common – there have been virtually none (respectively one positive and one negative) reactions to their methodological approach. Edmund Leach's article²⁵⁶ which, compared with his other works, seems to be just a short outing, was commented by John Baines as “novel interpretations of the Osiris/Horus and Seth myth. His analysis of its structural implications and his suggestion that a ‘joking relationship’ may be behind the burlesque episodes in the New Kingdom story go beyond any egyptological work on the subject.”²⁵⁷ This was truly positive reaction. Unfortunately, it did not bring about any discussion among the Egyptologists about the question of methods applied for interpreting ancient texts at all.

On the other hand, Robert Oden's structuralist effort,²⁵⁸ also dedicated to the Osiris/Horus and Seth myth, has been harshly criticised by Edward F. Wente.²⁵⁹ He was appalled:

Professor Oden's structuralist interpretation of “The Contendings,” a text written during the Ramesside period, involves an approach that is otherwise ill suited to elucidating that class of religious literature which the Egyptians called “God's Word,” for the meaning of such texts that possessed religious authority was not generally conveyed by the structure of an underlying narrative. [!?] A rigid application of structuralist methodology to the interpretation of Egyptian religious literature would, for the most part, yield results as unsatisfactory as if such a procedure were applied to determine the meaning behind the wealth of visual symbols present on religious monuments and objects of ancient Egypt.²⁶⁰

Fortunately for us and unfortunately for Wente's argument, it is precisely this basic idea that the meanings contained in the structural layout of texts and visual symbols present on

²⁵² EDMUND LEACH, “The Mother's Brother in Ancient Egypt”, *Royal Anthropological Institute News* [RAIN] 15 (1976): 19–21.

²⁵³ ODEN, “The Contendings”: 352–369.

²⁵⁴ ZEIDLER, “Zur Frage der Spärentstehung”: 85–109. Needless to say, Zeidler's article is very demanding – the reader is baffled by his complicated graphs and different types of equations and very quickly loses strength to inquire into the details of the topic. Such an analysis is on the verge of genius and madness.

²⁵⁵ GOEBIS, “A Functional Approach”: 27–59.

²⁵⁶ LEACH, “The Mother's Brother”: 19–21.

²⁵⁷ JOHN BAINES, “Introduction”, *Royal Anthropological Institute News* [RAIN] 15 (1976): 3.

²⁵⁸ ODEN, “The Contendings”: 352–369.

²⁵⁹ WENTE, “Response”: 370–372.

²⁶⁰ *Idem*: 370–371.

religious monuments of Ptolemaic Egypt have yielded very interesting results²⁶¹ just as in the case of the structural disposition of the Pyramid Texts as analysed by James P. Allen.²⁶² Wente continues and unveils the depth of his misunderstanding of the basic concepts of structuralism:

“The Contendings” does present an episodically structured narrative involving certain gods. The question that should be raised is whether “The Contendings” had the backing of religious authority, falling into the category of God’s Word, or whether it was composed simply as a tale about the gods. [...]”²⁶³

The main point, which Wente is obviously missing and which is the cornerstone of structuralism, is that it does not matter whether a certain written material had been backed up by religious authority or not – that is absolutely irrelevant. Peasants and religious and politic elite live all in a certain cultural context and the basic paradoxes, inherent to any cultural system, are expressed in structures which have the ability to replicate themselves infinitely on all levels of society and in all literary types. What is more, the cultural paradoxes operate in structures on the *unconscious* level – they are in everything a member of a certain culture creates whether he/she intends to or not. Therefore, if the story of the Contendings of Horus and Seth was not “something more than an often humorous and bawdy tale about the gods by an author of the Ramesside period”²⁶⁴ – all the better for us. This does not disqualify the text nor the interpretation method. Humour forms an inherent part of ritual and mythological language – it allows to reflect the cultural borderlines and its limitations in a way other types of communication and expression do not.²⁶⁵

Wente closed his article with the following statement: “Still less would I advocate the application of the Lévi-Strauss methodology to the bulk of surviving Egyptian religious texts that have religious authority.” Maybe Katja Goebis did not read Wente’s article or maybe she just wisely ignored it, but in 2002 she published an article²⁶⁶ which to some extent uses the

²⁶¹ DIETER KURTH, *Treffpunkt der Götter: Inschriften aus dem Tempel des Horus von Edfu*, Zürich; München: Artemis, 1994, especially p. 23–65; PHILIPPE DERCHAIN, “Un manuel de géographie liturgique à Edfou”, *Chronique d’Égypte* [CdE] 37 (1962): 31–65.

²⁶² ALLEN, “Reading a Pyramid”, p. 5–28.

²⁶³ WENTE, “Response”: 371.

²⁶⁴ *Idem*: 372.

²⁶⁵ For a classical study of social functions of jokes, see MARY DOUGLAS, “The Social Control of Cognition: Some Factors in Joke Perception”, *Man* (New Series), 3.3 (1968): 361–376. For the Czech reader, see RADEK CHLUP, “Vtip a náboženství. Posvátno jako mysterium ludicrum et ridiculum”, *Religio* 1 (2005): 259–278. I quote from the summary of his article (p. 278): “[this article] sees the essence of a joke in its ability to bring in relation disparate elements in such a way that one accepted pattern is challenged by appearance of another, making us realize that the accepted pattern has no necessity, that any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective. The reason why jokes often appear in religion is that here, too, we see an attempt at transcending established patterns and getting in touch with what is beyond them. For while religion and ritual help to define the categories and structural principles that a society stands upon, they also make it possible to transcend them.”

²⁶⁶ GOEBIS, “A Functional Approach”: 27–59.

structuralist method in a very functional and convincing manner for the analysis of a certain groups of mythemes found in the funerary literature of the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts and other sources.

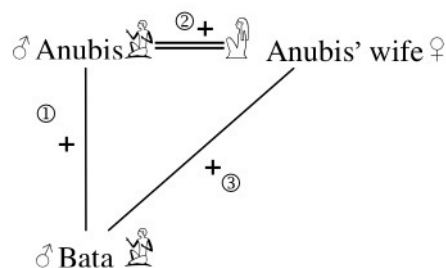
STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS APPLIED ON ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MATERIAL

Due to the fragmentary character of the pBN 202+pAmherst 9 it would be very difficult to perform a structural analysis directly on the surviving text. Even though we can isolate separate mythemes, we do not have the plot or sufficient connection between the fragments. I will start with a structural analysis of the Tale of the Two Brothers which I base on the pivotal structuralist presumption that any text, written in one cultural context, will always demonstrate a basic structural coherence (it will show the same structural patterns in different variations),. This story is complete and its analysis will provide a frame on which I will subsequently show the basic concepts of ancient Egyptian mythical thought and how its structural relation with the story in the pBN 202+pAmherst 9.

THE TALE OF THE TWO BROTHERS

Initial episode I²⁶⁷

In the beginning we hear of two brothers (older Anubis and younger Bata). Biologically, they are on the same level (siblings), economically their association is that of father and son (the younger living in the older brother and his wife's household doing for them the work traditionally undertaken by sons – ploughing, tending the cattle etc.). The situation at beginning can be visualised as such (fig. 4):



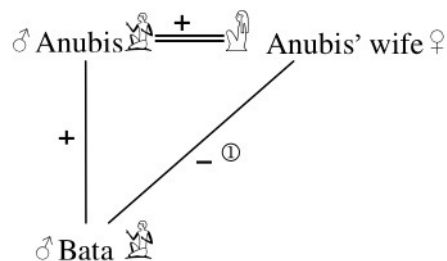
①,②,③

The relationships between these three individuals are ideal and in balance (indicated by the pluses), all involved parties are in normative social relations.

²⁶⁷ Sequence in the story: 1,1–2,7 (E. F. WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, in SIMPSON, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, p. 93–94).

Episode A²⁶⁸

As the story proceeds, the time of ploughing and sowing comes about and the brothers spend their working days in the fields. One day, they run out of seed so the older brother Anubis sends the younger brother Bata back home to fetch some seed from the magazine. When Bata arrives at the house, he finds his brother's wife sitting and plaiting her hair.²⁶⁹ The younger brother, used to hard manual labour, loads five sacks of seed on his back and is about to leave with his burden back to his brother in the field. When Anubis' wife sees Bata's figure, she is aroused by his virility and wants to seduce him. Bata becomes furious with anger ("like an Upper Egyptian panther in harsh rage"), reminds to her that she is like a mother to him and that it would be a violation of good manners towards his brother/father, but promises to keep everything to himself (fig. 5).



①

This episode establishes a negation of normative social relations between Bata and his sister-in-law/mother through her offer of an incestuous sexual encounter. The main cause for this is Bata's overt virility.

Episode B²⁷⁰

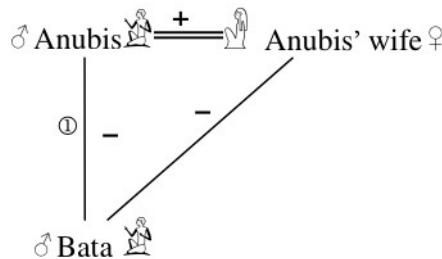
That very day, Anubis returns home earlier than Bata. In the meantime, Anubis' wife, afraid of being discovered, pretends that she has been assaulted by Bata. After telling her story, Anubis

²⁶⁸ Sequence in the story: 2,7–4,3 (WENTE, "The Tale of the Two Brothers", p. 95–96).

²⁶⁹ The ancient listener was at this point already aware that trouble was approaching since the connection of women's hair with sexuality and sensuality is well attested. In Ancient Egypt itself, hair figures very often in the lists describing woman's beauty. An example of a love song inscribed in pChester Beatty I, Coll. 1, song 1: "Long of neck, fair of breast,/her hair is (of) true lapis lazuli,/her arms surpass gold,/her fingers are like lotus flowers./Wide of hips, slim of waist,/her thighs underline her beauty./Balanced of <stride> when she walks the earth,/she seized my heart in her embrace./She makes the necks of all men/turn in order to look at her./Happy is everyone who embraces her,/being like the first of lovers." (RENATA LANDGRÁFOVÁ and HANA NAVRÁTILOVÁ, *Sex and the Golden Goddess*, in press. I would like to thank Renata Landgráfová for her help and for letting me work with her yet unpublished translation.)

²⁷⁰ Sequence in the story: 4,7–6,4 (WENTE, "The Tale of the Two Brothers", p. 96–98).

decides to hide and kill Bata as soon as he comes back. He hides behind the door of the cattle shed, nevertheless the cows, when entering the stable, give away his hiding place (they speak a language Bata understands) and Bata decides to run away (fig. 6).



①

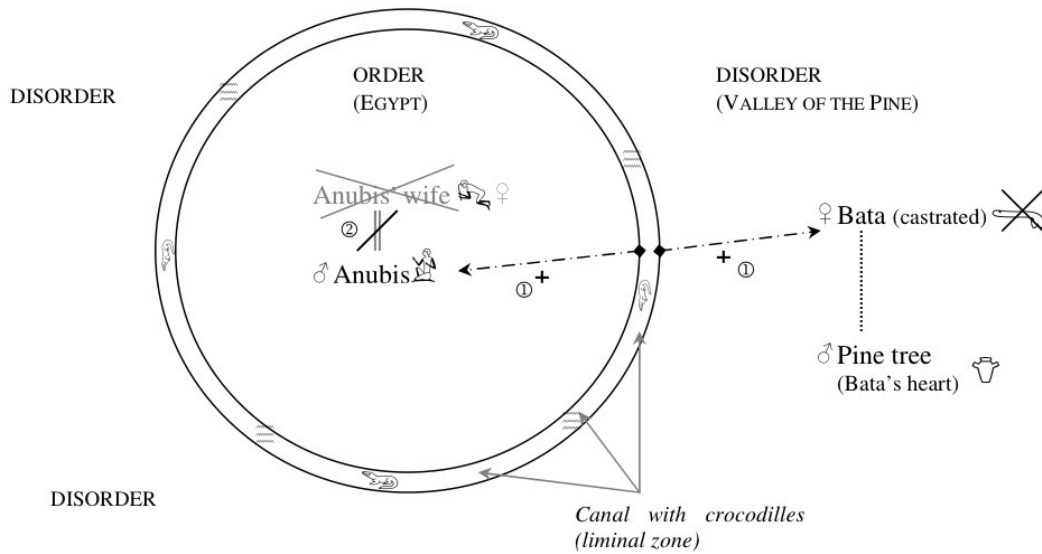
This episode establishes negative social relations between Bata and Anubis (attempt of fratricide) through the trick of a woman.

Episode C²⁷¹

Anubis sets off in pursuit of his brother with the intention of killing him and avenging his wife's honour. On the basis of Bata's prayer, Pre-Harakhti (the sun-god) creates a gulf of water filled with crocodiles between the two brothers, thus separating them. At dawn the two brothers exchange accusations, the younger brother explains how the whole situation came to pass ("[...] it was on account of a sexually exhausted slut [...]") and as a reaction he cuts off his phallus with a reed knife, throws it into the water where it is eaten by a catfish²⁷² and "he grew weak and became feeble". Bata then tells his brother that he will leave for the Valley of the Pine where he will live from now on placing his heart on the top of the flower of a pine tree (a cone). He entrusts his brother with a task of finding him in case something should happen to this heart. The brother would know by certain signs and at that moment should quickly depart for the Valley of the Pine and save him. Then they both leave. On his return home, Anubis kills his treacherous wife and feeds her corpse to the dogs (fig. 7).

²⁷¹ Sequence in the story: 6,4–8,8 (WENTE, "The Tale of the Two Brothers", p. 98–100).

²⁷² It is not by coincidence that this episode calls to mind the fate of Osiris whose phallus has also been eaten by a catfish. "The only part which Isis did not find was his male member; for no sooner was it thrown into the river than the *lepidotus*, *phargus* and *oxyrhynchus* ate of it, fish which they most of all abhor. In its place Isis fashioned a likeness of it and consecrated the phallus, in honour of which the Egyptians even today hold festival." (J. GWYN GRIFFITHS, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride, Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970, p. 144). For other mentions of Osiris' phallus, see also HORST BEINLICH, *Die Osiris Reliquien, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* [ÄA] 42 (1984), p. 319, "Phallus".



①

The negative relationship between Bata and Anubis materializes in the gulf of water separating them from each other. This water canal acts as a dividing zone because in the present state of things there is no coming back for Bata and there is no traversing for Anubis (what is divided is order × disorder, Egyptian × foreign). At dawn, which is a temporal liminal period *par excellence* (the sun is located in a region of the sky/netherworld called the Duat), the positive relationship between the brothers is recovered by Bata's castration act – since it was his virility which caused all these problems, the only solution was to get rid of it, which Bata did, thus becoming neither man nor woman (see below).

②

Anubis kills his wife thus eliminating the feminine cause of the separation between him and Bata just as Bata eliminated his virility by castrating himself.

Analysis (a)

This episode synthesizes the first two episodes to such an extent that it eliminates the causes of the negation of proper kin relationships which have arisen in episodes A and B; these mediations are at the same time obviously improper: Bata eliminated his masculinity (male element) by a violent and unnatural act of castrating himself and his brother eliminated his wife (female element) by a brutal and unnatural act of murder. The relationship between the two brothers is thus stabilised (it is positive) but they are separated from each other. Their encounter takes place in a temporal and geographical liminal setting (at dawn, the gulf of water creating an explicit obstacle) and it is paradoxical in its essence – the moment of their reconciliation is also the

moment of their separation. By his act of castration, Bata is excluded from the orderly human society and is condemned to living behind the border of order (here symbolized by water) and in a foreign (chaotic) region of the Valley of the Pine, being neither dead nor alive (his heart is not in his chest but on the top of a tree in form of a cone), neither man nor woman (castrate): he is in a marginal state of existence (the order is represented by the circle from which Bata was excluded). The situation is once again in a certain equilibrium (bones of contention have been eliminated – cut off and thrown to the dogs) but it is a perversion of the balanced initial situation (fig. 4) because although the relations are positive, the characters cannot communicate with each other.

On this first triad we can get the first glimpse of what I have called, following Terence Turner, the “mythomotrics” (the inner dynamics of a myth, see above, p. 56) “[...] an action or event violates or mediates the structure of the prevailing order, giving rise to a situation in which actors and elements stand in ambiguous or contradictory relationships to each other.”²⁷³ This is a precise description of what has transpired in Episode A (thesis) and B (antithesis). Two swings of the pendulum and it comes to a halt in Episode C (synthesis). On Episodes A and B we can also illustrate the two basic modes of this dialectic motion (negation and affirmation). In Episode A we can see an example of what Turner called the “negation of both incompatible poles of binary oppositions in a single unviable relationship” (see above, p. 56) – attempt for incest. In Episode B we see the negation which functions “in the opposite way to that normatively required in a given relationship” (see above) – attempt for fratricide. Episode C, on the other hand, gives a nice example of both types of “affirmation” (see above): a) “negation of a negation” (Anubis kills his wife); b) “re-separation of improperly combined relationships” (Bata and Anubis are physically separated after an attempt for fratricide). These basic modes of “negation” and “affirmation” are distinguishable in other parts of the text also.

Initial episode II²⁷⁴

“After many days following this” (the equilibrium lasted for a certain time) Bata starts living in the Valley of the Pine (he hunts desert game to obtain nourishment), he builds a house “with the intention of establishing a home for himself” (that is he tries to establish the perverted equilibrium of Episode C as the basis of his future life). Nevertheless, Bata meets the Ennead and Khnum fashions for him a “companion who was more beautiful in her body than any woman in the entire land, for the seed of every god was in her.” The following events I shall quote precisely:

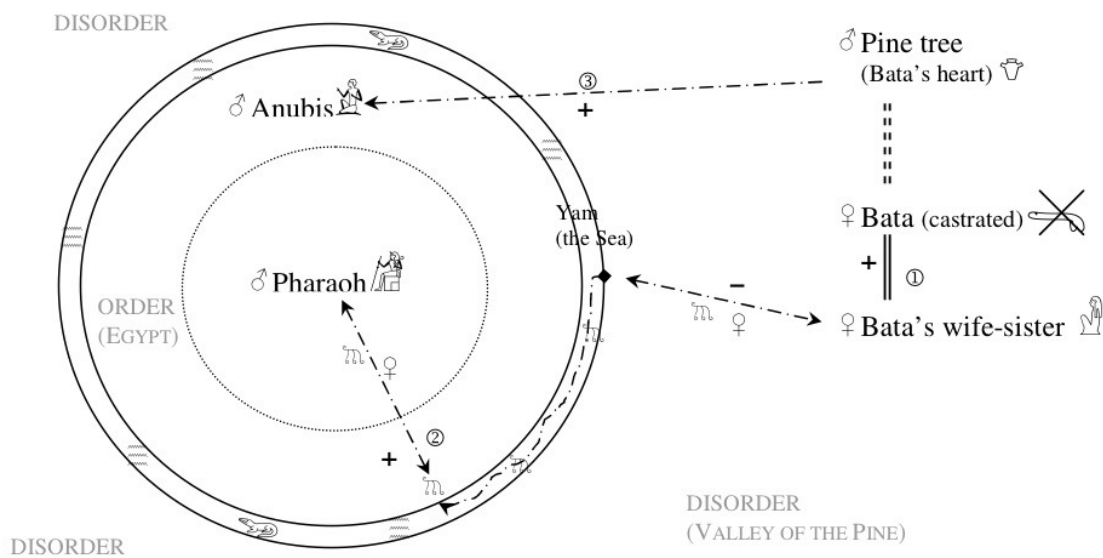
²⁷³ TURNER, “Oedipus: Time and Structure”, p. 33.

