

18th Dynasty Imperial Borders at the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth

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Abstract:

Some of the rulers of the 18th Dynasty applied the designations of «*Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*» for marking their borders. These terms most certainly referred to the northern and southern celestial borders of the Egyptian Empire, and although they were surely geographically inspired, they cannot be tied to any specific geographical locations. The probable location of «*the Cool Water of Horus*» can solely be found on the Yale fragment of a late Egyptian world map positioned in its north-western corner at the outer edge of the primal waters of the cosmos, beyond the depiction of the foreign countries of the region. Interestingly, «*the Cool Water of Seth*» was contrasted with the location of that of Horus in some of the royal inscriptions of the 18th Dynasty. It must have been placed along the outer margin of the southern border of the Egyptian cosmos. According to the royal ideology of the 18th Dynasty, the pharaoh — who simultaneously embodied the composite power of Horus and Seth as he received his legitimacy to rule from both gods — was responsible for ensuring the eternal unity and prosperity of Lower and Upper Egypt, the earthly river of which would also have been fed by these heavenly waters. Because of the will of the two gods, the 18th Dynasty rulers could extend their power not only over Egypt but even farther to the surrounding foreign countries as far as «*the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*» were imagined at the outer edges of the cosmos. There lay the ideologically «*legitimate*» northern and southern borders of the Egyptian Empire or at least for some of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs, who were regarded with great appreciation by later rulers attempting to follow suit in their own royal ideology from time to time in a somewhat altered form.

Key words:

Egypt (Upper and Lower), New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, royal ideology, (northern and southern) borders, celestial, firmament, cool water (*kbh*), *Horus* and *Seth*, river Nile, *Hapy*, inundation, *Thoth*, migrating birds, constellations, cardinal points, cosmos, cosmical order, *mꜣt*, Yale map fragment, *Wereshnefer* sarcophagus, *wpt t3*, *rth(w)–k3b.(w)t*, manifestation

I. Introduction

My fascination with old maps led me to come across the so-called Late Period «*Yale Map of Cosmos*» [FIG. 1] which is kept in the Yale Map Collection at Peabody Museum of Natural History¹. It presents the earliest depiction of the Egyptian world² in keeping with the usual south—north upside—down orientation of the Egyptian point of worldview but in a spherical way of three circles. The surviving pieces of the fragment only show the north—western section of the Delta of the Nile, which can be identified based upon the depicted six north—western Lower Egyptian nome standards and those of the three following northernmost nomes of Upper Egypt in the middle circle³. Interestingly enough, the middle circle, which represents the mainland of Egypt itself, is lined off from the third outer circle of the foreign countries as well as of the space and god (*H3*) displaying the Western desert with contoured lines reminiscent of water⁴. Each of these lines ending in a drop—like form seems to connect the mainland of Egypt with each of the foreign countries. The third outermost circle of the foreign lands is also surrounded with exterior wide lines that illustrate the boundary between the Egyptian world (inner cosmos) ideologically ruled by the pharaoh and the outer cosmos, that is, the celestial domain of primal waters (of the ocean of Nun) or the firmament of the darkness where the gods were believed to dwell. Just at the outer edge of this boundary but already in the outer north—western section of the cosmos a crenelated cartouche can be seen with the inscription 

¹ MANASSA 2023; ZAGO 2021.

² MANASSA 2023. Probably from between 664-332 BC. CLERE 1958. Its provenance is not known.

³ MANASSA 2023; ZAGO 2021: 519.

⁴ CALMETTES 2017: 35; PECOIL 1993: 108.

(*kbh Hr*) «the Cool Water of Horus» with the last subsequent sign completely damaged. Parallel to the «Yale Map of Cosmos», the Late Period (722–332 BC) sarcophagus of Wereshnefer (*Wrš—nfr*) on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibits an effectively full version of an almost identically arranged ancient Egyptian spherical world map [FIG. 2]⁵. However, in this well—preserved map nothing relates to «the Cool Water of Horus» in the north—western section of the outer cosmos or anywhere else. Yet, in some of the much earlier royal or royally related inscriptions of the 18th Dynasty (1539–1292 BC)⁶ «the Cool Water of Horus» happen to have been mentioned occasionally and sometimes even curiously paralleled with *kbh Sth* «the Cool Water of Seth». In the following, it is the specific location and imperial border—wise significance of «the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth» in the royal ideology of the 18th Dynasty that this paper is going to focus on.

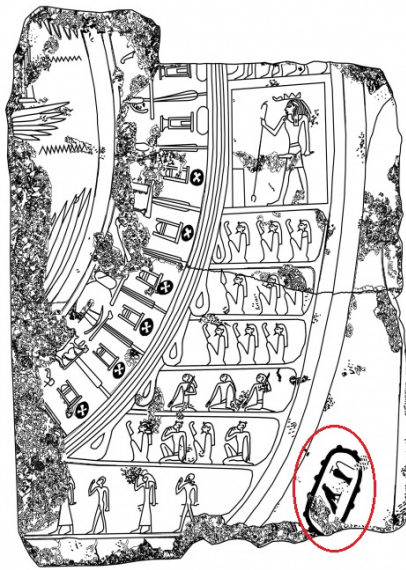


FIG. 1: ZAGO 2021: 528.

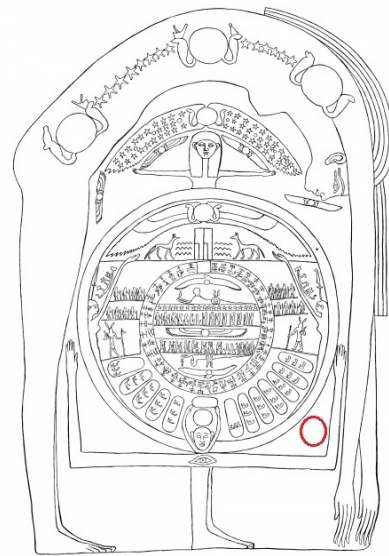


FIG. 2: ZAGO 2021: 529.

