

Aleksy ROMANCHUK

“The Dispute between Horus and Seth” and the Emergence of the Early Kingdom of Ancient Egypt

<https://doi.org/10.52603/rec.2023.33.08>

Rezumat

„Disputa lui Horus și Seth” și apariția Regatului Timpuriu al Egiptului Antic

Autorul oferă o nouă ipoteză a originii Regatului Timpuriu al Egiptului Antic. Conform ipotezei, cu mult înainte de Regatul Timpuriu, Egiptul avea o tradiție politică puternică, bine organizată și adânc înrădăcinată. În esență, aceasta era evident tradiția politică a Egiptului de Jos, a Deltei. De aceea, noua elită politică, care provenea din Egiptul de Sus (Sudul), a trebuit să-i încorporeze pe ei înșiși și puterea lor în această tradiție deja existentă și foarte puternică. Sudul, după ce a început să domine statul egiptean, era să „reconstruiască” ciclul mitologic despre Horus (adăugându-l pe Seth acolo), încercând să legitimeze noul guvern. „Mimetismul” regilor „șacali” sub „șoimi” a fost rezultatul acestui proces de adaptare la vechea tradiție politică. În timp, acest „mimetism” s-a transformat într-o nouă entitate. Acest lucru este bine demonstrat de apariția unui astfel de personaj mitologic precum „șoim care navighează într-o corabie”. Cu toate acestea, întrebarea rămâne: a fost Regatul Timpuriu (și nu formațiunea pre-statală anterioară, așa cum credeau K. Sethe și adepții săi) fondat de regii din Delta care se închinau lui Horus? Sau ar trebui să ne întoarcem la ipoteza lui K. Sethe (la un nou nivel, desigur)? O astfel de revenire la ipoteza lui K. Sethe este posibilă, însă, numai dacă datele arheologice care susțin această presupunere să fie obținute în viitor.

Cuvinte-cheie: „Disputa lui Horus și Seth”, state timpurii, Regatul timpuriu al Egiptului Antic, mitologie, etnologie, arheologie.

Резюме

«Спор Хора и Сета» и возникновение Раннего царства Древнего Египта

Автор предлагает новую гипотезу возникновения Раннего царства Древнего Египта. Согласно гипотезе, задолго до Раннего царства в Египте существовала прочная, хорошо организованная и глубоко укоренившаяся политическая традиция. В своей основе это очевидно была политическая традиция Нижнего Египта, Дельты. Именно поэтому новая политическая элита, выходцы из Верхнего Египта (Юга), вынуждена была инкорпорировать себя и свою власть в эту, уже существующую и очень сильную традицию. Юг, после того как он начал доминировать в обще-египетском государстве, был вынужден «перестроить» мифологический цикл о Хоре (добавив туда Сета), стремясь легитимизировать новую власть. «Мимикрия» царей-«шакалов» под «соколов» стала результатом этого процесса адаптации к старой политической традиции. С течением времени эта «мимикрия» трансформировалась в новую сущность. Это хорошо демонстрирует появление такого мифологического персонажа, как «сокол, плывущий в ладье». Остается, однако, вопрос: было ли именно Раннее царство (а не более раннее предгосударственное образование, как К. Зете и его последователи думали)

основано поклоняющимися Хору царями из Дельты? Или же мы должны вернуться к гипотезе К. Зете (на новом уровне, разумеется)? Такой возврат к гипотезе К. Зете возможен, однако, только при условии получения в будущем подкрепляющих это предположение археологических данных.

Ключевые слова: «Спор Хора и Сета», ранние государства, Раннее царство Древнего Египта, мифология, этнология, археология.

Summary

“The Dispute between Horus and Seth” and the Emergence of the Early Kingdom of Ancient Egypt

The author suggests a new hypothesis for the emergence of the Early Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. This hypothesis supposes that long before the Early Kingdom, a durable, well-organized and deep-rooted political tradition existed in Egypt. At its core, there was clearly a political tradition of Lower Egypt, the Delta. That is why the new political elite, which came from the South, had to incorporate themselves and their power in this already existing and very strong tradition. The South, after it started to dominate the all-Egyptian state, had to “re-build” the mythological cycle of Horus and Seth, aiming to legitimate the new power. The “mimicry” of “jackal”-kings under the “falcons” was the result of this process of adaptation to the old political tradition. Over time, this “mimicry” transformed into a new entity. This is well demonstrated by the appearance of such a mythological character as “a falcon sailing in a boat”. However, the question remains: was it the Early Kingdom (and not the earlier pre-state formation, as K. Sethe and his followers thought) founded by the kings worshipping the Horus from the Delta? The alternative explanation presumes the revival of K. Sethe’s hypothesis (at a new level, of course). Such a return to K. Zethe’s hypothesis is possible, however, only on condition that archaeological data confirming this assumption are obtained in the future.

Key words: “Dispute between Horus and Seth”, early states, Early Kingdom of Ancient Egypt, mythology, ethnology, archaeology.

This paper was for the first time prepared for the “World Congress on the State Origins and Related Subjects (Wigry, Poland, 7-13 September 2014)” (I’m very grateful to Petr Skalnik and Andrey Korotayev for the invitation to participate in the congress). I posted the draft variant (Romanchuk 2014) on my academia.edu profile. However, the papers of the congress, unfortunately, have not yet been published. That’s why I would like to publish this article here.

Starting, let me remind that the predominant opinion in the historiography is that Southern Egypt

(Upper Egypt, Valley) conquered Northern Egypt (Lower Egypt, Delta), and the Early Kingdom of Ancient Egypt appeared as a result of this conquest.

This was the situation at the beginning of Egyptology (Тураев 1936, 167), and it still is (Перепелкин 1988: 296-325; Перепелкин 2000: 69; Bard 2003: 57-61; Midant-Reynes 2003: 56; Raffaele 2003; Крол 2006: 23; for a review of some recent literature see: Крол 2006: 16-46; Elshamy 2014: 140-146), with some remarkable changes, of course.

“The final unification of Upper and Lower Egypt may have been achieved through one or more military conquests in the north” (Bard 2003: 60). And, “It has been ascertained that the Thinite kings were the founders of the 1st Dynasty” (Raffaele 2003: 103).

