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# THE JOURNAL OF EGYPTOLOGICAL STUDIES

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## THE SERPENT WHO LOVES EGYPTIANS IN MIDDLE EGYPTIAN LITERATURE

*Sergei Ignatov*

### ABSTRACT

The article presents detailed study of the Serpent of the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor. The Lord of the Island of Ka is placed in a wider context of similar creatures from the texts and artifacts of the epoch that are accessible. The name of the Serpent has been discussed and a decipherment is offered.

**Key words:** *serpent, island, thunder, storm, wave, sea, god*

The Serpent who loves Egyptians appears in Middle Egyptian Literature in the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor (further Sh. S.). After a shipwreck an Egyptian Sailor was placed on a Phantom Island. The Story contains the most ancient evidence of prayer and a sacrifice, committed without the mediation of priests and is the most ancient story, describing a meeting of a man with a deity. The text describes the encounter and the discourse of this Egyptian man with a Serpent – Lord of the Island, who according to the protagonist is ‘a god who loves people (= egyptians) from a distant land, unknown to mortals’ (Sh. S. 147 – 148). The Serpent says about himself that he is ‘the Ruler of Punt’ (Sh. S. 151), announces the name of the Island – the Island of Ka (Sh. S. 114).

This article is a detailed study of the Serpent who is placed in a wider context of similar creatures from the texts of the epoch that are accessible.

(60) *kf3.n.j* (61) *hr.j gm.n.j hf3w* (62) *pw jw.f m jj.t n(j)-sw* (63) *mḥ 30 ḥbswt.f wr.s* (64) *r mḥ 2 ḥ<sup>c</sup>w.f zḥrw* (65) *m nbw jnj.fj m ḥsbd* (66) *m3<sup>c</sup> rk(.w) sw r-ḥnt*

I uncovered my face. I saw (Literally: I found) that it is a Serpent that was coming [towards me]. He was 30 cubits. His beard was more than 2 cubits. His body was of gold, and his eyebrows – of true lazuli. He was winding to the fore.

W. K. Simpson translates *ḥbswt* as a hood, considering that the description is of a reptile, namely a cobra, or one with a hood like the cobra's (Simpson 1972: 52). For the translation of *ḥbswt* as a "goatee" see Faulkner 1099: 187, 187 with references to the ancient Egyptian Onomastica of A. H. Gardiner (Gardiner 1947: II, 238) and Urk. IV, 345, 15.

*gm.n.j ḥf3w pw jw.f m jj.t*

*gm.n.j ḥf3w pw* – the conditional clause in post position in relation to the preceding verb following the transitional verb *gmj* is in the role of object (Petrovskiy 1958: §203). The conditional clause as object (direct object) is most often found after the transitional verb *rdj* "give", in the sense of "permit", "allow the possibility", "oblige". Other often used transitional verbs, after which the conditional clause functions as direct object (the object), are the following:

*wḏ* "order"

*mrj* "love"

*rḥ* „know"

*ḥmt* "think"

*sh3* "remember"

*k3j* "consider"

*dd* "speak"

Compare the famous example from Sinuhe:

*dd.n.j dp.t mt nn* (Sin. B 23)

Said (I to myself), the taste of death is this.

*ḥf3w pw* – "nominal sentence" with predicative-substantive expressed through substantive noun. The indicative pronoun *pw* plays the functions of subject. The frequent substantiation of this pronoun has transformed it into the most important element of the widely encountered types of sentences with substantive predicate and subject (Compare: Petrovskiy 1958: §76, §195, §196, §197),

The reviewed excerpt in Sh. S. 61–62 is an example of pseudo-verbal construction with "*m* + infinitive". In the case of "*m* + infinitive" more emphasis is placed as compared to "*ḥr* + infinitive" (Gardiner 1957: §299).

*ḥf3w* – P. Ernshedt draws a parallel of the Greek word *οφίς* – "snake", noting that we owe the information on the vocalism of the Egyptian word to the Coptic substantive *hof* – "snake" (Ernshedt 1953: 62). The intermediate form is reconstructed by A. Smieszek (*ḥf3w-hoffew*) (Smieszek 1936: 25 ff.).

*n(j)-sw mḥ 30*

Compare:

*nj-wj R3*

(Eb.: I, 7)

I belong to Re.