II. The 18th Dynasty royal inscriptions

The first possible references to «the Cool Water of Horus» can be attested from the time of Thutmose I (1493–1483 BC). In the autobiography of Ineni engraved in his Theban tomb (TT81) it was remarked about the pharaoh that *ir.n.f t3š.f r wpt t3 phw.w m kbh.w* «he made his border at the Horns of the Earth (in the south) (and at the) distant swamps (in the north) (that are) in the cool waters»⁷. In accordance with the usual south—north upside—down orientation of the Egyptian point of worldview, firstly the southern border was characterized and then the northern. The southern border was set out at «the Horns of the Earth», which was usually applied for the boundary southernmost to Egypt at the farthest end of the foreign land of Nubia and invoked a high—altitude location possibly close to the zenith of the sky or the great openness of the beginning of the earth⁸. In turn, the northernmost limits were described as the «distant swamps in the cool waters» that may have been a prior correspondent to «the Cool Water of Horus». These

⁵ CALMETTES 2017; CLERE 1958. Probably from the 4th century BC (30th Dynasty) from Saqqara.

⁶ All dates in the following will be based on HORNUNG 2006: 490-495.

⁷ See e.g.: URK IV/1, 55: 4-5. In the following the transcriptions and translations are always mine if not stated otherwise.

⁸ GAUTHIER 1925: 194-195.

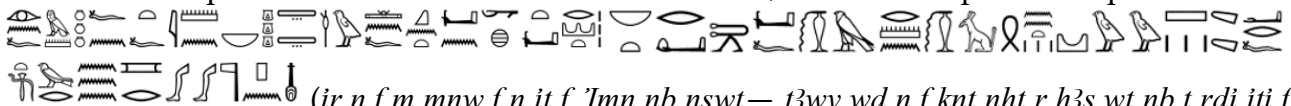
«*distant swamps*» must customarily have referred to the extensive marshy regions of the Delta of the Nile forming a natural boundary of the mainland of Egypt by the Mediterranean Sea, whose watery territory was presumably thought to be overlapping with the edges of the firmament of the outer cosmos. Thutmose II (1482–1480 BC) as well as Thutmose III (1479–1425 BC) also had similarly worded border characterizations⁹.

However, in his Buhen fortress inscription¹⁰, Thutmose III specifically indicated that



(*iti.n.f t3 pn hr hnt.f kbh Stḥ hr st hr.f htm.n.f sw hr mhty.f r-nm kbh Hr nn*) «*he occupied this land (Nubia), to the beginning of the Cool Waters of Seth (in the south), which is under his control. He closed these (lands) in the north as far as the beginning of the Cool Waters of Horus*». There «*the Cool Water of Horus*» was not only explicitly mentioned for the first time in connection with the northern border¹¹, but also it was immediately paralleled with «*the Cool Water of Seth*» at the southernmost end of Nubia. Presumably, based upon a new kind of deliberate royal ideological revelation, «*the Cool Water of Horus*» seems to have taken the place of the former «*distant swamps in the cool water*», just as «*the Cool Water of Seth*» took over the position of «*the Horns of the Earth*». We can assume that the nature of the equated expressions must have been the same, so «*the Cool Water of Horus*» would have been a marshy place connecting to the celestial waters of the outer cosmos and «*the Cool Water of Seth*» would have been a high—altitude location close to the firmament.

Although, the Konosso Stela of Amenhotep III (1390–1353 BC) adopted the expression of «*the Cool Water of Horus*» for the northern border¹², it is in the temple of Soleb that, yet another border characterization text survived, the wording of which is like that of the Buhen inscription of Thutmose III. At Soleb, Amenhotep III reported that



(*ir.n.f m mnw.f n it.f Imn nb nswt— t3wy wd n.f knt nḥt r ḥ3s.wt nb.t rdi iti.f kbh Hr r— mn kbh Stḥ šn ny.wt ḏww ṛf.t w3d— wr r rd.w ntr pn nfr*) «*he made his monument to his father, Amon, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, who commanded him to win bravely against all foreign countries, and gave him the capture of the Cool Water of Horus as far as the Cool Water of Seth surrounded by a ring of mountains and the sea at the feet of this beautiful god*»¹³. This is the only border related inscription that discloses further particulars about «*the Cool Water of Seth*». Taking it into account, the former assumption about its high—altitude location seems to be right. It is said to be surrounded by lofty mountains and a (high-flown?) sea at the feet of a god who must have been close to (the watery edge of) the sky. Seth was not only the god of chaos, war, and foreign lands, but also of storms, rain, lightning, and thunder. As a sky god he had power over the cosmic waters of the

⁹ See e.g.: Thutmose II in URK IV/1, 138: 7-8; Thutmose III in LD III/5 60.

¹⁰ See e.g.: URK IV/3, 807: 17-808: 3. Other copies of which also survived in Wadi Halfa and Ellesiya.

¹¹ For the history of the usage of «*the kbh.w cool waters*» see ZAGO 2021: 520-521.

¹² See e.g.: LD III/5 82a.

¹³ In a bandeau-text of a ram—headed sphinx, taken from Gebel Barkal, now in Berlin. See e.g.: LD III/5 89e; MACIVER 1911: 29; GAUTHIER 1928: 171-172.

firmament, therefore he was also revered as the god of the sea who through his anger caused rain from the celestial body of water onto the earth¹⁴.