Well, the situation is understandable. The written sources – Manetho, Herodotus, the Egyptian lists of kings from the times of the New Kingdom, – all tell us about the appearance of the Early Kingdom’s dynasties from Southern Egypt, from Thinis (Перепелкин 1988: 296).

Moreover, new archeological evidence supports these written sources: “Naqada civilization spread into the Delta at the end of phase II” (Raffaele 2003: 104). And, “The most powerful centres of the late Naqada I period were those controlling the Thinis-Abydos region, Naqada (*Nwbt* – Ombos and Ballas) and Hierakonpolis (Nekhen)” (Raffaele 2003: 102).

Let’s cite “The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt” more extensively here: “By the end of the Naqada II phase (c. 3200 BC) or early Naqada III, the indigenous material culture of Lower Egypt had disappeared and was replaced by artifacts (especially pottery wares) deriving from Upper Egypt and the Naqada culture” (Bard 2003: 59-60). The (relatively – since the 1970s) recent “excavations at Abydos and Hierakonpolis have clearly demonstrated the indigenous, Upper Egyptian roots of early civilization in Egypt” (Bard 2003: 61). And, “In a late Pre-dynastic power struggle in Upper Egypt, it is possible that the Naqada polity was vanquished, whereas rulers whose power base was originally at Abydos went on to control the entire country” (Bard 2003: 60).

Thus, if O. D. Berlev said: “the concept of victory of the South could be proved still at the basis of pre-eminence of all «Upper Egyptian» components in the title of kings, in the nomination of offices, in the tradition to name the South first of all, and so on,

but all these are indirect evidences only” (Берлев 1984: 23), we can’t support it further. Nowadays, the archeological data give some “direct evidences” for the victory of the South.

However, I think that there are some reasons to doubt the concept of “the victory of the South” (Романчук 2005)¹. What are these reasons? Let’s start from the well known facts.

First of all, the so called Palermo Stone, one of the earliest “written” sources of Egyptian history, names before the I dynasty a number of previous kings, and all of them are kings of the Lower Egypt. The Palermo Stone doesn’t know any king of Upper Egypt.

Well, we could suppose, as Iu. Ya. Perepelkin did, that names of the kings of Upper Egypt were written on the Palermo Stone as well, but they were lost because the Stone was broken. The information on the Palermo Stone can be proved by some other sources.

Thus, according to Manetho and Turin’s Papyrus, in the beginning Egypt was ruled by gods, then by semi-gods (so called “Nekias” or “Spirits of Buto and Nekhen”) and later by the first human king, Menes from Thinis. Yet, two dynasties of “Kings of Memphis and North” are placed before the “Nekias”. I suppose this fact is a good reason at least to think about.

Especially, if we take into account that the title of Lower Egypt’s kings (bj*t, sign of bee) is considered to be the most ancient designation of Egyptian concept of “king” in historiography and only later, little by little it was replaced by another designation (nsw*t, sign of throne) (Савельева 1975: 134). Moreover, in the “Pyramid Texts” we have a case when the title bj*t (used for a god) “was scraped off and replaced by official designation of Pharaoh” (Тураев 1936: 192).

Thus, I think there is a problem. How can it be solved? We should start our reflection from the analysis of the myth about the “dispute between Horus and Seth” (Матъе 1956: 84). The core of this “dispute”, as we remember, is the question: who will own the whole of Egypt?

Many researchers rejected this myth as a source of some real historical events (Коростовцев 1976: 136). M. E. Matie thought that it reflected the struggle between matriarchate and patriarchate and the changing procedure of power inheritance (Матъе 1956: 80).

On the other hand, it is a common opinion that “the falcon (Horus’s bird – A. R.) and Seth’s animal

were identified with the rulers who were worshippers of the mentioned gods” (Антек 1977: 69). R. Antes also believes that it was typical for Ancient Egypt that political events were reflected in mythology (Антек 1977: 97). I think, we can't deny some correlations between political events and mythology in the Ancient Egypt.

The kings of the Early Kingdom identified themselves namely with Horus. But in the mid-term of the Second Dynasty period, some kings appeared who named themselves after Seth. And, the last king of the Second Dynasty identified himself with both Horus and Seth and his name meant “The one in whom both Gods are reconciled” (Перепелкин 1988: 315).

According to the myth, Seth usurped power from Horus, and only later Horus took it away. Some variants of the myth tell that Horus and Seth came to agreement (Липинская, Марциняк 1983: 120).

I believe this example alone doesn't allow us to desist from analyzing the myth in the context of the problem of emergence of the Early Kingdom. The old saying is right: “the sources don't tell lies, though they can be misleading”. So, let's try to retrieve from the myth as much information as possible.

First of all, we should remind ourselves of the plot of the myth (without going into details and different variants (Матъе 1956) for a while). So, Osiris, the king and god of Egypt, was treacherously murdered by Seth. After the death of Osiris, his wife, Isis, collected together the pieces of Osiris's body and conceived a son – Horus (it is curious to mention that Isis didn't find the most important part for conception of Osiris's body). Horus won in a cycle of competitions with Seth and became a new governor of Egypt.

It is important to mention here that Ra, the God of sun and a supreme god in Egyptian pantheon supported Seth in the dispute and only “grudgingly” admitted the victory of Horus. Some researchers suppose that in the most ancient version of the myth, Horus and Seth are brothers and rule Egypt together (Липинская, Марциняк 1983: 213).

But still more important is another fact, the subject of argument between Horus and Seth is Upper Egypt, the South (!) – the “white crown”. Horus in the myth (and it is accentuated time and again) was the king of Lower Egypt, the Delta. Isis bore Horus in the Delta, and hid him near Buto (“her city” – (Тупаев 1936: 181)). Horus is named as the “Youth of the Delta”, and according to the “judgment of

Thoth” he received the Low Egypt, the North (while Seth got Upper Egypt). Osiris is regularly titled in the myth as “the Lord of the North” (Матъе 1956: 79), though he is presented as a ruler of the whole of Egypt.