²⁷⁴ Sequence in the story: 8,8–11,8 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 100–102).

Then he proceeded to covet her exceedingly while she was dwelling in his house and while he spent all day / hunting desert game, bringing (it) back, and putting (it) down before her. He told her: Don't go outside lest the sea carry you away, for I will be unable to rescue you from it, because I am a female like you and my heart lies on top of the flower of the pine tree. But if another finds it, I will fight with him. Then he revealed to her all his inmost thoughts.

After many days following this, while Bata went to hunt according to his daily habit, / the maiden went out to stroll under the pine tree which was next to her house. Thereupon she beheld the sea surging up behind her, and she hastened to flee from it and entered the house. Then the sea called to the pine tree, saying: Seize hold of her for me. And the pine tree removed a braid from her hair. The sea brought it to Egypt and deposited it in the place of the launderers of Pharaoh, l.p.h.

The scent emanating from the lock of hair in the water perfumes the clothes of the pharaoh, the scent attracts his attention and after a while its source is discovered in the lock of hair. The pharaoh consults this event with his learned scribes and they agree that this lock of hair is a tribute to the pharaoh from another country and that he should send envoys to every foreign country to fetch the girl – which the pharaoh does (fig. 8).



①

The stalemate situation (Bata built a house planning to stay in the foreign Valley of the Pine forever) is once again stirred up by the Egyptian gods themselves in their encounter with Bata. Bata himself beings in a marginal state (dead/alive, foreign/Egyptian, male/female, his food is based on desert game as opposed to standard manner of acquiring food by agriculture²⁷⁵) he is

²⁷⁵ The desert was considered to be the domain of the god Seth (who was very often connected with chaos) and also the land where the dead were buried. Scenes of the pharaoh hunting desert game are often found in the decoration programmes of the pyramid temples and are generally regarded as a symbolic expression of the force

not capable of returning to order by his own means. Through pity a beautiful maiden is created. At this point we have to look at the attributes with which this “maiden” is endowed, for she is truly the model mediator. She is an ideal partner for Bata – we have to remember that Bata is still castrated and therefore he could not have consummated the marriage with this girl through a sexual act (“I [Bata] am a female like you [Bata’s wife]”) – the girl is therefore a wife and a virgin at the same time (in a way she is his wife-sister in one person); she is a wife to a person living outside order, but at the same time she has got a firm connection with order because “in her is the seed of every (Egyptian) god” which makes her an ideal mediator between Bata and the orderly world.

The whole passage which I have quoted above is concerned with the attempt of the lecherous sea to get hold of this sensuous woman by snatching her away from the sea shore. Even though we do not know the name of Bata’s wife-sister, this episode immediately reminds us of a widespread mythological motif of the Levantine coast about “[...] the sexually-avaricious Sea who turns his attention to the beautiful goddess, the Baal’s consort, pursues her and either catches her or precipitates an act of aetiological importance to the cult.”²⁷⁶ In our case the outcome of the encounter is not a cult, but presents means by which the story is propelled further. The Sea attacks Bata’s wife-sister but doesn’t manage to get her directly but asks the pine tree for help and gets a lock of her hair (as we have seen earlier in case of Anubis’ wife, hair is an overtly feminine sexual symbol). The Sea represents the border which divides order from disorder and at the same time acts as a mediator between these two modes of existence (the Sea brings the lock of hair to the pharaoh). The maiden acts as a mediator between Bata and the Sea/order. Even though, socially, they are husband (male) and wife (female), biologically, Bata is not a proper man (“[...] I am a female like you [...]”, see above) and his wife-sister is not a proper woman (she is a virgin). By forbidding her to go to the seashore, he thus reasserts the equilibrium reached in Episode C (he is trying to stay outside of order by building a house in the Valley of the Pine because he cannot return into order) but at the same time helps the Sea get hold of his wife-sister’s sexuality/lock of hair (it is the pine tree on which Bata’s heart is placed which cuts off the lock, i.e. it is part of Bata, his twin personage – the heart/pine cone/pine tree). The reason is that he wishes to connect himself with the liminal zone (the Sea) through female sexuality (mediated by his wife-sister as a very sensuous virgin) which he acquired by castration in Episode C but which is inappropriate for him because he used to be a very virile man. By not

of order with which the pharaoh conquers the disorder represented by the chaotically arranged desert game. For an overview of all scenes of desert hunts from the pyramid complexes with references, see: *ĆWIEK, Relief Decoration*, p. 214–217.

²⁷⁶ REDFORD, “The Sea and the Goddess”, p. 831–835 and the accompanying notes. In this connection it is interesting that he also mentions the story of the pAmherst 9, see p. 833–834.

allowing his feminine part to get into contact with the liminal but at the same time helping the liminal (as the pine tree) to reach his feminine part, he finds himself in a paradoxical and structurally opposing situation: he tries to defend his position of an outcast belonging to disorder (which at the present state is the only balanced and stable situation) but at the same time he utilizes the acquired femininity in the form of the lock of hair to establish a contact with the liminal and thus with the orderly world.

②

The pharaoh enters the scene. Even though Anubis is also part of the order, the pharaoh creates a more “orderly” zone within order. All following actions of the actors of this myth will be related to the centre of order represented by the pharaoh: the living god and materialisation of the order *maat* and an exemplary male principle. He associates himself with Bata via the female principle of the lock of hair belonging to Bata’s wife-sister. By sending out envoys, order reaches out into disorder trying to develop a contact. It had to be by the pharaoh and not by Bata’s brother (who, as we know, already has a positive relationship with Bata and in a certain situation will be capable of finding Bata in the Valley of the Pine). Otherwise it would mean that Anubis would be searching for the lock of hair of his brother’s wife which would be an (unintentional) effort to establish an incestuous kin relationship which was the causal agent of all the troubles in the first place. The pharaoh stands out as ideal representative of the order and has the power to establish contact with the disorder (his function *is* to periodically establish contact with the disorder through rituals) with which Anubis is not capable of contacting himself (he could not cross the gulf of water infested with crocodiles separating him from his brother in Episode C).

③

Even though Bata’s brother Anubis is pushed into the background, we must not forget that there has been established a strong positive connection between Anubis and Bata’s heart (the flower of the pine tree). Anubis shall be warned by signs in case anything should happen to it.

Analysis (b)

This part of the story, which we have just read and analysed, I called “Initial episode II”. The “Initial episodes” (three in total in our story) have a very specific function different from that of the triads of Episodes (see above, Analysis [a]). Whereas the triadic structures of the Episodes can create an infinite number of permutations of certain elements within one order (we shall see that in case of two triads of Episodes G–I and J–L), there are certain parts of stories whose function is not to create variations of a certain number of structural oppositions. Their function is to shift the stories upwards to a different level – they change the synchronic structure

of the story (articulated in the pendulum-like movement of the episodes) itself and move the whole mythic contraption into a different “frame”. There the pendulum-like movement of Episodes starts again. This is precisely the function of our “Initial episodes”. For example, whereas in Episode A–C the basic tension was between kinship relations within a family included in the orderly world, the “Initial episode II” establishes a new situation and moves the plot (“frame”) to a different level: the main concern of the following Episodes D–F shall be the clash of the structural opposites order × chaos.

The “Initial episode II” also introduces two very important mechanisms necessary to the inner dynamics of myth (“mythomotrics”). The first is embodied in the characters of the so-called “mediators”. I have summarised the importance of these personae in the theory Lévi-Strauss (see above, p. 50–52) and from this moment on we shall be meeting more of them in our story. Generally speaking, a “mediator” is a character which stands on both sides of the opposing principles. For Lévi-Strauss a classical mediator in North-America was the coyote or raven,²⁷⁷ for us, so far, it is Bata’s wife-sister and the Sea (see above). The position somewhere “in between” gives the mediators the opportunity to link orders and bridge distances which, from the point of view of a member of one of them, seem unconnectable and insurmountable. In religion a classical example of a mediating action would be an offering, bridging the distance and existential chasm of the world of men and that of gods etc.

The other basic principle of “mythomotrics” is the splitting/merging of characters and their roles into more/less personae or objects. I have previously noted the close connection of structuralism with psychoanalysis. Even though there are major disagreements between both approaches, the basic task of trying to uncover patterns or structures present in the minds of people as a biological kind is characteristic for both. It is thus logical that in some aspects these two theories should borrow concepts from each other. For example in case of the story of Oedipus we witness the splitting (or as Turner says “bifurcation”) of Iocasta, Oedipus’ mother. All the positive qualities stay with Iocasta and all of the negative qualities are projected and materialised in the character of the Sphinx.²⁷⁸ In case of our story, we see that the character of Bata is divided into his mutilated (female) body and his virility and male qualities are for the time being put away on top of a tree.²⁷⁹ The reason for such “bifurcation” is that being a man/woman

²⁷⁷ See above, p. 50–52.

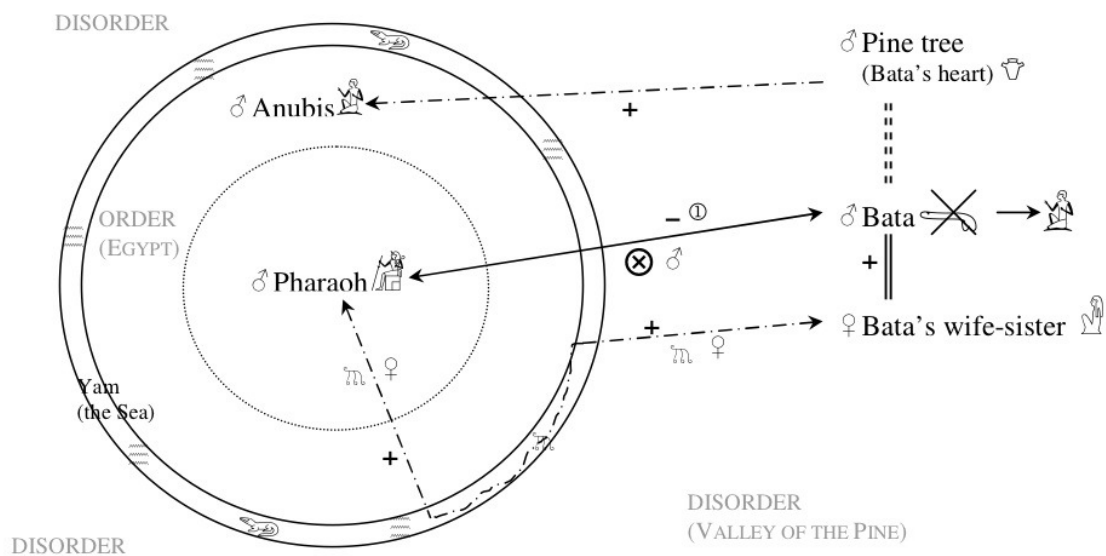
²⁷⁸ For the whole interpretation, see.

²⁷⁹ A hard-core Freudian analyst would definitely like to see the “tree” as a symbol for the phallus (a tree is longer than it is wide, stands erect etc.) – nevertheless, we do not need to venture in this direction. For a very interesting Freudian analysis of an ancient Egyptian story of the so-called Contendings of Horus and Seth (pChester Beatty I), see: NEAL WALLS, “Chapter 2 – On the Couch with Horus and Seth: A Freudian Analysis (Or, The Case of Pharaoh’s Mommy)”, in NEAL WALLS, *Desire, Discord and Death: Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Myth*, ASOR Books (vol. 8), American School of Oriental Research, Boston, 2001. PDF download

at the same time is a paradoxical situation and thus the genders (which are both connected with Bata) are split. This is confirmed by Bata's own words to his wife-sister: "Don't go outside lest the sea carry you away, for I will be unable to rescue you from it, because I am a female like you and my heart lies on top of the flower of the pine tree. But if another finds it, I will fight with him." Bata in fact needs his wife-sister to be carried away for she in a certain way also represents Bata's femininity (she is bound to him by marital status and thus his female counterpart) which is something he needs to get rid of – as it is, he does not have the strength to protect her ("and my heart lies on the top of the tree"). But at the same time, if somebody should touch his virility (even though "neutralised" for the time being) "[Bata] would fight him".

Episode D²⁸⁰

All the envoys return except for the ones who were sent to the Valley of the Pine – all of them were killed by Bata who left just one survivor so he could report the news to the pharaoh (fig. 9).



①

Bata managed to kill the pharaoh's envoys sent to the Valley of the Pine. In this way he managed to restore his lost virility by a masculine act of fortitude and bravery (later, in "Initial episode III" he even changes to a bull, a symbol of masculinity *par excellence*). Nevertheless he left one envoy alive so as not to break the relation established with the king (order) via his wife-sister (lock of hair) as a target of the pharaoh's longing. It is obvious that a positive contact with the king

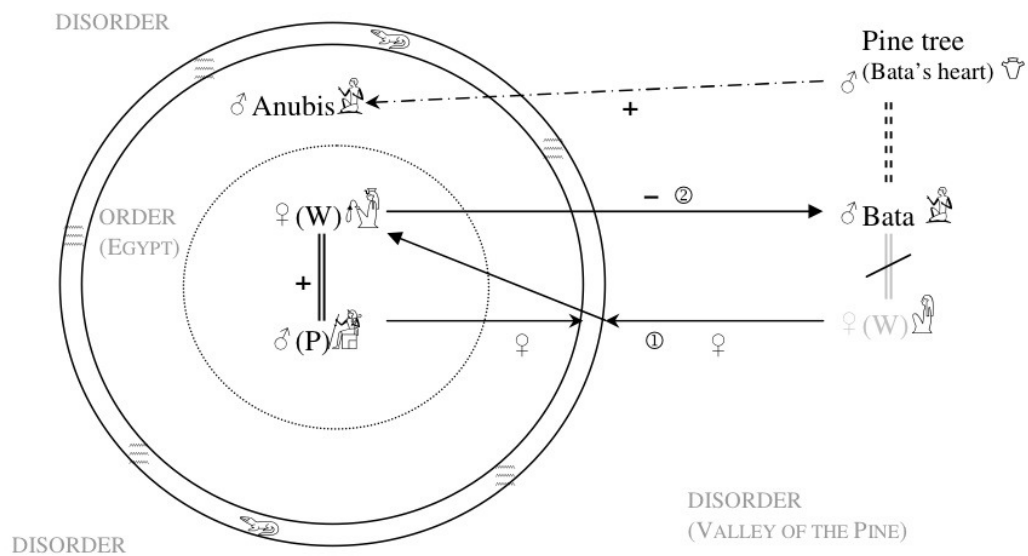
available at: <http://www.bu.edu/asor/pubs/walls.pdf> (last visited 7.8.2008). For the association of a tree with a phallus/erection, see p. 106.

²⁸⁰ Sequence in the story: 11,8–11,9 (WENTE, "The Tale of the Two Brothers", p. 102).

(order) cannot be reached via the masculine principle (clash and killing of envoys) and the relationship thus becomes negative.

Episode E²⁸¹

After receiving the news of the destruction of his envoys, the pharaoh sends another war party but this time accompanied by a woman whose task is to present gifts to Bata's wife-sister to persuade her to return with the soldiers. This time we hear of no fighting and Bata's wife-sister leaves her husband to join the royal court. Her arrival is celebrated very much and she soon becomes the pharaoh's Chief Lady. The pharaoh inquires about his new wife's formal husband and not only does she divulge that Bata keeps his heart on the top of the pine tree, but she also persuades the king to send out a party and cut down the tree (fig. 10a).



①

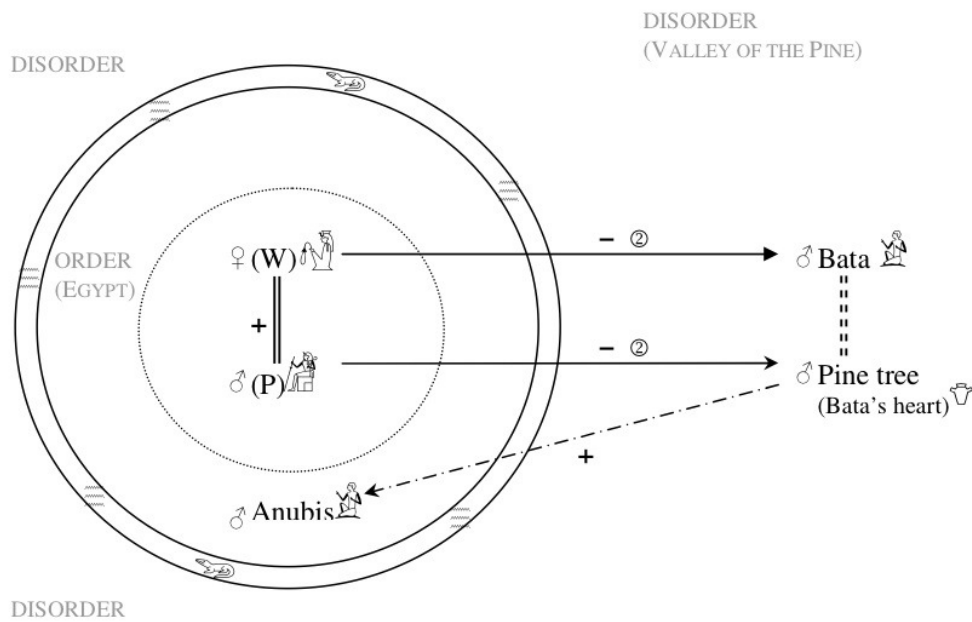
The pharaoh dispatches another war party which is accompanied by a woman. Her task is to persuade Bata's wife-sister to leave her husband by presenting presents Bata's wife-sister leaves the Valley of the Pine and comes to Egypt. In this part it is emphasized that the liminal margin cannot be bridged by a direct intervention of the male principle (soldiers) for it is eliminated (soldiers are killed). The border is penetrable only for the female principle and that is why the woman accompanying the soldiers can persuade Bata's wife-sister to leave the disorder and join the order. By her crossing of the liminal border she becomes a woman and a wife of a true man – of the pharaoh. This is because she finds herself in a structurally inverted position. By taking

²⁸¹ Sequence in the story: 11,9–12,6 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 102–103). I divided Episode E into two figures so the drawing would still be comprehensible.

Bata's wife-sister for himself, the pharaoh enables Bata to eliminate the female part of his personality – he physically gets rid of it by sending it away and Bata is therefore left with his virile strength (just as at the beginning of the story) but still being outside of order.

