

3. *Bw3t*, the reed thicket, as in P. Lansing, 2,1. See p. 175, n. 1.
4. I.e., The callous behavior of the woman deserves to be punished by death.
5. Modern El-Balamun in the northern Delta.
6. The name for the Nile in its main course.

HORUS AND SETH

P. Chester Beatty I, Recto

Written in a beautiful hand, the papyrus dates from the reign of Ramses V and comes from Thebes. The tale occupies the first fifteen pages of the *recto* and the first eight lines of page 16.

Publication: Gardiner, *Chester Beatty I*, pp. 8-26 and pls. 1-16. Gardiner, *LES*, pp. 37-60.

Translation: J. Capart, *CdE*, 8, (1933), 243-255. Lefebvre, *Romans*, pp. 178-203. Brunner-Traut, *Märchen*, pp. 93-107. E. F. Wente in Simpson, *Literature*, pp. 108-126.

Translation and study: J. Spiegel, *Die Erzählung vom Streite des Horus und Seth in Pap. Beatty I als Literaturwerk*. Leipziger ägyptologische Studien, 9 (Glückstadt, 1937).

On the myth of Horus and Seth see: H. Kees, *Horus und Seth als Götterpaar*. 2 vols. Mitteilungen der vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft, Berlin, vols. 28, 1 and 29, 1 (Leipzig, 1923-1924). J. G. Griffiths, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth from Egyptian and Classical Sources* (Liverpool, 1960). H. te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion* (Leiden, 1967).

(1,1) [This is] the judging of Horus and Seth, they of mysterious forms, mightiest of existing princes and lords. A [divine] youth was seated before the All-Lord, claiming the office of his father Osiris, he of beautiful appearances, [the son of] Ptah, who brightens [the netherworld] with his lustre, while Thoth presented the Eye to the great prince of On.¹

Then spoke Shu, the son of Re, before [Atum], the great prince of On: "Right rules might. Do it by saying: 'Give the office to Horus.'" Then Thoth said to the Ennead: "That is right a million times!" Then Isis uttered a loud shout and was overjoyed. She [stood] before the All-Lord and said: "Northwind, go west, give the news to Wennofer!"² Then said Shu, the son of Re: "Presenting the Eye (to Horus) seems right to the Ennead." Said the All-Lord: "What is this, your making decisions on your own?" Then [Onuris] said: "He (Thoth) shall take the royal name-ring to Horus, and the White Crown shall be placed on his head!" Then the All-Lord was silent for a long moment, for he was angry with the Ennead.

Then Seth, the son of Nut, spoke: "Let him be sent outside with me, and I shall let you see my hand prevailing over his hand in the presence of the Ennead, since one knows no other means [of] dispossessing him." Then Thoth said to him: "Do we not know what is wrong? Shall one give the office of Osiris to Seth while his son Horus is there?" Then Pre-Harakhti became exceedingly angry, for it was Pre's wish (2,1) to give the office to Seth, great of strength, the son of Nut. And Onuris uttered a loud cry before the Ennead, saying: "What shall we do?" Then said Atum, the great prince of On: "Summon Banebdjede,³ the great living god, that he may judge between the two youths."

They brought Banebdjede, the great god who dwells in Setit, before Atum, along with Ptah-Tatenen. He said to them: "Judge between the two youths, so that they will stop wrangling here every day!" Then Banebdjede, the great living god, replied to what he had said: "Let us not decide in ignorance. Have a letter sent to Neith the Great, the divine mother. What she will say, we will do."

Then the Ennead said to Banebdjede, the great living god: "They have been judged once already in the hall 'Way-of-Truth.'" And the Ennead said to Thoth in the presence of the All-Lord: "Write a letter to Neith the Great, the divine mother, in the name of the All-Lord, the Bull of On." And Thoth said: "I will, I will." He sat down to write the letter, which said:

"The King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Re-Atum, beloved of Thoth; The Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan; the Aten who illumines the Two Lands with his lustre; the Hapy mighty in his rising: Re-Harakhti; to⁴ Neith the Great, the divine mother, who shone on the first face, who is alive, hale, and young. The living *Ba* of the All-Lord, the Bull of On who is the good King of Egypt, (says) as follows: I your servant spend the night on behalf of Osiris taking counsel for the Two Lands every day, while Sobk endures forever. What shall we do about these two people, who for eighty years now have been before the tribunal, and (3,1) no one knows how to judge between the two? Write us what we should do!"