According to a version of the myth, which was written on the so called “Shabakha Stele” (namely in this version Horus and Seth came to agreement), the story begins with the information: “Geb gave the North to Horus, and the South to Seth” (Рак 2000: 116). It should be mentioned here also that Seth, starting the complot against Osiris, involved the “Queen of Ethiopia” in complot, i.e., a territory to the south from the first rapids of the Nile.

Thus, we see a paradox. The situation directly contradicts the generally accepted model according to which “the South captured the North”. In the myth, the winner, Horus, is associated with the North, Lower Egypt. And Seth, who lost this contest – with the South.

It should be pointed out that the version of the myth analyzed by M. E. Matie was written in the South, in the city of Thebai (the Egyptian name was Ua-Seth, “The Doors of Seth” (Рак 2000: 40)), at the time of the New Kingdom (Матъе 1956: 111). The plot of this version coincides with the earliest known version of the “Horus and Seth dispute” reconstructed according to “Pyramid Texts” (Коростовцев 1976: 125-126).

Well, can the myth be misleading? To check the myth, we should have a look at the “religious geography” of Ancient Egypt and answer the following question, where were the centers of origin and worship of the main characters of the myth? First of all, of Horus, Seth, Osiris, Isis and her sister (according to the myth) – the goddess-kite; and, for sure, Thoth – the judge in the competitions between Horus and Seth. As for Horus and Osiris, the question is complicated (for details, Романчук 2005: 327-328). However, it seems that Lower Egypt indeed was the first center of their worship.

More clearer is the origin of Isis from the north-eastern part of the Delta (Коростовцев 1976: 130). This consequently links Isis's son (i. e., Horus) to this region too.

Seth's origin is perfectly clear. Seth is definitely identified as an “ancient god of the Upper Egypt”. His principal centers of worship were situated in the Koptos nome of Upper Egypt, in the city of Ombos, as well as in the XI nome of Upper Egypt, and in some places of Middle Egypt (Коростовцев 1976: 113). In Lower Egypt, the cult of Seth ap-

peared not earlier than during the Second Dynasty (Коростовцев 1976: 111).

So, Seth's association with the South, declared in the myth, is also proved by the "religious geography" of Ancient Egypt.

It is worth having a look at Seth's image, as we can reconstruct it. Initially he was a helpmate and defender of Ra, his first warrior (Коростовцев 1976: 136; Липинская, Марциняк 1983: 129). And, in the most ancient tradition, presented in the "Pyramid Texts", Osiris (Horus's father had a hostile attitude to Ra (Коростовцев 1976: 125). So, we can see now why Ra supported Seth in his dispute with Horus.

Thoth is strictly associated with the South (to be precise, with Middle Egypt) as well. This god (in the images of baboon and ibis) was worshipped first of all in Hermopolis, in the XV nome of the Upper Egypt (ХИДВ 1980: 315). В. А. Тураев pointed out, "there is an obscure mention in the most ancient parts of the «Pyramid Texts» that initially Thoth supported Seth" (Тураев 1936: 181).

Localization of the main and prime center of Thoth's worshipping explains, why Thoth supported Seth primarily. In general, why Thoth was chosen a judge in the argument. The reason is in the frontier position of Hermopolis, which was situated on the border between the South and the North, in ancient times the southern limit of the Lower Egypt was more advanced to the south – or a little to the north from Heracleopolis (Постовская 1952: 62), or even a little to the north from Assiut (Матъе 1956а: 20).

It is important (as we will see later) to mention here that the ibis became Thoth's symbol later and was worshipped in XV nome of Lower (!) Egypt. But Hermopolis initially worshipped the god Het-sur, who was represented by a baboon (!) and even more – a baboon with the head of a dog.

Coming to another interesting character of the myth, goddess-kite – Nekhbet, we see that she was a Lady of the religious capital of Upper Egypt – the city Nekhen. And even more – usually Nekhbet is a symbol of Upper Egypt as a whole (Липинская, Марциняк 1983: 199). Thus, the Pharaoh's crown – the kite – symbolizes the Upper Egypt, while the cobra – Lower Egypt (Тураев 1936: 167).

Extremely significant is that in the myth (and in the Egyptian mythology as a whole (Берлев 1969: 14)) the goddess-kite was Seth's wife.

Thereby, we see that the myth distinguishes two groups of gods by their origin and position in the

argument. Seth's friends are the gods of the South, while his enemies are the gods of the North, Horus, Osiris, Isis and the not mentioned so far Neith.

Neith's participation in the myth is quite symptomatic. She was a judge in the argument as well, and made a decision in favor of Osiris (Липинская, Марциняк 1983: 127). It is not surprising that Neith, "The Deterrent", was a goddess of Sais (which was another capital of the Lower Egypt, besides Buto; a temple of Neith in Sais had the name "The House of the King of Lower Egypt" (Брэстед 1915: 33)), and was represented by the "red crown", i.e. the crown of Lower Egypt (Липинская, Марциняк 1983: 198).

Let's mention here that, during the Early Kingdom, the name of Neith was a component in a great number of queens' names (see, Постовская 1959). Some researchers think that Neith was a patron of queens during the Early Kingdom (Липинская, Марциняк 1983: 198).

Well, to summarize: the god-winners were the gods of the North. But the god who lost, Seth, was the god of the South.

Does it mean that all our sources made a mistake, and in reality just the North won (and united Egypt)? I think we shouldn't make haste. The picture remains incomplete without one more character which was mentioned in the myth cursorily. I mean the god-jackal, Anubis, by one of the versions – the son of Seth and of the goddess-kite (Тураев 1936: 179). He was worshipped in the South, in Synopolis (ХИДВ 1980: 306), in the XVII nome of Upper Egypt and in the Assiut (Тураев 1936: 178), as well as in the XIII nome of the Upper Egypt, where his cult amalgamated with the cult of another local god-jackal (or god-dog) – Vepuat (Матъе 1956а: 20).

Well, according to some other versions of Egyptian mythology, Anubis had many different variants of parents, including Osiris (Липинская, Марциняк 1983: 199). But it is extremely significant, I think, that only in the South there existed a very popular, even dominating cult of the god-jackal (or god-dog). And even Seth sometimes is represented as a god-jackal.