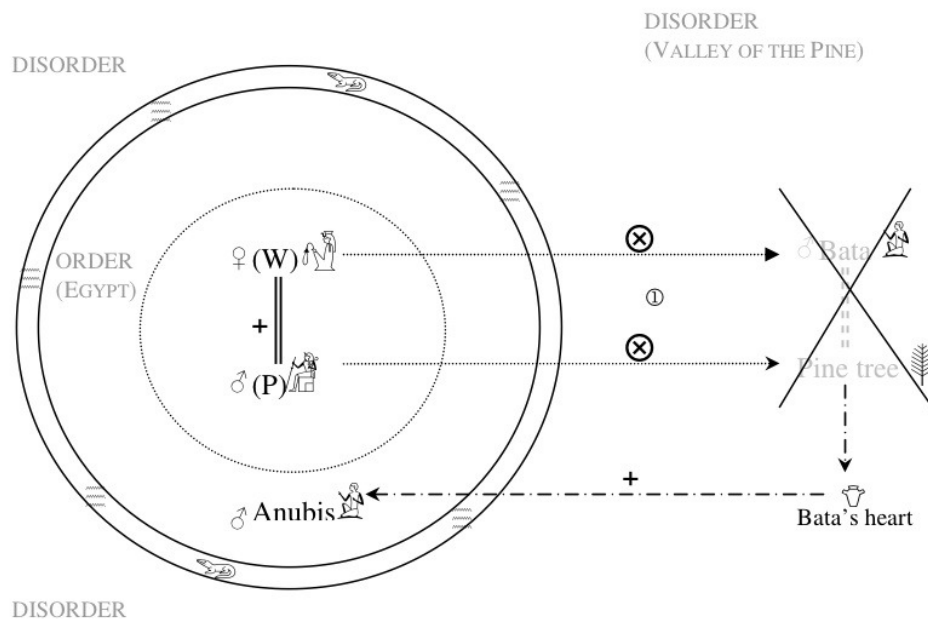
②

By divulging Bata's secret concerning his heart, the woman creates a negative relationship towards Bata and so does the pharaoh by sending out a party to destroy the pine tree (fig. 10b).



Episode F²⁸²

Pine tree is chopped down – Bata is killed (fig. 11).



²⁸² Sequence in the story: 12,6–12,7 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 103).

①

The negative relation between the pharaoh and Bata and pharaoh's wife and Bata is cancelled by the physical elimination of Bata/pine tree. This episode thus represents a synthesis of episodes D and E and the story again reaches a certain equilibrium but again not satisfactory because our hero is dead.

Analysis (c)

The triad of episodes D, E and F is a structural inversion of the triad of episodes A, B and C.

Episode A: Bata is sexually assaulted by a woman (Anubis' wife).

Episode D: Bata is physically assaulted by a man (pharaoh's envoys).

Episode B: Bata is assaulted by a man (Anubis).

Episode E: Bata is assaulted by a woman (Bata's former wife-sister, who persuaded the pharaoh to kill Bata).

Episode C: The aftermath of Episode A and B is Bata's castration, elimination of virility; Bata lives.

Episode F: The aftermath of Episode D and E is Bata's recovery of virility (Episode D), elimination of his feminine part (Episode E); Bata is killed.

Initial episode III²⁸³

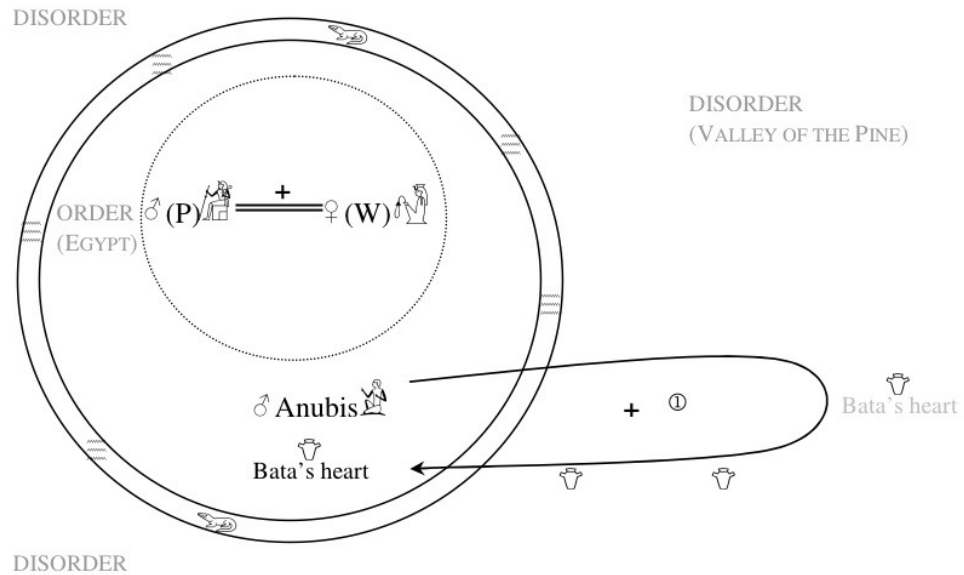
After the pine tree with Bata's heart is cut down, Anubis is warned by signs that he should hasten to the Valley of the Pine to save his brother. He leaves immediately, finds Bata's body in the house and for three years searches for his brother's heart with no result. At the beginning of the fourth year he decides to return home for the search looks hopeless. But the day before he leaves Anubis finds a pine cone which is, of course, Bata's heart. He takes the cone to Egypt, puts it into water and Bata's body starts living again. Bata then drinks the water in which the cone was placed thus acquiring for himself his own heart and becoming a whole person again ("His heart assumed its [proper] position so that he became as he used to be"). Bata tells his brother of his plan:

Look, I shall become a large bull that has every beautiful color and whose sort is unparalleled, and you shall sit upon <my> back. As soon as the sun rises we shall be where my wife is that <I> may avenge myself, and you shall take me to where the king is, for every good thing shall be done for you and you shall be rewarded with silver and gold

²⁸³ Sequence in the story: 12,7–14,9 (WENTE, "The Tale of the Two Brothers", p. 103–104).

for taking me to Pharaoh, l.p.h., because I shall become a great marvel, and there shall be jubilation for me in the entire land, and (then) you shall depart to your (home) town.

fig. 11a:



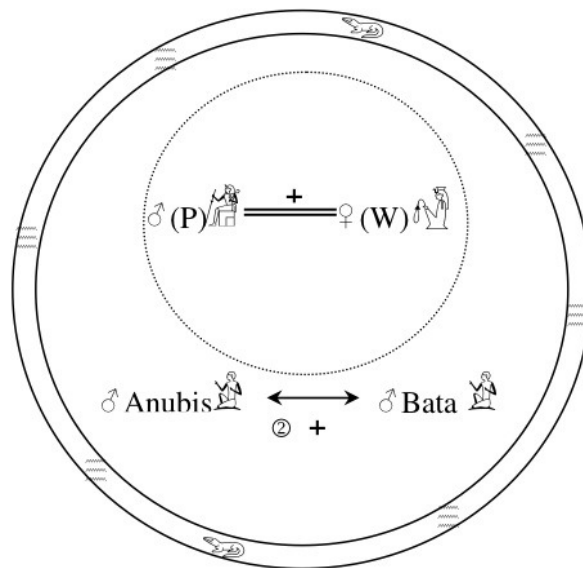
①

In Episode F negative relations with the king and his wife have been severed by the pharaoh's assault on Bata. This breach, which allowed Bata to definitely dispense of his femininity (his wife-sister), opened up a channel between Anubis and Bata which has been present all the time but only potentially (conditioned by Bata's death). Anubis was thus able to cross the liminal zone (which he was not in Episode C) and enter the disorder. He found Bata's heart in the form of a pine cone and he brought it back with him to Egypt. He thus acted for Bata as a mediator who enabled his transition from the disorderly world back to order.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ In this context it is very interesting to note that most interpreters of this story consider the characters of Bata and Anubis to be the actual gods whose names the two characters bear. Even though I think that it is not the case, for gods and men are distinguished throughout the story, it is most probable that these names were chosen by the composer(s) of our story to evoke the characteristics of these two gods in the minds of their listeners/readers and thus add another dimension to the whole narrative. Many allusions within the story make sense once connected with the characteristic traits of these gods. In case of the episode of Anubis acting as a mediator for Bata, it is worth mentioning that this god was in close iconographic and functional relation with the god *Wp w3w.t* ("Opener of the ways") whose main function was to act as an intermediary between the world of the living and the dead, leading the souls of the deceased on the ways of the netherworld. For example in Spell 412 of the Pyramid Texts, §727a–727c: "The double doors of heaven are open for thee; the double doors of the *shd.w* stars are open for thee,/after thou art descended (in the grave) as the jackal of Upper Egypt,/as Anubis on his belly, as *Wpi.w* who resides in Heliopolis." (MERCER, *The Pyramid Texts*, p. 140) See also: WILKINSON, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses*, p. 191–192.

②

In the realm of order Bata must be re-made into a full man again which Anubis does by letting Bata drink the water in which Bata's heart had been placed²⁸⁵ (the story does not deal with the question of transporting Bata's body from the Valley of the Pine since that is not important). This happens during the night – a period explicitly opposed to the day (order). During the night, the sun has to face its enemies in the netherworld and also undergoes bodily transformations. At dawn Bata is ready in full bodily form and tells his brother of a rather cunning plan. He will transform himself into a bull “whose sort is unparalleled” and commissions his brother with the task of presenting him to the pharaoh.²⁸⁶ Since Bata has no connection with the pharaoh or his wife (this was severed by his death), Anubis must yet again act as Bata's mediator. What is interesting is the fact that at the beginning of our story it was Bata who did tasks on behalf of his elder brother Anubis and received remuneration for it (“[...] it was he [that is, the elder brother] who made clothes for him [...]”) but at this moment the situation has changed and we read that it is Bata giving tasks to his brother and promising him reward for it (“[...] every sort of good thing shall be done for you and you shall be rewarded with silver and gold [...]”). The scene is set for the continuation of our story (fig. 11b).



²⁸⁵ The idea that drinking a liquid with special qualities (such as water poured over a stela with an incantation to a specific god) had magical efficacy was widespread in ancient Egypt. This could be well illustrated by the statue of Djedhor inscribed with magical spells which was designed as a basin for drawing water which had been made magically efficacious. See: ELIZABETH J. SHERMAN, “Djedhor the Saviour Statue Base OI 10589”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* [JEA] 67 (1981): 82–102; E. JELÍNKOVÁ-REYMOND, *Les inscriptions de la statue guérisseuse de Djed-Her-le-Sauveur*, Bibliothèque d'Étude 33 (1956), Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'archéologie orientale.

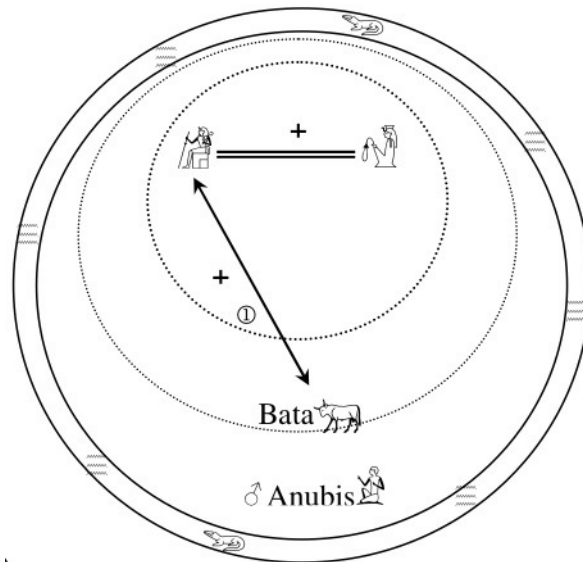
²⁸⁶ This must be an allusion to the way how sacred bulls used to be sought out in ancient Egypt. A bull designed to the cult of a certain god such as the Apis bull to Osiris, Buchis with Montu, Mnevis with Re, etc. had to have special qualities of fur, hooves, tail, tongue, etc. Such animals were looked for by temple agents throughout Egypt and received great veneration.

Analysis (d)

Just as in the case of Initial episodes I and II, the story is again shifted into a different frame. We do no longer have to work with the opposition order \times disorder but the plot will now be deal with kin-relations within order and also with the progress of Bata (and Anubis) through different levels of order.

Episode G²⁸⁷

Everything goes as planned, Bata, who has taken on the form of a bull, is welcomed by the pharaoh himself who even serves Bata an oblation. The brother leaves the scene rich with gold and Bata receives a cult of his own with “much personnel and lot of goods, for Pharaoh l.p.h., preferred him exceedingly over anybody (else) in the entire land.” (fig. 12)



①

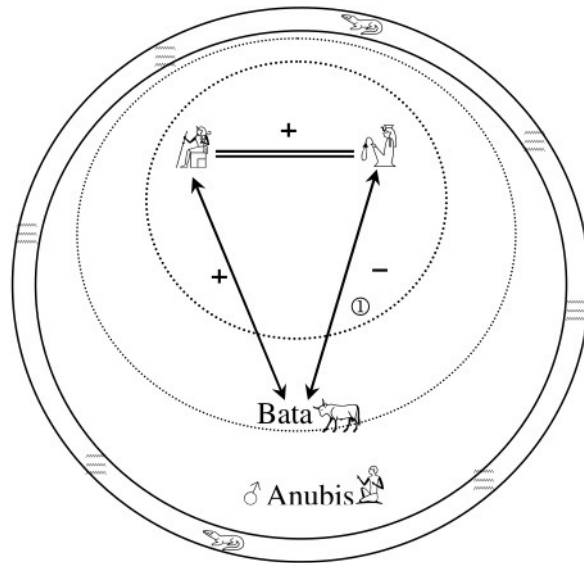
Bata manages to connect himself in a very personal and positive manner with the pharaoh (order) himself. What a turn, for in Episodes D–F he was the target of pharaoh’s aggression, whereas now he bathes in his favour.

Episode H²⁸⁸

Bata reveals his identity to the queen. She becomes scared and persuades the pharaoh to sacrifice Bata. The pharaoh is vexed by her request for he likes Bata very much (fig. 13).

²⁸⁷ Sequence in the story: 14,9–15,6 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 104).

²⁸⁸ Sequence in the story: 15,7–16,6 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 105).

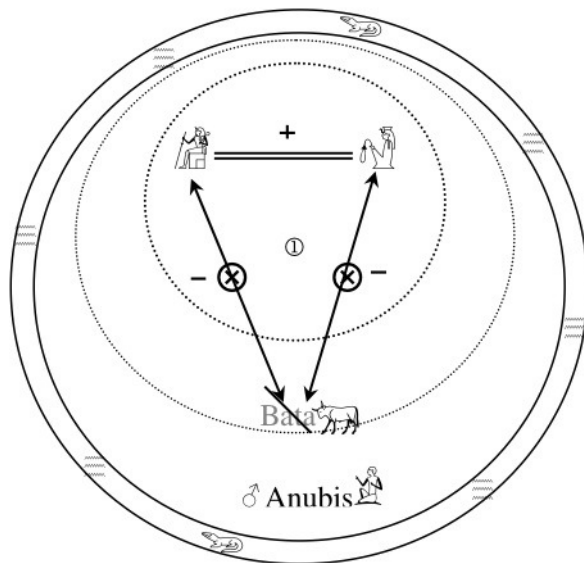


①

Bata tries to establish a relationship also with the pharaoh's wife. Unfortunately she is scared and strives to physically destroy Bata.

Episode I²⁸⁹

“After dawn, and the next day had come about” the king agrees to sacrifice Bata (fig. 14).



①

A negative relationship is established with the king and Bata is killed.

²⁸⁹ Sequence in the story: 16,6–16,8 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 105).

Analysis (e)

This episode is a synthesis of Episodes G and H and is structurally similar to the triad of Episodes D, E and F:

Episode D: Negative relationship is established with the man (pharaoh)

Episode G: Positive relationship established with the man (pharaoh and the bull)

Episode E: Negative relationship is established with the woman (wife)

Episode H: Negative relationship is established with the woman (wife) who changes the positive relationship between Bata and pharaoh to a negative relationship.

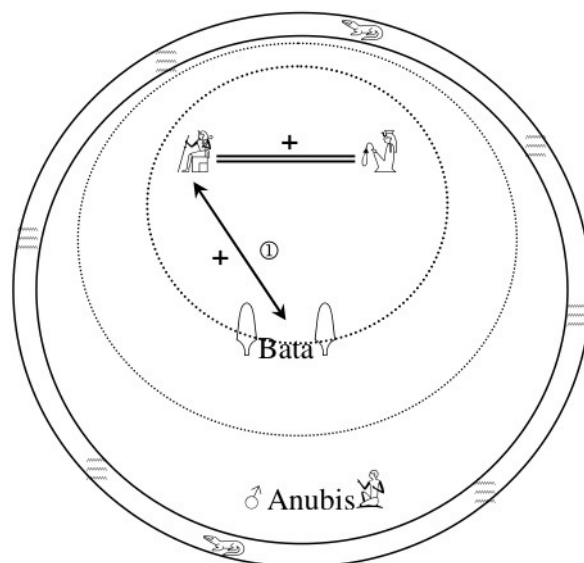
Episode F: Negative relationships are eliminated by murdering Bata (cutting down of the pine tree); Bata is outside order.

Episode I: Negative relationships are eliminated by murdering Bata (sacrifice of the bull); Bata is inside the realm of order.

The main difference is that whereas in Episode F Bata was located outside the realm of order, in Episode I he is already integrated into the order and quite close to the source of order – the pharaoh himself.

Episode J²⁹⁰

After Bata has been sacrificed, Bata lets two drops of blood “from his neck” fall next to the doorposts of the pharaoh’s palace(?). These grow into two large Persea trees. The King is greatly astonished by this and he presents an offering to them (fig. 15).



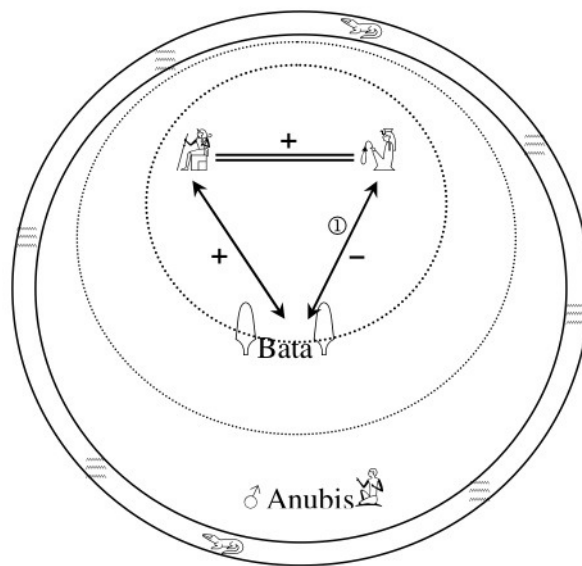
²⁹⁰ Sequence in the story: 16,8–17,3 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 105–106).

