

## NILE VALLEY CHRONOLOGY AND THE DOUBLE GREAT YEAR

### PART III

With the advent of the Zodiacal Age of Khepera 8,751 BC, 300 years after that of the Polar Ploughman, a new ritual and vitalist synergy would have emerged. Khepera was imaged as the scarab beetle whose natural habits in the lands along the Nile are powerfully suggestive. For one thing, Khepera can be seen as the harbinger of the flood since the scarab, just before the first waters of the annual flood begin to arrive in late June, rolls dung and mud into a perfectly spherical ball into which it has deposited its eggs. It then digs a hole into which it places this ball which is subsequently covered over by the Nile flood. Three months later, when the flood has subsided, the incubating larvae inside the buried dung ball have matured enough to fly up out of the mud to begin life. The symbolic resonance with the Ploughman is evident: the scarab has dug a hole and planted its 'seed-ball' from which new life eventually emerges, out of the waters so to speak. Khepera was also called *Apur*, 'the Flier,' and became emblematic of that which created itself out of the Cosmic *Primum Materium*. As E.A.W. Budge explains, 'When *Neber-Djer* ('Lord of the Universe') took the form of Khepri, nothing existed except a vast mass of watery matter...an abyss of slime.'<sup>1</sup> This liquid 'slime' or 'primal ooze' was *Nun* ('inertness'). Thus the life activities of the scarab beetle becomes the re-enactment on earth of this cosmological creation event. Moreover, the name *khepera* means variously (1) 'to make,' (2) 'to mold,' and/or (3) 'to become' or 'evolve.' Since the divine Scarab is the Flier out of the spherical ball of its incubation, it is also the image of the sun emerging from the primal darkness. R.T. Rundle Clark says, '...Khoprer is God as he appears in visible form, whether at the

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<sup>1</sup>Budge, op. cit., p. 141.

beginning or every day...'<sup>2</sup> Khepera the Scarab would also serve as the living image of the origin and evolution of *Kemit* (Egypt) itself which, as Herodotus noted, was the Gift of the River (and the mud of the River). Thus Khepera was the imperishable symbol of Ever-Becoming or Evolution—cosmic, terrestrial, and human.

Around 6,593 BC, the constellation of the Twins—Set/Horus (or Shu/Tefnut)—begins to rise heliacally at the vernal equinox, inaugurating the Age of Gemini. In this Age, Egypt as *Tauit*, 'the Two Lands,' comes into being. It is a known fact that Upper and Lower Egypt were separate kingdoms up to the time of unification circa 4,300 BC under Menes. They were, in fact, the Twin Kingdoms with Upper Egypt in the south ruled by Set and Lower Egypt in the north ruled by Horus. In this Age, Horus and Set were complementary Twins, not antagonistic as they would become in dynastic times. In the early dynastic period, several the pharaohs bore both a 'Set name' and a 'Horus name' and it must be assumed that the pharaohs in each of the Twin Kingdoms beforehand had also done so. Even after unification, Egypt was often referred to as 'the Two Lands,' and the pharaohs typically wore the double crown—the red crown of Lower Egypt combined with the white crown of Upper Egypt.

It isn't clear why in after ages a mortal antagonism grew up between Set and Horus or why Set became increasingly seen as a malevolent power. However, through dynastic times, Set's hostility and enmity toward Osiris and Horus is implacable and unalterable. It does seem that the initial conflict involved Set and Osiris—the latter gradually becoming the central, if not paramount, figure in the pantheon—and Horus got drawn into it, as it were, by his evolving role as the son of Osiris and therefore as Osiris reborn. As Rundle Clark puts it, 'The living king was

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<sup>2</sup>Rundle Clark, op. cit., p. 41

Horus, *the son and heir of Osiris.*<sup>3</sup> The **Pyramid Texts** simply recite, in praise, ‘O Horus who is Osiris, the King...’<sup>4</sup> Osiris and Horus thus became one. Because of the greater prestige of the South, after the close of the Age of the Twins, Set and Horus switched places, thereby installing Horus as the Ruler of the South.