The significance of this fact could be understood if we take into account a very interesting analysis of the ceremony known as "heb-sed" which was made by М. Е. Матие (Матъе 1956а). First of all, considering different etymologies of "heb-sed", she came to the conclusion that it means "the ceremony of god Sed". The god Sed was a hypostasis of Vepuat,

and he was worshipped in the image of a jackal as well (Матѳе 1956а: 7; Рак 2000: 159).

Next, the god Sed – is nothing else but a variant of Seth. Thus, Sed, Seth and Vepuat were the god-jackals of the Upper Egypt. Besides, we should mention here the jackal Anubis as well (as it was pointed out, he was often associated and identified with Vepuat). And, we should not forget one more god-jackal – Hentimentiu, a god-protector of Abydos and of the royal necropolis of the Early Kingdom (Коростовцев 1976: 118).

The “heb-sed” was interpreted by M. E. Matie (and it is almost a common opinion) as a ceremony of ritual renewal of Pharaoh (who was virtually dying and reviving during the ceremony). This is a very important ceremony and it was celebrated already in the Early Kingdom. The ritual of “heb-sed” presents some extremely important information.

First of all, we see that at the beginning of the ceremony Pharaoh had to stalk before the naves of gods. And, “near the southern naves he was escorted by “spirits of Nekhen” – priests in the masks of jackals (!), and near the northern naves – by “spirits of Pe”, i.e. with priests in masks of falcons”(Матѳе 1956а: 16).

Nekhen, as it was mentioned, was the religious capital of the Upper Egypt. Pe and Dep – two cities which constituted Buto, i.e., the capital of Lower Egypt. Thereby, the analysis of “heb-sed” evidently proves the correlation of god-jackal (i. e., Seth) with the South, as well as the correlation of falcon (i.e., Horus) with the North.

Should we conclude that the winner and the loser exchanged their places? Vepuat in the ceremony can't be interpreted as a god who lost. Moreover, the name “heb-sed” means, as we saw, “the ceremony of god-jackal”.

Actually, there are two main characters in the ritual of “heb-sed” – the Pharaoh and Vepuat. Vepuat is in the head of the procession during all acts of the ritual, he precedes the Pharaoh. Besides, in the course of the ritual, the Pharaoh often comes up to the sign – fetish of Vepuat for adoration and anointing.

In general, Vepuat could be considered the principal character of “heb-sed”; it is pointed out by M.E. Matie as well. She said that in ancient times, Vepuat was more worshipped than later, and the main center of his worshipping, Assiute (Sauti), played an important role in the conquering of the North by the South. Vepuat was represented as a

warlike god, and his title was “The one who captured Two Lands”, i. e. the South and the North (Матѳе 1956а: 20).

It is important, that one of the centers of Seth's worshipping, in XI nome of the Upper Egypt, is situated not more than five kilometers away from Assiut (Коростовцев 1976: 113).

Besides, to understand the status of Vepuat, we should remember that according to the Egyptian mythology, the Pharaoh revived after death and met Kebechet (she was the goddess of death and the daughter of Anubis) as a jackal (Матѳе 1956а: 27). Also, the “Pyramid Texts” write that the dead Pharaoh, assimilated with the “recumbent jackal”, or, sitting on the throne of Osiris, had “the hands of Atum” (as well as all other parts of body), but “the head of Anubis” (i.e., the head of jackal) (Коростовцев 1976: 212).

It is generally known that after death, the Pharaoh was deified just as Osiris – “the Chief of the West”, i. e., the god-king of the dead. But it is worth pointing out that Osiris as a god of the dead supplanted the other “chiefs of the West” (Hentimentiu and Anubis) only in the time of the Middle Kingdom (Коростовцев 1976: 217).

It is evident that in early times Pharaohs considered the god-jackal as their after-death hypostasis. And it could be explained, only if the god-jackal, Vepuat, was initially the personal patron of Pharaoh, his “totem”.

Thereby, the “heb-sed” is the celebration of the king-jackal, a descendant from the South. The “heb-sed” is evidence that the South conquered the North.

But what about the paradoxes we started from? To make it clear, the “heb-sed” will help us as well. Actually, Vepuat, being the “general” of the ceremony, at the same time is extremely inactive and not included in the scenario. He is sort of “a big wig”. And it makes us think that Vepuat is a much later interpolation in the long-existing story.

Who were the characters of the story? Some details of the “heb-sed” ceremony suggest that it was the ceremony of the kings of the North.

Thus, first of all the dress of Pharaoh in “heb-sed” is “the specific ritual robe of the ancient governors of Buto”, i. e., the kings of Lower Egypt (Матѳе 1956а: 15). Next, a big part of the ceremony constituted a ritual martial game, the participants of which “were fighting to possess the Horus-Pharaoh”. The participants “represented the people of Dep and Pe (two parts of Buto)” (Матѳе 1956: 23).

And, finally, “the Muu dancing” was part of the Egyptian funeral rituals. Researchers interpret this dance as an ancient funeral ritual of the kings of the Low Egypt, “Muu” is etymologized from the word meaning ‘water’, and the so called “spirits of waters” symbolized the drowned kings of Buto (Матъе 1956a: 28). Osiris, according to the most ancient version of the myth, was also drowned by Seth (Матъе 1956: 79).

Well, it is time to give some explanations. So, why was the victory of the South reflected in the myth as a defeat of its embodiment – the defeat of Seth? Earlier, I thought (Романчук 2005) that a quite consistent hypothesis could be the following.

The dynasties of the Early Kingdom indeed were descendants from the South, and it is likely that they were from Thinis. But before the establishment of the Early Kingdom, the political leaders of Egypt were, for quite a long period of time, the kings of Lower Egypt (exactly of Buto and Sais). Some of them might have been the kings of the whole of Egypt – the Cairo Stone presents some pre-dynastic kings in the double, “red and white” crown (Перепелкин 1988: 303).