①

Bata again managed through a metamorphosis to create a positive relationship with the pharaoh. He is now even closer to him than before, for the Persea trees are next to the entrance to where the pharaoh lives – Bata is on the threshold (*limen*) of pharaoh's residence, of the source of order.

Episode K²⁹¹

Bata reveals his identity to the queen. She becomes scared and persuades the pharaoh to cut down the trees (fig. 16).



①

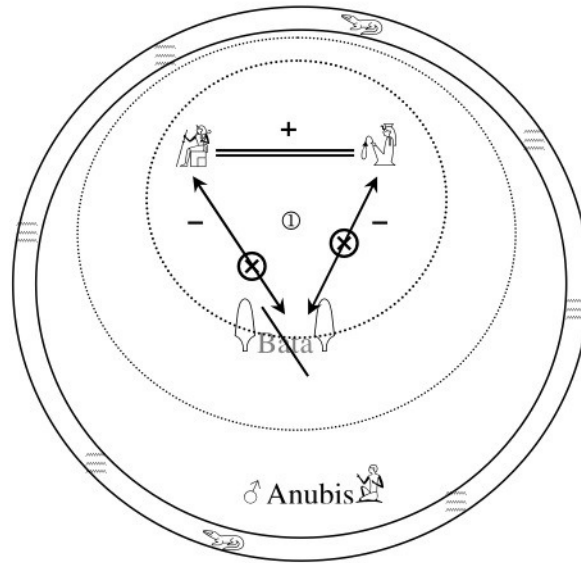
Bata tries to establish a relationship also with the pharaoh's wife. Unfortunately she is scared and strives to physically destroy Bata.

Episode L²⁹²

Bata is chopped to pieces and made into furniture (fig. 17).

²⁹¹ Sequence in the story: 17,3–18,1 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 106).

²⁹² Sequence in the story: 18,2–18,3 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 106).



①

Again we witness a “negation of negation” = affirmation, that is a re-separation of improperly combined or “synthesized” relationships.²⁹³

Analysis (f)

This episode is a synthesis of Episodes J and K and these three episodes together are structurally similar to the triad of Episodes H, G and I:

Episode G: Positive relationship is established with the man (pharaoh and the bull).

Episode J: Positive relationship is established with the man (pharaoh and the Persea trees).

Episode H: Negative relationship is established with the woman (wife) who changes the positive relationship between Bata and the pharaoh to a negative relationship.

Episode K: Negative relationship is established with the woman (wife) who changes the positive relationship between Bata and pharaoh to a negative relationship.

Episode I: Negative relationships are eliminated by murdering Bata (sacrifice of the bull); Bata is inside the realm of order.

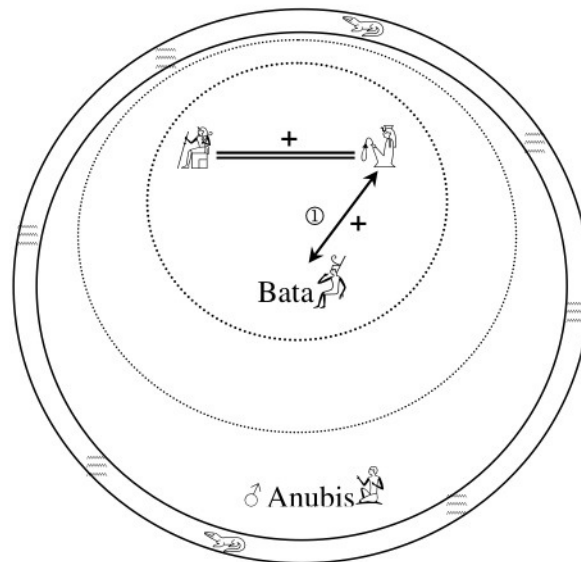
Episode L: Negative relationships are eliminated by murdering Bata (cutting down of the Persea trees); Bata is on the threshold of the source of order.

²⁹³ See above, p. 56.

The main difference between these two triads is that whereas in Episode I Bata was in the realm of order, in Episode L he is even closer to the source of order.

Episode M²⁹⁴

During the process of chopping down the Persea tree which the queen oversees, a splinter falls into her mouth which she swallows and conceives (fig. 18).



①

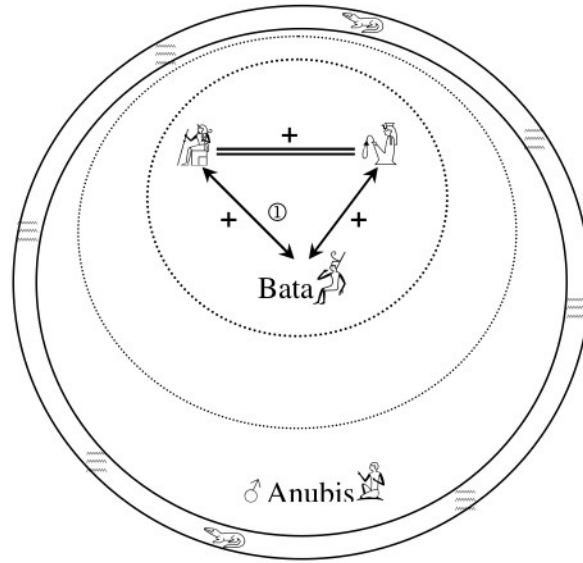
Since there was not any point in trying to establish positive contact with the pharaoh (it always ended with Bata's death), Bata establishes a positive relationship with the pharaoh's wife first.

Episode N²⁹⁵

Bata is born to the pharaoh as his own son. Pharaoh cherishes him and appoints him the highest offices (Viceroy of Kush) (fig. 19).

²⁹⁴ Sequence in the story: 18,3–18,6 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 106).

²⁹⁵ Sequence in the story: 18,6–19,1 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 106–107).

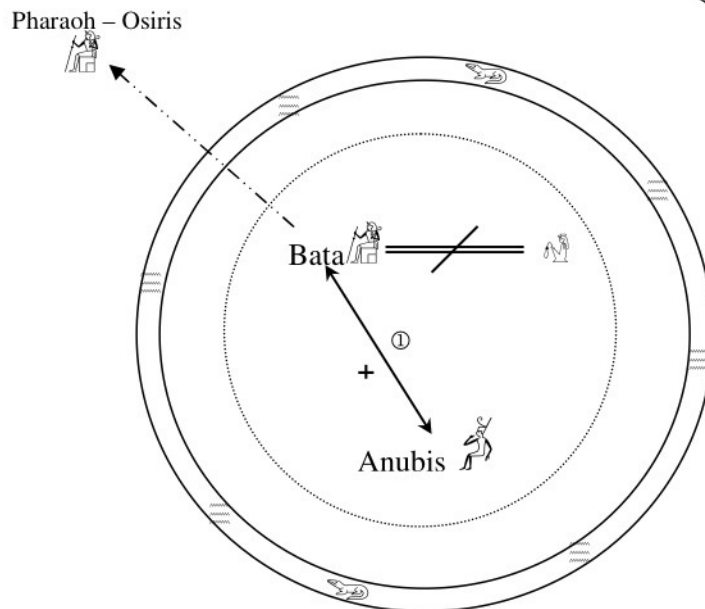


①

Bata establishes a positive relation with the pharaoh (male component).

Episode O²⁹⁶

Pharaoh dies, Bata succeeds to his position. His former wife-sister/mother/wife is judged for her deeds. His elder brother is appointed Bata's successor (son) (fig. 20).



①

Bata finally reaches into the heart of order (*maat*) itself – he becomes the mediator of *maat* by becoming the pharaoh. He eliminates his ambiguous relationship to his former wife-sister, then

²⁹⁶ Sequence in the story: 19,1–19,6 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 107).

mother and by his succession to the throne – wife again, through a trial (he exerts order). His older brother/father becomes his younger brother/son.

Analysis (g)

This last triad is a direct inversion of the first triad of our story whose basic theme is the problem of generational replacement. Projected to the political level – of the right to replace the pharaoh/father in his role of king.

Episode A: Bata creates a negative relationship with his mother/sister because of an offer of abnormal sexual relationship. If he had accepted her offer of incestuous connection, he would have occupied the position of his father/brother but in a socially inappropriate way.

Episode M: Bata creates a positive relationship with his wife-sister (they had never had intercourse with each other for he was castrated)/mother by becoming her child.

Episode B: Anubis creates a negative relationship with Bata through the hatred of Bata's mother/sister-in-law.

Episode N: Pharaoh creates a positive relationship to Bata through the love of Bata's mother/wife-sister.

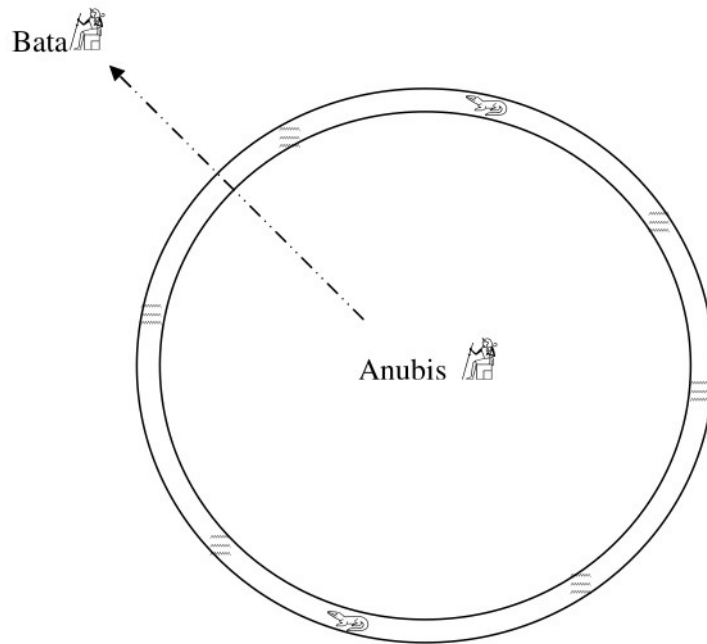
Episode C: Bata becomes a woman (castration) and is expelled outside of order; Bata's mother/sister-in-law is eliminated.

Episode O: Bata becomes a true man (pharaoh) and is lifted to the role of the mediator of order; Bata's mother/wife-sister is eliminated.

Terminal Episode²⁹⁷

Bata dies and his son Anubis succeeds him (fig. 21).

²⁹⁷ Sequence in the story: 19,6–19,7 (WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 107).



Analysis (h)

Even though the last Episode may look unimportant (Bata, the hero of the story, has already become king – that is what we wanted), it is in fact crucial. It shows that even though it was Bata whom we followed throughout the story (his expulsion from the order, his problematic return, progress through the levels of the orderly world all the way to the top – the pharaoh), the terminal episode reveals that the story was about Anubis from the beginning.²⁹⁸ Bata was very important, crucial, but only to allow Anubis to become king. Let us just summarize Anubis' situation. At the beginning we meet him as part of order but on its fringes – somewhere in Egypt (in Episode G, when Bata comes before the pharaoh – who supposedly resides in the residence – and is given gold in reward, he “leaves for his city”). Then through a series of structural permutations (during which Anubis helps Bata to be reintegrated into the structures of order) and *through his brother* Bata, Anubis is elevated into the inner-most sphere of order/power (heir to the throne) and then into the most cherished position itself. In our story, we therefore witness two parallel integration processes (that of Bata and Anubis) but inverted – Bata is throughout the story split/changes into several characters and objects. Anubis, on the contrary, stays “in one piece” but gradually works his way through the layers of order to merge, in the end, with the pharaoh. Bata needs Anubis to be able to leave the order and then be re-integrated in it on a different position, but Anubis also needs Bata because only through him and through his contact with the marginal (chaotic) forces can he a) gain wealth (by bringing Bata in the form of a bull to the pharaoh), b) become the heir of the throne (after Bata became the pharaoh), c) become

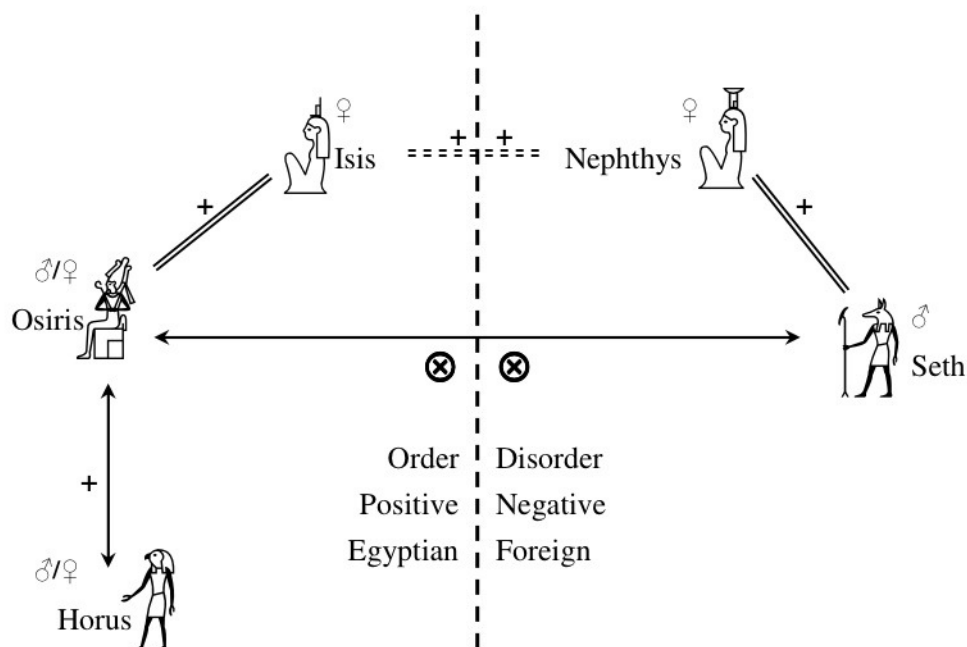
²⁹⁸ I very much thank Dr. Radek Chlup for pointing out this fact to me. Personal communication, Prague, 6.8.2008.

pharaoh himself. Anubis uses the power which is channelled by his brother Bata through his contact with the chaotic for his own profit. (Even Anubis disappears in Initial Episode III for some time in the chaotic zone when trying to retrieve Bata's heart).

The end of the story is set in a royal milieu. In fact, the structure of the Tale of the Two Brothers is only a structural permutation of the key myth connected with royal ideology – the Osiris Cycle and the contendings of Horus and Seth. I shall prove it in the following chapter.

THE TALE OF THE TWO BROTHERS AS A TRANSFORMATION OF THE OSIRIS CYCLE

The basic relations between the main actors of the Osiris Cycle may be depicted in the following way (fig. 21):



Osiris and Seth are from the classical Egyptian view considered to be direct opposites of each other in many ways. The main ones are ORDER : DISORDER :: EGYPTIAN : FOREIGN :: POSITIVE : NEGATIVE. Osiris and Seth are also linked by another opposite FEMALE : MALE. Osiris lost his virility when he was chopped to pieces by Seth (it is Seth who is the exemplary representative of male virility) and Isis managed to recover all parts except for his phallus. Nevertheless, this last opposition also connects Horus to Seth and Horus to Osiris. Horus, as is several times explicitly said in pChester Beatty I, is not a true male either – he is several times accused of not having the abilities to succeed in his father's position because he has not yet become a full-grown man: "Then the Universal Lord became furious at Horus and told him: You are despicable in your person, and this office is too much for you, you lad, the flavour of whose

mouth is (still) bad.”²⁹⁹ In this way, Horus and Osiris are connected – one has lost his virility and the other has not yet gained it. As Katja Goebis has convincingly shown, these gods share the same position of the “God in need” to whom something is missing (an eye in case of Horus after he has lost it in one of the encounters with Seth; and vital force in the case of Osiris after being killed by Seth) and in this way they can be (and very often were by the Egyptians themselves) interchangeable.³⁰⁰

The key figure in this whole cycle is, therefore, Seth, the materialisation of virile strength who has got to supplement this quality his two partners lack. Osiris and Seth are direct and irreconcilable counterparts which, from a structural point of view, are always in a structural alliance – they are two sides of one coin, like the positive and negative in photography. Horus can succeed to the throne only with the help of Seth – for he is the split part of his “positive” father Osiris and in order for Horus to become a fully acknowledged ruler, the king has to unite both opposites/both Lands etc.

Now let us look at kin-relationships between the three key figures of the Osiris Cycle: Osiris, Seth and Horus (I will leave out Isis and Nephthys for the moment and show their function later on). Horus is said to be Osiris’ son. Seth is said to be Osiris’ brother, therefore Horus’ uncle. Nevertheless, the Egyptians themselves have also considered Seth to be the older brother of Horus. Many an Egyptologist had been perplexed by these and similar statements, which they consider to be contradictory, and have come up with more or less forced solutions as to why it is so.³⁰¹ On the other hand, the structuralist method sees these types of statements not as a set of unreasonable contradictions, but as the transformation mechanics of myth, that is, sets of reasonable contradictions.

Depending upon which position is given weight the relationship between Seth and Horus can be *either* mother’s brother to sister’s son *or* father’s brother to brother’s son *or* elder brother to younger brother. The Egyptian term *sm* can carry any of these meanings,^[302] so that exact relationships can be defined with certainty only when there is some further factor to limit the field of choice. In P. Chester Beatty I itself, the reader is offered the alternative of viewing Horus as Seth’s sister’s son or as his younger brother.³⁰³

This ambiguity in kin-relationships originates from an institution which was the innermost principle holding Egyptian society and therefore the whole cosmos together – the king

²⁹⁹ pChester Beatty I, 3,5–3,10. The last insult is traditionally explained by Egyptologists as a reference to the smell of mother’s milk from Horus’ mouth, therefore to his youth.

³⁰⁰ GOEBS, “A Functional Approach”: 42–59, specifically p. 47–48. In n. 80 she gives a translation of the Spell 26 of the Pyramid Texts §19a: “Horus (who is) in Osiris N—take for yourself the Eye of Horus to yourself!”

³⁰¹ GRIFFITHS, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth*, p. 12–14.

³⁰² Leach himself gives a reference to KÖHLER, “Enigie Überlegungen”: 17–20.

³⁰³ LEACH, “The Mother’s Brother”: 21.

and the mechanics of succession. Edmund Leach wrote a very short but illuminating article on this topic in which he says:

In Ancient Egypt the institution of Divine Kingship associated with “positional succession” – the system whereby a holder of office becomes absorbed in that office – gave manifest expression to just such a mythology. The legitimacy of the reigning king depended upon the principle that he was both the living “son” of his predecessor and also the immediate divine reincarnation of his dead predecessor. Correspondingly, the Queen Mother, i.e. the principal widow of the former king, was simultaneously both the “mother” of the reigning king and his “wife”. At certain stages during the course of its long but erratic development, the mythology of Osiris, Horus and Isis “mapped” this relationship between religious ideology and real life politics very closely. The reigning King was Horus, the deceased King was Osiris, the Queen Mother was Isis. But since Osiris and Horus are two persons but one god, (in that living Horus in due course become dead Osiris) the half-sister principal Queen of the living King was also, like the Queen Mother, potential Isis.³⁰⁴

In Egypt itself, we see that it was not individuals who were important when it came to offices, but the structural patterns in which certain individuals function – thus, theoretically, anybody could become a pharaoh as long as he acted like one. The individual’s identity in a way “melted” on becoming king. This is indeed a structuralist approach from the side of the Egyptians themselves!