Then Neith the Great, the divine mother, sent a letter to the Ennead, saying: "Give the office of Osiris to his son Horus, and don't do those big misdeeds that are out of place. Or I shall get angry and the sky will crash to the ground! And let it be said to the All-Lord, the Bull of On: Double Seth's possessions. Give him Anat and Astarte, your two daughters. And place Horus on the seat of his father!"

The letter of Neith the Great, the divine mother, reached the Ennead as they sat in the hall "Horned-Horus," and the letter was placed in the hand of Thoth. Then Thoth read it aloud before the

All-Lord and the whole Ennead. And they said with one voice: "This goddess is right!" Thereupon the All-Lord became angry at Horus and said to him: "You are feeble in body, and this office is too big for you, you youngster whose breath smells bad." Then Onuris became angry a million times and so was the Ennead, the Council of Thirty.⁵ The god Baba⁶ got up and said to Pre-Harakhti: "Your shrine is empty!"⁷ Then Pre-Harakhti felt offended by the answer given him, and he lay down on his back, his heart very sore. Then the Ennead came out, shouting loudly at Baba and saying to him: "Go away; you have committed a very great crime!" And they went to their tents.

The great god spent a day (4,1) lying on his back in his pavilion, his heart very sore and he was alone. After a long while, Hathor, Lady of the southern sycamore, came and stood before her father, the All-Lord. She uncovered her nakedness before him; thereupon the great god laughed at her. He got up and sat with the great Ennead; and he said to Horus and Seth: "Speak for yourselves!"

Then Seth, great of strength, the son of Nut, said: "I, I am Seth, greatest of strength among the Ennead. For I slay the enemy of Pre every day, standing in the prow of the Bark-of-Millions, and no other god can do it. I should receive the office of Osiris!" Then they said: "Seth, the son of Nut, is right." Then Onuris and Thoth cried aloud, saying: "Shall one give the office to the uncle while the bodily son is there?" Then Banebdjede, the great living god, said: "Shall one give the office to the youngster while Seth, his elder brother, is there?"⁸

Then the Ennead cried out aloud to the All-Lord and said to him: "What are these words you spoke which are not worthy of being heard?"⁹ Then said Horus, the son of Isis: "It is not good to defraud me before the Ennead and to take the office of my father Osiris away from me!" And Isis was angry with the Ennead, and she took an oath by the god before the Ennead, saying: "As my mother lives, the goddess Neith, and as Ptah-Tatenen lives, the tall-plumed horn-curber of gods, these matters shall be laid before Atum, the great prince of On, and also Khepri in his bark!" Then the Ennead said to her: "Don't be angry. Right will be given to him who is right. All that you said shall be done."

Then Seth, the son of (5,1) Nut, was angry with the Ennead because of the words they had said to Isis the Great, the divine mother. And Seth said to them: "I shall take my scepter of 4,500 pounds and kill one of you each day!" And Seth took an oath by the All-Lord, saying: "I shall not contend in court as long as Isis is in it!" Then Pre-Harakhti said to them: "Cross over to the Island-in-the-Midst and judge them there. And tell Nemty, the ferryman: 'Do not ferry across any woman who looks like Isis.'" So the Ennead crossed over to the Island-in-the-Midst, and they sat down to eat bread.

