

The Name of Thoth

By David A. Cintron

Probably the most enigmatic god in the Ancient Egyptian pantheon was Thoth. For one thing this Greek rendition of his name came from the original Egyptian *dhwty* that can only through informed etymological derivation be found to sound something like “Thoth”. The hieroglyph for Thoth was an Ibis. He was also represented as a baboon and was said to represent the Moon. The only obvious connection between these two is that both are white, but the hieroglyph for baboon was used with a phrase meaning “the great white one”, an idiom for “ancestor”, who was also presumed to have wisdom.

 *𓂏𓂏𓂏 Dhwty n. div. Thoth, varr. 𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏, 𓂏𓂏𓂏, 𓂏𓂏𓂏, late 𓂏𓂏, cf. Boylan, Thoth.*

Thoth was the god of writing, said to have brought the written word and wisdom to Man. Thoth was considered the source of all knowledge and so Thoth often stands in scenes where dead are judged by weighing the heart against the feather of truth. If the heart is heavier, then that spirit has not followed *Ma'at*.

Certainly Thoth knew all. In a story from the Old Kingdom found on a document called the Westcar Papyrus, a magician is deemed great because he “knows the number of the secret chambers of the sanctuary of Thoth.” What’s more, the Egyptian Thoth became the Greek Hermes, after whom the Hermetica is named. The source of the Hermetic knowledge is named Hermes Trismegistus, which can be translated as “Thoth three times great”.

Re and Thoth form a pair of sun and Moon. The big unknown has been where the name of *dhwty* came from and how the Moon connects to any of this.

This name can be broken down into three components. The first syllable *d* is the root for the word “body”.¹ The second syllable *hwt* is the word “temple”.² The suffix *-y* means “dual”.³ Putting this together the name of *dhwty* can be translated as “the body of the two temples”. What the two temples are is revealed in that the word for temple is a synonym for enclosure. If we take the fact that Thoth is represented by the Moon, the fact that the Moon is the “body of the two enclosures”, and throw in the fact that the Egyptians felt that day and night were two separate worlds then we can see where the name of *dhwty* comes from.

The answer is that the Moon is the *only* heavenly body commonly visible during both day and night and hence, Thoth is the only god who belongs to both worlds.

In “The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth” translated by Richard Jasnow and Karl-Theodor Zauzich, line 355 translation refers to Thoth as “He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands”.

All other facts about Thoth can be derived from the dual world symbolism. The Moon circles the Earth day and night, so the Moon sees all, and so the Moon knows all. The Moon can be seen

to directly influence the life of men and women as the Moon brings the tides, menstrual cycles and it reflects the light of the Sun to dispel darkness with sunlight.

The Moon's connection with the Sun made the Sun and Moon the right and left Eyes of Horus, respectively. Together with Horus, the spirit of Amun sent to Earth to bring Mankind to life, these three bodies bring both physical and spiritual light to the world of Man.

The Moon as the left Eye of Horus is also subject to astronomical references encoded as anthropomorphic events. The most significant of these is the story of the battle between Horus and Seth. In this story Seth tears out the Eyes of Horus and Horus tears out the testicles of Seth. This story is often interpreted if not as a physical battle between male forces then a sexual one, but it is in truth an astronomical event.

“Hear it, O Re, this word which I say to you; your nature is in me, O Re, and your nature is nourished in me, O Re ... which was born before the Eye of Horus was gouged out, before the testicles of Seth were torn off...”⁴

- Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts, from Utterance 570

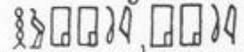
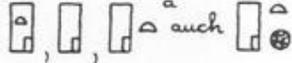
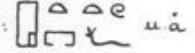
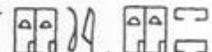
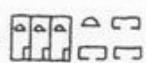
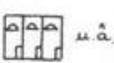
If the Eyes of Horus are the Sun and Moon, and Seth is the storm, then it is the storm clouds that block the Eyes of Horus from their connection with Mankind. So astronomically speaking, Seth has the power to tear out the Eyes of Horus. Consequently, as the Moon travels within the primordial waters to which Seth is connected, this event repeats unto eternity, the Moon going through a cycle of being “injured” and “healing” once a month.

Conversely, if Seth is the presence of primordial Chaos in the world of Mankind, and we look at the original source of the translation of the word “testicles” we find that it is “lower parts”. As Seth is in one of his aspects the turbulent atmosphere of Earth, the two lower parts of the atmosphere in Egyptian terms would have been the horizons of morning and night which separate the worlds of light and darkness. The Sun and Moon as the Eyes of Horus erase this separation by bringing light to the world during both day and night. So, astronomically speaking, Horus removes the lower parts of Seth. This event also repeats itself.

Thus the story of the battle of Horus and Seth defines the astronomical relationship between Earth, Sun and Moon or, to put it another way, the physical worlds of Gods and Man.

David Cintron, March 2011

1. Faulkner, A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, p. 317
2. Ibid, 165
3. Allen, Middle Egyptian, 37
4. Faulkner, Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts
5. Wörterbuch III.1, definition 4:

<p>h.t (hwt?) </p>	<p>belegt seit <u>Syr.</u>; Nä. mit Artikel <u>t3</u>. Urspr. wohl <u>hwt</u>, vgl. den alten Eigennamen 4  Erhalten in Kopt. (NEB) Ⲯⲱ, ⲉⲗⲮ(ⲱⲡ), ⲉⲗⲮ(ⲡⲬⲖⲓ) u. a. m. grösseres Haus u. ä.</p>	<p> auch  ^{xn} mit Suffix:  u. ä Dual ^a ,  Plur ,  u. ä</p>
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