The basic relationship, which is the main theme of the Osiris Cycle and other myths, is that of a father to a son. At the same time, Osiris and Seth are nothing else but two emanations of one fatherly figure through the principle of character “bifurcation” (just as the feminine and masculine parts both of which Bata could not hold, were separated into his body and his heart, see above, Episode C, Analysis [a], p. 62–64). The “good” Osiris and the “bad” Seth.³⁰⁵ Horus is the son, but once the principle of the “positional succession” comes into operation – once Horus (pharaoh) becomes ruler – he is identified with his father, he becomes his father. From this point of view, all three gods, if related to the position of “the ruler” are one: Osiris and Seth represent two structurally opposing parts and Horus, once becoming the ruler, is identified with Osiris (and implicitly with Seth). All three gods are deeply rooted in each other and at the same time represent different and structurally opposing qualities (ORDER × CHAOS, EGYPTIAN × FOREIGN etc.). Therefore any myth, which somehow deals with the problem of kin relations and the

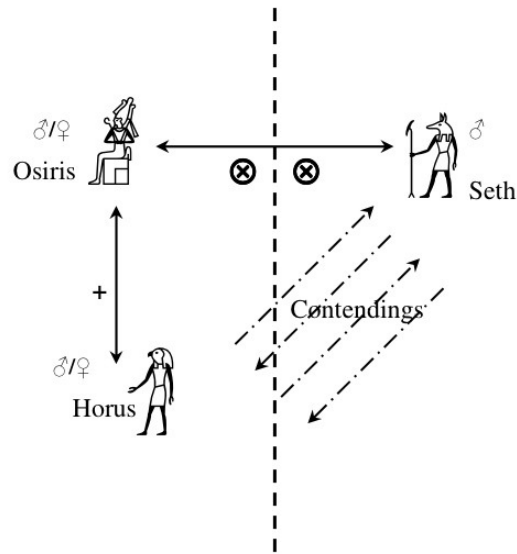
³⁰⁴ *Idem*: 20.

³⁰⁵ The fact is that in other mythological contexts their roles can be structurally inverted. Seth thus appears in his role of the mightiest of gods who alone is capable of defeating the arch enemy of the re – Apophis. In this sense he is the personification of order. Osiris, on the other hand, does also have negative and threatening aspects to his personality. In pChester Beatty he threatens the Ennead in a very matter-of-fact manner: “As for the land in which I am, it is filled with savage-faced messengers who do not fear any god or any goddess. I have but to let them go forth, and they will fetch the heart of whoever commits misdeeds and they will be here with me. [...] Who among you is there mightier than I?” (15, 5). See also Utterance 264 of the Pyramid texts, line 350a: “He (Rē) has freed N. from *hrti*; he has not given him to Osiris.” (MERCER, *The Pyramid Texts*, p. 87)

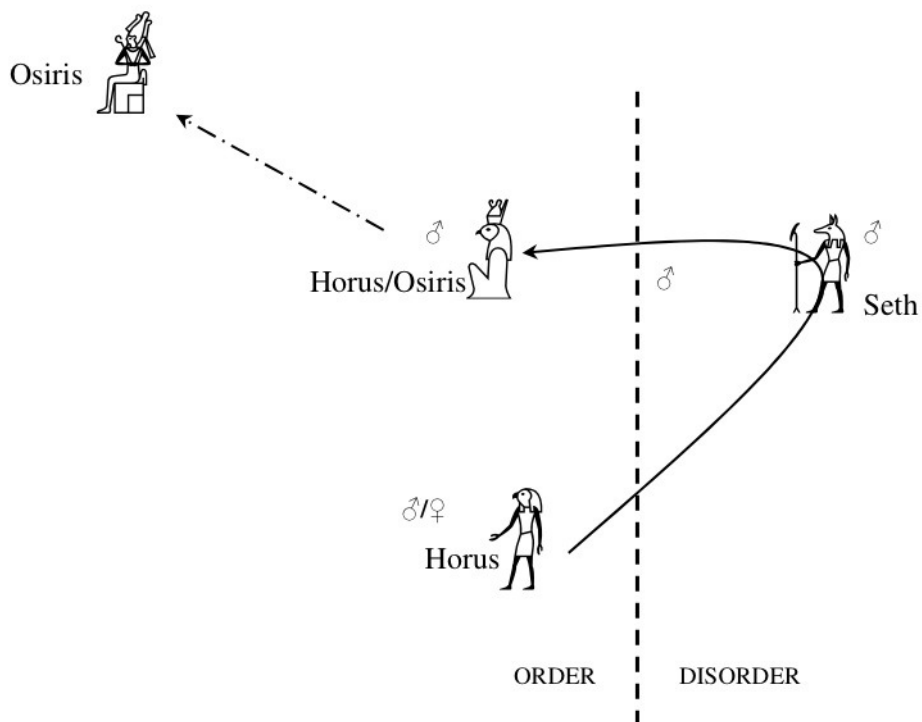
problem of succession, can decide which relation it will develop because structurally it does not matter. In the end, one god is transformable into any other. Through the transformational “mythomotrics” of myths, we can predict that in Egypt there will exist structurally inverted variants of the basic scheme as shown in fig. 21. What is important for the myth are the structural relations of the Osiris Cycle into which the actors enter with each other – these must be kept. What can be (and is) changed are the positions of the actors in the structure and even the actors themselves. What we witness in case of the Contendings of Horus and Seth and the Tale of the two Brothers is only a change of focus and the number of permutations the authors decided to incorporate into their narrative. In case of the Contendings, the way how Horus ascends to the throne is by interacting with Seth (representing virile and potent disorder as opposed to his impotent father – order) by means of series of seemingly inimical contendings. By these encounters, Horus acquires a competence (becomes a man³⁰⁶) and therefore a different status which enables him to ascend to the throne – and that with the approval of the originally opposing side, Seth himself: “Then Atum, lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, sent Isis, saying: bring Seth restrained with manacles. Isis brought Seth restrained in manacles, as a prisoner. Said Atum to him: Why do you not allow yourselves to be judged but (instead) usurp for yourself the office of Horus? Said Seth to him: On the contrary, my good lord. *Let Horus, son of Isis, be summoned and be awarded the office of / his father Osiris.*”³⁰⁷ What we witness in this story is a gradual progression of Horus through the levels of order (at first in a marginal role of the not yet mature heir to the throne facing his “mighty” uncle/older brother, then he becomes a man) by coming into interaction with the disorder (Seth) – fig. 22.

³⁰⁶ That is why Seth in the Contendings fails to “do the job of a man on Horus” (i.e. homosexual intercourse) but Horus succeeds (by a trick of his mother Isis) to prove that it was he “who did the job of a man on Seth”. In the same story, Horus manages to cut off Seth’s testicles – he physically acquires Seth’s virility for himself. Only then can he become ruler, but for that he needs Seth.

³⁰⁷ WENTE, “The Contendings of Horus and Seth”, p. 125 (italics mine). Hieroglyphic text in GARDINER, *Late Egyptian Stories*, p. 59, sequence in the story: 15,12–16,1.

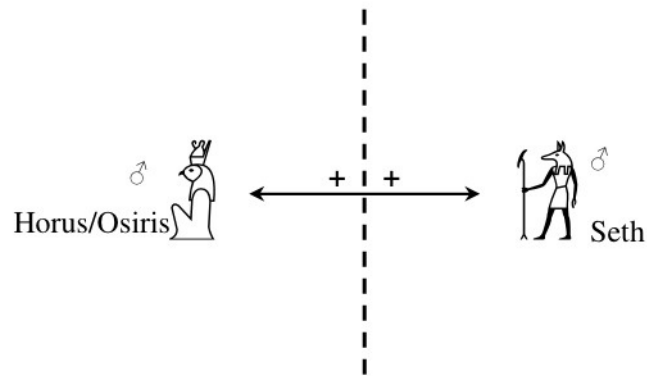


The whole narrative ends with Horus' enthronement and a final state of equilibrium in which the two originally opposing sides (order and disorder) are combined, the "disorder" being contained in order (Seth not only establishes Horus on the throne, but is in the end of pChester Beatty rewarded by joining the supreme ruler – the sun god Pre-Harakhti).³⁰⁸ (fig. 23)



³⁰⁸ "Then Ptah the Great, South of his Wall, Lord of Ankhatawi, said: What shall be done for Seth? For see, Horus has been installed in the position of his father Osiris. Said Pre-Harakhti: Let Seth, son of Nut, be delivered to me so that he may dwell with me, being in my company as a son, and he shall thunder in the sky and be feared." (WENTE, "The Contendings of Horus and Seth", p. 125).

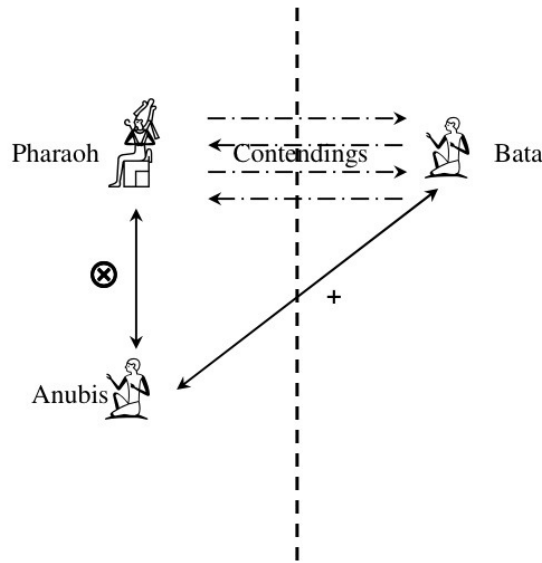
fig. 24



In case of the Tale of the Two Brothers we are confronted with the same mythical structure which had undergone a series of permutations. The first marked permutation is that the focus is changed from the relationship of Bata – Anubis to that of Bata – pharaoh. It is between these two characters that we witness the “contendings” (even though Episode A–C is only about the conflict of Bata and Anubis) whereas Anubis is more or less in the background even though his story structurally follows that of Horus in the Contendings. Anubis, who also stands in a marginal position within order (living outside the capital being virtually nobody), also gradually progresses through the levels of order (first acquires wealth and then becomes crown prince) through interacting with the disorder (Bata – the initial episodes drive Bata from the orderly world into the Valley of the Pine, Anubis fetches Bata’s heart from the Valley of the Pine). In the meantime, Bata also undergoes a process structurally similar to that of Horus in the Contendings: he lacks certain qualities enabling him to be integrated into order; these qualities he gradually gains and becomes the pharaoh himself, finally appointing Anubis as his successor. Anubis is to Bata as Horus to Seth. Explicit connection is made between Bata and Seth in the papyrus Jumilhac XX. “According to the vignette with accompanying text in the pap. Jumilhac, Bata, that is Seth carries Osiris on his back in the form of a bull.”³⁰⁹ (see fig. 25, p. 130)

The topic which is stressed in this way is the interdependence of Bata/Seth on Anubis/Horus and vice versa – a theme which might not have been as obvious in the case of the Contendings (fig. 26).

³⁰⁹ TE VELDE, *Seth*, p. 97.



The author of the Tale of the Two Brothers chose here not to focus on the interaction between Seth and Horus (which was the main theme of the *Contendings*), but on the relation between Osiris/pharaoh and Seth/Bata. Since these two characters represent at the same time two contradictory principles (OSIRIS : SETH :: ORDER : DISORDER etc.), it was probably more viable to substitute names of Osiris and Seth (who could not come into such a close interaction as Bata and the pharaoh does) with the character of the pharaoh and Bata. Nevertheless, the structure of the Tale of the Two brothers must have rung a bell in the head of the ancient listener for he knew an alternative structure of this myth already from the Contendings of Horus and Seth and this version only supplied him with a new angle. It was structurally same, but at the same time new in many aspects. He might have said “Oooh, I have never thought about it like that before.”

THE FEMINEN PRINCIPLE AS MEDIATOR IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN STORIES

So far I have been discussing the male characters of myths while deliberately avoiding the analysis of the function of female characters. Before we proceed to the analysis of the pAmherst 9+pBn 202 we have to look at the crucial function which goddesses, women and the female element in general play in Egyptian myths.

In both the Tale of the Two Brothers and the Osiris Cycle the women play an intermediary role. It is always through a female principle that things start happening, the contradictory is connected, the homogenous divided etc. The following table illustrates the mediating female principles in the Tale o the Two Brothers.

Episode	Female principle	Event in the story	Result for the structure of the narrative	Outcome for female principle
Episode B and C	Anubis' wife	Tries to seduce Bata (incest) and by a lie cajoles Anubis to protect her honour and kill Bata (fratricide).	Things start happening, the whole story is set into motion.	She is brutally killed and her corpse fed to the dogs.
Initial Episode II	Bata's wife-sister, female sexuality (lock of hair)	Is created by the gods of Egypt for Bata as his wife in the Valley of the Pine. Her lock of hair is brought by the sea to the pharaoh.	Represents a materialisation of Bata's femininity (he is castrated). Through her sexuality she (a) establishes contact with the liminal zone (attack of the lecherous Sea) (b) establishes contact with the order-pharaoh via her lock of hair (sexuality).	-
Episode D	Bata's wife-sister, female sexuality (lock of hair)	After the failure of pharaoh's first war party, she leaves Bata after meeting a woman envoy sent by the pharaoh with jewellery.	Bata gets rid of his unwanted femininity (becomes a man again); part of Bata is associated with the source of order (pharaoh) – his way back into order is starts.	-
Episode E	Bata's wife-sister alias pharaoh's wife	Reveals Bata's secret which causes his death (pine tree chopped down).	By destroying Bata's imperfect (non-human) bodily form, she enables him to cross the liminal zone and re-enter order.	-
Episode H and I	Bata's wife-sister alias pharaoh's wife	Persuades the king to kill Bata (in the form of a sacred bull).	By destroying Bata's imperfect (non-human) bodily form, she enables him to ascend a step closer to the source of order.	-
Episode K and L	Bata's wife-sister alias pharaoh's wife	Persuades the king to kill Bata (in the form of two Persea trees).	By destroying Bata's imperfect (non-human) bodily form, she enables him to ascend a step closer to the source of order.	-

Episode M–O	Bata’s wife-sister alias pharaoh’s wife alias Bata’s mother	Becomes pregnant with Bata; promotes Bata to become pharaoh’s favourite son and heir to the throne.	By giving human form to Bata (through her own body), she enables him to enter the innermost zone closest to the source of order – pharaoh’s family.	She is judged by her son/husband (and found guilty?).
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In case of the Osiris Cycle the situation is in many ways similar. Above, I have tried to defend the view that Osiris and Seth represent two opposing principles which are not connectable in any direct way (see fig. 21) – they are too contradictory to communicate with each other directly. Nevertheless, the relations between them are mediated by their female counterparts – Isis and Nephthys. Just as Seth is a negative mirror image of Osiris, Nephthys is a mirror image of Isis – but mainly not a negative anymore.³¹⁰ This is also shown by her attributes: “Nephthys was a funerary goddess who usually played a subordinate role to her sister Isis. She appears only in the myths of Heliopolis and nothing is known about her before her appearance there.”³¹¹ It is through Isis and Nephthys that the two opposing male figures of Osiris and Seth can find a way to interact.

Generally, we can see that the feminine principle plays a crucial role in Egyptian mythology (see table above) but very often is treated in a manner that would like to minimise or neutralise its strength: Anubis’ brutally murders his wife and Bata brings to court his own wife-sister/mother/wife! What does this tell us about the ancient Egyptians themselves? Both the Tale of the Two Brothers and the Osiris Cycle have as their basic topic the problem of royal succession and of kin relationships. We can easily imagine the situation in the Egyptian royal palace: tens or hundreds of children all begotten by the ruling king living together with their mothers in the pharaoh’s harem. Strong competition between pharaoh’s wives as to which one of them will become the Chief Lady mirrored by the contendings of princes’ – the throne is at stake. Kin relations in such a milieu were very complicated given the fact that the principle of “positional succession” (see above, p. 86) was the foundation of royal and state ideology and theology. The heir, once becoming king, physically enacted the role of his own deceased father – he became his father thus becoming the older brother to those who were an uncle to him before his succession, father to his brothers, husband to his own mother etc. The reins of rule were

³¹⁰ Only in those cases when her relation towards Seth needs to be emphasised is she addressed by the Egyptians through invectives such as “the barren one”. It is true that throughout the ancient Egyptian history, Nephthys stayed a childless goddess – an attribute which distinguishes her from all other (for this observation I thank Jiří Janák from the Institute of Egyptology at the Charles University in Prague, personal communication, 29.8.2008).

³¹¹ WILKINSON, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses*, p. 159.

expected to be handed over to the pharaoh's son but rivalry between the princes' and the deceased pharaoh's brothers definitely promoted the principle "stronger one takes everything" whether the stronger one was the youngest of all the candidates. At the same time, nevertheless, the Egyptian society stressed very much the moral rule of respecting the elders and their demands – the younger (brother) learns from the older (brother), nephew learns and respects his uncle etc. But who is in fact one's younger brother or uncle when a woman who was his mother or sister could well have become his wife? These paradoxes were deeply embedded in the unconscious of the ancient Egyptian mind and as such they were expressed in hundreds of possible permutations in ancient Egyptian literature. These were the paradoxes which the young prince faced on coming of age and starting to function in the male society. But even before that moment, young princes living in the confines of the world of the harem witnessed the power which women had over their early lives and very often also over the life of the ruling king. It was the harem and the women who had a crucial and often lethal affect on the world of men. It was the women with their mode of communication differing in many aspects from that of men who had the ability to link two opposing male principles. Men needed women (as young children) and for a long part of their lives they were under their control. In the eyes of a man deeply embedded in the patriarchal society this ability to link and stir events and also the experience of their dependence on the feminine principle gave women a halo of mediatory and often disorderly figure and these functions found a direct expression in ancient Egyptian mythology.

CONCLUSION OF THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE TALE OF THE TWO BROTHERS

We are at the end of our story. Let us summarise its structure:

Initial Episode I → Episode A–C → Initial Episode II → Episode D–F → Initial Episode III → Episode G–I and J–L → Terminal Episode.