Some of these aspects of the nature of Seth were also disclosed in the Tombos Stela of Thutmose I, where – in the description of the Nubian conquests of the pharaoh –

 (tr r.w.sn mi snm hy.t) «the red of the blood running out from the mouths» of the defeated Nubians was compared in violence to «the rainstorms of Seth that were causing the flood of Nile»¹⁵. In the Onomasticon of Amen(em)ope, possibly around the 20th–21st Dynasties (1190–944 BC), the names of stormy weather phenomena were also listed with the E21 sign of Seth sitting on the N1 sky hieroglyph¹⁶.

After Amenhotep III, the sole mention of «the Cool Water of Horus» for the marshy celestial northern border occurred under pharaoh Taharqa (25th Dynasty, 690–664 BC) in his Kawa Stela V¹⁷. In this stela the designation of «Rth(w)–k3b.t» was used for the southernmost border of the empire. Certain meanings of this expression could also refer to a high–altitude location or a body of water, albeit some of them are debatable¹⁸.

III. The northern and the southern skies of Egypt

To outline the Horus and Seth related celestial particulars in the northern and the southern skies of Egypt, at least a brief scrutiny must be carried out in the following.

The Egyptian concept of both skies was first shown in the astronomical ceiling in the 18th Dynasty tomb of Senenmut (TT353)¹⁹. In the northern sky, the harpooned Horus (ꜥnw) every night overpowered the tied–up Seth (msht.jw) in the form of our Big Dipper Constellation. Because of Horus' forever victory and the nearby presence of the never setting circumpolar stars (jhm.w sk), the northern sky can be regarded as the safeguarded place of eternal regeneration with the competence of immortality²⁰. In the southern sky, the Sirius was the main star, whose heliacal rising was the messenger of the coming of the annual inundation of the Nile. Horus and Seth also came into sight there in the forms of decans. Seth appeared in the shape of three decans (hntt hrt (12), hry–jb wj3 (15), sšmw (16)) in the constellation of «Wj3» (the Boat), which presumably could be matched with the night solar bark sailing on the celestial Nile of the Milky Way²¹. Seth's task was to protect the bark against its enemies during the night voyage. Besides, Seth appeared as planet Mercury (Sbg) that, from the Egyptian point of view, defended the sun by showing up next to both of its sides after sunset and before sunrise²². Because of the periodicity of the

¹⁴ TE VELDE 1967: 84-91; WAINWRIGHT 1971: 14-15; ALLON 2007; SIDDAL 2010.

¹⁵ See e.g.: URK IV/1 84: 8-9; WB IV 165: 11-12; WB III 49: 3-4.

¹⁶ GARDINER 1947: 4-5.

¹⁷ GOZZOLI 2006: 67. It survived in other copies from Tanis, Coptos and Matanieh as well.

¹⁸ REGEN 2015: 226-228. For «rth(w)» in the meanings of «to intimidate; to catch birds; the beginning of the ocean» see e.g.: WB II 459-460; RITNER 1993: 160-161 & 209; and for «k3b.t» in the meanings of «to whirl; to bend; meanders of a body of water; ridge, zenith, peak; name of a distant sea» see e.g.: WB V 9: 13-14 & 11: 10-12. «Rthw–k3b.wt» was also mentioned by Thutmose I in his Tombos Stela as a name for the southernmost peoples of Nubia (see e.g.: URK IV/1 83: 7), just as «rth–k3b.t» appeared in the Book of Nut in the Cenotaph of Sety I.

¹⁹ DORMAN 1991: 138-146; PRISKIN 2019; MUELLER – ROTH 2008: 290-292; GUILHOU 2010.

²⁰ ZAGO 2021: 523; VON BOMHARD 2012.

²¹ LULL 2018; BEAUX 1994.

²² NEUGEBAUER & PARKER 1969: 180-181. Horus as planet Mars is missing from the astronomical ceiling of Senenmut. GUILHOU 2004.

annual rising of the Sirius as well as the matching appearance of the other constellations and decans, the southern sky can be considered as the place of cyclic renewal causing recurrent regeneration periods to the whole of Egypt. This cyclic renewal could also have been identified with the annually returning new creation of the world from the celestial primal waters of the ocean of Nun²³. In all that Seth's task was to protect the cyclic processes of the sun and to generate rain from the primal waters of the firmament that initiated the flood of the Nile somewhere at the outer edge of the cosmos. The decan of the tortoise, which appeared in the Constellation of the Two Tortoises of the southern sky (*štwy*) in the tomb of Senenmut, was similarly associated with the rebirth of the new year, materialized by the arrival of the inundation. Presumably from the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 BC), the tortoise became the symbol of the evil-spirited Seth and had to be harpooned by Horus as the enemy of the sun god²⁴.

From the time of the 19th Dynasty (1292–1191 BC) in the Abydos Cenotaph of Sety I (1290–1279 BC) the first version of the Book of Nut survived. The texts enclosing the north–western (Dd, §81) and north–eastern (Dd, §82) outer side of the west–east oriented depiction of the body of Nut²⁵ [FIG. 3], the goddess of the cosmos, contain references to «*bird nests that are in the celestial cool waters* ( *kbh.w*) » (Ff, §70)²⁶. It is also claimed there that it is «*the primeval darkness (of the outer cosmos), the kbh.w of the gods, the place from where the birds come*»²⁷ (Dd, §80) and «*these birds ... after they come to eat greens and nourish themselves in the marshes of Egypt, they settle in the light of the (inner) cosmos*»²⁸ (Ee, §73–78). This could reinforce the idea that the northern marshy border region — either in the western and the eastern side of the Delta — was believed to be the place of constant regeneration. This characteristic may also have been attributed to «*the Cool Water of Horus*» situated in the same celestial region. A later version of the Book of Nut annexed to this section of the north–western and north–eastern part of the sky, where the birds were located, extended to the south–eastern side of the sky (PC1 Dd, §82)²⁹. Possibly, there could also have been a comparable connection between these cardinal directions even in the New Kingdom³⁰. The region of «*Rth–kb.t*» (§2–4, A) was likewise mentioned in the Book of Nut in the Cenotaph of Sety I. Its location is enthralling because it was placed far beyond the south–western edge of the world, that is, at the rear upper edge of the body of Nut, in the watery territory of the primeval darkness of the sky³¹. It was a

²³ PECOIL 1993; VON BOMHARD 2012; GOZZOLI 2006; COLLOMBERT 2017-2018.

