

Relations and Conflicts between Egyptian Gods, particularly in the Divine Ennead of Heliopolis

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1. RELATIONS BETWEEN GODS AND POLYTHEISM

The Egyptian religion was a polytheistic religion. Participants in a polytheistic religion assume that their gods have mutual relationships, of a positive or negative nature, that they form a constellation to use a term of Assmann. Such a constellation may be strongly developed or prove to be rudimentary. In the course of history all kind of alterations may take place in the constellation. Old established gods with many relationships may fade away to a name or even disappear entirely. Newcomers will often have a rather isolated position. When one can follow the historical course of a culture's religion over thousands of years, as we can in Egypt, the pantheon of its central authority, i.e. the royal court, proves to consist of a permanent nucleus of gods and goddesses but also of many divinities who are but sojourners there; in any case we can see that there may be a good deal of change in the mutual relations of the gods. The way the gods are related is indeed essential in the polytheistic Egyptian religion.

Sometimes, especially when gods are concerned of no more than local significance, the relation may be no more than a vague colleagueship. Since many gods were not recognized over the whole country it was presumably not considered necessary to determine and specify their relationships with all manner of gods with whom they did not come into direct contact through festivals or other occasions. But when, after having lived

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in retirement for centuries, a god begins to be active on occasions reaching beyond his own locality, as for instance by taking part in the national Sed festival, then he suddenly proves to be a manifestation (ba) or son of the sun-god or of some other god or goddess. In the documents, which naturally reflect the situation of a particular moment, it may happen that a great deal is said about one particular god without a full account being given of his relations with other gods. Working out the relationships between gods, however, was an important and favourite task of Egyptian priests. Prominent gods Ptah, Sokaris and Osiris can be conjoined to form a single god Ptah-Sokaris-Osiris, while at the same time these gods continue to exist individually with their specific traits of handicraft and arising life. One of the aspects of the originally obscure god Amon proves to be of the nature of the sun and the name Re is then added to his name as a determinative. Amen-Re then takes up the very important place of king of the gods, with many relationships with numerous gods and particularly goddesses. The Asiatic goddess Astarte can be given citizenship or godhood in Egypt and be adopted as daughter of Ptah. In spite of her nationalization and adoption, exotic peculiarities, such as riding naked upon a horse, a thing hardly done by Egyptian goddesses, are not denied her.

The god Amon of Karnak has at first a rather vague and undefined relationship with the goddess Amaunet 'who dwells in Karnak'. To judge by this name, however, the relationship must surely have been of ancient date and very close; quite recently it has been characterized as that of 'Muttergattin'. In the course of the 16th. century B.C. the cult of the goddess Mut, who had already been worshipped for centuries in the little provincial town of Megen, was introduced into the capital.

She is then called a daughter of Amon and soon forms an established triad with Amon and Khonsu after the model: father-mother-son. Amaunet maintains her place in the Theban constellation of gods as 'the ⁶⁷⁴who dwells in Karnak', but Amon and Mut remain a permanent pair within and without Karnak until the end of the Egyptian religion.

Relationships between gods develop and are lasting, especially on a local level. Some divine relationships, e.g. those of the ennead of Heliopolis, attain to and maintain national importance quite transcending their local beginnings. For that matter, interlocal relations were not precluded. The god Horus of Edfu and the goddess Hathor of Denderah, whose temples were many hundreds of kilometres apart, maintained a relationship (of Living-Apart-Together) by bringing each other an annual visit, which was most exuberantly celebrated.

Often we do not have sufficient data to be able to make out the nature or even the existence of relations between gods. Also, the participants in the Egyptian religion have never fully mapped out the network of divine relationships. They continued working upon it until the Egyptian religion perished.

In the scope of the present article it is not possible to give even a rough sketch of the whole panorama of relations between the gods in the Egyptian religion. Even the old question whether there was a single Egyptian religion, or a plurality of Egyptian religions with separate networks of divine relationships, must remain unanswered here.