*n(j)-s(j) jmj-r pr(w)*

(Peas. B1, 16)

This belongs to the house-master

When the subject is independent pronoun *n(j)*, it can fulfill the functions of predicate (Gardiner 1953: §144). A. Gardiner notes that the link between the adjectival predicate and the pronoun's subject is so close that in the case of third-person masculine singular (*sw*) the double-vowel *ns* gradually connects both – predicate and pronoun (ibid.).

*hbswt.f wr s(j) r mh 2* – a sentence with adjectival predicate (adjective + dependent pronoun). The adjective precedes the subject and is invariable in gender and in number (Gardiner 1957: §137).

*wr s(j) r mh 2* – emphasis of the parts of the nominal sentence (Petrovskiy 1958: §199).

*h<sup>c</sup>w.f shr.w m nbw* – verb form to convey statics of the action (Petrovskiy 1958: §187). N. Petrovskiy notes that the predicate *m* with dependent part forms indirect object indicating the material, used for the particular product (Petrovskiy, 1970: 198).

*hsbd m3<sup>c</sup>* – in accordance with N. Petrovski's classification, this is a morphologically coordinated word combination with post-position of the dependent part. The meaning of the noun is expanded with the help of qualitative adjective for the trustworthiness of the subject (Petrovskiy, 1970: 79).

*rq(w) sw r hnt* – old perfective form of quality and condition (processive participle expressing circumstance, plus dependent pronoun and prepositional construction – *r hnt*)

The Serpent and the circumstances of his appearance require special attention. Here is what the ancient story teller focuses on:

(55) *shpr.n.j ht jrj.n.j* (56) *sb-n-sd.t n ntrw h<sup>c</sup>.n sdm.n.j* (57) *hrw qrj* (61) *gm.n.j hf3w* (62) *pw jw.f m jj.t*

I created fire. Made a burnt offering unto the gods. And then I heard the voice of a thunder storm... I found (= saw) that it is a Serpent that was moving (=coming) (towards me).

Notably the Serpent appeared after the lighting of the fire and the performance of a “burnt offering” to the gods. This is the first interrelation between

the Serpent and the world of gods, where the fire sacrifice and the prayers of the shipwrecked seaman were heard. The comparison with “And call me in a day of mourning; I will save you, and you will glorify me”, imposes itself naturally. (Psalm 49: 15)

The drama that unfolds on that island, “follows” what has been said by the author of the psalm – appeal to the gods, appearance of the ruler of the island, who is a deity in the form of a serpent, loading the shipwreck sailor with the riches of the island, and the desire expressed by the serpent that his name be glorified in Egypt.

The analyzed fragment Sh. S. 55–62 is the first indication of a rather important fact, widely debated in Egyptology, that the Serpent belongs to the world of gods (cf. Lanczkowski, 1953: 239 ff; Goedicke 1974: 58; 65; 83; Bryan 1979: 98). As will soon be clarified, it is in this particular fragment that the name of the Serpent is encoded, as well as exactly what is the identity of the deity that is manifesting itself in this image.

To which gods does the shipwrecked sailor appeal to for help? The text says *ntr:w* in the plural. We possess one and the only of its kind evidence, with reference to the chief priest (*hmww-ntrw*) of the gods of the Great Greenness (the sea), i.e. the place of the shipwreck and that is a fragment of a stela from the time of the Nineteenth Dynasty, possibly from the time of Ramesses II:

*jmj-r n hmww-ntr n ntrw*  
*nbw w3d-wrw*  
 (Berlev 1982: 85. 5)

The chief of the priests  
 of all gods of the Great Greenness.

The word *ntr* (“god”) requires special study. Even in the work of Hornung, its meaning and content are not clearly disclosed (Hornung 1982). From Ptolemaic times *ntr* is translated “god” (theos). Egyptian rituals are focused at entities that are named *ntr*. In the opinion of D. Meeks, a common feature shared by all beings, called *ntr* is that they are “beneficiaries” of the rituals (Meeks 1988: 425–446).

The “Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor” is the first most ancient text known to me, where the man turns to the gods directly through sacrificial offering, without the mediation of priests. This is also the first text describing the encounter of a man with a deity.

Sacrifice is a form of communication between two worlds – the everyday world and the surreal one beyond the daily world. Sacrificial offerings are means of sustaining order in the world. The mechanism of this type of communication is explained with the “give so that you are given” principle. In Marcel Mauss’s opinion gifts are appraised in accordance with the inner state of the person who is of-

fering and prompt that the recipient must also donate in return. What is given is what should be received back (Mauss 1923–24: 30–186).