²⁴ GUILHOU 2010; SOLIMAN 2020: 157-158.

²⁵ VON LIEVEN 2007: 77-78. Dd, §81-82 explicitly says that the birds came from the north–western and north–eastern side of the body of Nut, where the cool waters of the gods (*kbh.w ntr.w*) were in the sky.

²⁶ VON LIEVEN 2007: 76. At the outer edge of Nut's head in the north-western direction, birds resting in island-like features can be seen (Jj, §72).

²⁷ VON LIEVEN 2007: 77.

²⁸ VON LIEVEN 2007: 76-78. These birds were believed to be *bas* (PC1 Dd, §83). Later, the solar *ba* of Re was also thought to enter Egypt in the form of a migratory bird from the cool waters. MANASSA 2007: 82-83.

²⁹ VON LIEVEN 2007: 78; CARLSBERG FOUNDATION 2017. Papyrus Carlsberg I version of the Book of Nut is from the 2nd century AD.

³⁰ CONDON 1978: 11, 18, 27-29, 39.

³¹ VON LIEVEN 2007: 49-50, 59; S §2; PC1 §3-4; «*The top of this heaven is in primordial darkness. The outside of heaven is in darkness ... it is called Rth–kb.t ... which is the boundary of heaven. Its borders are unknown to the south, north, west, and east*» (PC1 L, §31-32).

region for the periodically revolving matutinal journey of a falcon form of the sun god that progressed from the south—west to the south—eastern part of the sky at every sunrise³². Thus, with just a few years after the end of the 18th Dynasty, «*Rth—k3b.t*» seems to have been mentioned again to characterize the mythically far southern border, the enigmatic territory of which was previously circumscribed with the possibly relatable terms of «*the Horns of the Earth*» and «*the Cool Water of Seth*» in the earlier mentioned royal border descriptions³³.

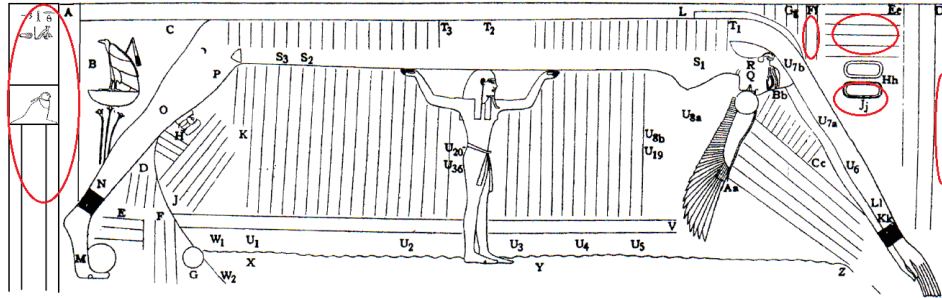


FIG. 3: VON BOMHARD 2014.

IV. The cardinal points and the flood of the Nile

According to Edel, the birds that came from the celestial cool waters (*k3b3.w*) of the western and eastern side of the northern marshy lands in the Book of Nut (Dd, §81-82) were migratory birds from the Mediterranean region or even farther from the north. Egypt was only a transit station for them in their annual flight and many flew over to the south³⁴. Edel thus believed that just as the northern «*Cool Water of Horus*» could have had a western and eastern section, so could the southern «*Cool Water of Seth*»³⁵. These four sections of the cool waters would have defined the cardinal points of the Egyptian world, which doubtless represented the expansion of the authority of the pharaohs.

An explicit allusion to this assumption can be found in a 20th Dynasty hymn to Ramses VII (1138—1131 BC) (P. Turin CG 54031) which was probably sung during his royal enthronement. In this hymn, after the *k3b3.w* migratory birds were said to have filled every pond in Egypt, «*they turned their faces to Napata*» and flew to the far south. The district of the biblical Lake of Horus (*p3 š Hr*) in the easternmost Delta of the Nile got also filled by them³⁶. Thus, it is plausible that through the flight of the migratory birds the expansion of the kingdom of Ramses VII could have been associated with the location of the four

³² VON LIEVEN 2007: 59. In Papyrus Carlsberg I (PC1 §3-4), in accordance with the texts of the Cenotaph of Sety I, the falcon god (next to section A) is said to be «*on the south—eastern side beyond the land of Punt ... he is the shape of Re that rises from the water every morning. He ... comes out of Nun ... (he) is on the way before the light of heaven ... his back is still in Rth—k3b.t* (which is in darkness, while) *his front is in Srk—hty.t, where there is brightness*». REGEN 2015: 218-225. Regen promotes the view that «*Rth—k3b.t*» might have referred to the southernmost meanders of the Nile from where the sun falcon emerged at dawn and moved towards east. Therefore, the Nile would possibly have been believed to originate from the south—western darkness of the outer cosmos.

³³ See footnote 18.