The function of the Initial Episodes can be likened to establishing the scene in a theatre and the triads of Episodes then perform the play. The Initial Episodes move the story further to higher levels; they change the "frames" of the story, that is, they change the syntactic structure of the plot. In each "frame" a different set of paradoxes is being dealt with, therefore:

Initial Episode I (kin × non-kin) → Episode A–C (violation of kinship relations)
 → Initial Episode II (chaos × order, foreign × Egyptian, death × life) →
 Episode D–F (establishing contact between order and disorder) → Initial
 Episode III (legitimacy [representing order] × illegitimacy) → Episode G–I and

J–L (interaction between different levels of order, gradual progress within its structure) → Terminal Episode (climax – becoming order/the system).

The reason why the story has this particular structure and not some other lies mainly with the decision of the compiler. The structure of myths is flexible – the author could have added infinite number of episodes to any part of the plot or he could have chosen only a certain part of the several opposites and write/tell a story only about that. What is obvious is that the story is a coherent whole. It is not as Jan Assmann has argued that it is an “amalgam of inconsistent and not well drawn together motifs and orientations”³¹²

In my structural analysis I have tried to show that Osiris and Seth function as a split image of one fatherly figure (through “bifurcation”) and that the Tale of the Two Brothers is a transformation of the Osiris Cycle (Anubis=Horus, pharaoh=Osiris, Bata=Seth) even though the characters bear different names and at first sight seem not to have anything to do with each other. The fact that the Tale of the Two Brothers is not just a bawdy tale but is concerned with (my)themes pivotal to ancient Egyptian cosmic and political thought just as the Osiris Cycle, has been marked by other authors as well. Wolfgang Wettengel,³¹³ for example, considers the Tale of the Two Brothers as a “founding document relating the divine origin of Ramesside kingship”.³¹⁴ He bases his analysis on the final colophon, “unusual in its threat of a threat formula, something rarely seen in literary documents.”³¹⁵ He divides the document based on the rubrics into 24 chapters which, according to him, reflect the daily route of the sun and also the political inferences with connection to the king. Also Anthony Spalinger³¹⁶ notes that “the clear involvement of royalty in the later portions of the account [...] and the final triumphant rise of Anubis, the elder son, to the throne of Egypt [...] provides an overt link to the Egyptian ideological framework of monarchy.”³¹⁷

Concerning my equation of Bata with Seth and Anubis with Horus, I am aided by both Egyptologists and the Egyptian tradition itself. Again, Wettengel relates the narrative of the Two Brothers to other ancient near Eastern Mediterranean cultures and the person of Bata to Baal³¹⁸

³¹² SPALINGER, “Transformations”: 139 which is a comment of an article by JAN ASSMAN in *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* [ZÄS] 104 (1977): 1–25.

³¹³ WOLFGANG WETTENGEL, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern: der Papyrus d’Orbiney und die Königsideologie der Ramessiden*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis [OBO] 195, Freiburg: universitätsverlag and Göttingen: vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003.

³¹⁴ SUSAN TOWER HOLLIS, “Review” (Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*), *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* [JEA] 92 (2006): 290–293.

³¹⁵ HOLLIS, “Review”: 291.

³¹⁶ SPALINGER: “Transformations”: 138–147.

³¹⁷ *Idem*: 140.

³¹⁸ WETTENGEL, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, p. 68–70.

and subsequently in chapters 9, 10 and 11 he draws close analogies between Bata and Seth and then Baal.³¹⁹ The ancient Egyptians themselves have textually equated Bata and Seth in the papyrus Jumilhac³²⁰ and also graphically in a vignette accompanying this text (see fig. 25, p. 130) which depicts Bata-Seth carrying the body of the slain Osiris.

Again in the papyrus Jumilhac, Anbis plays the exactly same role as Horus for he cuts off the phallus and testicles of the Bata-Seth deity.³²¹ In an episode of the Osiris myth recorded by Plutarchos, we hear of a sexual encounter of Osiris and Nephthys the fruit of which was Anubis.³²² This story not only shows that Nephthys was a mirror image of Isis (here taking her place as Osiris' partner) but also very neatly illustrates that even the ancient Egyptians themselves (even though through the eyes of a Greek) saw a connection between Anubis and the Osiris Cycle – a connection I have been trying to establish in case of the Tale of the Two Brothers in which Anubis plays a structurally identical role to that of Horus in the Osiris Cycle. The last argument supporting my assertion that the Tale of the Two Brothers is only a structural transformation of the Osiris Cycle comes from Schneider. He compares Egyptian texts which all somehow integrate the Near-Eastern motive of the Weather-god (among which is the Astarte papyrus and the Tale of the Two Brothers) and comes to the conclusion that the names of the involved gods function as code-names. Thus “(Semit.) *bt* = (Ba'al) *Bēti* = ‘(The Lord of) the Dynasty’ and (Egypt.) *jnpw* = *Anpaw* ‘Heir to the throne’.”³²³ Bata-Seth is the “Lord of the Dynasty” both in the Tale of the Two Brothers and in the reality of the New Kingdom when Seth played a very important role in the royal cult and several kings took his name as part of theirs. Anubis would then be the “Heir to the throne” who is traditionally equated with Horus. The Tale of the Two Brothers indeed is a transformation of the Osiris Cycle.

THE ASTARTE PAPYRUS (pBN 202+pAMHERST 9)

In the translation and commentary I have quoted many scholars who have noticed affinities of this story with those from the Near East, Anatolia or Mesopotamia. The historical context in which the story was written, as has been neatly and exhaustingly shown by Collombert and Coulon and Schneider, seems also to support the point that the story represents an import into

³¹⁹ HOLLIS, “Review”: 291.

³²⁰ JACQUES VANDIER, *Le papyrus Jumilhac*, Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1965, p. 114–115, III 22–23. In fact the story contained in this papyrus seems to be a direct transformation of the story in the Tale of the Two Brothers and very similar to that of the Contendings as part of the Osiris Cycle.

³²¹ VANDIER, *Le papyrus Jumilhac*, p. 114, III 19–22.

³²² THEODOR HOPFNER (übersetz.), *Plutarch über Isis und Osiris*, I. Teil – Die Sage, Prag: Orientalisches Institut, 1940, §14, p. 6–7; for commentary, see: THEODOR HOPFNER, *Plutarch über Isis und Osiris*, II. Teil – Die Deutungen der Sage, Prag: Orientalisches Institut, 1941, §38, p. 21.

³²³ SCHNEIDER, “Texte”: 626–627.

Egypt facilitated by the foreign communities living in the Memphite area during the reign of Amenhotep II. The many loan-words which appear within the story, the appearance of the foreign deities of Yam, Astarte and also Baal (who is not mentioned but whose attributes correspond directly with those of the hero of our story) all support this theory. Other scholars have settled with showing parallels of this story in other cultures. All of this work is very important; unfortunately, nobody has shown how the text of the Astarte papyrus fits in with the whole of ancient Egyptian society and its religious and political tradition. The text is written in a very neat hieratic and its estimated length, as I have noted earlier, would have been about two times more than the longest story of the Contendings of Horus and Seth preserved from the time of the New Kingdom. The Astarte papyrus must have been a substantial and important story for the Egyptians themselves. But how does this correspond with the motives which must have been foreign for a native Egyptian and sound strange?³²⁴ I believe that by using the structuralist method it is possible to show the connection of the story from the pBN 202+pAmherst 9 with Egyptian thought and also the way how the Egyptians adjusted foreign motives to their own cultural system.

In the following structural analysis we cannot, unfortunately, proceed as in the case of the Tale of the Two Brothers because the text of the pBN 202+pAmherst 9 is too fragmentary to allow for a coherent and neat division into episodes. I will, therefore, compare the few basic episodic events which the fragments allow us to reconstruct with the analysis of other Egyptian stories as I have shown above.

SYNOPSIS OF THE ASTARTE PAPYRUS

1) 1,1–1,2

Introduction – date and epithets.

2) 1,2

Mention of a renewal [of a cult or possibly a shrine for Seth-Baal-King] so as to enable him to battle Yam on behalf of the Egyptian gods (the Ennead).

3) 1,3–1,4

In the introduction we hear of childhood deeds of our hero which the work wants to celebrate.

4) 1,4–1,5

The birth of our hero and appointing of destiny to him by the goddess Renenut and the god Shay.

5) 1,5–1,9 and 1, x+1

Hero's appearance and his attributes' description.

6) 1, x+1–1, x+2

Incantation praising [the hero].

7) 1, x+3

Cosmic setting – in fragments we hear of the sky, the (satisfied/pacified) earth.

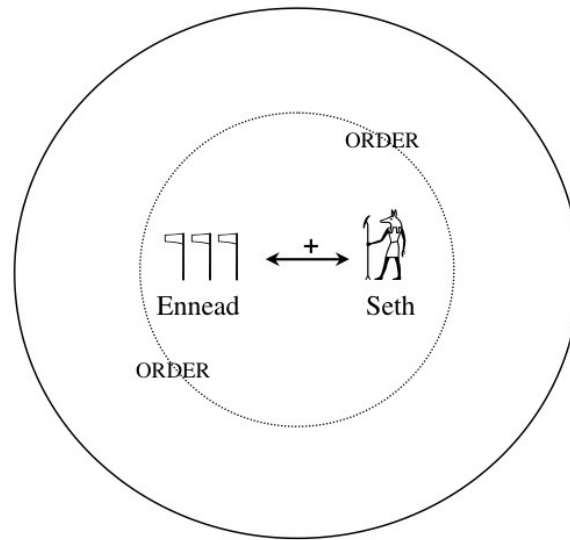
³²⁴ For example “Yam” as a personification of the Sea does not have a strong tradition in ancient Egyptian thought – the river Nile was the main body of water playing an important role for the Egyptians whereas the Sea had never been represented in a personalised manner, see above, p. 42–43.

- 8) 1, x+4
Subordinates are mentioned (“then they bent as š3q3”).
- 9) 1, x+5-1, x+7
An allusion to a cosmological act(?) (“the earth gave birth”, “four regions of the world” etc.).
First mention of The Sea.
- 10) 1, x+8
In the midst of the creation(?) the throne of the Ruler is built.
- 11) 1, x+9-1, x+13
We first hear of the claim to the tribute (“to bring him tribute”) and of a certain “assembly”.
Renut brings precious stuffs, the “assembly” is threatened to be taken captive by The Sea(?) who demands tribute. The tribute is a condition on which The Sea(?) is willing to start negotiating with the Ennead.
- 12) 2, x+1-2, x+3
Tribute and the Sea are mentioned again and now in connection with fear and “evil”.
- 13) 2, x+3-2, x+12
The Ennead is trying to solve the threatening situation – Renut sends a bird as a messenger to Astarte. She is bid to come before the Ennead and is entrusted with the task of bringing the tribute to the Sea.
- 14) 2, x+13-2, x+17
Astarte is crying [because of the harshness of the task?] And the Sea (Ruler) seems not to be communicating.
- 15) 2, x+17-2, x+19
Astarte finally goes naked down to the sea shore and by singing and laughing she tries to attract the Sea’s attention.
- 16) [22 lost lines on page 3] + 3, y-2-3, y-1
[After series of negotiations?] the Sea agrees to certain conditions remarking that he alone could not fight all the gods.
- 17) 3, y-1-3, y
Astarte goes back with the message. She is greeted and praised.
- 18) 4, y-2-4, y
Collection of the tribute starts – part of it is obviously a pearl necklace of Nut.
- 19) [23 lost lines on page 5] + 5, y-1-5, y
[Astarte might be going there and forth always with further demands of the voracious Sea?] finally demanding the seal of Geb.
- 20) 10, y
We hear of gates (to a palace?)
- 21) 14, y
A threat is formulated that the Sea will cover the earth and the mountains.
- 22) 15, y
Seth is persuaded that the Sea will not dare to fight with the Ennead (represented by him as the mightiest and strongest god).
- 23) [page 15-19 mainly destroyed]
[Possible duel between Seth and the Sea?]

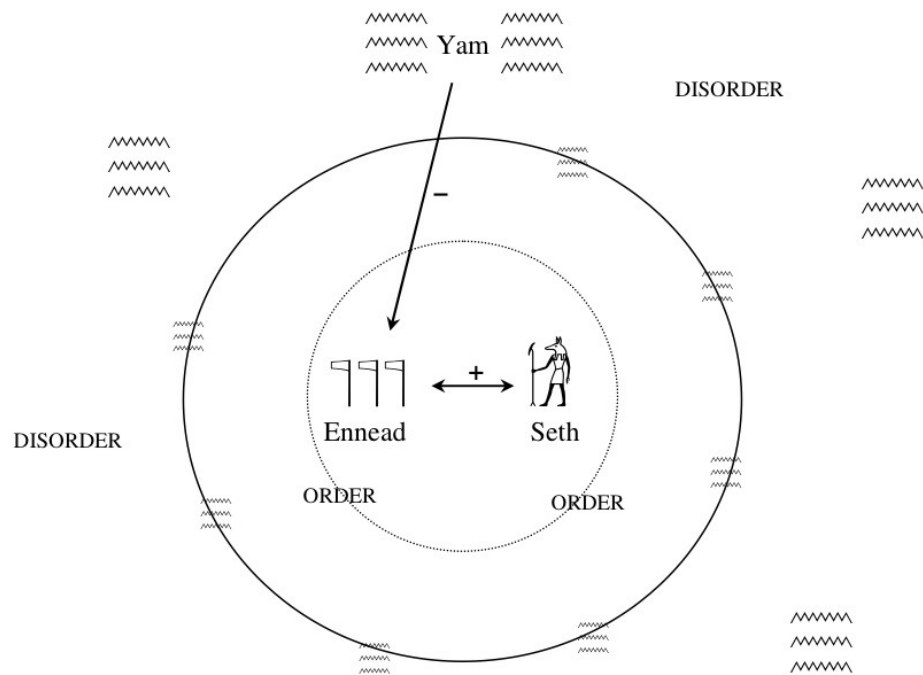
STRUCTURAL INTERPRETATION

At the beginning it is necessary to graphically visualise the main involved parties of our story and the relations in which they stand with each other.

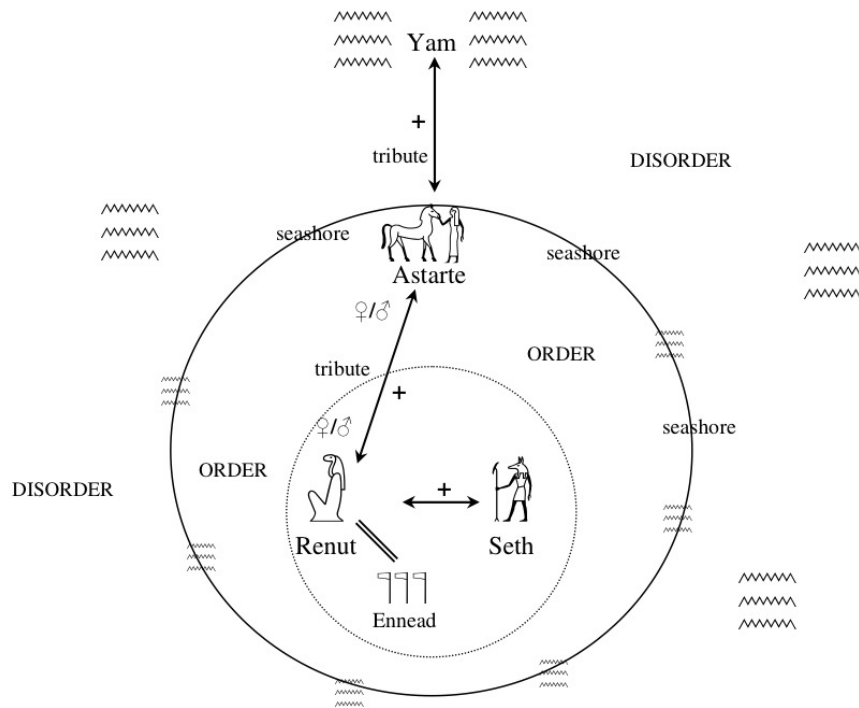
2) – 6) The hero is introduced, he is the pharaoh with all the attributes of the mighty Baal-Seth. Something has been done for him so as to enable him to fight on the side of the Ennead against the Sea (fig. 27).



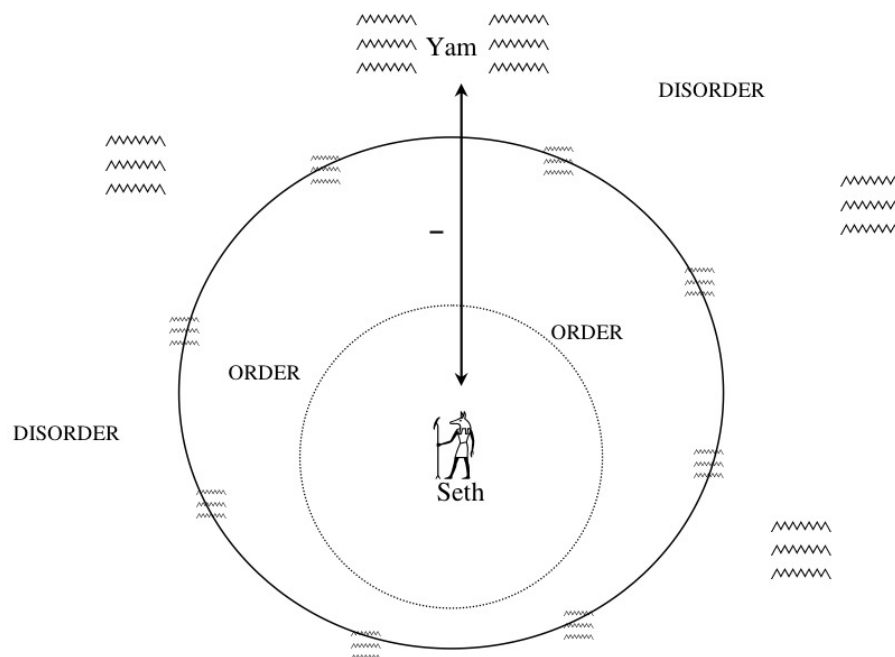
7) – 12) In a cosmological setting, the Sea is mentioned together with an epithet Ruler and mention is made of a throne. Ennead is first threatened by the Sea who demands tribute. The whole situation is evil and frightening (fig. 27).



13) – 21) The Ennead (represented by Renut) finds an intermediary in the form of the goddess Astarte who is able to contact the Sea by descending naked to the sea-shore. Then a series of interactions between the Ennead and the Sea takes places, the Sea always strenghtening his demands for tribute (fig. 28).



22) The god Seth stands up and claims that the Sea shall not dare to fight the Ennead represented by him (fig. 29).



At first I would like to point out some details of the Astarte Papyrus which are interesting in relations to the two previously analysed texts – the Tale of the Two Brothers [*Two Brothers*] and the Contendings of Horus and Seth [*Contendings*]. The Astarte papyrus is obviously concerned with the question of kingship and with the position of the ruling king – the *Contendings* explicitly, the *Two Brothers* also (these two stories being a permutation of one another), and the Astarte papyrus implicitly but obviously, for it celebrates the king in his function of the warrior of the Ennead and maintainer of *Maat*. Since the crucial set of myths connected with the royal office and the person of the king in ancient Egypt was the Osiris Cycle, we can presume that in one way or another even the Astarte papyrus will have some affinity to it.