It should be mentioned here that in the first half of the 20th century some researchers suggested the idea that the appearance of the Early Kingdom was preceded by the integration of the whole Egypt by Heliopolis (Туряев 1936: 167). Probably, B. A. Turayev meant K. Sethe’s hypothesis here: “Kurt Sethe went so far as to reconstruct two stages in the pre-dynastic expansion (first of Lower Egyptians southwards and then of Upper Egyptians northwards) based on some sparse allusions in later myths and on the order of importance of certain hieroglyphs in classic royal titularies” (Raffaele 2003: 99). More information I have found in the review of M. Elshamy: “Sethe envisages two Pre-dynastic unions, the first under Osiris the god of Busiris. <...> Upper Egypt under the leadership of Seth then broke away from the union, but Lower Egypt, under Horus, the leading god of the Western Delta, put down the revolt and established a second united kingdom centered on Heliopolis” (Elshamy 2014: 175).

Also, H. Kees suggested a very similar (as I can see) hypothesis: “Kees’s hypothesis was that the kingdom was first unified under the aegis of the north, but that this unification broke down for some reason and was reformed by the kings of the south, who were happy to retain the pre-existing northern system of government. <...> (Kaiser 1985)” (Elshamy 2014: 146).

Unfortunately, I have no access to the papers either by K. Sethe, or by H. Kees. So, my idea about their hypotheses is very scanty and controversial. Thus, in the same page of his review, M. Elshamy restates B. Midant-Reynes’ (2000) briefs of H. Kees and K. Sethe hypotheses: “Hermann Kees refuted Sethe’s hypotheses and proposed a different possibility, whereby there was no colonization of the south by the north, but the emergence of a powerful confederation of the southern nomes, united around the ruler of Hierakonpolis and leading eventually to the unification of the country as a whole” (Elshamy 2014: 146).

Anyway, as I can see, these hypotheses were also rejected in historiography.

Well, coming back to the question, I suggested (Романчук 2005) that long before the Early Kingdom, a durable, well organized and deep-rooted political tradition existed in Egypt. At its core, there was clearly a political tradition of Lower Egypt, the Delta. That is why the new political elite, which came from Thinis, had to incorporate themselves and their power in this already existing and strong tradition. The South, after it started to dominate the all-Egyptian state, had to “re-build” the mythological cycle of Horus and Seth, aiming to “legitimate” the new power.

The “mimicry” of jackal-kings under the falcons was the result of this process of adaption to the old political tradition. And we should point here that at the same time these jackal-kings did not forget their own “jackal nature”: “outside the funeral cult for a long time Seth was not considered as a bad, evil god. Thoth reconciled him with Horus, they both equally ruled Egypt, Seth was considered the ancestor of Pharaoh, as well as Horus” (Туряев 1936: 183). As we saw, in the funeral cult just Seth initially was the patron of Pharaoh.

Over time, this “mimicry” transformed into a new entity. This is well demonstrated by the appearance of such a mythological character as “a falcon sailing in a boat”. The thorough analysis of this character was done by O. D. Berlev (Берлев 1969)².

Thus, this is an explanation that I suggested earlier. For sure, this hypothesis had to explain some controversies. First, we saw that Lower Egyptian Maadi-Buto culture was replaced by Upper Egyptian Naqada culture.

Next, as we talk about the political tradition, we should add that “the information on Palermo Stone is the only trusted source, to some extent, which

tells us about the existence of the Lower Egyptian Kingdom” (Перепелкин 1988: 304). Some researchers doubt even the mere existence of any considerable “state” in the Delta during the Early Kingdom, and accept as a fact “the existence of two cities only – Buto and Sais” (Заблоцка 1989: 72).

Thus, E. Voegelin (2001) says: “A generation ago historians were still willing to assume the existence of two kingdoms, as well as the conquest of Lower Egypt by the southerners. Today the hypothesis is on the point of being abandoned, since the sources reveal for the Delta the existence only of small principalities that never formed a political unit prior to the conquest” (cited by: Elshamy 2014: 145).

Indeed, the archeological data demonstrate that “Maadi-Buto peoples were peaceful” (Raffaele 2003: 104). And, “From the Naqada II phase onwards, highly differentiated burials are found in cemeteries in Upper Egypt (but not in Lower Egypt)” (Bard 2003: 58). During the Naqada period “The Lower Egyptian graves are characterized by extreme simplicity without ever displaying conspicuous luxury like that found in Upper Egypt” (Midant-Reynes 2003: 56).

These data don’t allow considering the Lower Egyptian political tradition as more ancient and developed than the Upper Egyptian one. So, some recent hypotheses try to explain the genesis of the primary state in Egypt considering the Upper Egyptian areal as a place of its genesis.

Their key points could be formulated as, follows:

1. “The cults of both Horus and Seth are attested in Upper Egypt during the Pre-dynastic period; at least the Horus-falcon and the Seth-animal are represented in the Naqada I culture, and Horus is prominent in the Naqada II culture as well” (Griffiths, cited by: Elshamy 2014: 174).

2. “...rulers whose power base was originally at Abydos went on to control the entire country, perhaps in alliance with less powerful elite groups (the so-called Followers of Horus) at Hierakonpolis...” (Bard 2003: 60; see also: Крол 2006: 45).

Well, on the other hand, even taking into account all these facts we can’t explain the controversies described above through the “Upper Egypt hypothesis”. First of all, we can’t explain the controversy of “heb-sed” and the strong correlations of “Horus allies” (especially of Horus himself) with the Delta, and namely with Sais and Buto.

Extremely interesting is D. B. Prusakov’s hy-

pothesis (it was criticized (Крол 2006: 89), but these criticism is very poor and slipshod, neglecting D. B. Prusakov’s arguments), which deals more with Lower Egypt. Anyway it suggests that the Lower Egyptian population played a “passive” role only in the scenario of the emergence of the primary state, the pre-dynastic Delta was flooded in the culminating stage (IV millennium BC) of the Flanders transgression of the Mediterranean Sea, and the population of the Delta migrated to the Valley on the eve of the appearance of the Early Kingdom (Прусаков 2001: 31-49). This migration provoked “local and great demographic explosion” in the Valley; migrants were settled in the “domain” of “Upper Egyptian chiefs whose totem was falcon-Horus” and became the economic and demographic basis the swiftly rising power of Thinis’ kings (Прусаков 2001: 49). As we see, D. B. Prusakov also looks for the Upper Egyptian origin of “Horus Chieftom”.