The possibility of direct contact of a man and a divinity is rooted in the destruction and disappearance of the institutions during the First Intermediate Period. There is a statement in the “Teaching of Ipuver” that it is during these times when the theft and disclosure by the unenlightened of the magic spells, which were before accessible only to the king’s encirclement occurred. In the “Coffin Texts” the non-royal owners of the spells already received the status of deities after death and promises of eternity, which they could spend with the gods. In this way Egyptians from the Middle Kingdom started associating with deities as never before.

The offered “burnt sacrifice” is also worth the debate. The question remains open whether the burning of the sacrificial gifts was a frequent sacrificial practice. Scenes from the New Kingdom sometimes show sacrificial offerings embraced by flames. This type of offerings was interpreted as gifts to the god, which god will not share with anyone. In the late period the destruction by the fire of the sacrificial presents began to symbolize “victims”, representing the inimical forces, which must be annihilated.

In the formative years of the Middle Kingdom in the “Teaching of the Herakleopolitan King to his Son Merikare” it is emphasized that the good qualities of the aspiring man are preferable to a sacrificial ox offered by an evil person. This is the attitude to sacrificial rituals of Egyptians from that epoch. A similar example is the deity from Sh. S., who in exchange to the wellness with which he was loading the shipwrecked sailor, asked only that his name be held in good repute in Egypt.

In Sh. S. mentioning is made of “burnt offering to the gods”. There is no reference to what exactly was the Egyptian’s plea to the gods, but we are acquainted with a similar example, when another Egyptian found himself out of the reaches of his land and turned with a prayer to the gods. This is the case of the renowned “Sinuhe”. “The “Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor” and “Sinuhe” are the only known Middle Egyptian texts, illustrating the adventures of Egyptians, who had found themselves in the chaotic world outside of the Egyptian Kingdom.

It needs to be underlined that what Sinuhe was praying for was almost literally the same what the divine Serpent promised to the shipwrecked sailor (Sh. S. 122–125; 134–135; 168–169). Here is Sinuhe’s prayer:

*ntr(.w) nbš3j w<sup>c</sup>r:t tn  
 htp.k dj.k wj r hnw  
 smwn.k r rdj.t m3.j bw wrš.w jb.j jm  
 pw tr wr:t r <sup>c</sup>b.t h3.tj m t3 msj.kwj jm.f  
 mj m s3 pw hpr sp nfr  
 (Sin. B 156–160)*

Oh, gods, who foreordained this run-away!  
 Whoever of you has it been, be merciful, bring me back to the Residence.  
 Maybe you will permit me to see again the place, where my heart dwells.  
 Could there be anything more important than the union of my body with the earth, where I  
 was born.  
 Come to my rescue!

And so, as a result of the sacral offering the world of the divine accepts the “sacrifice” and sends its messenger. Before the shipwrecked sailor appeared the master of the island in the image of a Serpent, in order to understand what has happened and to help him. Centuries later the great Ramesses II finds himself in an extraordinarily difficult situation and also receives help from god Amun, after he had appealed to him:

*š.n.j n.k jt.j jmn-r<sup>c</sup>  
 jw.j n hr-jb šš3t n rh.j st...*  
 (Kuentz 1928, 55: 123)

I was praying to you, father of mine, Amun – Re,  
 while I was amidst plenty of enemies...

and further on...

I achieved, more useful to me is Amun – Re, then...

The appearance of the Serpent after the sacrificial offering reveals an important didactic element: god comes to help, but you must pray to him.

The appearance of the Serpent is impressive – all nature’s elements are raging in rumble. D. Berg sees in the verb *šhpr* from Sh. S. 55 the key to everything that occurred on the island (Berg 1990 (76): 170) and although the suggested analyzes is philological, it is justified to assume that indeed the events described in Sh. S. 54–56 aroused invisible forces as a result of which among rumble appeared the Serpent – Lord of the island.

The notion of the appearance of a deity amidst rumble is known as early as from the Old Kingdom. In “The Pyramid Texts” this is how the king appears in the divine world:

*Pt nhm.s t3 nmnm*  
 (Pyr. 1771)

The sky – it is soaring! The earth – it is shaking!