³⁴ EDEL 1963: 105.

³⁵ EDEL 1963: 105-113. He also suggested that the last subsequent damaged hieroglyph sign in the crenelated cartouche of «*the Cool Water of Horus*» in the «*Yale Map of Cosmos*» must have referred to the west.

³⁶ CONDON 1978: 18; ALLEN 2003: 15. P. Anastasi III from the time of Merneptah (1213-1203 BC) likewise mentioned that the birds from the cataract region flew to the Lake of Horus. HOFFMEIER 2005: 107.

cardinal points at the edges of the Egyptian cosmos. Also, upon coronation, four birds are presumed to have been released to fly towards the four quarters of the Egypt signalling the installation of the new ruler into power³⁷.

In the Egyptian Hymn Dedicated to the Flooding of the Nile, presumably from the time of the 18th or the 19th Dynasty³⁸, comparable ideas can be attested. From the hymn it seems to be clear that the migratory birds of the *kbh.w* regions were characteristic of the flooded country. The beginning of the flood brought them towards the south (II. 1–2)³⁹, but at the end of the flooding season they returned to where they came from in the north (X. 5–6)⁴⁰. Therefore, during the annual flood of the Nile the presence of these migratory birds in the distant muddy waters at the farthest edges of the Egyptian world could have symbolized the expanse of the influence of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs, after all it was the flood on which no border could be imposed (VII. 9–10)⁴¹. Upon the appearance of the flood, its waves were said to be hailed the same way as the pharaoh himself (VI. 3–4)⁴². For this reason, the relationship between the flood and the pharaoh must have been close⁴³.

Although already represented in the Middle Kingdom (1800–1760 BC)⁴⁴, it was especially in the New Kingdom (1539–1077 BC) that the tight connection between the pharaoh and the flood (*Hapy*) became paramount since the ritual identification of the king with *Hapy* was found for the first time in the texts of the 18th Dynasty under Amenhotep III⁴⁵. The king of Egypt, as a representative or an intercessor for the sun god, was in charge of maintaining the cosmic order (*mꜣt*) on earth. His receiving this task upon coronation⁴⁶ implied his decisive influence and sustaining force on the arrival of the inundation⁴⁷.

The inundation of the Nile usually started during the month of Thoth at the end of the summer. Consequently, Thoth was identified with the waves of the flood and would have been a master over the source of the southern Nile⁴⁸. In the Small Temple of Abu Simbel, as the maintainer of *mꜣt*, Ramses II (1279–1213 BC) represented Thoth in his duty of bringing back and directing the waves of the flood from the south to Egypt. Appearing each year with the new waves of the flooding water, the pharaoh managed to renew his royalty as well as the lands of Upper and Lower Egypt ruled by him (XIV. 3–4)⁴⁹.

The benefits of bringing the inundation of the Nile were not only attributed to the reigning pharaoh, but also the deified late king could have had a crucial influence on the proper

³⁷ CONDON 1978: 39. See e.g.: Thutmose III shooting four arrows in the company of Hours and Seth at his Sed Festival (footnote 70).

³⁸ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 187-189.

³⁹ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 79-81.

⁴⁰ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 136-137.

⁴¹ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 118-119.

⁴² VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 105-106.

⁴³ COLLOMBERT 2017-2018.

⁴⁴ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 106, 183. See e.g.: the statue of Amenemhet III (1818–1773 BC) as double *Hapy*.

⁴⁵ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 105-106, 154. Also, in the temple of Luxor, after his divine birth, Amenhotep III was carried on the arms of *Hapy* as if they were father and son.

⁴⁶ TEETER 1997: 82-83, 89-90; ASSMANN 2006: 205-212.

⁴⁷ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 110, 183; GRIMAL 1986: 264, 267-270; DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT & KUENTZ 1968: 114, 118; ROBERSON 2012: 232-234, 474.

⁴⁸ DRIOTON 1933; BOYLAN 1922: 168-170, 184; GABER 2009: 371-372.

⁴⁹ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 153, 155-156; PECOL 1993: 110; DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT & KUENTZ 1968: 109-124.

and timely coming of the flood. On a scarab of Thutmose III (Louvre, E 3408) it reads that «*Mn—hpr—R^c is in the sky like the moon (Thoth). Hapy is at his service. He opens his source to give life to Egypt*»⁵⁰. The importance of the annual flood of the Nile was so immense that in the case of an inadequate water level the reigning pharaoh had to perform certain rituals to ensure that the coming of tide would be of quite appropriate measures for the whole of Egypt. Accordingly, from the time of Queen Hatshepsut (1479— 1458 BC) the following prayer to Amon survived, demanding rain from abroad for the abundance of the annual inundation: «*Bring down for her the dew that comes from the sky in its time. Give that every big flood would come to her during her time of reign*»⁵¹. In an inscription in the Temple of Luxor, Tutankhamon (1334— 1324 BC) also encouraged the flooding of the Nile by performing an ancient ritual on a bark on the river⁵².

As the expected inundation of the Nile was spreading over the lands throughout the whole of Egypt, so was the ultimate life—giving power of the king who seems to have represented the waves of the flood themselves or could have directed them with the magical rites that he performed⁵³. Figuratively speaking, as far as the flooding water of the Nile reached the lands, the pharaoh ruled. The inundated lands were all placed under his power. Since the migratory birds, whose appearance was closely connected with the flood, settled down in out of the way, secluded places that were faraway to reach for humans, they brought the sensation of where they were nesting was the boundary of the world (inner cosmos) and the beginning of the outer cosmos. Therefore, the presence of these *kbh.w* birds would have endowed the idea that the water under their nests was nourished by celestial waters originating from the firmament⁵⁴.