Another idea (a little controversial to his position presented above) of D. B. Prusakov should be mentioned here as well. He suggests that Thinite kings, the worshippers of Seth, included the totem of Horus in their title for “peaceful incorporation of migrants from Delta” (Прусаков 2001: 78). He explains it as a “peculiar form of gift-exchange”, of potlatch.

This idea is extremely interesting too, and it sounds similar to my suggestions. However, it cannot explain, besides the mentioned above, one more question, why did Horus become a dominant totem?

The “potlatch explanation” here sounds doubtful. Potlatch is a competition between equals, so, it demands to consider the “migrants from the Delta” as an equal (at least) political power rather than pitiful and weak fugitives³.

Well, could all these facts and controversies be reconciled? In (Romanchuk 2014) I tried to give an explanation that would reconcile all these facts and controversies.

Thus, first of all, I thought that we anyway have to accept the existence of “a durable, well organized and deep-rooted political tradition of Lower Egypt, the Delta” (Романчук 2005) right before the Early Kingdom. The considerable primary state (or states) existed in the Delta (and not only in Upper Egypt) at the beginning of the Early Kingdom.

Did this primary state in the Delta appear as a result of previous migration of the Naqada II culture from Upper Egypt (“well before this political unification, a «cultural unification» had affected”

the whole of Egypt (Raffaele 2003: 101)? Or, we should suppose that Maadi-Buto was not a unique archeological tradition of the pre-Dynastic Delta (in other words, we should suppose that our knowledge about Maadi-Buto is insufficient⁴)? These questions are important, of course. However, they are secondary questions for this hypothesis (Romanchuk 2014). This is a point of view, I still hold today.

Next, I saw (Romanchuk 2014) the possibility of reconciliation if we suppose that it was the Early Kingdom (and not the previous state — as K. Sethe and his followers thought) which was established by king-worshippers of Horus from the Delta. The “Thinite kings” were not from Thinis. Although this supposition sounds even more strange and paradoxical, but it is least of all controversial (Romanchuk 2014).

This hypothesis doesn't need from us to “re-understand” any word from the myth about the “dispute between Horus and Seth”. It explains why the Early Kingdom dynasties worshipped Horus in the first place. As well as why “Thinite kings” built their main tombs in Saqqara, but much smaller (and, probably, the cenotaphs only (Постовская 1959; Прусаков 2001: 37; Крол 2006: 150)) in Abydos.

Do the written sources contradict this hypothesis? If we look at the sources of the Early Kingdom and pre-Dynastic periods – not at all. Thus, one of the most important, the “Palette of Narmer” presents on its front side (!) the Pharaoh (who, as Egyptology supposes, first united “Two Lands”) in “red crown” (i. e., in the crown of Lower Egypt; it is interesting that the first picture of red crown appeared on the clay pottery shard during Naqada I (Шой 2006: 16)) and dressed in the “Muu robe”. On the rear side the Pharaoh is depicted in a white crown (i. e., the Upper Egypt crown), but dressed in the same “Muu robe” and in front of him the “god-falcon Horus” is keeping prisoners (Шой 2006: 16-21)⁵. Narmer is depicted in red crown in another important source, his mace, as well (Крол 2006: 84).

A look at historiography demonstrates that “there are sixty and four ways” to interpret the “written” sources of this period. But could this palette and mace be interpreted as a message about the “victory of the South above the Delta”? I don't think so, especially if we don't know anything about Manetho and Herodotus.

On the “Mace of Scorpio”, i. e. the mace of one of the pre-Dynastic kings, the Pharaoh is depicted

in a red crown too (Крол 2006: 92). Not less important, I think, is the fact that “during the second half of Dynasty I and during Dynasty II, the first person after the king was the «keeper of the Red House's seal»” (i. e., the treasury of Lower Egypt. – A.R.) (Постовская 1947: 243). During the rule of Peribsen and Khasekhemwy (kings of the second half of Dynasty II – A.R.), we see the emergence of such functions as “keeper of seal for all documents of the South” and “keeper of seal for tribute of the North” (Постовская 1947: 247).

In other words, the mentioned by the myth “usurpation of power by Seth” could probably better be interpreted as a “story” which tells about the “revolution” in the mid-term of Dynasty II and the kings who named themselves after Seth⁶. At the same time, we can suppose the interpolation of Vepuat in “heb-sed” as a principal character of this ritual. “Thus, this is in brief the least of all controversial explanations I see now”, I concluded (Romanchuk 2014).

However, re-thinking the problem today, I would like to say some words about the alternative explanation. This alternative explanation presumes the revival of K. Sethe's hypothesis (at a new level, of course). Thus, this explanation should accept that the Lower Egypt state tradition appeared (and was very developed) even long before the Naqada conquest. That is why this Lower Egypt political tradition, being stronger and more developed, influenced the Naqada political tradition so much. The defeated “defeated” the winner. That is why the Early Kingdom at its appearance used the Lower Egyptian political tradition for self-legitimation.

However, to choose the latter explanation we need to obtain the archaeological data that could prove such a supposition. And, anyway I suppose that I have presented here only some preliminarily outlines to this complicated issues.

Acknowledgments. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Iulia Timotina. It took a lot of efforts on her behalf to check and correct the English version of this text. Besides, Josef Ricci helped me much in this task.

Notes

¹ The paper (Романчук 2005) was written before the Internet had provided extensive access to the sources and literature. It made it impossible for me to take into account some important opinions and papers.

² Let's consider it in more detail. This god, "the falcon, sailing in the boat", was worshiped "in the Middle Egypt only, as we suppose with enough reliability". The center of its worshiping was, starting from the VI dynasty at least, the XII nome of the Upper Egypt (Берлев 1969: 3). But in the X nome of the Upper Egypt, in the city named Anteopolis by the Greeks, "two falcons in the boat" were worshipped. And, as O. D. Berlev demonstrated, the spelling of Anteopolis god's name proves that this god was a doubled "falcon in the boat" (Берлев 1969: 4,8).