This idea of the appearance of god has been passed through the millenniums unto the Holy Bible:

*And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; (Exodus 19: 16 KJV).<sup>1</sup>*

Compare also the story about the crucifix and the passage of Jesus to the Holy Father:

*And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent to twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks ran; (Matthew 27: 51 KJV).<sup>2</sup>*

One more text has been preserved from the times of the Middle Kingdom, containing a story about a meeting of an Egyptian with a deity. This is “The Herdsman’s Story” which is included at the end of the manuscript “The Dispute of a Man with his *Ba*” (Gardiner 1909: 16a-17a).

This is the image in which the goddess presents herself before the man:

*nn s m ḥmw rmt*  
(ibid. 3–4)

She was supposedly not in the capacity of a human *hemu* (i.e. she was nothing that resembled a human body or image).

In his analyzes of this fragment, O. Berlev comments the opinion of the publisher: “The fact that the goddess, although resembling a woman, appeared in front of the shepherd not in a human image, but in her divine appearance, was difficult to accept prior to our (O. Berlev’s) interpretation of the word *ḥmw* in this phrase. It is understandable to us that the story teller, reaching the moment of the meeting with the goddess was obliged to take into account her *ḥmw*, without which he would simply not have been able to see the goddess.” (Berlev 1972: 38)

Regarding the plural of the word *ḥmw*, O. Berlev notes that it could be accepted with utter seriousness because gods have at their disposal numerous human images. On the other hand, it is possible and it seems more acceptable that the word in the plural case can be considered as a formal graphic design of conceptual character (ibid.).

After O. Berlev manages in his researches to disclose the meaning and content of the word *ḥmw*, today we are noticeably closer to unveiling the mechanism of interaction between humans and deities. As it is often the case, the *hemu* of the deity is a living creature. With these living creatures (= *ḥmw* of the god) the people, the deceased, or the *ḥmw* of other deities are able to come into contact (Ber-

<sup>1</sup> “The Holy Bible”, King James Version (pravoslavieto.com).

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit.

lev 1972: 38). In the “Coffin Texts” (CT I, 114) there is reference to the deceased being received in person by *hmt* of the West (the land of the dead) (CT I 114: 56).

*hm.t jmn.t ds.f*

(Literally) Hemet Imnet (of the West) she in person.

In this connection O. Berlev remarks that if it were not for the teaching about hemu, then it is unexplainable how such a contact would occur (Berlev 1972: 38).

This material throws light also on the “Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor”. It is now already possible to suggest a solution to the question who is the master of the island, who appeared as a divine Serpent. At that, a completely new and unexpected solution!

From the very start of the study of the text, G. Lanczkowski considered that this was “the initial god”, who shares with the shipwrecked sailor a quite educative forecast about the end of the universe (Lanczkowski 1953). This concept is elaborated in details by his successors – nowadays we can see that according to Derchtain-Urtel, the Serpent makes its appearance as the creature, which had created the world (possibly with the help of his daughter Maat), had survived in the catastrophe of what had been created and the loss of the gods, who symbolize the 74 forms of the solar god (Derchtain-Urtel 1974). In all that, W. Simpson sees an astronomical metaphor: the Serpent is the sun, there is also a star that has fallen (Simpson LA V 620). According to D. Kurt, we are faced with the daily sun cycle (Kurt, SAK 14, 173–175), and in H. Goedicke’s view – with a common metaphor of life, presented as a venture on water (Goedicke 1974). It is generally accepted that the Serpent is god Re with his 74 forms which are known from “The Litany of Re” (Baines 1990: 63; Lekov 2004). He is god because of the free will, with which he is bestowed, because of the divine knowledge and the ability to foretell the future (and eventually to rule upon it). J. Baines estimates as paradoxical the desire of the Serpent that the Egyptian man should make his name “good” in his homeland (i.e. to glorify him, to impose him), because in Sh. S. not a single name is disclosed (Baines 1990: 68). Is it so in reality?

There are two key words in the text which link the Serpent to a definitive power, to a defined deity – *nšnj* and *qrj* in the combination *hrw qrj*.