At the north pole the Ploughman-Vine Grower, the early form of Osiris, rules until 5,354 BC thus sharing cosmic rulership with the zodiacal Twins for more than 12 centuries. Without any clear indication of the cosmic, religious, and perhaps political dynamics of the situation, one can only speculate about whether it was in this period that Osiris the Ploughman formed the connection to Horus that would play itself out later in the Osirian drama that emerges fully-formed by dynastic times (circa 4,300 BC). Why such a thing happened to the detriment of Set can only be guessed at. It is pertinent to note, however, that the southern pre-unification dynasty (4,600-4,300 BC) discovered at Qustul pertained to the kingdom of *Ta-Seti*, whose name could mean ‘Land of the Bow’ or, just as readily, ‘Set’s Land.’ Even after Ta-Seti was conquered and incorporated into the unified kingdom of historic Egypt, the southernmost nome of Egypt—it’s first nome—was given the name *Ta-Seti*. As we have noted already, Ta-Seti might have been the Southern Kingdom during the era (Gemini) of ‘The Two Lands.’ The thing is obscure in many ways, but Set never really loses his strategic place in the pantheon, though nominally superseded by Osiris and Horus.

Around 5,354 BC, the Ploughman/Vine-Grower moves off the pole and *Ta-Urt*—more precisely, a portion of Ta-Urt, the Cosmic Hippo—takes over the pole. Ta-Urt, who became *Draco* (‘Dragon’ or ‘Serpent’) of later planispheres, is unique because she is so sizable and

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 107

<sup>4</sup>Faulkner RO, **The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts**, Oak Park: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1969, p.316.

strategically placed as a constellation that the ecliptic runs through her while at specific periods in the polar precession, the magnetic pole is also situated in her. Draco too is so configured as to be the locus of the ecliptic pole and, in turn, the magnetic pole. Ta-Urt's strategic place in the northern polar heaven is indicated by one of her names: *Ment Uret*, 'the Great Mooring Post,' i.e., the ecliptic around which the circumpolar stars revolved.<sup>5</sup> Ta-Urt, the hippopotamus goddess of ancient Egypt, was probably the oldest deity in the pantheon. She had a number of other names: *Apit*, *Rerit*, and *Deb*, to name a few, and several other goddesses exhibited a hippo form. As *Apit*, Ta-Urt's holiest sanctuary was *Apit-Isut*, in what later became Amon's temple complex at Karnak. One could say that Ta-Urt loomed over the whole polar Great Year as the Determiner (or Mother) of Cosmic Time, since the ecliptic pole—around which the magnetic pole gyrated in a 25,900-year spin—passed through her. And, as indicated above, she also had a circumpolar location, around herself as it were.

In one of his forms, Set was the male hippopotamus and therefore the son of Ta-Urt. In this instance, he participates in her stellar character. In fact it is said, concerning Set and his 'children,'

'The Children of Seth' were the inventors of that peculiar  
sort of wisdom which is concerned with the heavenly bodies  
and their order...<sup>6</sup>

The time comes when Ta-Urt falls away from the pole (1,651 BC) and when she does, so does Set. With this event, the cosmo-religious character of the hippopotamus shifts because this animal, at least in its Sethian aspect, becomes a type of the enemy of Horus who has emerged as

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<sup>5</sup>Budge, op. cit., p. 243.

<sup>6</sup>Temple RKG, **The Sirius Mystery**, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976, p.103.

the Cosmic Hero deity. This relationship is clear and unmistakable on the walls the Temple of Edfu, dedicated to Horus, in which Horus is depicted spearing the hippopotamus who threatens the cosmic order. However, this ‘reversal of fortune’ seems to have no affect on Ta-Urt herself who maintains pride of place in the pantheon.

It would be interesting to ascertain when Draco was substituted for Ta-Urt in the polar planisphere which may have happened outside of Egypt. Or Draco may have always been considered a ‘co-type’ of Ta-Urt even in Egypt itself. Certainly serpent symbolism plays a prominent, even ubiquitous, role in Egyptian cosmology from its remotest beginnings and the Cosmic Serpent *Kametef*, i.e., ‘he who completed his time,’ is instrumental in the formative creation of the universe itself. Serpent symbolism had to be as old as—perhaps older than—the figuration of the hippopotamus in the primordial Egyptian world-view and there were numerous serpent figures—benevolent and malevolent—in Egyptian mythology. It is said in the **Pyramid Texts**:

I am the outflow of the Primeval Flood, he who emerged from the waters.