	Two Brothers	Osiris Cycle (Contendings)	Astarte papyrus
ORDER	Pharaoh, Anubis (Horus)	Osiris, Horus	Ennead, Seth-Baal-Pharaoh
DISORDER	Bata (Seth)	Seth	Yam
MEDIATORS	Bata's wife (Astarte)+female envoy sent by the king, Anubis, Yam	Isis, Ennead	Astarte+Renut
NARRATIVE FOCUS	Interactions between the pharaoh and Bata (order and disorder)	Interactions between Horus and Seth (order and disorder)	Interactions between Ennead (+Seth-Baal-Pharaoh) and Yam (order and disorder); Seth(-Baal-Pharaoh) merged with Horus (Amenhotep II)
OUTCOME OF NARRATIVE	Anubis becomes ruler with the approval of Bata; disorder integrated into order (Bata becomes pharaoh and thus maintainer of order)	Horus becomes ruler with the approval of Seth; disorder integrated into order (Seth joins Pre-pharaoh and thus maintainer of order)	?

tab. 1

The main difference between the *Two Brothers* and the *Contendings* was the narrative focus of each of these stories which concentrated on the interactions of always a different pair of the main actors of the succession drama (see tab. 1 above and fig. 22 and 26). What was the same in both myths was that the order was represented by Osiris and Horus in one case and the pharaoh and Anubis in the other. I have tried to show that from a structural point of view, these two pairs are in fact identical. In case of the Astarte papyrus, not much of the plot has survived for us to tell whether there has been any major alteration of the plot differencing it from the other two stories – so far the only thing we can tell is that the Sea (chaotic force) threatens the Ennead (order) and therefore a series of interactions takes place mediated through the figures of Astarte and Renut. Nevertheless, in the Astarte papyrus we actually witness a very interesting permutation of a

different kind. As Collombert and Coulon have shown, the main point of the Astarte papyrus was the eulogy of the ruling king Amenhotep II and at the same time his identification with Seth-Baal who, by his attributes may be determined as the “hero” of our story, so as to emphasise certain abilities which are typical for Seth-Baal.³²⁵ Nevertheless, by identifying the pharaoh with Seth the Egyptian compiler has prepared for himself a tricky situation – the ruling pharaoh was always perceived as the living incarnation of Osiris in the form of his son Horus. The king is under normal circumstances Osiris-Horus. The king is Seth but at the same time he is Horus as the rightful heir to the throne and as an incarnation of Osiris. This fact is not surprising for as I have tried to show above, the final merging or identification of these three gods (if not in the form of their characters then in the form of the principles they represent – disorder merges with order) was the main aim of both the *Contendings* and the *Two Brothers*. The Egyptians themselves also formulated this idea graphically in the form of the god *ḥrwy=fy* “He with the two faces” (see fig. 30, p. 130). “This image represents one body with two faces, one Horus face and one Seth face, i.e. a figure where two opposite forces are integrated, the good and the evil, the light and the dark, the intellectual side and the instinctive one.”³²⁶ Another very interesting fact is that Horus and Seth were worshipped together in daily ritual practice.³²⁷

The identification of the king with Seth therefore did not represent a problem for the Egyptian mind, but it did for the story of the Astarte papyrus – Seth has been traditionally depicted as the *enemy* of Horus-King and once the main character becomes Seth-Baal-Horus-King, we are suddenly missing the representative of the disorder! If we remember the basic structuralist rule that what is meaningful are the relations between units and not the units themselves, then the solution to this problem is obvious. Above I have shown that the relation between Seth and Osiris is that of a directly insurmountable opposition. One represents the order (Osiris), the other disorder/chaos (Seth). However, both these gods could also represent the direct opposites and in isolated traditions they did. Seth is ferocious, sexually voracious, impulsive which are qualities generally considered as disastrous and evil. But at the same time he is the only god who was able to protect the sun god Re by defeating the arch enemy of the order the serpent Apophis (see fig. 31, p. 130) putting to use exactly these “negative” qualities. Osiris was the ideal representative of order but (sexually) inactive and a “God in need”, harmless in a way. But at the same time he was feared as the master of the dead and of the demons located in the Netherworld. Their nature was that of aggression (even though only the morally weak would have to fear) and so was sometimes the attitude of Osiris towards his fellow gods (as in the

³²⁵ In some texts the pharaoh is directly compared to Baal. See above, p. 41.

³²⁶ ENGLUND, “The Treatment of Opposites”, p. 79.

³²⁷ HERMANN KEES, *Horus und Seth als Götterpaar*, Leipzig : Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1923, p. 44.

episode from the *Contendings* where he threatens the Ennead) or as a chthonic god towards both the unrighteous living and deceased.³²⁸ If Seth then becomes the representative of *maat*, in order for the structural relationship between him and Osiris to be safeguarded, Osiris has to take on the aggressive aspects which are rarely attributed to him. What is important is not that Osiris is the serene representative of order, but that Osiris always stands in opposition to Seth and that both represent the relation between order and disorder. If Seth becomes the guardian of order, Osiris must take on the aggressive aspect and become the representative of disorder. One might object that this does not make sense, but from a structural point of view it does not matter – in both the *Contendings* and the *Two Brothers*, disorder was, in the end, integrated into order thus becoming order. What has been divided at the beginning is united in the end and therefore what must be kept are the relations because these make the gradual integration possible – not the actors. Thanks to this principle, characters can change names, sex and even exchange places within the structure (negatives can become positives and vice versa) as long as the relations to other characters are maintained. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Astarte papyrus. The traditional antipode of Seth is Osiris. Yam, who is in fact the opponent of Seth in the Astarte papyrus, has no tradition in Ancient Egyptian religion but his physiognomy as that of an aggressive deity corresponds well to the aggressive aspect attributed to Osiris in certain contexts. Thus if we compare the basic structure of the Osiris myth (see below, figs. 32 and 33) to that of the Astarte papyrus, we get another very interesting permutation of the classical Egyptian story – Horus and Seth actually merge in the person of the king (Amenhotep II) and the aggressive Yam-Osiris stands in opposition to Seth:

³²⁸ Spell 23 of the Pyramid Texts §16a: “Osiris, carry off all those who hate N., who speak evilly against his name.” (MERCER, *The Pyramid Texts*, p. 23)

fig. 32

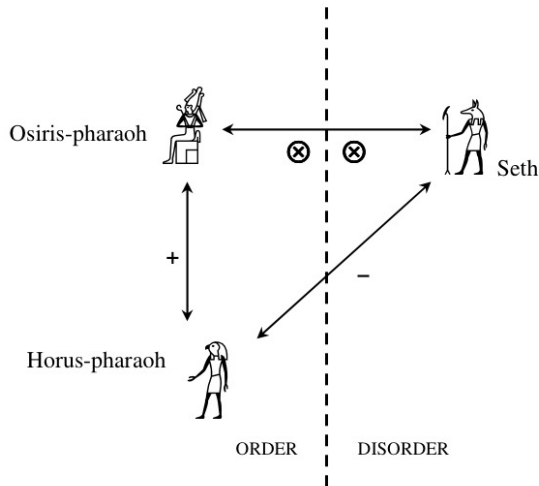
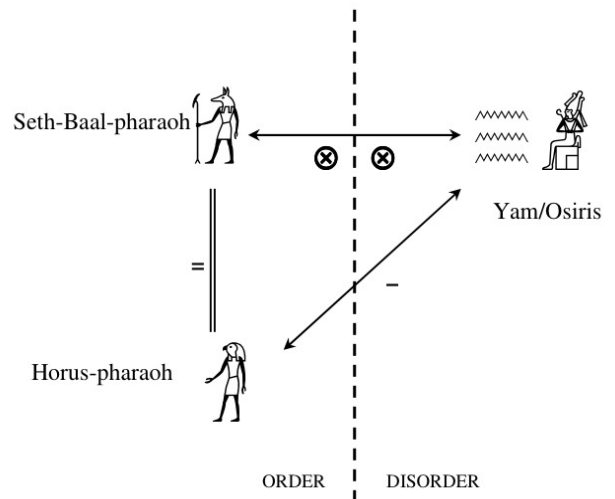


fig. 33



The fact that the Astarte papyrus is also strongly embedded in the ancient Egyptian mythical thought even though we meet many Syro-Palestinian motives, is shown by other structural similarities which the myth shares with either the *Two Brothers* or the *Contendings*.

Two Brothers

(1) tribute

11,4–11,5: After the pharaoh has acquired the lock of hair, which belongs to Bata’s wife and which made his clothes so fragrant, he sends for his learned scribes to obtain an explanation of such a marvel: “Then the learned scribes of Pharaoh l.p.h., were brought. They told Pharaoh l.p.h.: As for this braid of hair it belongs to a daughter of Pre-Harakhti in whom there is seed of every god. Now it is a tribute to you [from] another country.”³²⁹ In this case the tribute is sent from the disorderly region and into the midst of order.

(2) mediators

As I have tried to show above, the role of the main mediators is played by women, especially by Bata’s wife. She is a woman of captivating beauty, for “seed of every god is in her”. Her status is that of an ideal mediating figure – she belongs both to order (begot by the Ennead) but at the same time she is a wife to a foreigner-outlaw (Bata). She has got a status of a wife but at the same time she is still a virgin – a maiden because Bata was castrated and could not have marital sex

³²⁹ WENTE, “The Tale of the Two Brothers”, p. 102. The word “tribute” here is different from that used in the Astarte papyrus which is . For information about the problematic of tribute and gift giving in ancient Egypt see JAC J. JANSSEN, “Gift-giving in Ancient Egypt as an Economic Activity”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* [JEA] 68 (1982): 253–258; CYRIL ALDRED, “The Foreign Gifts Offered to Pharaoh”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* [JEA] 56 (1970): 105–116; EDWARD BLEIBERG, “The King’s Privy Purse During the New Kingdom: An Examination of INW”, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* [JARCE] 21 (1984): 155–167. For these references I would like to thank Jana Mynářová from the Czech Institute of Egyptology of the Charles University in Prague, personal communication 25.8.2008. For more references, see p. 38, n. 161.

with her. She is “in between” all categories and this gives her an ideal position to connect worlds which stand in opposition with each other.

Astarte papyrus

(1) tribute

Throughout the text we hear of tribute being demanded by the Sea from the Ennead and also that the tribute is being gathered. In this case the tribute’s direction is opposite – it goes from within the order and into the disorder.

(2) mediators

The description of the functions and characteristics of Bata’s wife correspond in all details to that of the goddess Astarte who plays the role of the main mediating figure in the *Astarte papyrus*. Astarte’s physiognomy (not only in Egypt) gives her an ideal position to fulfil this task – she is the marginal figure *par excellence*. Just as Bata’s wife, she is neither a woman nor a girl (socially she belongs to a man but physically she is still a “maiden”). Astarte is generally the goddess representing passion and states of strong emotions – she is the blood-thirsty goddess (Yam addresses her on the seashore [2, x+18]: “You angry goddess”) and at the same time she represents sexual passion in its raw form (she comes to Yam naked) – the sort of passion that borders on aggression. In her aggressive aspect she is connected to both Seth and also Yam/Osiris. She has got something from both a ferocious warrior³³⁰ and a sexually attractive woman yet “untamed” by the social bond of marriage (or outside the bond of marriage just as was the case of prostitutes). In this way she can mediate between the order and disorder. She is neither within order (not yet a married woman) nor outside (even prostitutes were part of the social system³³¹). She is in between categories. In both the *Astarte papyrus* and the *Two Brothers* the mediating figure of Astarte/Bata’s wife cannot be contacted by the order directly but by the services of another (lesser) mediator. In the *Two Brothers* it is the lady from the court and in the *Astarte papyrus* it is Renut.³³²

³³⁰ When depicted in her war-like aspect she has got many aspects similar to those of male deities. See for example: HARRY S. SMITH, *Fortress of Buhen*, London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1976, p.110, fig. XX [1112]; LECLANT, “Astarte à cheval”: 31–35, doc. 1, fig. 11.

³³¹ On the connection between Innana-Ishtar and prostitutes, see: JEAN BOTTÉRO, “La femme, l’amour et la guerre en Mesopotamie ancienne”, *Poikilia Etudes offertes à Jean-Pierre Vernant*, Paris: EHESS, 1987, p. 165–83. Quotation after: RIVKAH HARRIS, “Inanna-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites”, *History of Religions* 30.3 (1991): 262.

³³² Interestingly enough, throughout the text of the *Astarte papyrus* we meet two alternative writings of her name (see above, n. 332). The first one, when connected with birthing and woman responsibilities, uses the determinative of a goddess. The second one, connected with the task of contacting Astarte and gathering tribute, has got the male god determinative. I would argue that this is not a mistake on the side of the scribe but that it reflects the characteristics of the relations between Astarte and Renut – since Astarte demonstrates both purely male and female qualities, the character contacting her should in some way be similar for the message to be

Astarte (or her foreign counterparts Ishtar, Innana, Shaushka) played the role of a marginal/liminal character in mythologies of other ancient civilisations (especially of the Sumero-Acadian complex)³³³ and it is this function that is also stressed in the Astarte papyrus.

THE ASTARTE PAPYRUS – AN INFILTRATION OR APPROPRIATION OF A WEST SEMITIC MYTH?

From the previous chapters it is obvious that the narrative contained in the pBN 202+pAmherst 9 (Astarte papyrus) is strongly influenced in many details by foreign models. The main theme, which is the possible battle between Baal-Seth-Pharaoh and Yam, seems to be a direct adoption of a typically West Semitic mythical motive known also as the Baal cycle. The question now is in what relation was the Astarte papyrus to the autochthonous Egyptian mythological tradition? Was it only the work of a strong and influential group of Semitic residents of the Memphite area who were trying to integrate their gods and religion into the framework of the Egyptian system? What did the text mean for the native ancient Egyptians?

Thomas Schneider would like to see the text of the Astarte papyrus as “[...] evidence of innovation from abroad [which is] striking because traditional Egyptology assumed that the core of Egyptian civilization, the cultural frame formed by such domains as religion and kingship, was immune to innovation and not affected by change. We now see that it was the very representative of Egyptian kingship, Amenophis II, who *changed its cultural code, and he redefined it on a non-egyptian model.*”³³⁴ I agree with Schneider in that ancient Egyptian culture was by no means a static one. Even though the Egyptians did strive to portray it as such (see above the discussion of the problem of narrativity in texts, see Part I) it was dynamic as any other. What I do not agree on with Schneider is the claim that the Astarte papyrus is a direct evidence of a redefinition of the Egyptian cultural code – it is not an infiltration of foreign material but rather an appropriation of a certain mythical structure into genuinely Egyptian mode of thought.³³⁵

What I have tried to show in the last few chapters is that the narrative of the Astarte papyrus fits very neatly into the structure of the Egyptian thought which stays traditional (the basic theme of the Astarte papyrus is structurally the same as that of the Two Brothers which is a transformation of the Osiris Cycle) but at the same time changes its characters to include the West Semitic deities. The identification of the pharaoh with the one who unites Horus and Seth (Baal in the case of the Astarte papyrus) is as old as Egyptian kingship itself. Osiris, apart from

understood – this was solved by adding a male determinative to Renut’s name who, in her main function, is a goddess of an archetypal female role – childbirth.

³³³ See especially HARRIS, “Inanna-Ishtar as Paradox”: 261–278 and also CAITLÍN E. BARRETT, “Was Dust Their Food and Clay Their Bread? Grave Goods, The Mesopotamian Afterlife, and the Liminal Role of Innana/Ishtar”, *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* [JANER] 7.1 (2007): 7–65.

³³⁴ SCHNEIDER, “Foreign Egypt”: 161 (italics mine).

³³⁵ For discussion about the mechanism of myth appropriation between different cultures, see below, p. 107.

his benign qualities, was already in the Pyramid Texts endowed with a very aggressive aspect which was here identified only with the aggression of the sea god Yam who, historically, had no tradition in Egyptian writing which does not matter because the Egyptian mind did have a genuine concept which it could use. We might ask Why did not the scribe simply put Osiris in the position of Seth's contender? There are two reasons. First, the compiler wanted deliberately to include as many West Semitic deities as possible. In fact, he wanted to "mime"³³⁶ the contents of the Baal Cycle or a similar mythological work in as many details as possible. The Astarte papyrus is obviously a politically motivated text based on the political ambitions of the young warrior pharaoh Amenhotep II and the militarily strong New Kingdom Egypt which started expanding into the region of the Near East. The second reason is that the compiler could not include Osiris as Seth's contender because the living pharaoh was traditionally viewed as the incarnation of Osiris in his son Horus. By the identification of Seth and Horus, the pharaoh implicitly united all three gods in himself and the separation would thus be illogical. At the same time Seth became the representative of order and since the relation between Osiris and Seth as two unconnectable opposites had to be maintained, the compiler had to substitute the figure of Osiris with a character bearing the same structural characteristics. The ideal solution was Yam, an aggressive Near Eastern aquatic deity who in fact threatens the Ennead in the same way as the chthonic Osiris does in the *Contendings*: "As for the land in which I am, it is filled with savage-faced messengers who do not fear any god or any goddess. I have but to let them go forth, and they will fetch the heart of whoever commits misdeeds and they will be here with me. [...] Who among you is there mightier than I?"³³⁷

If we look at tab. 1 (p. 100) again, we can see that the main actors of the three mythical stories are the same. What differs are the units within the structure, what stays the same are the relationships between them. These three stories are only permutations of one another and in this view they are all absolutely Egyptian. The Astarte papyrus has not been written for foreigners living in Egypt. This has got relevant implications for the reconstruction of the contents of the destroyed parts of the pBN 202+pAmherst 9. Schneider considers the story to be an identical copy of its Near-Eastern counterpart – the Baal Cycle.³³⁸ This would mean that in the end Seth-Baal-Pharaoh would slaughter Yam and would be victorious just as in the Ugaritic version (CAT 1.2, second tablet, col. 4, lines 23–28): "The weapon leaps from Baal's hand,/ [like] a raptor from his fingers,/ it strikes the head of Prince [Yamm,]/ between the eyes of Judge River./ Yamm collapses and falls to the earth,/ his joints shake, and his form collapses./ Baal drags and

³³⁶ See below where I explain in what way did the compiler "mime" the foreign models.

³³⁷ WENTE, "The Contendings of Horus and Seth", p. 124.