1) *sr.sn d<sup>c</sup> n jjt(.f)*  
*nšnj n hp<sup>r</sup>t.f d<sup>c</sup> prw*

2) *h<sup>c</sup>.n sdm.n.j hrw qrj jb.kwj*  
*w3w pw n w3d-wr*

The voice of the thunder (*hrw qrj*) the thunder itself (*qrj*) is the might of god Seth, which is manifested through the *hemu* of this god (Berlev 1972: 38–39). For

the connection to god Seth speaks the determinative of the word *qrj* – the sign is E 20 “Seth’s animal”, possibly in the form of a pig (Gardiner 1957: 460).

Judging by Gardiner’s sign-list, that symbol is an ideogram of Seth (ibid.). It is namely him, who is also the determinative of the word *nšnj* (storm).

A proof of Seth’s power being realized through his *hemu* could be found in papyrus Rhind, 87, p. 1–2, where it literally says that the thunder (= the power of Seth) is exposed through his *hemu*.

*rnp.t 11, 3bd 1, 3ht 3, mswt sth rdj.t.tw hrw.fjn hmw n ntr pn mswt 3s.t jr:t  
p.t hw.t*

Year 11, Month 1, of the season of the flood, Day 3. The birth of Seth, the *hemu* of that god made so that his voice be heard. The birth of Ese (Isis) challenged the sky to rain.

Some examples in which Seth is not named:

*jnk ʕš3 jr hrw.jʕš3 jr hrw pt sʕr...*

*ʕš3 jr hrw pt*

(CT 1069)

I am the lizard, who excited thunder in the sky...

*hrw pt jnk ʕš3 hr.w jr hrw pt*

(CT 1179)

I am the one with the many faces,  
who excited thunder in the sky.

In other cases Seth is named:

*jnk sth dj hnmw qrj m hnw 3ht nt pt mj nbd jb.f pw jnk swtj (sth) dj hnnw*

*hrw prj.f jm m hnw n 3ht nt pt mj nbd.t jb.f pw*

(BD 39, 14–15)

I am Seth, who provoked chaos and thunder storm in Akhet (The Land of Light, conditionally Horizon) in the sky, similar to the one desiring destruction.

The above examples show the link between Seth and the storm, the thunder, absence of order, as well as the mechanism of manifestation of the deity. It needs to be noted that in “The Book of the Dead”, *hrw qrj* (thunder storm) and *hrw prj* (Literally: Giving out voice=pronouncing) are interchangeable. There is an interesting example from “The Pyramid Texts”, related to a very popular word and notion, which is the key to understanding of the picture of the world of the ancient Egyptians. Besides, the word is about the manifestation of the power of the god through the same mechanism as in the examples being analyzed. According to this

example, the Sun is the power of Re and this power is manifesting itself through the *hemu* of Re (Berlev 1972: 38).

*n psd hmw n R<sup>c</sup> m 3ht*  
(Pyr 1739)

Did not shine *hmw* (hemu) of Re in Akhet.

The confirmation of our interpretation is found in the confession of the Egyptian, who thought that the thundering came from a sea wave. In the Egyptian vision of the world, *w3w pw n(j) w3d-wr* (Literally: A wave is this of the Great Greenness, i.e. the sea) is logically connected to *hrw krj*. If the thunder storm is Seth's power, then the sea and the waves are that god's elements. Egyptians perceived the horrifying sea as a manifestation of Seth, who as the master of the desert, in his quality of a "red" god, was also the lord of all non-Egyptian territories. Seth, differing from Horus, has a htonic character (Lurker 1986: 109).

Thus, in the "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor" the connection between the Serpent, which carries with it all the specifics of a deity, and the power of a defined deity (the thunder storm, the waves of the sea), which as has been shown was realized by *hmw* (*hemu*) of god Seth. To the Egyptian however the divine creature is nameless, unknown. That is so because the shipwreck survivor perceives the serpent as a strange, unknown to Egyptians deity, which is identifiable to them through the forms, with the help of which god Seth is manifesting himself. With the expansion of the Egyptian territories, during the transition from the Middle to the New Kingdom, Egyptians began to call the deities of foreign people Seths (plural of Seth), because they appreciated them as forms, through which the lord of all non-Egyptian territories expresses himself. It is clear that the Serpent has nothing in common with the demiurge Re.