2. ALLIANCES BETWEEN GODS AND ENNEADS

When one sets out to seek for alliances between gods in the Egyptian religion, one automatically comes to those groupings

of gods that are called enneads. When Van Baaren (Mensen tussen Nijl en Zon, p.43) proposes to introduce the reader to the principal Egyptian gods, he writes: 'I begin with the sun-god and with the ennead of Heliopolis to which Osiris belongs, and after that will treat a number of gods in alphabetical order'.

The ennead of Heliopolis consists of nine gods. This would seem self-evident, since the word *psd.t* (ennead) signifies a nonary. It is not superfluous to note this, however, as quite a number of groups of gods are known that consist of more and fewer than nine, and are still called enneads. As a rule, the names of the gods and goddesses of the ennead of Heliopolis are: Atum, Shu and Tefnut, Geb and Nut, Osiris and Isis, Seth and Nephthys. Already in the Pyramid texts the retiring figure of the goddess Nephthys is sometimes replaced by the goddess Neith, while in later times the god Seth, not because of inconspicuousness but rather on account of his controversial behaviour, tends to be replaced by some other god, e.g. Horus or Thoth. On the other hand Horus is sometimes called the tenth god, while Thoth usually fills the part of scribe of the ennead, a kind of officially allocated secretary. This function, subordinate in form, should however be regarded in the light of the Egyptian society in which the state official and scribe had an influential position. Already in the Pyramid Texts, but especially in later times we repeatedly see the afore-mentioned names added to or even replaced by the names of other gods and personifications.

Thus the names of the members of the ennead and even their number are not definitely fixed. This variation in names and number is already found in texts of more than local, of national significance such as Pyramid texts and Coffin Texts

and Book of the Dead, but is very marked indeed in temple texts of various places. The great ennead of Karnak numbered fifteen gods: Month, the nine Heliopolitan gods named above, and in addition Horus, Hathor (not though of Denderah, but of Gebelein), Sobek, Tjenenet and Iunet. Apart from the Heliopolitan set, these gods had temples in the Theban nome. Thoth's divine status was clearly not of sufficient degree to give him an entry into this great ennead. He was, though, accounted no. one of the small ennead of Karnak which also included Harendotes, Wepwawet of the south, Wepwawet of the north, Sobek lord of the Iuntiu, Ptah-upon-his-great throne, Anubis lord of Ta-djeser, Ptah-at-the-head-of-the-gods, Dedwen-at-the-head-of-Nubia, Dewenawi, Merimutef and the four children of Horus. Amon of Karnak presided the greater and the small ennead. At first it seems peculiar that the two other members of the triad of Karnak, Mut and Khonsu, are not named, whereas even the Nubian god Dedwen has been given a place, be it in the small ennead. Presumably these two, who like Montu had important temples in Karnak, could not be simply ranged in these groupings. As part of Amon's immediate family they already occupied a place of exception. In Abydos, however, Amon, Mut and Khonsu are placed before Re, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut and Wepwawet in an ennead of nine gods, in which the name of Osiris is lacking. Other documents show the ennead of Abydos to be composed of seven gods (two Khnum-gods, Thoth, Horus, Harendotes and two Wepwawet-gods) or of twelve gods (Osiris, Harendotes, Isis Nephthys, Min, Iunmutef, Re-Harachte, Onuris, Tefnut, Get, Thoth and Hathor). We can understand that the name of Seth, the murderer of Osiris, never appears in the ennead of Abydos, the sacred city of Osiris. After all there were limits, however much the number and the names of the members of the ennead of Abydos might vary.

The examples given above are only a comparatively arbitrary sample from the data concerning enneads, in which there is even a much greater variation as to names and number of the members than summarily indicated here. Further information is to be found in the book by W. Barta, 'Untersuchungen zum Götterkreis der Neunheit', Berlin 1973, which contains a list of 84 enneads.