³³⁸ SCHNEIDER, "Foreign Egypt": 161.

dismembers (?) Yamm,/Destroys Judge River.”³³⁹ Nevertheless, as we have seen in case of the *Contendings* and the *Two Brothers*, the annihilation of the character representing the disorder would be an absolutely non-Egyptian way of treating the basic theme of the interaction of order – disorder. The Egyptians always stressed the *integration* of disorder into order especially when framed by the relation Osiris/Yam – Seth. They were well aware that even though chaos threatens order, it is the disorder from which the order draws its potency. It is the grease which enables the machinery of order to function and not get jammed. Order and disorder are dependant on each other. In this view it is obvious that even though the Astarte papyrus represents, at a first glance, a copy of the Baal Cycle, it is absolutely adopted to traditional Egyptian mental structures. I would, therefore, expect that in the lost and destroyed parts of the Astarte papyrus through series of interactions between the Ennead and Seth-Baal-Pharaoh (mediated by Astarte) there would be a gradual integration of the chaotic aspect (Yam) into the realm of order. In this way the text differs from its Near Eastern model. Unfortunately, we are missing exactly these parts of the text. I can only hope that one day these portions will be uncovered and that my theory and therefore my analysis will prove to be correct.

What is left to be answered is the problem of the appropriation of foreign mythological material into Egyptian tradition. Above I have tried to show that even though the narrative of the Astarte papyrus seems to be a mechanical copy of a Near Eastern myth, it fits very well into the grid of the ancient Egyptian thought. How is it possible? Different societies have diverging values, social organisations, kinship relations, etc. which are all reflected in their mythology. How can myths be translated from one society to another and still retain the urgency of the message for the native listener? As I have been trying to show above, the core of myths is their synchronic structure which exhibits itself through infinite structural permutations and transformations. As such, the structure is morally neutral. It does not imply any social values. Since the human mind in general, not regarding whether “primitive” or “civilised”, ancient or modern, functions in these basic structures, the myth in this form is very easily transferable. “But as soon as moral judgments are injected into any part of the system – as soon as it is postulated that ‘*A* is a good man and *B* is a bad man’ then, automatically, the logical ordering of the system causes the whole story to be permeated through and through with moral implications [...]”³⁴⁰ and thus it becomes culturally specific. Myths do not transfer any meaning or inherent message. Myths do not “tell” us anything. Their force is that they have the ability to structure the disorderly experience of their listeners. In this manner they are cross-cultural.

³³⁹ SMITH, “The Baal Cycle”, p. 104.

³⁴⁰ LEACH, “The Legitimacy of Solomon” p. 77.

WHAT IS ALL THIS GOOD FOR?³⁴¹

Even though in the previous chapters I have applied the structural analysis only to a very limited corpus of ancient Egyptian mythological material, it is obvious that any further analysis would continue in the same manner – it would proceed in discovering infinite series of transformations and permutations of mythemes all connected together in a great mythematic structure. An example of such an analysis is given in Lévi-Strauss' opus magnum – *Mythologiques*. Here he starts with a single myth, gradually identifies more and more transformations of this myth within the given society, then within the traditions of the surrounding societies and still further until he covers the area of both the South and the North Americas. At first the solitary narrative he chooses to analyse resembles a nebula, indistinct and floating in space, because it cannot be placed in a broader framework of the native's thought. However, by recognising more and more of its transformations, "the nebula gradually spreads, its nucleus condenses and becomes more organized. Loose threads join up with one another, gaps are closed, connections are established, and something resembling order is to be seen emerging from chaos."³⁴² This work of Lévi-Strauss comprises four volumes and one is astonished by the wealth of material he has been able to incorporate into his analysis and the connections he is able to trace. However, once confronted with this abundance of structural mythical transformations, the question which inevitably comes to mind is What is all this good for? And further, if myths do not technically "tell" us anything, what are *they* good for?

Myths deal with cultural paradoxes but they do not "solve" them, they either pair them with different paradoxes or create their transformations. Myths do not give us any answers, they only confront us with many problems which they turn from all sides and look at them from different angles. The structuralist analysis does not uncover any "meaning" of myths, it uncovers the structure in which they are set, the symbolic activity of the human mind. Lévi-Strauss sometimes confuses his readers when he says that myths are certain "codes" – logically, then, there should be some sort of message "encoded" in them. In reality, the only message encoded in myths is their own symbolic structure. "Symbolism [...] is not a means of encoding information, but means of organising it."³⁴³ The myth functions as a sort of relations matrix which has the ability to connect different levels of human experience and to convert them into one another. Thus, for example, a mythological utterance may be perceived at the same time as a description

³⁴¹ This chapter is based on "The Myth and Meaning" in CHLUP: "Claude Lévi-Strauss": 14–16.

³⁴² LÉVI-STRAUSS, *The Raw and the Cooked*, p. 3. Such was the case after I have analysed the structure of the Tale of the Two Brothers. Only after being connected with other narratives do the oppositions start making sense.

³⁴³ DAN SPERBER, *Rethinking Symbolism*, tr. by Alice L. Morton, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975 (French original, Paris: Hermann, 1974), p. 70.

of ritual acts, as a cosmological concept and also as a description of the physical state of a sick person. The only limitations a mythological matrix has got stem from the way it is constructed (binary opposites, transformations of mythemes, etc.). The myth matrix does not give meaning to myths themselves but organises the disorderly experience of individuals which they have with the society, its institutions and demands which often contradict their individual longings.

This experience is typically laden with anxiety, especially at times of life crisis. Society, for its part, can of course only sustain itself by ensuring that the individual's efforts at reintegration (together with the integration of new individuals) will be successful. Time, in other words, is also the mode in which society continually resynthesizes itself. The temporal forms of social organization (ritual, judicial process, domestic group cycle, etc.) are cultural devices for the mediation of this process.³⁴⁴

We can also add myth to the list. Using the plot, the myth guides people through the whole framework of the narrative. A person identifies with a certain character – accepts the rules (logic) of the story and through the process of listening to the story he incorporates his individual ideas into the model structures of the myth. This model structure is expressed in paradoxes and binary oppositions and concerns ethics and problems of existence pervading a certain culture. That is not to say that myths should be copied. Characters, acting in myths, are not representatives of normal individuals and the stories are not images of historical events; rather *they show the limits of the social structure*. The incorporation of individual cravings into the model structure of the myth and also the “knowledge” of the limits a certain culture has got helps to strengthen the connection of the individual to the system. That is why, for example, children want to hear fairy-tales again and again. It is the longing for the *process* of the narrative which makes the myths so vivid and important.

Nevertheless, even though the narrative is important, it may be completely avoided if desired. This we have seen in the case of the Pyramid Texts, the topic of discussion in Part I of this my work. In this case “textual narrativity” as we have seen and analysed in case of the Tale of the Two Brothers and the Astarte papyrus, is deliberately omitted – the texts are not intended for general living audience serving them as a way to connect their individual chaotic notions with the order of society. They are intended for one dead individual who, by the sheer fact of his death, has already entered a mode of existence which lies somehow “above” the world of the living. It is a meta-existence and the only problem is that this transformation has got certain phases through which the dead king/queen must be successfully guided – it has got a structure. As I have said above, anything a person creates stems from the general matrix of his society. Therefore even the Pyramid Texts, haphazard as they may seem, will demonstrate this structure. This has been very

³⁴⁴ TURNER, “Oedipus: Time and Structure”, p. 35.

well proven, as I have already said in Part I, by Katja Goebis in her structural analysis applied on individual mythemes contained in the Pyramid Texts and other sources.³⁴⁵ But as I have also tried to show, there is an inherent structure in the whole corpus of the Pyramid Texts. With regard to Allan's analysis of the spatial distribution of these texts, I have introduced the term "structural narrativity" and explained this as a kind of "meta-structure" not evident at the first glance. The compilers of the Pyramid Texts intentionally avoided the inclusion of "textual narrativity" (beginning – middle – end) because the tombs and their decoration were intended "for eternity". However, the "structural narrativity" formed by the spatial distribution of rooms and their accompanying texts serve as a "meta-structure" for the dead king who has already achieved a state of "meta-existence". They start "narrating" once the dead king starts *moving* through the substructure of the pyramid. The pyramid texts, therefore, *are* narrative (structural narrativity) and *are not* (textual narrativity) at the same moment. The fact that this paradoxical assertion fits very well with the basic principles of the structuralist method and at the same time with the character of thought of the ancient Egyptians only strengthens my conviction that the approach advocated by the structuralist theory is legitimate. The structural analysis uncovers paradoxes which trouble the (ancient) mind. It uncovers the model structure underlying anything a human being (for example an ancient Egyptian) may create. We think how we move, move how we eat, eat how we build, build how we create myths, create myths how we kill, kill how we give life, etc. Connecting different levels of experience, seemingly unconnected with each other, proves to be a very effective tool in our effort of understanding the ancient Egyptian mind and by that also our own.

³⁴⁵ GOEBS, "A Functional Approach": 27–59.

CONCLUSION

The aim of Part I was to inquire into the main methods used to interpret Egyptian religious material. In the chapter “Methods and Methodology” I started by giving an account of the most widespread approach – the euhemeristic method. After naming its main proponents I showed why this method is in general mistaken. Even though history may and very often does lie beneath mythology, the sheer fact of finding or reconstructing these to-have-happened events does not explain why a certain event had been chosen to be narrated as a myth nor does it tell us anything else about the myth itself.

I then carried on with summarizing the views of the myth-ritual school (basically showing the main ideas on the theory of Jan Assmann), another very influential theory in this field of scholarship. I rejected the main ideas of the myth-ritual school, especially the assumption that rituals are static.

Within the discussion of the myth-ritual theory I summarized the problem which has been haunting many students of ancient Egyptian religion for several decades: the problem of the non-existence of mythology in early religious material appearing as late as the New Kingdom (1550–1069 B.C.). According to some scholars “mythology” is characterised by its narrative – a myth is a story about gods with a beginning, middle and end. This criteria is, according to these scholars, not fulfilled by the largest bulk of religious texts from the Old Kingdom (2650–2134 B.C.): the Pyramid Texts. In the subsequent discussion I pointed out that even though the Pyramid Texts might not at first sight appear to be narrative, they do meet another criterion which is by many scholars considered as a crucial aspect of the genre of “myth” – their sacredness to the people who created them. I then proceeded with the observation that in the Old Kingdom we do find narrative inscriptions and from this fact I infer that the lack of narrativity was deliberate from the side of the ancient Egyptians. By excluding narrativity the builders of the pyramids wanted to stress the static mode of existence in which beginning, middle and end merge. Just as the pyramids were built to last for eternity (without an end), so were the texts inside them intended to express the same concept (without an end and therefore without a beginning or middle).

Subsequently I introduced the terms “semantic narrativity” and “structural narrativity”. By contrasting these two terms I tried to show that even though we might not be finding narrativity in the Pyramid Texts in the form we expect (that is on the level of the content of the texts – Pyramid Texts are traditionally viewed as a assemblage of individual sayings), the corpus of the Pyramid Texts is nevertheless structured as a kind of narrative which is mediated by the spatial disposition of the texts within the chambers of the pyramids themselves. (This I have been

able to do thanks to an article by James P. Allen in which he formulated this idea quite clearly). This I call the “structural narrative” and I have tried to prove my argument by showing that the principle of “structural narrativity” is inherent to the Egyptian writing system and works of art in general (e.g. the position of individual hieroglyphic signs/objects to each other different than successive ordering conveys a certain meta-meaning).

I have concluded Part I by stating arguments supporting my view that by accepting the principle of “structural narrativity” we can be not only more faithful to the material in question but that we do not weaken the position of the scholar by limiting his interpretive possibilities.

The aim of Part II was to theoretically present and apply the structuralist method on ancient Egyptian religious material. This can only be done on a specific text. For this purpose I have chosen the so-called Astarte papyrus (pBN 202+pAmherst 9). I start with a written summary of all the main articles and works dedicated to this fragmentary papyrus, followed by a bibliographic list of all the works which mention the Astarte papyrus. I then proceeded with a translation of the papyrus itself supplemented by explanatory footnotes where necessary. Even though the pAmherst 9 has been translated into English many times, the pBN 202, which forms the initial part of the first page of the Astarte papyrus and which has been paired with the rest of the text only recently, has been translated into French and German only. This work thus represents a first translation into English. Since the Astarte papyrus demonstrates strong affinities with foreign myths in its content and because the main characters in these fragments are represented by deities from the Near East (Seth-Baal, Astarte, Yam), I give a short overview of the position of these deities within the Egyptian pantheon and refer the interested reader to more specialised literature.

A theoretical summary of the basic principles and methods of the structuralist theory as proposed by Lévi-Strauss follows. Since his theory in its pure form contains several fallacies, I also presented the main criticism directed towards the structuralist method and explained how other scholars (especially Edmund Leach and Terence Turner) have managed to cope with these fallacies, modifying the structuralist theory into a form which I used in this work. Since the Astarte papyrus is in an appalling state of preservation, it was not possible for me to proceed with the structural analysis directly. I had to first conduct a structural analysis of the Tale of the Two Brothers and show that this story is only a structural transformation of the crucial concept of ancient Egyptian kingship and theology – the relation between Horus, Osiris and Seth; between order and chaos. The Astarte papyrus in many aspects seems to be a direct transformation of the Tale of the Two Brothers and from this fact I deduced that there must also be a structural connection between the Astarte papyrus and the Horus-Seth story even though it might not be

obvious at first sight. The fact that this connection exists has got grave implications for the interpretation of the Astarte papyrus and for the question of cultural appropriation of foreign elements into ancient Egyptian culture generally. In the final chapter I explained what is the reason of all these permutations and structural inversions of mythemes which is revealed once we start analysing ancient Egyptian mythological material.

I have set out with the task of discovering whether the structuralist method is applicable to ancient Egyptian religious material and if yes, whether it actually tells us anything new about the material itself and about the ancient Egyptian culture. What I am hoping my work has been able to show is the fact that there *is* an inherent system in the ancient Egyptian thought as manifested in its religious writings. It is not only a haphazard set of opposing ideologies represented by quarrelling priestly lobbies. Nor is it a mechanical reflection of historic events. It is a system with very specific rules, full to the brim with paradoxes which the ancient mind incorporated within its structure and through constant transformations and permutations created order in the disorderly universe. In this, I am persuaded, I have succeeded.

What must follow is a detailed study of the relations between the synchronic structures thus revealed, the basic paradoxes which they include and the relation they have to different levels of ancient Egyptian society throughout the ages. This work of course includes meticulous and responsible assessment of primary archaeological material, sociological data and must result from a multidisciplinary approach. In this way only can we try to understand the ancient Egyptians' mind. Although it is very different from our own, in basic structures it demonstrates strong affinities with our own mind. And that is, I think, definitely an encouraging thought.

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FIGURES AND PLATES*

* All plates taken after COLLOMBERT et COULON, "Les dieux contre la mer": 194, 196–197, 230–242, Pl. I–XVI.

Resumé

OTÁZKA VÝKLADU MYTOLOGIE STAROVĚKÉHO EGYPTA

Strukturalistická analýza Příběhu o dvou bratrech a Astartina papyru

MARTIN PEHAL

Práce je rozdělena na Část I a Část II. V Části I autor shrnuje badatelské metody, jež jsou v rámci Egyptologie využívány k interpretaci mytologických textů – euheméristická (historizující) a teorie prosazovaná tzv. Školou mýtu a rituálu. Autor ukazuje jejich základní nedostatky a dochází k závěru, že historizující metoda je redukcionistická a teorie Školy mýtu a rituálu se mýlí v názoru na způsob, jakým se k sobě vztahuje mýtus a rituál. Autor tvrdí, že strukturalistická metoda je schopna se vyhnout pastem, do níž předešlé dva přístupy spadly.

Část II je zasvěcena aplikaci strukturalistické metody na mytologické příběhy starého Egypta – konkrétně analýze tzv. Astartina papyru. Autor nejprve shrnuje veškerou relevantní literaturu vztahující se k tomuto papyru a podává i její chronologický seznam. Následuje shrnutí základních principů strukturalistické metody tak, jak ji ve své díle rozpracoval Claude Lévi-Strauss a další badatelé. Vzhledem k tomu, že tato teorie ve své čisté podobě obsahuje i několik mylných předpokladů, autor nabízí i shrnutí těch základních námitek, jež se přímo vztahují i k této práci a které jsou namířené proti strukturalistické metodě a vysvětluje, jak se jiní badatelé (zejména pak Edmund Leach a Terence Turner) s těmito námitkami úspěšně vyrovnali tím, že strukturalistickou metodu upravili do podoby, jíž autor aplikuje i ve své práci. Aby měl autor k dispozici interpretační rámec do něhož by mohl výklad Astartina papyru zasadit (papyrus sám je příliš fragmentární na to, aby byla možná přímá analýza), následuje strukturální analýza Příběhu o dvou bratrech a Usirovského cyklu. V následujících kapitolách autor vysvětluje, jakým způsobem jsou tyto mýty propojené s Astartiným papyrem a také jakým způsobem může docházet k výměně mýtů mezi odlišnými kulturami. V závěrečných kapitolách autor dospívá k závěru, že strukturalistická analýza je velmi dobrým nástrojem pro porozumění mytologii obecně a Egyptské zejména. Na závěr podotýká, že závěry úspěšné strukturalistické analýzy musejí být konfrontovány s archeologickým materiálem. Pouze tak mohou být její závěry potvrzeny a může také dojít k jejich propojení se socio-kulturní situací starověkých Egyptanů.

Resumé

INTERPRETING ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY

A Structural Analysis of the Tale of the Two Brothers and the Astarte Papyrus

MARTIN PEHAL

The work is divided into Part I and Part II. In Part I the author summarises the scholarly methods applied by Egyptology for interpreting ancient Egyptian mythological material – the euhemeristic (historicising) method and the theory developed by the Myth-Ritual school. He shows their main weaknesses and concludes that the historicising method is reductionistic and that the Myth-Ritual school is mistaken in its view of the type of connection between myths and rituals. He states that the structuralist tradition seems to avoid the pitfalls of these two methods.

Part II is dedicated to a practical application of the structuralist method on ancient Egyptian mythological material – namely on the so-called Astarte papyrus. The author starts with summarising all the relevant literature published on the papyrus and gives its chronological overview. A theoretical summary of the basic principles and methods of the structuralist theory as proposed by Lévi-Strauss follows. Since his theory in its pure form contains several fallacies, he also presents the objections (relevant to his topic) which directed towards the structuralist method and explains how other scholars (especially Edmund Leach and Terence Turner) have managed to cope with these fallacies, modifying the structuralist theory into a form which the author used in this work. To create an interpretational framework for the analysis of the Astarte papyrus (for it is too fragmentary to be analysed directly), a structural analysis of the Tale of the Two brothers and the Osiris Cycle follow. He then explains the connection which connects these myths with the Astarte papyrus and inquires into the process myth transfer from one culture to another. In the final chapters the author concludes that the structuralist approach is a good way to understanding mythological material in general and the Egyptian in particular. He also proposes that the results of a successful structuralist analysis should be followed by a comparison with archaeological material. Only thus can its validity be ascertained and connection with the actual socio-cultural situation of the ancient Egyptians established.