The study of the image of the Serpent permits scientists to collect immense material in the search of parallels of Egyptian and non-Egyptian origin. At the end of the 80's of the past century A. Bolschakoff expressed doubts as to the Serpent being a deity, because, according to him, nowhere in the text has it been named as god (Bolshakov 1988: 202). The below example from the text of Sh. S. speaks to the contrary:

*mj jr:t(w) n ntr mrr r(m)t m t3 w3 n rh sw rmt*

As one has to do it for the God from a distant land, who loves Egyptians, about which Egyptians do not know.

This is how the Serpent is presented – as a deity from a distant unknown land and as obviously unknown to the Egyptians. C. Allam compares the Serpent from Sh. S. to goddess Hathor. In the "Coffin Texts", Hathor is called the She Lord of

Punt (CT I 204c-205a, Spell 47). In one of the variations of the text the name is graphically explained with a snake. According to the author, this reminds of Sh. S., where the Serpent declares: “it is me who is the Ruler of Punt”. It is often mentioned that in his Egyptian image the master of Punt often manifests himself as a snake (Allam 1963: 110).

In S. Sauneron’s study, which has provoked deserved interest, he has collected and analyzed the whole available Egyptological material, and what is especially important, the opinions and definitions of real ancient Egyptians about snakes. It needs to be marked that the studied papyruses are considerably later, than the time of the writing of the “Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor”. S. Sauneron’s opinion about the serpent in Sh. S. is expressed with French humor of finest quality. All comes down to the point that, if we like to believe in the existence of such a Serpent, we simply have to measure it (Sauneron 1989: 138 ff.).

The “Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor” has been a life-time focus for E. Maksimov, who has collected and studied impressive facts based material about the serpent (Maksimov 1980: 120–126). He comes up with analogical narrations about the appearance of such Serpent! The Serpent from an Ethiopian legend was moving by producing “noise that could be heard at a distance of 7 days of travel”. The Dragon from the hagiography of Saint Teodor Stratilat, which “when creeping out of its lair, everything around – and the earth and the forests – were shaking. While moving, the dragon was turning down immense trees, the bushes, and the rocks” (ibid.).

G. Lanczkowski also connects the Sh. S. text to Ethiopia’s religion (Lanczkowski 1955). E. Littmann narrates of the still vivid ideas in Abyssinia of the lord of the land being a “snake” (Littmann 1904).

In E. Maksimov’s thinking, the Sh. S. Serpent is a “huge bearded dragon, whose winding body is supported by human legs. The latter conclusion could be derived from the text itself (*ḳw.f m jjt*). His face is human, decorated with eye brows of lazuli (Maksimov, Op. cit. 123). E. Maksimov emphasizes that the lazuli, which harmonizes in a perfect way with gold, corresponds exactly to the esthetic imaginations of the ancient Egyptians. In the description of the Serpent’s body he sees nothing else, but “a method of style, created literary characteristics, which is used to describe some strange creature” (ibid.). The author makes reference to the famous case of the birth of the infants from the “Westcar Papyrus”, the description of Re’s body, etc.

To gold and lazuli however corresponds a different explanation, because they are direct evidence that the Serpent is a deity. Ancient Egyptians from the beginning of their history perceived god’s flash as pure gold (Berlev 1972: 37). O. Berlev agrees with A. More’s thesis, in whose opinion gold is a synonym to “strength, resistance”, of “indestructability”, but he still thinks that this remains an aspect of a more complicated issue (Berlev 1979: 53). “Gold is the substance of the deity, the flesh of each god. Such is the “physics” of divine flesh *ḥꜣw ntr* that it is of gold. Even

the pharaoh Sethoy I, when addressing the laborers in the golden mines in Redezie, explains: “As concerns gold, the flesh of gods (*h<sup>c</sup>w ntrw*) is it...” and reminds of the words of the Sun at the conceiving of the world: “Indeed, my flash (Literally: my skin) is of bright, pure gold” (ibid.).

*jr nbw h<sup>c</sup>w ntrw...*  
*dd.w jm R<sup>c</sup> m š<sup>c</sup>.fn md.t*  
*jnm.j m d<sup>c</sup>m w<sup>c</sup>b*  
 (Kitchen 1969–80, I, 68)

Egyptians covered with gold and paint in gold, and later on in silver colours the masks of the mummies, the covers of the sarcophagi, the faces of the statuettes *šbtjw*, the bodies of the statues. In Deir el-Medina yellow colour was applied to paint all images of people in a whole row of tombs. This is being done because the deceased is “sun”, residing in the horizon (Literally: at Akhet) of his mortuary site.