The complicated information to be found about the enneads in textual and visual material led to a controversy quite in the beginning of the investigation, around the middle of last century, which has not yet been overcome. Brugsch and others regarded an ennead as a 'Neungötterkreis' (a squared plural: 3×3). The word controversy is not exaggerated. Not long ago J.G. Griffiths, 'The Origins of Osiris, Leiden 1980 (2), 121, n.135, repeated the opinion he had formerly set forth: 'Kees (Götterglaube, 158) misleads therefore, when he suggests that the number three is the basic unit of the Ennead in the sense of undetermined plurality (unbegrenzte Vielheit)'. His historical-genetic view is, that in origin the ennead meant a certain group of nine gods, and that the word was then used in a derivative sense in referring to other groups of gods whose number might be more or less than nine.

Nevertheless, every ennead is an alliance of gods, and so is the ennead of Heliopolis. How and when, historically speaking, this ennead came into being cannot be ascertained. The earliest data showing the existence of the ennead of Heliopolis compared with other enneads is that it is set forth as a family group and in order of seniority. It is a reasonable assumption that the term of ennead for an alliance of gods was borrowed from the Heliopolitan theology by the priests of other temples. Evidently priests of other temples interpreted

the term ennead not as a circle of nine gods, but as a circle of a plurality of gods. This was possible because the ennead of Heliopolis did not merely function as nine personifications in the creational doctrine of Heliopolis, like the ennead of Karnak, also functioned as the retinue of the council of the god, who was regarded as the principal god. As we shall see below, the ennead of Heliopolis also functioned as a court of justice, e.g. in the judging of the dead.

3. RELATIONSHIPS AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN GODS IN THE ENNEAD OF HELIOPOLIS.

A. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

It was already remarked that the special thing about the ennead of Heliopolis is that the gods and goddesses are ordered according to their ages and as a family group. They constitute a genealogy for Horus the tenth god: the pharaoh is a Horus and was traditionally crowned in Heliopolis. It is possible to regard the mythology of Heliopolis as a mythology of creation. Here we shall mainly take notice of the relations and conflicts in this family of gods consisting of four generations. Atum belongs to the first, Shu and Tefnut to the second, Geb and Nut to the third and Osiris and Isis and Seth and Nephthys to the fourth generation. As members of the ennead these gods constitute an alliance which remains directed upon the actuality of human affairs and sees to it, for instance, that Egypt gets the right pharaoh in the form of Horus.

Special relations and conflicts are hardly seen at all between grandparents and grandchildren, between Atum and Geb and Nut, between Shu and Tefnut and Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nephthys, if we except the situation of conflict between Seth and the Ennead. The Egyptian language has no special words

for grandfather, grandmother, grandson and granddaughter, unless one were to recognize father's father and similar terms as such, expressions that are, however, never used in connection with the ennead. Special relations and conflicts do occur between members of the same generation (brothers and sisters) or, to a far less extent, between successive generations (father, mother, son, daughter).

The Egyptian language is in general poorly provided with terms of kinship, which is not surprising in an urban culture, where the family group consisted of parents and children and perhaps unrelated persons also belonging to the household. Hardly any other terms of kinship are known than those mentioned above. Only recently has it been established that a certain rather rare word must signify mother-in-law. In the Egyptian language indeed things, e.g. parts of the body, are often not indicated by specific terms, but by paraphrases. This is also the case with terms of relationship: uncle was paraphrased as brother of the mother. The Egyptian word that is translated as brother is also a paraphrase: sn is the number two. It can be used to indicate the opponent in a lawsuit without conveying the meaning that claimant and defendant are blood-relations. Furthermore brother (sn) and sister (sn.t) are also terms that can signify a marital relationship. We can conclude from the above that the apparent contradiction that Seth is called both brother (sn) of Osiris and brother of the mother, i.e. Isis (sn n mwt) and also brother (sn) of Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, a matter that has been so much discussed and which has often been explained as the confusing of two originally separate traditions, is really no more than a problem of translation. When it is to be stressed that Horus is not inferior to Seth but is his equal, then the gods are called the two brothers (sn.wy), but when Horus

is regarded as still a little child or a minor, then Seth is his mother's brother.