I am the ‘Provider of Attributes’ *serpent with its many coils*,

I am the Scribe of the Divine Book

which says what has been and effects what is yet to be.<sup>7</sup>

Rundle Clark also tells us,

When all differences have disappeared he [Atum] and  
Osiris, the transcendent and emergent forms of deity,  
will be reunited in the universal primordial form of life,  
the original Serpent, the form in which divinity existed

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<sup>7</sup>Cited in Rundle Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

before the coming of gods or men.<sup>8</sup>

Atum himself was Serpent probably before he was Lion and in the Egyptian flood-story, two neters remain—Atum and Osiris—as serpents, as we see in the above quotation. Thus, after Rundle Clark, the serpent, as Atum, is ‘an image of God at the beginning and at the end of time,’ Atum will become a serpent once more.<sup>9</sup> It is not hard to believe that Draco the Serpent would have been a Determiner of Time and a cosmic polar type among the Egyptians, however prominently the Hippopotamus was featured in their polar planisphere.

In fact, the pervasive ancient symbolism of the Serpent-and-Tree undoubtedly stems from figure of Draco coiled around the Pole, the Tree being always a type of the pole. As seen above, Draco falls away from the pole 1,651 BC and this event is captured in *Genesis* when the Serpent is condemned by God to crawl on the ground. There are, to be sure, Egyptian prototypes: Atum, the Egyptian Adam, is a serpent, and a form of the Mother Serpent in Egypt is *Hefa*, who becomes Havvah or Eve in *Genesis*. Thus the Fall of Adam and Eve is coterminous with the Fall of the Serpent, astromythically determined by the precessional shift at the pole. Related to this Fall in Egyptian mythology, the Serpent *Apep* becomes the image of the Destroyer. Several of the hated Hyksos pharaohs—who still rule Egypt around 1,651 BC—took the name *Apepa*. The Hyksos had been known as Set-worshippers and in this period, Set and Apep conjoin mythically in the Egyptian mind as the Adversarial Power.

Around 4,435 BC, the Twins cease to rise heliacally at the spring equinox as the Bull-constellation moves into the vacated heliacal position at the spring equinox, thus inaugurating the Age of Taurus. This Age marks the beginning of documented Egyptian history with the

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

unification of the Two Lands into a single kingdom known variously as *Kemit* ('the Black Land') and *Ta-Meri* ('the Beloved Land'). The neter *Ptah*, allied with the Bull *Apis*, astromythically comes to the fore and the ethos and symbolism of the Bull dominates for the next 2,158 years. Egyptian annals record that Menes, the uniter of Egypt, c. 4,300 BC, is the one who installed the Bull cult in Egypt. Menes moves the capital of Egypt to *Men-nefer* or *Memphis*, the city sacred to Ptah and the Apis bull. Within 600 years after unification, the classic era of pyramid-building in Egypt commences, by which time the ancient architects had completely mastered building with stone on a massive scale. Nothing like it was seen before or since; the pyramids of Egypt are the still the most magnificent edifices ever erected by human hands. Other sacred locales in Egypt also establish the primacy of Bull: in Heliopolis, the sacred capital of the sun-god Atum (later of Ra), Atum is represented in bull-form as *Mnevis*; in *Waset* (later Thebes), the bull neter is *Mentu*.

Osiris comes into his own in this period. Ptah, the Universal Architect, is the paramount neter ('god') of the Age but Osiris becomes the dominant force in Egyptian religious life, a role he does not relinquish for 4,300 years. Osiris assumes the attributes of the very old underworld form of Ptah by name of *Sokar*, the deity who presided over the Land of Dead. From that time on, the Osirian role in achieving immortality for the soul makes him the one neter whose preeminence never wavers. Though Osiris assumes all the attributes of Sokar, he goes beyond Sokar's status as God of the Dead and Lord of the Underworld, to become the embodiment of a *personal* hope for resurrection and immortality. The Way of Liberation—from death and 'the psychic hindrances of life'—is accomplished through Osiris. Osiris also assumes a bull-form and eventually becomes fused with the Apis Bull. The potency and power of the bull accounts for the impact and influence of his symbolism. Even after the Era of the Bull (Taurus) fades in the

course of the Precession, bull symbolism continues to exercise its influence down to the end of Egyptian history.

