

is also evident in Ancient Egypt (*Dualismus), and one of the forms in which it appeared was the divine pair Horus and Seth, who came into conflict and were reconciled, who were separated and reunited. Besides as an expression of fundamental anthropological and religious conceptions, it has repeatedly been attempted to explain the myth of Horus and Seth as the reflection of tribal struggles in predynastic Egypt. The latter idea has not been generally accepted, although prehistory and history must indeed have influenced the origin and development of the myth.

This pair of gods was so well-known that without mention of their names they could be referred to by terms such as the two gods, the two men, the two combatants, the two lords. According to the mythology they are not twins. Horus is the son of *Isis and *Osiris, while Seth is the son of *Geb and *Nut, making Seth the uncle of Horus, i.e. his mother's brother. The term the two brothers (*smw*) is used in a wide sense, meaning perhaps no more than a family connection, sometimes even best rendered as the two companions or the rivals. When the two gods are mentioned by name, Horus as the prototype of the Egyptian gentleman 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 the two lords rule over the world through the pharaoh whom they purify and crown, but each has his own half of the world: Horus usually Lower Egypt and Seth usually Upper Egypt, though this may also be reversed, presumably dependent on which part of the country was the more important at the time. The central and the peripheral position of each of the two gods is clearly shown in the NK when Horus was lord of the Black Land (home country) and Seth of the Red Land (foreign country). Not only the bipartition of the world, but also many other contrasts could be connected with the two gods: 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.

However, the contacts between Horus and Seth did not always consist of a peaceful and ordered collaboration for the weal of the world. They are the mythological symbols of all strife, the antagonists per se. In the conflict between Horus and Seth the two gods not only oppose each other in sporting contests, using all kinds of legitimate means or clever tricks, they also commit various acts of violence. Seth even

Horus und Seth. Man's inclination to explain reality by means of binary oppositions or paired contrasts that complement each other

induced his nephew Horus to take part in paederastic acts (*Homosexualität).¹ The fruit of the homosexual relation was the moon or *Thot, the son of the two lords. Horus lost the light of his eye (*Horusauge) and Seth the semen of his testicles. They fight for the rulership of the world, the function of Osiris who had been murdered by Seth. Helped by his mother Isis Horus gains the upper hand of Seth, but Seth is not totally destroyed. When offerings are made Horus receives his eye, but sometimes Seth also receives his testicles. 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. The justification of Horus certainly already had an exclusive tendency and led to some, chiefly later, exclusive variants of the myth. At the same time, the reconciliation of the two gods, ascribed especially to Thot and leading to a condition of equilibrium and an integration of the contrasts, continues to be mentioned as late as the beginning of the first millennium B.C., the period when the demonisation of Seth took place in Egyptian religious history, bringing about changes in the myth of Horus and Seth, and is sometimes referred to even later.

Horus and Seth, who are reconciled, unite the two lands (*Zmꜣ tꜣwy*) by joining the sedge and the papyrus, 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.

¹ Texts of the NK give drastic details but allusions are found in older texts; cf. literature below and for a still unpublished Pyramid text, recently discovered, the remark of Leclant, in: *Textes et Langages de l'Égypte Pharaonique*, BdE 64. 2, [1974], 47.

Lit.: John Gwyn Griffiths, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth*, Liverpool 1960; Herman te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, Leiden 1967, 27-81; Hornung, in: *Symbolon. Jahrbuch für Symbolforschung* NF 2, 1975, 49-63. H. te V.