B. THE ONENESS OF ATUM

In the beginning there were no gods, no relations and no conflicts. Then there was a god all alone: Atum, whose name is connected with an Egyptian word (tm) that can mean everthing and nothing. He came forth from the primaeval waters (Nun). Nun is sometimes called the father of the gods, but there is no question of a relation between Nun and Atum, for Nun is not real. It is expressly stated that Atum originated by himself (hpr dsf). Atum has problems with himself, and indulges in solosex:

I am he who came into being as Khepri. When I had come into being, being(itself) came into being, and all beings came into being, and all beings came into being after I came into being. Many were the beings which came into being, before the ground and creeping things had been created in this place. I put together (some) of them in Nun as weary ones, before I could find a place in which I might stand. It (seemed) advantageous to me in my heart; I planned with my face; and I made (in concept) every form when I was alone, before I had spat out what was Shu, before I had sputtered out what was Tefnut, and before (any) other had come into being who could act with me.

I planned in my own heart, and there came into being a multitude of forms of beings, the forms of children and the forms of their children. I was the one who copulated with my fist, I masturbated with my hand. Then I spewed with my own mouth: I spat out what was

Shu, and I sputtered out what was Tefnut.

Pap.Bremner-Rhind 26, 21 ff.

Translation J.A.Wilson in: J.B. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, Princeton 1955, 6f.

The problem is loneliness, for Atum has no partner as the gods of the subsequent generations have. As was mentioned before, Amon too appears as president of the great and the small ennead of Karnak without a partner, without Amaunet or Mut and Khonsu. In Heliopolis Atum too could form a triad with the goddesses Hathor-Nebet-Hetepet and Saosis, who were venerated in temples there. Their names indicate the female and male sexual organs (ḥtpt 'bliss', etc., iw.s-^C3 .s 'she comes while she grows large'). These two goddesses could also be conjoined in a single figure: the hand; a word also used in the above quotation. The word mouth, too, from which Shu and Tefnut emerge, can indicate the vulva in erotic Egyptian literature. In this quotation however and in many other texts the goddesses remain reduced to part of the body of Atum, who is alone. Nor does the goddess Temet obtain an independent place in the ennead as companion or daughter of Atum.

One might wonder in how far this lonely place of the creator-god corresponds to the monarchical state in a culture that has an otherwise polytheistic religion. The pharaoh, however, is king of Upper-Egypt and king of Lower-Egypt. It is a dual kingship. In the Egyptian culture solitude was pitiable and even suspect and reprehensible. The dissolute Sethian man is an 'Einzelgänger'. The Man who is weary of life is at the point of despair because there is no one he can talk to. The motif of loneliness returns in the mythology of the ennead as a result of the grave situation of conflict caused by Seth: Isis bears Horus in the solitude of the marshes of Khemnis.

Osiris is killed by Seth in the desert according to some versions but loneliness is localized in the marshes or in the Nun, where Atum was alone. Frankfort (Ancient Egyptian Religion, paperback ed. 154) says in another connection: 'The waters of chaos and the primeval hill formed a sort of landscape of 'the first time' which played as great a part in the religious imagination of the Egyptians as did the Judaeen hills with the Garden of Gethsemane and the Mount of Golgotha in that of Christians'. A god all alone is balanced between being and non-being. 'Hier stoßen wir auf den gedanklichen Grund des ägyptischen Polytheismus: Göttliches muss, sofern es seiend ist, differenziert sein' (Hornung, Der Eine und die Vielen, 171).

The transition from a single divine being to an alliance of gods with all the relational problems involved, was considered necessary and natural. Thus the one god becomes three gods: Atum, Shu and Tefnut. In hieroglyphic writing three equals the plural. Shu and Tefnut are the first pair differentiated as man and woman. Thus the problem of the loneliness of the androgynous creator-god, who has problems with himself, is moved on to the problem of the relation between man and woman.