Isis came and approached Nemty, the ferryman, as he was sitting near his boat. She had changed herself into an old woman who walked with a stoop, and a small signet ring of gold was on her hand. She said to him: "I have come to you in order that you ferry me across to the Island-in-the-Midst. For I have come with this bowl of flour for the young boy who is tending some cattle on the Island-in-the-Midst these five days, and he is hungry." He said to her: "I have been told: 'Don't ferry any woman across.'" She said to him: "It was on account of Isis that this was said to you." He said to her: "What will you give me for ferrying you across to the Island-in-the-Midst?" Isis said to him: "I will give you this cake." He said to her: "What is it to me, your cake? Shall I ferry you across to the Island-in-the-Midst when I was told, 'Ferry no woman across,' in exchange for your cake?" (6,1) Then she said to him: "I will give you the signet ring of gold that is on (my) hand." He said to her: "Give me the signet ring of gold." She gave it to him, and he ferried her across to the Island-in-the-Midst.

Now as she walked under the trees, she looked and saw the Ennead as they sat eating bread before the All-Lord in his pavilion. And Seth looked and saw her coming from afar. Thereupon she pronounced a spell of hers and changed herself into a young girl of beautiful body, the like of which did not exist in the whole land. Then he desired her very much.

Seth got up from sitting and eating bread with the great Ennead and went to meet her, while no one but himself had seen her. He stood behind a sycamore, called to her, and said to her: "I am here with you, handsome girl!" She said to him: "Let me tell, my great lord: As for me, I was the wife of a herdsman and I bore him a son. My husband died, and the boy began to tend the cattle¹⁰ of his father. But then a stranger came. He sat down in my stable and spoke thus to my child: 'I shall beat you, I shall take your father's cattle, and I shall throw you out!' So he spoke to him. Now I wish to make you his defender." Then Seth said to her: "Shall one give the cattle to the stranger while the man's son is here?" Thereupon Isis changed herself into a kite, flew up, and sat on top of an acacia. She called to Seth and said to him: "Weep for yourself! Your own mouth has said it. Your own cleverness (7,1) has judged you! What do you want?"

Then he began to weep; and he went to where Pre-Harakhti was and wept. Pre-Harakhti said to him: "What do you want?" Seth said to him: "That evil woman came to me again. She has cheated me again. She had changed herself into a beautiful girl before me, and she said to me: 'I was the wife of a herdsman who is dead. I had born him a son; he tended the cattle of his father. Then a stranger intruded in my stable to be with my son, and I gave him food. And many days after this the intruder said to my son: 'I shall beat you; I shall take

your father's cattle; it shall be mine." Thus he spoke to my son.' So she said to me." Then Pre-Harakhti said to him: "What did you say to her?" And Seth told him: "I said to her: 'Shall one give the cattle to the stranger while the man's son is there?' So I said to her. 'One must beat the intruder with a stick, and throw him out, and set the son in the place of his father.' So I said to her."

Then Pre-Harakhti said to him: "Now look, you yourself have judged yourself. What do you want?" Seth said to him: "Let Nemty, the ferryman, be brought, and let a great punishment be done to him, saying: 'Why did you ferry her across?' So one shall say to him." Then Nemty, the ferryman, was brought before the Ennead, and they removed his toes. And (8,1) Nemty forswore gold to this day before the great Ennead, saying: "Gold shall be an abomination to me in my town!"

The Ennead crossed over to the western shore and sat on the mountain. Now when evening had come, Pre-Harakhti and Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, wrote to the Ennead, saying: "Why are you sitting here again? Are you going to make the two youths spend their lifetime in the court? When my letter reaches you, you shall place the White Crown on the head of Horus, son of Isis, and appoint him to the position of his father Osiris."

Thereupon Seth became exceedingly angry, and the Ennead said to him: "Why are you angry? Should one not act according to the word of Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, and Pre-Harakhti?" Then the White Crown was placed on the head of Horus, son of Isis. And Seth cried out aloud to the Ennead in anger and said: "Shall the office be given to my young brother while I, his elder brother, am here?" And he took an oath, saying: "The White Crown shall be removed from the head of Horus, son of Isis, and he shall be thrown into the water! I shall yet contend with him for the office of ruler!" Then Pre-Harakhti acted accordingly.