For the Egyptians the annual inundation emerged from more sources on the mainland of Egypt. First and foremost, it came from the underground caves of the first cataract region at Elephantine at the southern border of Upper Egypt, the Land of Seth, which was also called *kbh.w*⁵⁵. In the New Kingdom the Nile was considered to be quite noisy there and its water had a rampageous, whirly, and violent character, which would compare to Sethian nature⁵⁶. Then the flood had to calm down to reach the northern parts of Egypt where several places and cities were acknowledged as its further possible orifices. In the north, at the southern apex of the Delta of Nile, a spring emerging from the ground near Khor—Aha (*Hr—ḥ3*) was believed to be a major orifice for the northern Nile that, from a very early date, acted as a cult centre on the cool water (*kbh*) of the northern Nun for Lower Egypt, the Land of Horus⁵⁷. In effect, the way of the flood and its sources through Egypt were theologically combined into an all-in complex hydrological system⁵⁸.

⁵⁰ «*Thoth was also called the Son of the Two Lords (P. Jumilah V, 21)* » TE VELDE 1967: 44. VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 185; BOYLAN 1922: 63-65; DRIOTON 1933: 46.

⁵¹ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 71. See e.g.: URK IV/1 217: 10-11.

⁵² VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 184.

⁵³ PECOIL 1993: 99, 110.

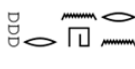
⁵⁴ CALMETTES 2017: 30-31; PECOIL 1993: 103.

⁵⁵ See e.g.: P. Anastasi III, 3.1. or P. Turin CG 54031, 8.

⁵⁶ PECOIL 1993: 97-98; VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 127-128, 172-173.

⁵⁷ AJA SANCHEZ 2012: 219, 229; PECOIL 1993: 105. Late texts from Edfu affirm that Horus extracted the water of Nun at Khor-Aha. See also e.g.: Pyr. 810c; THIEM 2000: 166. «*Horus, according to Plutarch (Isis and Osiris 38) is the child of the Nile, and of the inundated soil, and hence his birthplace is the marshland*». BOYLAN 1922: 18.

⁵⁸ PECOIL 1993: 103, 107; COLLOMBERT 2017-2018: 11.

The origin of the inundation was also alluded to in the Hymn Dedicated to the Flooding of the Nile as «*it is in the underworld; heaven and earth rest on its props; who takes possession of the Two Lands (of Egypt)* » (IV. 7–8)⁵⁹. Implied, the flood of the river might have been believed to be present in all three layers of the Egyptian (outer and inner) cosmos: heaven, earth, and underworld (IX. 1–2)⁶⁰. Thus, the flooding water not only would have emerged throughout Egypt, in its underworld and heaven, but via its comprehensive hydrological ways also even in the farther—off foreign countries, which then would have been nourished by the saturation of the water filtering through either from the underworld or from the skies⁶¹. In accordance with this, in the late «*Yale Map of Cosmos*», contoured lines and drop—like forms connected the mainland of Egypt with the foreign countries of the outermost circle [FIG. 1]. Therefore, from the Egyptian point of view of watery places, all these far—off lands were conceived to belong under the authority of the pharaoh within the schema of the four cardinal points. Thutmose III suitably marked his northern border in the Obelisk of Constantinople as at the  (*phw.w r nhrn*) «*distant swamps at Naharin*»⁶² (the foreign country of Mitanni in northern Mesopotamia between the Tiger and the Euphrates). Due to the permeability between the layers of the heaven, earth and underworld, the inundation of the Nile — as a circulating body of water around the inner and outer cosmos as well as the four cardinal points of Egypt — would have got back from where it primarily originated from, the great waters of the firmament. In the Hymn Dedicated to the Flooding of the Nile, the flood was said to finally join «*the Great Green*» (the Mediterranean Sea) (X. 3–4)⁶³. This northern sea was looked at by the ancient Egyptians as a vast rough body of water directly connecting to the celestial domain of the primal waters (the ocean of Nun) somewhere in the darkness of the outer cosmos.

V. Horus and Seth in the royal ideology of the 18th Dynasty

In the royal ideology of the 18th Dynasty, Horus and Seth as «*the Two Lords*» were largely referred to in connection with royal birth, coronation, legitimacy, rulership, the Sed Festival, and the physical properties of the pharaohs. To the best of my knowledge, any texts or depictions alluding to the two gods together with reference to royalty did not survive before the time of Hatshepsut (1479–1458 BC). During her reign, however, it was reported that upon her divine birth she was purified by Horus and Seth with their waters⁶⁴. They «*baptised*» her as a form of initiation into the life of a legitimate ruler. Upon giving birth, her mother wore the title «*She who sees Horus and Seth*» which was the renewal of an ancient title for queens from between the Early Dynastic Period (2900–2545 BC) and the Old Kingdom (2543–2120 BC)⁶⁵. At her coronation, the crowns of Upper and

⁵⁹ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 95-96, 59-61. See e.g.: I. 1-2: «*Who springs from the earth, who comes to give life to Egypt*». The concept of the Nile in the sky can also be found in other Egyptian hymns collected by ASSMANN 1975.

⁶⁰ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 126-131. See also the succession of the circles in the Wereshnefer map of the cosmos under the double door flanked on both sides by lots of water signs at the top of the outermost circle under the sun disk (in the south) [FIG. 2].

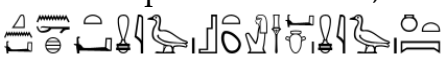
⁶¹ ALLON 2007. Seth as the Egyptian rain god was often identified with other Near Eastern rain gods, such as Baal or Hadad. SIDDAL 2010; KUENTZ 1925: 238.