C. THE TWO-IN-ONENESS OF SHU AND TEFNUT

Shu and Tefnut are the twins. These two gods, almost inseparable in the texts, are the double lion or the pair of lions, or the pair of eyes or the pair who procreated the gods. The first female being was already prefigured by parts of Atum's body: not Atum's rib, but Atum's hand, penis of Atum and Eye of Re. These female aspects of Re or Atum, for the names of these two gods can be used interchangeable, are now carried over to Tefnut, whose epitheton is often not only daughter of Re, but also eye of Re, as with many Egyptian goddesses

who are regarded as an Eve .

In the tangle of multitudinous allusions to the myth of the sun's eye in Egyptian texts it is not always easy to find one's way: it is stated that when Re's one eye returns from searching for Shu and Tefnut, as they had been spewed out, it becomes angry because its (in Egyptian her) place has been taken by another eye. Egyptian texts, that so often speak of the loneliness of Atum, sometimes also refer to the primeval time before there was any duality. This implies that at that time Atum did not yet have two eyes, but was one-eyed. The myth of the half-man that is current in some cultures, does not lie at the surface though in Egyptian texts. As far as I know it has never been written about in Egyptological literature. Shu and Tefnut, as we saw, are the pair of eyes. Tefnut does not accept her partner and goes off as the furious eye of the sun to more southern parts where she retires to the solitude of the dessert as a growling and sulky lioness.

Shu then sets out to fetch her back, seconded by Thoth, the professional secretary of the ennead, who is always there when he is needed. After almost endless attempts at conciliation by Thoth, the ape, the male and the female deity are reconciled, and the furious lioness changes into a charming pussy-cat. The lability of the relationship between that inseparable pair, Shu and Tefnut, clearly shows when we see that at the slightest provocation Tefnut, the Nubian cat, can change into a malevolent lioness.

A variant of the myth of the angry eye is to be found in the tale of the destruction of mankind or of the deluge. Re sends forth his eye, his daughter, there called the goddess Hathor, as the terrible lion goddess Sakhmet to defeat the people, who had rebelled against him. Re himself then brings peace by pouring out red beer over the world, which the blood-

thirsty goddess takes for blood and begins to drink, so that she becomes drunk, stops slaughtering the people and loses her evil humours.

The triumphant return from Nubia and the calming of the raging eye of the sun was exuberantly celebrated in and around the temples of many Egyptian goddesses. A not unimportant and often mentioned title of a male functionary in the temple of Mut in Karnak was that of Embracer of the Eye.

D. THE TWO-NESS OF GEB AND NUT.

The oneness of Atum, which was transformed into the two-ness of Geb and Nut. The begetting and birth of Geb and Nut may very well have been regarded as so normal that it was not thought necessary to pay special attention to it. Tefnut is not a celebrated mother goddess like Isis or Nut, she is the inseparable companion of Shu. Judging by the texts, it is not the birth but the separation of Geb and Nut that is the important mythological point. The reason is sometimes given that in their alliance, which as we may indirectly conclude from the iconography consisted of an endless coition, Geb and Nut quarrelled because like a sow that eats up her own litter, Nut swallowed up her children the sun, moon and stars. The result of the separation of the earth-god Geb and the sky-goddess Nut was the forming of the course along the sky which sun, moon and stars could pass along to fill the world with light and life. In contrast with divine pairs of heaven and earth in many other countries, the earth-god in Egypt is male and the sky-goddess female. In Egypt water did not rain down from the sky, which elsewhere could be regarded as the semen of the sky-god impregnating the earth-goddess, but came from the inundation of the Nile, that is to say from

the earth, which thus was to be regarded as male.

Naturally heaven and earth continue to form a unity, but then it must be expressly added that this unity was looked upon as differentiated. Heaven and earth are concepts that belong together, but that in the Egyptian language cannot be replaced by any single word such as cosmos or world, neither in the singular nor in the plural. Geb and Nut are not considered to be twins like Shu and Tefnut. There is no textual or iconographical material to be found which could confirm the supposition that the Egyptians assumed that heaven and earth, Geb and Nut, conjoined each night. A conjunction of heaven and earth, i.e. the collapse of the sky, was not thought impossible but it was looked upon as a cosmic catastrophe, a threat that gods and magicians might use, but that could not take place unless perhaps at the end of time. The differentiation of Geb and Nut was deeper than that of Shu and Tefnut.