Seth said to Horus: "Come, let us change ourselves into two hippopotamuses and plunge into the depth in the midst of the sea. And he who emerges in the course of three whole months, he shall not receive the office." So they plunged together. Then Isis sat down weeping and said: "Seth will kill Horus, my son!" She took a quantity of yarn and made a rope. She took a *deben* of copper and cast it into a harpoon. She tied the rope to it and threw it into the water at the spot where Horus and Seth had plunged. (9,1) Then the weapon bit into the body of her son Horus. And Horus cried out aloud, saying: "Come to me, mother Isis, my mother! Tell your weapon to let go of me! I am Horus, son of Isis!" Then Isis cried out aloud and said to her weapon: "Let go of him! He is Horus my son." And the weapon let go of him.

Then she threw it again into the water, and it bit into the body of Seth. And Seth cried out aloud, saying: "What have I done to you, my sister Isis? Call to your weapon to let go of me! I am your maternal brother, O Isis!" Then she felt very sorry for him. And Seth called to her, saying: "Do you love the stranger more than your maternal brother Seth?" Then Isis called to her weapon, saying: "Let go of him! It is the maternal brother of Isis whom you are biting." And the weapon let go of him.

Thereupon Horus, son of Isis, was angry with his mother Isis. He came out, his face fierce like that of a leopard and his knife of 16 *deben* in his hand. He cut off the head of his mother Isis, took it in his arms, and went up the mountain. Then Isis changed herself into a statue of flint without a head. And Pre-Harakhti said to Thoth: "Who is she who is coming and has no head?" Thoth said to Pre-Harakhti: "My good lord, she is Isis the Great, the divine mother. Her son Horus has cut off her head." Then (10,1) Pre-Harakhti cried out aloud and said to the Ennead: "Let us go and punish him severely!" So the Ennead went up into the mountains to search for Horus, son of Isis.

As for Horus, he was lying under a *shenusha*-tree in the oasis country. Then Seth found him, seized him, and threw him on his back on the mountain. He removed his two eyes from their places and buried them on the mountain. Toward morning his two eyeballs became two bulbs, and they grew into lotuses. And Seth came and told Pre-Harakhti falsely: "I did not find Horus," although he had found him. Then Hathor, Mistress of the southern sycamore, went and found Horus as he lay weeping on the desert. Thereupon she caught a gazelle, milked it, and said to Horus: "Open your eyes, that I may put this milk in." He opened his eyes and she put the milk in. She put it in the right eye; she put it in the left eye; she said to him: "Open your eyes!" He opened his eyes. She looked at them; she found them healed. Then she went to tell Pre-Harakhti: "I found Horus deprived of his eyes by Seth, but I restored him. Now here he comes."

Then the Ennead said: "Horus and Seth shall be summoned and judged!" So they were brought before the Ennead. The All-Lord spoke before the great Ennead to Horus and Seth: "Go and heed what I tell you: Eat, (11,1) drink, and leave us in peace! Stop quarreling here every day!"

Then Seth said to Horus: "Come, let us have a feast day at my house." And Horus said to him: "I will, I will." Now when evening had come, a bed was prepared for them, and they lay down together. At night, Seth let his member become stiff and he inserted it between the thighs of Horus. And Horus placed his hands between his thighs and caught the semen of Seth. Then Horus went to tell his mother Isis: "Come, Isis my mother, come and see what Seth did to me." He

opened his hand and let her see the semen of Seth. She cried out aloud, took her knife, cut off his hand and threw it in the water. Then she made a new hand for him. And she took a dab of sweet ointment and put it on the member of Horus. She made it become stiff, placed it over a pot, and he let his semen drop into it.

In the morning Isis went with the semen of Horus to the garden of Seth and said to the gardener of Seth: "What plants does Seth eat here with you?" The gardener said to her: "The only plant Seth eats here with me is lettuce." Then Isis placed the semen of Horus on them. Seth came according to his daily custom and ate the lettuces which he usually ate. Thereupon he became pregnant with the semen of Horus.

Then Seth went and said to (12,1) Horus: "Come, let us go, that I may contend with you in the court." And Horus said to him: "I will, I will." So they went to the court together. They stood before the great Ennead, and they were told: "Speak!" Then Seth said: "Let the office of ruler be given to me, for as regards Horus who stands here, I have done a man's deed to him." Then the Ennead cried out aloud, and they spat out before Horus. And Horus laughed at them; and Horus took an oath by the god, saying: "What Seth has said is false. Let the semen of Seth be called, and let us see from where it will answer. Then let mine be called, and let us see from where it will answer."