⁶² See e.g.: LD III/5 60.

⁶³ VAN DER PLAS 1986/I: 135-136.

⁶⁴ See e.g.: URK IV/1 232: 3.

⁶⁵ SHANLEY 2015: 16, 19, 21, 39, 91, 101, 107, 155.

Lower Egypt were put on her head by the two gods⁶⁶. In her obelisk at Karnak, it was proclaimed that for her «*the Two Lords united their parts that she may rule this earth (Egypt) as the son of Isis (Horus), and she may have strength as the son of Nut (Seth)*»⁶⁷. This way, she received the legitimacy to rule from both gods. Just like Thutmose III, who was also said to have been placed on the throne of Egypt by the two gods⁶⁸. In Deir el—Bahari, in his coronation cycle, he was wearing the so—called «*royal jacket*» that covered his bust with the intertwining portraiture of Horus and Seth as if his body would directly have originated from both gods as their joint embodiment⁶⁹. In his Sed Festival, Thutmose III was depicted in the company of Horus and Seth who were supporting him in shooting four arrows possibly towards the cardinal points of Egypt and beyond as a sign of his befitting claim over every land⁷⁰. This must have been an allusion to the divine legitimacy of his rulership passed over by the two gods of Upper and Lower Egypt. Alike, claiming that his northernmost and southernmost borders were established at «*the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*» in his Buhen text, Thutmose III proclaimed that the legacy of his fathers was rightfully vindicated by him on the entire earth. Not only was he the ruler of the Two Lands, but also the guarantor of divine order (*mꜣꜥt*) and the inundation between his fathers' heavenly waters where they could have dwelt⁷¹. His guarantorship granted well—being to the whole of Egypt and the related foreign lands by the grace of «*the Two Lords*». The mother of one of the next rulers of the 18th Dynasty, Thutmose IV (1400—1390 BC), also had the title of «*She who sees Horus and Seth*» upon giving birth to the pharaoh⁷². It meant the ideological continuation of the king's bodily and legal descent from the two gods. On the occasion of his divine birth, Amenhotep III was also purified by Horus and Seth with their waters, and he was wished that «*the strength of the Two Lords strengthens his limbs*»⁷³. In the same manner, his mother wore the title «*She who sees Horus and Seth*»⁷⁴. In the Temple of Luxor, in his Two Ladies Name, he was addressed as  (*kni nḥt mi sꜣ'Isṯ šm-ib mi sꜣ Nwt*) «*brave and strong like the son of Isis, stout—hearted like the son of Nut*»⁷⁵. Thus, in his royal program, Amenhotep III would have assumed to be the joint manifestation of both gods as their legitimate heir. At Soleb, by declaring that his territories spread between «*the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*», he ensured his rulership as far as his fathers' dwelling places in the sky who watched over his earthly deeds throughout his reign. In another wall relief at the Temple of Soleb, the son of Amenhotep III, the later Akhenaten (1353—1336 BC) was primarily crowned the

⁶⁶ See e.g.: URK IV/1 251: 11-13. CWIEK 2008, FIG. 8-9. See her damaged coronation scenes in Deir el-Bahari.

⁶⁷ See e.g.: URK IV/2 366: 3-5.

⁶⁸ See e.g.: LD III/5 35B, LD III/5 33C-G, LD III/5 34C; SHANLEY 2015: 68; VON BISSING & KEES 1922, 116 [ABBILDUNGEN 1]. In this fragmentary relief from the Akh Menu in Karnak the empty sedan chair of the king was brought by the two gods at the beginning of the coronation of Thutmose III.

⁶⁹ CWIEK 2008, FIG. 1-7.

⁷⁰ See e.g.: LD III/5 36b.

⁷¹ See e.g.: Pyr. 1278b, Pyr. 1327b mention a «*Mansion of Horus*» (*ḥwt Hr*) located in the *ḳbh.w* region of the sky. For more see: ZAGO 2021: 520.

⁷² SHANLEY 2015: 39.

⁷³ See e.g.: URK IV/7 1720: 3-4, 1716: 20.

⁷⁴ SHANLEY 2015: 90-91.

⁷⁵ See e.g.: URK IV/7 1695: 10-11.

king of Egypt by Horus and Seth before his Amarna reform⁷⁶. In his case, this coronation would have meant the early continuation of his family's traditional ideology before his big change. And finally, Horemheb (1319–1292 BC), the last ruler of the 18th Dynasty, was called a «son by flesh» by Seth in a text from the Temple of Abahuda⁷⁷. Unfortunately, the parallel speech of Horus to the king is lost. Horemheb was a commoner on the throne, possibly with no royal blood, so he had to strengthen his position by granting himself divine origin through the collaboration of «the Two Lords». Thus, he could legitimately rule over the Two Lands of Egypt just as his predecessors in the 18th Dynasty.

The purification of the pharaoh by Horus and Seth was not limited only to birth. It could also happen right before coronation. Only a few examples of such scenes survived with Horus and Seth, and exclusively from the 19th and 20th Dynasties: three from the reign of Sety I [FIG. 4] and one from under Ramses III (1187–1157 BC)⁷⁸. However, in the majority of these purification scenes Horus and Thoth can be seen performing the ritual cleaning⁷⁹. In the 18th Dynasty, there must have been a discrepancy because the purification before coronation seems to have solely been carried out by Horus and Thoth⁸⁰, while the coronation often took place with the help of Horus and Seth. It might have been the result of an ideological takeover from the time of the Old Kingdom [FIG. 5].