"In the time of Ptolemy, in the temple in Edfu, the name of the god of XII nome was spelt with a sign, which was used in the title of Pharaoh to represent the so called "golden name" of Pharaoh. It is considered that this sign reflected the triumph of Horus over Seth" (Берлев 1969: 5).

Consequently, "the falcon in the" was interpreted as a hypostasis of Horus the Winner. But O. D. Berlev read the name of this god as Nemty, and identified him with a character of the myth about the dispute between Horus and Seth. This character, a god-boatman, enticed by a gold ring of Isis, broke the ban and transported her to the island of judgment between Horus and Seth. That is why he was punished, "the fore part of his legs (i.e. – the feet) was cut" (Берлев 1969: 26).

So, the god-winner turned into a god-sufferer and wanderer (Берлев 1969: 26). The sign of "golden name" was used to spell the name of god of XII nome in much later times (Берлев 1969: 5).

But extremely important is his another conclusion, "the falcon in the" at the heart was ... Seth. Thus, the god of the X nome is Seth. He was depicted as Seth, and directly named as Seth, and he was escorted by the goddess-kite Nebtho – she was, as we remember, Seth's wife.

"By his nature, which can't be masked by minor details, this god is Seth, and not the hypostasis, which reconciles Horus and Seth" (Берлев 1969: 14). In this context we should remember that the kings of the Early Kingdom celebrated the so called "Celebration to Horus" and "defined it by the hieroglyph «wooden barge»" (Турпаев 1936: 176). Besides, we know that the earliest kings of I dynasty wrote their names in a frame, the upper line of which was concave, and a falcon was drawn in this concave (Перепелкин 1988: 302). I would like to emphasize this detail, though O. D. Berlev especially points out that this archaic variant of spelling of the king's name has nothing to do with

the sign "the falcon in the" (Берлев 1969: 16). D. B. Prusakov also presents here some interesting facts (Прусиков 2001: 57-59).

Concerning the "golden name", it is worth mentioning also that just gold was the sign of Seth in Ombos (Берлев 1969: 5). Ombos is a name of Naqada during Ptolemaic and Roman periods; "the ancient name of Naqada is Nubt ('[city] of gold')" (Bard 2003: 58).

These facts, and some others (for details see: Романчук 2005: 333) made me think that initially "the golden name" of Pharaoh was his name as Seth.

Whether I am right or not in this idea, anyway, the example of "the falcon in the" demonstrates, I think, which were the ways of transformations of Seth and what could be the final stage of these transformations.

³ Thereby, even if we agree with D. B. Prusakov's hypothesis, it needs some corrections. That is, we have to suppose that the Flanders transgression (provoking indeed large-scale migration of population from delta to the valley) only made this state primarily in Lower Egypt to move its political center more to the south. But, I believe, the transgression did not destroy either this state or its political tradition. Otherwise, we would not observe the process of adaptation of the southern political tradition to the northern.

⁴ Concerning the "simplicity of Buto-Maadi culture", especially of its burial rite, we, besides the postulated by D. B. Prusakov inundation of the Delta (which probably hid from us some important archeological sites), should remember about the "drowned kings of Buto" and "Muu". This could be interpreted as evidence that burial rites of Buto-Maadi's elite was archeologically elusive.

⁵ It is interesting that the iconography of the so called "serpopards" (two lions with long necks) on the "Palette of Narmer" was "adopted from the iconography of early Mesopotamia" (Шой 2006: 16-21).

⁶ It is worth mentioning that simultaneously the royal necropolis in Abydos (Thinis) got temporarily neglected.

References

- Bard K. 2003. The Emergence of the Egyptian State. In: Shaw I. (ed.). The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt. Oxford: University Press, p. 57-82.
- Elshamy M. 2014. Ancient Egypt: The Primal Age of Divine Revelation. Vol. I. Cairo.
- Midant-Reynes B. 2003. The Naqada Period. In: Shaw I. (ed.). The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt.

Oxford: University Press, p. 41-56.

O'Connor D. 2009. Abydos. Egypt's First Pharaohs and the Cult of Osiris. New York: Thames & Hudson Inc.

Raffaele F. 2003. Dynasty 0. In: *Archeo-Nil* 17, p. 99-141.

Romanchuk A. 2014. The "Horus and Seth Argument" and the Emergence of the Early Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. In: https://www.academia.edu/7638775/Romanchuk_A_A_2014_The_Horus_and_Seth_Argument_and_the_Emergence_of_the_Early_Kingdom_of_the_Ancient_Egypt_In_World_Congress_on_State_Origins_and_Related_Subjects_Wigry_Poland_7_13_September_2014 (visited 09.02.2023).

Антес Р. 1977. Мифология в древнем Египте. In: Якобсон В.А. (отв. ред.). Мифологии древнего мира. Москва: ГРВЛ – Наука, с. 55-121. / Antec R. 1977. Mifologija v drevnem Egipte. In: Jakobson V.A. (otv. red.). Mifologii drevnego mira. Moskva: GRVL – Nauka, s. 55-121.

Берлев О. Д. 1969. Сокол, плывущий в ладье, иероглиф и бог. In: Вестник древней истории, № 1, с. 3-30. / Berlev O. D. 1969. Sokol, plyvushchii v lad'e, ieroglif i bog. In: Vestnik drevnei istorii, № 1, s. 3-30.

Берлев О. Д. 1984. Источники по истории Раннего царства Египта. In: Кузищин В. И. (ред.). Источниковедение истории Древнего Востока. Москва: Высшая школа, с. 20-59. / Berlev O. D. 1984. Istochniki po istorii Rannego tsarstva Egipta. In: Kuzishchin V. I. (red.). Istochnikovedenie istorii Drevnego Vostoka. Moskva: Vysshiaia shkola, s. 20-59.

Брэстед Дж. Г. 1915. История Египта. Т. 1. Москва: Книгоиздательство Сабашниковых. / Brested Dzh. G. 1915. Istoriia Egipta. T. 1. Moskva: Knigoizdatel'stvo Sabashnikovykh.