E THE CONFUSION AND ORDERING OF PLURALITY IN THE FOURTH GENERATION

After the oneness of Atum, the two-in-oneness of Shu and Tefnut, the two-ness of Geb and Nut one would finally expect a triad. The triad is the ideal divine formation in Egypt. This triad does indeed appear in its familiar form: Osiris, Isis and Horus with the variant Isis, Nephthys and Horus, but before getting so far a complicating factor was worked into the structure of the ennead. This was the coming of the god Seth that according to an Egyptian text was the beginning of confusion (*hnnw*). Though Seth is the symbol of confusion, he is all the same included in the ennead. The ennead represents a higher order, higher than the order of duality of the triad, and in this order the element of disorder and confusion is integrated. This would seem to be the chief *raison d'être*

of the ennead. Not only is chaotic plurality ordered, but also that which pre-eminently symbolizes confusion is admitted and ordered in the perfect number nine.

The order of one divine pair (Shu and Tefnut) generating a following divine pair (Geb and Nut), is now broken: in fourth generation of gods we see not the one divine pair Osiris and Isis, but also Seth and Nephthys.

Nephthys is a rather colourless figure in the Egyptian world of gods. Within the ennead she seems to be a double of Isis, except that she does not represent all the aspects of Isis. Her name means mistress of the palace, yet she is not like Isis the model of conjugal fidelity and motherhood. Neither, however, is Nephthys a sex symbol like Hathor for instance, whereas the immoderate, disorderly sexual energy of Seth directed both hetero- and homosexually is well-known. There is a variant according to which Nephthys, who is sometimes said to lack a vulva, did not remain childless. Her child Anubis though was not supposed to have been begotten by her official partner but by Osiris. For the rest, Nephthys plays those parts in mythology that women without a husband filled in the Egyptian society, i.e. as wailing-woman and nursemaid. She helps Isis to lament Osiris and to bring up Horus. Isis and Nephthys are called the two sisters and the two women, as Horus and Seth are called the two men and the two brothers.

In so far as Seth and Nephthys are really accounted a pair, they form the anti-pair of Osiris and Isis. The relation between the pairs Osiris-Isis and Seth-Nephthys was not symmetrical, for Seth was the 'trickster', the 'god of confusion', who brought death into the world by murdering Osiris. Isis, famous as a woman of magic, cares for the dead body of Osiris, conceives by him his heir Horus, and through her astuteness

manages to escape the assaults of Seth and bears and brings up her child in solitude. Sometimes Isis is said to have been assisted in her lonely position by Nephthys. When Isis thinks Horus is old enough, the law-suit begins for the office of Osiris, that is to rule over the world as king, and then the conflicts between Horus and Seth arise.

When the two gods, the two lords, the two men (rhwy), the two combatants are mentioned by name, Horus as the prototype of the Egyptian gentleman-king always comes first and Seth as the spirit of disorder comes second, for Horus has the more central and Seth the more peripheral position. Together they rule over the world through the pharaoh whom they purify and crown, but each has his own half of the world, Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt or the Black Land (home country) and the Red Land (foreign country). Not only the bipartition of the world, but also many other contrasts could be connected with Horus and Seth: north and south, heaven and earth, earth and underworld, right and left, black and red, being born and being conceived, rulership and strength, life and dominion. Horus and Seth not only oppose each other in sporting contests, using all kinds of legitimate means of clever tricks, they also commit various acts of violence, so that Horus lost the light of his eye and Seth the semen of his testicles. Seth even induced his nephew Horus to take part in paederastic acts. The fruit of this homosexual relation was the moon or Thoth, the 'son of the two lords'. Helped by his mother Isis Horus gains the upper hand of Seth, but Seth is not totally destroyed. The juridical proceedings do not invariably result in Horus being proclaimed the victor and Seth being condemned as the loser even though Horus is pronounced to be justified with regard to Seth. The two gods are separated and the quarrel is settled. When offerings are made it is said that Horus

is given his eye, but sometimes also that Seth is given his testicles. The justification of Horus certainly already had an exclusive tendency and led to some, chiefly later, exclusive variants of the myth. Horus and Seth, who are reconciled, unite the two lands, so that the pharaoh can rule over a country of order, unity and peace. Yet this fair cosmos was preceded by a chaos of disorder, dissension and strife. The pharaoh is a Horus reconciled to Seth or a gentleman in whom the spirit of disorder has been integrated.