Osiris does not relinquish his older attributes, however; he remains the god of agriculture, vine-growing, and wine-making. Mystically, because of his connection to grain, he becomes ‘the bread of life;’ wine becomes symbolically his ‘blood.’ Indeed, these disparate images and symbols are interwoven: Osiris, who dies (killed by Set), is resurrected in the new grain (or plants) of spring; the fermentation of grape juice into wine—the ‘spiritous’ beverage—images the transubstantiation of Osiris who triumphs over and transcends death. Thus, all people can hope for resurrection and immortality through Osiris.

Around 2,277 BC, the Bull constellation-sign of the Taurus Age is replaced by the Ram constellation-sign, launching the Age of Aries. Thus lamb, ram, and shepherd symbolism come to overshadow history for the next 21 centuries. In Egypt, the Ram-god Amon comes to the forefront of the pantheon, merging with the sun-god Ra as Amon-Ra. *Waset*—known later as *Thebes*—becomes the capital city of Egypt and Amon’s temple at Karnak eventually becomes the country’s ‘Vatican.’ Some think that the name *Thebes* was derived from *Ta-Apit*, ‘Land of Apit,’ the place-name stemming from the earliest divine ruler of the city. It is also pertinent to recall that prior to the rise of Amon, the other paramount deity (with Apit) of Waset was *Mentu*, a bull-headed deity, thus showing the effects of the change from Bull to Ram *in situ* as it were. When the Arian (or Amonian) Age begins, the north polar Age of Ta-Urt (Draco) is still in force and the original temple, Ipet Asut, had been dedicated to Ta-Urt as Apit. In fact, even after Amon appropriates the sacred city and its temple, Apit continues to have a noticeable presence there; the Amonian priesthood continues to exhibit a careful deference to Apit. As a matter of

unalterable custom, the Egyptians never get rid of an earlier deity even as the Ages shift; they always reconfigure and find an honored place for the earlier netter.

The other Ram deity of note is Khnum—always shown as the flat-horned ram—who rules over the 1<sup>st</sup> cataract region of southern Egypt. He is said to control the flood and is depicted as fashioning human beings out of clay on a potter's wheel. Clearly, there is a synergy between him and Amon.

This era of Aries marks the advent of a people who would eventually exert an influence on world history all out of proportion to their actual numbers: the Children of Israel. Their remote ancestor Abraham emigrates from Chaldea sometime around 1,900 BC, or a little later, and from the first, the history of these people is decisively impacted by lamb, ram, and shepherd symbolism as Abraham's son Isaac is saved from sacrifice by a ram caught in a thicket. A connection to Egypt is evident early, as Abraham migrates there and in fact takes an Egyptian consort, Hagar, who gives birth to his first son, Ishmael. Only after leaving Egypt, do certain events transpire—including the covenant by circumcision—that change the course of the history of Abraham and his descendants. Probably around 1,660 BC or so, Jacob-Israel, a descendant of Abraham, re-migrates to Egypt with 70 of his clan at a time when Egypt was ruled by the Hyksos. The Hyksos, though originally from Egypt's eastern desert, were probably ethnically and culturally allied to Canaanites such as Jacob and his clan, allowing the latter to settle in northern Egypt without difficulty. Four hundred thirty (430) years later, the descendants of Jacob-Israel are saved by 'the blood of the lamb' (*Exodus*) and depart Egypt under the leadership of a dissident Egyptian priest *Osar-siph*, later called *Moses*. Especially after the critical episode at Sinai where the Decalogue—clearly modeled on the Egyptian *42 Declarations of Innocence* in

the **Book of the Coming Forth By Day**—is given to Moses by a newly-Hebrewized Egyptian lunar deity *Yah*, the Children of Israel follow a path that eventually alters the course of history.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Finch, op. cit., pp. 129-78 for a fuller discussion.