Thoth, lord of writing, true scribe of the Ennead, laid his hand on the arm of Horus and said: "Come out, semen of Seth!" And it answered him from the water in the midst of the marsh.⁷ Then Thoth laid his hand on the arm of Seth and said: "Come out, semen of Horus!" And it said to him: "Where shall I come out?" Thoth said to it: "Come out of his ear." It said to him: "Should I come out of his ear, I who am a divine seed?" Then Thoth said to it: "Come out from the top of his head." Then it came out as a golden sun-disk on the head of Seth. Seth became very angry, and he stretched out his hand to seize the golden sun-disk. Thereupon Thoth took it away (13,1) from him and placed it as a crown upon his (own) head. And the Ennead said: "Horus is right, Seth is wrong." Then Seth became very angry and cried out aloud because they had said: "Horus is right, Seth is wrong."

Seth took a great oath by the god, saying: "He shall not be given the office until he has been dismissed with me, and we shall build ships of stone and race each other. He who wins over his rival, he shall be given the office of ruler." Then Horus built himself a ship of pine, plastered it over with gypsum, and launched it on the water in the evening, while no one in the whole land saw it. And Seth looked at the

ship of Horus and thought it was of stone. He went to the mountain, cut off a mountain peak, and built himself a ship of stone of 138 cubits. Then they went into their ships in the presence of the Ennead. Thereupon the ship of Seth sank in the water. Seth changed himself into a hippopotamus and wrecked the ship of Horus. Then Horus seized his weapon and hit the body of Seth. Then the Ennead said to him: "Do not hit him."

So he took his sailing gear, placed it in his boat, and journeyed downstream to Sais to tell Neith the Great, the divine mother: "Let me be judged with Seth! For it is now eighty years that we are in the court, (14,1) but they don't know how to judge between us. He has not been vindicated against me; and a thousand times now I have been in the right against him day after day. But he pays no attention to what the Ennead says. I have contended with him in the hall "Way-of-Truth." I was found right against him. I have contended with him in the hall "Horned-Horus." I was found right against him. I have contended with him in the hall "Field-of-Rushes." I was found right against him. I have contended with him in the hall "Field-Pool." I was found right against him. The Ennead has said to Shu, son of Re: 'Horus, son of Isis, is right in all that he has said.'"

Thoth spoke to the All-Lord: "Have a letter sent to Osiris, that he may judge between the two youths." And Shu, son of Re, said: "Right a million times is what Thoth has said to the Ennead." Then the All-Lord said to Thoth: "Sit down and write a letter to Osiris, that we may hear what he has to say." So Thoth sat down to compose a letter to Osiris as follows: "The Bull:¹¹ Hunting Lion; Two Ladies: Protector of gods, Curber of the Two Lands; Gold Horus: Inventor of mankind in the beginning; King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Bull who dwells in On; Son of Ptah: Benefactor of the Two Shores, who arose as father of his Ennead, who lives on gold and all precious glazes: Life, prosperity, health! Write us what we should do about Horus and Seth, so that we do not take action in ignorance!"

(Many days) after this, the letter reached the King, the son of Re, Great in Bounty, Lord of Sustenance. He cried out aloud when the letter was read before him. He replied in great haste to where the All-Lord was with the Ennead, saying: "Why is my son Horus being defrauded when it was I who made you strong? It was I who made barley and emmer to nourish the gods, and the cattle after the gods, while no god or goddess was able to do it!"

The (15,1) letter of Osiris arrived at the place where Pre-Harakhti was, as he sat with the Ennead in the White Field at Xoïs. It was read to him and the Ennead, and Pre-Harakhti said: "Answer this letter of

Osiris for me quickly, and tell him concerning his letter: 'If you had not existed, if you had not been born, barley and emmer would yet exist!'"