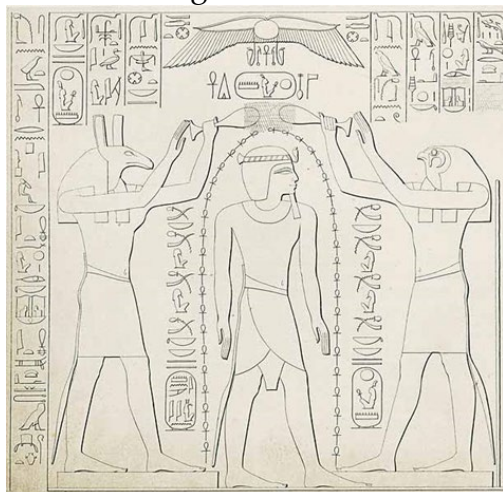


FIG. 4: LD III/6 124d (SETY I; KARNAK, GREAT HYPOSTYLE HALL, WEST SIDE).

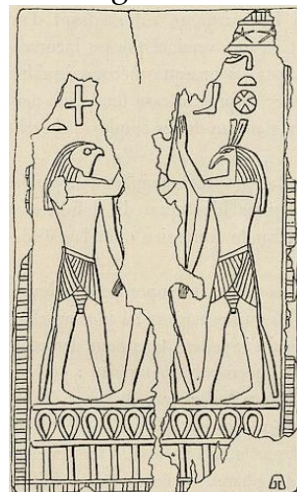


FIG. 5: JEQUIER 1940: 39 (CORONATION OF PEPI II AT SAQQARA, WOODEN BOX).

In my view, in the 18th Dynasty the reason for performing purification before coronation by Horus and Thoth would have been that Thoth was identified with the growing waves of the inundation⁸¹. Just as the appearance of Horus was surely attributed to his being a master over the northern section of the water of the Nile. In this view I would differ from Gardiner's who suggested that Thoth's presence at purifications before coronation would have referred to the western cardinal point because Thoth was the god of the western

⁷⁶ SHANLEY 2015: 132-133; SCHIFF-GIORGINI 1998: 6-9.

⁷⁷ See e.g.: LD III/6 122a.

⁷⁸ GARDINER 1950. No. 13 (Sety I), No. 27 (Sety I), No. 17 (Ramses III); LD III/6 124d.

⁷⁹ GARDINER 1950: 4-5.

⁸⁰ GARDINER 1950: 8. Six purification scenes survived from the 18th Dynasty all with Horus and Thoth: No. 7 (Hatshepsut), No. 8 (Hatshepsut), No. 9 (Thutmose III), No. 11 (Amenhotep III), No. 12 (Amenhotep III), No. 26 (Amenhotep II).

⁸¹ DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT & KUENTZ 1968: 113, 219 (footnote 479). The Nile was called the wave of Thoth. DRIOTON 1933: 47.

quarter of Egypt. In the same manner, Horus was the god of the norther cardinal point. Together these two gods would have represented the extension of the pharaohs' empire⁸². However, as it was mentioned before, «*the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*» would not only have indicated the northern—southern borders of the empire, but also all the cardinal points through their extensions to the west and east by the flight of the *kbḥ.w* migratory birds. Consequently, Horus and Seth performing the purification together, let alone the coronation, must have carried a different and more specific connotation to the king's initiation into the royal legacy and into the handover of the dominant divine power of «*the Two Lords*» of Upper and Lower Egypt. Also, they, as «*Lords of the Sky*»⁸³, had major powers over the celestial waters in their parts of the sky that they transferred to their «*son by flesh*» upon coronation. This way he could assert his rule up to the edges of the cosmos.

VI. Conclusion

In this paper at first the location of «*the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*» was analysed mostly in the light of the 18th Dynasty royal inscriptions and various later sources. It was detected that they were located on the opposite sides of the sky at the northernmost and southernmost extremes of the Egyptian Empire, at the edges of the celestial waters of the outer cosmos. In connection with their location, it can be assumed that they would have had western and eastern subsections that incorporated into the four cardinal points characterizing the expansion of the empire of the pharaohs.

Concerning the imperial border—wise significance of «*the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*» in the 18th Dynasty royal ideology, it was showed that the unity as well as the prosperity of the whole of Egypt depended on the celestial waters of the two hereditary gods of Upper and Lower Egypt. Firstly, because by birth the pharaoh was believed to be their joint bodily manifestation. Therefore, as his legacy, he received all his powers, lands, rulership, and physical properties to become king from his fathers upon coronation. Secondly, because through their celestial waters «*the Two Lords*», as «*Lords of the Sky*», may have taken part in the generation of the inundation of the Nile that became notably equated with the actions and powers of the pharaohs in the 18th Dynasty. It was the pharaohs' royal duty to ensure *m3ṯ* and bring regeneration to Egypt by promoting the inundation of the Nile. In this manner, the country was able to undergo a recreative purification that kept it alive until the next inundation. The impact of the flood would even have been extended to the foreign lands, because through the justifiable power over the waters of «*their fathers*», the Egyptian pharaohs could legitimately rule all lands — as far as the cardinal points on the edges of the cosmos — that came into touch with any water stemming from «*their fathers*'». Thus, ideologically speaking, all foreign lands belonged under the rulership of the pharaoh, just as their fathers' homeland along the Nile between «*the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*». In fact, by marking their borders at «*the Cool Waters of Horus and Seth*», the greatest 18th Dynasty kings — Thutmose III and Amenhotep III — could efficiently prove their rightful hold over every piece of land as far as the edges of the then known world that, for them, all belonged within the boundaries of their huge empire.

⁸² GARDINER 1950: 9.

⁸³ LD III/6 122a, LD III/5 33d-e, LD III/5 35e, LD III/5 34c, LD III/5 33g, LD III/5 36b. SHANLEY 2015: 65, 107.

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