Заблоцка Ю. 1989. История Ближнего Востока в древности. Москва: Наука. / Zablotska Iu. 1989. Istoriia Blizhnego Vostoka v drevnosti. Moskva: Nauka.

Коростовцев М. А. 1976. Религия Древнего Египта. Москва: Наука. / Korostovtsev M. A. 1976. Religija Drevnego Egipta. Moskva: Nauka.

Крол А. А. 2006. Египет первых фараонов. Хеб-сед и становление древнеегипетского государства. Москва: Рудомино. / Krol A. A. 2006. Egipt pervykh faraonov. Kheb-sed i stanovlenie drevneegipetskogo gosudarstva. Moskva: Rudomino.

Липинская Я., Марциняк М. 1983. Мифология

Древнего Египта. Москва: Искусство. / Lipinskaia Ia., Martsiniak M. 1983. Mifologija Drevnego Egipta. Moskva: Iskusstvo.

Матъе М. Э. 1956. Древнеегипетские мифы (исследование и переводы текстов с комментариями). Москва-Ленинград: Издательство АН СССР. / Mat'e M. E. 1956. Drevneegipetskie mify (issledovanie i perevody tekstov s kommentariiami). Moskva-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR.

Матъе М. Э. 1956а. Хеб-Сед (из истории древнеегипетской религии). In: Вестник древней истории, № 3, с. 7-28. / Mat'e M. E. 1956a. Kheb-Sed (iz istorii drevneegipetskoj religii). In: Vestnik drevnei istorii, no. 3, s. 7-28.

Перепелкин Ю. Я. 1988. Древний Египет. Раннее царство. In: Бонгард-Левин Г. М. (ред.). История Древнего Востока. Зарождение первых классовых обществ и древнейшие очаги цивилизации. Москва: Наука, с. 295-325. / Perepelkin Iu. Ia. 1988. Drevnii Egipt. Rannee tsarstvo. In: Bongard-Levin G. M. (red.). Istoriia Drevnego Vostoka. Zarozhdenie pervykh klassovykh obshchestv i drevneishie ochagi tsivilizatsii. Moskva: Nauka, s. 295-325.

Перепелкин Ю. Я. 2000. История Древнего Египта. Санкт-Петербург: Летний Сад. / Perepelkin Iu. Ia. 2000. Istoriia Drevnego Egipta. Sankt-Peterburg: Letnii Sad.

Постовская Н. М. 1947. Начальные стадии развития государственного аппарата в Древнем Египте. In: Вестник древней истории, № 1, с. 233-249. / Postovskaia N. M. 1947. Nachal'nye stadii razvitiia gosudarstvennogo apparata v Drevnem Egipte. In: Vestnik drevnei istorii, no. 1, s. 233-249.

Постовская Н. М. 1952. Царь Скорпион и его время. In: Вестник древней истории, № 1, с. 49-67. / Postovskaia N. M. 1952. Tsar' Skorpiion i ego vremia. In: Vestnik drevnei istorii, no. 1, s. 49-67.

Постовская Н. М. 1959. Абидос и Мемфис (к определению памятников I династии). In: Вестник древней истории, № 3, с. 103-129. / Postovskaia N. M. 1959. Abidos i Memfis (k opredeleniiu pamiatnikov I dinastii). In: Vestnik drevnei istorii, no. 3, s. 103-129.

Прусаков Д. Б. 2001. Раннее государство в древнем Египте. Москва: ИВ РАН. / Prusakov D. B. 2001. Rannee gosudarstvo v drevnem Egipte. Moskva: IV RAN.

Рак И. В. 2000. Египетская мифология. Санкт-Петербург: Нева – Летний сад. / Rak I.

V. 2000. Egipetskaia mifologiiia. Sankt-Peterburg: Neva – Letnii sad.

Романчук А. А. 2005. Спор Хора и Сета и возникновение Раннего Царства Древнего Египта. In: Технология власти (Нестор 7). Санкт-Петербург: Нестор-История, с. 325-334. / Romanchuk A. A. 2005. Spor Khora i Seta i vozni-knovenie Rannego Tsarstva Drevnego Egipta. In: Tekhnologiia vlasti (Nestor 7). Sankt-Peterburg: Nestor-Istoriia, s. 325-334.

Савельева Т. И. 1975. Абидосский указ царя Нефериркара (XXV век до н. э.). In: Древний Восток. К 75-летию академика М. А. Коростовцева. Т. 1. Москва: Наука, с. 113-140. / Savel'eva T. I. 1975. Abidoskii ukaz tsaria Nefer-irkara (XXV vek do n. e.). In: Drevnii Vostok. K 75-letiiu akademika M. A. Korostovtseva. T. 1. Moskva: Nauka, s. 113-140.

Салинз М. 1999. Экономика каменного века. Москва: ОГИ. / Salinz M. 1999. Ekonomika kamennogo veka. Moskva: OGI.

Тураев Б. А. 1936. История Древнего Востока. Ч. 1. Ленинград. / Turaev B. A. 1936. Istoriia Drevnego Vostoka. Ch. 1. Leningrad.

ХИДВ 1980: Коростовцев М. А. (ред.). Хрестоматия по истории Древнего Востока. Ч. 1. 1980. Москва: Высшая школа. / KhIDV 1980: Korostovtsev M. A. (red.). Khrestomatiiia po istorii Drevnego Vostoka. Ch. 1. 1980. Moskva: Vysshaia shkola.

Шоу Я. 2006. Древний Египет. / пер. с англ. И. Сергеевой. Москва: АСТ. / Shou Ia. 2006. Drevnii Egipet. / per. s angl. I. Sergeevoi. Moskva: AST.

Alexei Romanciuc (Chișinău, Republica Moldova). Doctor în culturologie, Centrul de Etnologie, Institutul Patrimoniului Cultural.

Алексей Романчук (Кишинев, Республика Молдова). Доктор культурологии, Центр этнологии, Институт культурного наследия.

Aleksey Romanchuk (Chisinau, Republic of Moldova). PhD in Culturology, Center of Ethnology, Institute of Cultural Heritage.

E-mail: dierevo5@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-2021-7958