FINAL REMARKS.

The pharaoh is the representative of the cosmic order. The ennead is his family tree. This does not mean, however, that the ennead itself belongs to primaeval times and is no longer of present importance for the world of men. It continues to function as a kind of council of elders. When the people rebel against the sun-god, the latter convokes his Eye, Shu and Tefnut, Geb and Nut and the fathers and mothers who are in Nun to consult with them what must be done. The ennead, that as a court of Justice has judged the case of Horus and Seth or of Osiris and Seth, continues to function as a body of judges that justifies a man who has died against possible enemies at the judgment of the dead. Also a man living upon earth who feels he has been wronged by someone who has died, can try to obtain redress from this high court. In accordance with this judicial function the ennead may function as a less strict commission of reception in the realm of the dead and welcome a defunct person like a king. An extension of this is the lifegiving function of the ennead that is so often mentioned.

The ennead also continues to play a contemporary part

as retinue and council of prominent gods, as appears e.g. in various hymns to the gods. The official presidency of the ennead may be assigned to others of its male members and is not automatically exercised by the eldest god Atum-Re. Important gods from outside such as Amon-Re are sometimes also named as president of the ennead of Heliopolis, which is then no more than a retinue.

The secretariate of the ennead is not exercised by the members in turn, but is the permanent task of the officially adjudicated secretary Thoth, the scribe of the ennead and the lord of the divine words (hieroglyphs). It is just because of this technical-administrative function that Thoth is important as mediator. As moon-god Thoth can provide light in the absence of the sun-god, whose substitute he is said to be. We have already mentioned Thoth's intercession in the conflict between Shu and Tefnut. In illustrations representing the separation of Geb and Nut by Shu, Thoth is also often depicted standing beside them. Thoth also played an important part during the confusion of the fourth generation. His official task as functionary secretary required impartiality, but reproach that the functional secretary was manipulating affairs is not far to seek. The Pyramid Texts already transmit that not only Seth but also Thoth failed to lament for Osiris after his murder. In this connection it has been remarked (H. Jacobsohn, 'Das Gegensatzproblem im altägyptischen Mythos, in: Studien zur analytischen Psychologie C.G. Jungs II, Zürich 1955, 191) that 'Seth, eine prahlerische Kraftnatur und notorischer Tölpel und Rüpel, war zu einer solchen Gewalttat leicht zu verführen. Thoth aber war der Gott, der genau wusste, was er wollte. Er hatte offenbar das ganze göttliche Drama in Gang gesetzt'. Thoth was also deeply involved in the contentions of Horus and Seth, so that he can even be called 'the son of the two

lords', that is to say a creature resulting from their paederastic relations. In cases where besides the ennead as a whole or one of its changing presidents Thoth is also named as the one who separates and reconciles the warring gods Horus and Seth, this should rather be understood as a measure of technical administration than as the act of statesmanship itself. Yet in a civilization with an extensive bureaucracy of officials and where so much had to be put down in writing, the position of this divine scribe can hardly be overestimated, and it must be admitted that Thoth filled a key position in the ennead.

Finally it can be pointed out that in the world of men the ennead remained known as a group of gods venerated especially in Heliopolis. As hardly anything remains of the town and temples of Heliopolis, very little indeed is known of this. Since Heliopolis was of old, in any case from the time of origin of the Pyramid texts until the breaking up of the Egyptian religion, one of the most important religious centres of Egypt, the ennead of ~~XXXX~~, Heliopolis had a more than local importance and was the alliance of gods whose mutual relations and conflicts were known everywhere.

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