The letter of the All-Lord reached Osiris and was read before him. Then he wrote to Pre-Harakhti again, saying: "Very good is all you have done and what the Ennead has found to do! Maat has been made to sink into the netherworld! Now you pay attention to this matter! The land in which I am is full of savage-looking messengers who fear no god or goddess. If I send them out, they will bring me the heart of every evildoer, and they will be here with me!¹² What good is my being here, resting in the west, while all of you are outside? Who among you is mightier than I? But they have invented wrongdoing! When Ptah the Great, South-of-his-Wall, Lord of Memphis, created the sky, did he not say to the stars in it: 'You shall go to rest in the west every night, in the place where King Osiris is? And after the gods all mankind shall also go to rest where you are!' So he said to me."

(Many days) after this, the letter of Osiris arrived at the place where the All-Lord was with the Ennead. Thoth received the letter and read it to Pre-Harakhti and the Ennead. Then they said: "He is right, he is right in all he says, the Great in Bounty, the Lord of Sustenance!" Then Seth said: "Let us be taken to the Island-in-the-Midst, that I may contend with him!" And he went to the Island-in-the-Midst. But Horus was declared in the right against him.

Then Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, sent to Isis, saying: "Bring Seth bound in fetters." So Isis brought Seth bound in fetters as a prisoner. Atum said to him: "Why have you resisted being judged and have taken for yourself the office of Horus?" Seth said to him: "Not so, my good lord. Let Horus, son of Isis, be summoned, and let him be given the office of (16,1) his father Osiris!"

They brought Horus, son of Isis. They placed the White Crown on his head. They placed him on the seat of his father Osiris and said to him: "You are the good King of Egypt! You are the good lord of all lands for ever and ever!" Then Isis uttered a loud shout to her son Horus, saying: "You are the good King! My heart rejoices that you will brighten the earth with your lustre!" Then said Ptah the Great, South-of-his-Wall, Lord of Memphis: "What shall we do for Seth, now that Horus has been placed on the seat of his father?" Then Pre-Harakhti said: "Let Seth, son of Nut, be given to me to dwell with me and be my son. And he shall thunder in the sky and be feared."

They came to say to Pre-Harakhti: "Horus, son of Isis, has risen as Ruler." Then Pre rejoiced greatly and said to the Ennead: "Jubilate throughout the land, jubilate throughout the land for Horus, son of Isis!" And Isis said:

"Horus has risen as Ruler, life, prosperity, health!
The Ennead is in feast, heaven in joy!
They take garlands seeing Horus, son of Isis
Risen as great Ruler of Egypt.
The hearts of the Ennead exult,
The entire land rejoices
As they see Horus, son of Isis
Given the office of his father,
Osiris, lord of Busiris."

Colophon: It has come to a good ending in Thebes, the place of truth.

NOTES

1. The All-Lord is the sun-god Re (or Pre) in all his manifestations which include Re-Harakhti, Atum, and Khepri. In this tale, however, Pre-Harakhti and Atum are in some instances viewed as one person and in some others as two distinct personalities. The Sacred Eye that Thoth presents to the sun-god is a complex symbol which here signifies the kingship of Egypt.

2. Name of Osiris.

3. Or, "Ba, lord of Mendes"; he is the ram-god of the Delta town of Mendes, the metropolis of the Sixteenth Nome of Lower Egypt. By calling him a dweller in Setit (the island Sehel in the first cataract) he is associated with the southern ram-god Khnum.

4. Emending *iw* to *n*.

5. The Ennead is sitting as the supreme tribunal of Egypt, called the Council of Thirty.

6. Or, Bebon; a deity associated with Seth; see P. Derchain, *RdE*, 9 (1952), 23-47.

7. This apparently means: "Go home."

8. In the dominant form of the myth, Osiris and Seth were brothers. But in an even older tradition, Horus and Seth were brothers. The two traditions are intermingled here.

9. The passage appears to be garbled, for the sun-god has not spoken.

10. The tale that Isis tells Seth plays on the words for "cattle" and "office" which sound alike.

11. Osiris is addressed as king of Egypt with a royal titulary of five names.

12. The netherworld over which Osiris rules includes a place of punishment.