The workshops for statues are *hwt nbw* “court of gold” (Faulkner: 129). This is how Sinuhe describes his statue:

*jw twt.j shr m nbw*  
*šndwt.fm d<sup>c</sup>mw*  
 (Sin. B 307–308)

My statue was covered with gold and its cuisse with light gold.

The idea of the golden flesh of deities is all-embracing. Such is the description of the Serpent from Sh.S. Obviously similar are the following additional descriptions:

1. The infant from the “Westcar Papyrus”:

*ṯ.w.fm nbw ṯnt.fm ḥsbd m<sup>3</sup>ṯ* (Westc. X. 11).

The organs (of his flash) are of gold, the royal bandage on his head – of real lazuli.

2. God Re (“The Destruction of Mankind”):

*h<sup>c</sup>.w m nbw šmw.fm ḥsbd m<sup>3</sup>ṯ* (Budge 1904: 388)

His flash is of gold, the hair – of real lazuli.

Here is a list of other snake-alike deities, similar to the Serpent from Sh. S.:

1. Serpent with a human head from “The Book of the Dead” (Lepsius, 1842, Pl. XXXII).

2. Serpent with a head of a bearded man – a statuette from the Berlin Museum (Roeder 1927: 161, 11).

3. The Serpent of evil with the head of Serapis (seen as an image on the coins of Adrian), representing the image of a Serpent with human head (Sharpe 1893; fig. 93). Similar images are to be found amongst gnostic images, stemming from the midst of the Ofeties (Lietzmann 1958, Taf. VI-VII), but also in mystical Masons' manuscripts – The Python of evil, which is depicted as a winged Serpent with a bearded man's face (Masonstvo 1914; I, 107).

4. The bearded Serpent *jbnnt3* from the coffin of Seth I.

5. The Serpent Apop shown with a beard – coffin No. 6029, National Museum, Cairo.

Concerning the beard of the Serpent from Sh. S., the discoverer of the papyrus, V. Golenischeff, writes: "In reference to the beard, with which the Serpent from the magic island is described, it reminds especially of the beard, which according to many ancient authors, was one of the symptoms that were characteristic of snake-like monsters, which the Greeks called *δρακων*". (Golenischeff 1912: 154).

6. Serpent, walking on man's legs, "The Book of the Dead" (Lepsius, Op. cit. Pl. XXVII).

7. Dragon with human legs and human arms, in front of which a person is depicted. Coffin from the Sais epoch (Lanzzone 1881, Pl. CLXXII; More 1913: 254).

8. Serpent, walking on man's legs, image from the tomb chamber of Ramesses IV.

9. Serpent with man's legs and arms – the iconography of god Nehebkau. In this form it is found especially frequently in small glazed earthenware of the deity from the late epoch (Shorter 1935: 41–48).

10. Serpent on man's legs with the Horus eye in his hands – a wooden statuette from the British museum (11779).

T. Hopfner describes similar images of Serpents with men's legs and arms, sometimes with wings, which hold in their hands two vessels, containing food for the dead. The author refers to "Texts from the Pyramid of Onnos" (Unas, 599), to the bronze miniature figures from the Turin Museum (Nr. 135, 195), from Vienna (Saal V, Mittelschrank 4, Nr. 89–92) (Hopfner 1914: 140, compare Vandier 1961: IX).

E. Maksimov considers that the serpent's image has been transferred in Sh. S. from ancient eschatological concepts and emphasizes that the Egyptian is approached with a speech not by the Serpent "but by its ever present soul *ka*" (Maksimov 1967: 102).

11. A Serpent of similar dimensions is mentioned in "The Coffin Texts":

*mḥ 30 m 3w.f*

*mḥ3 m ḥ<sup>c</sup>t.f m ds* (CT I, 378)

Its length is 30 cubits. 3 cubits in the front part are of flint stone (?).

H. Fisher suggests a different reading: "... 3 cubits are extending forwards as a knife" (Fisher 1977: 156). He thinks that this fragment is linked to the snakes, which appear amongst the magical artifacts of the Middle Kingdom, and which are sometimes equipped with a knife (*ibid.*).

The preceding context is "*sbk...* his Serpent, which is at the top of the mountain".

12. A figure of a Serpent with a knife in front of it is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum, No. 15–3–197 (*ibid.*).

13. Serpent – apotropaic creature, with man's head and with a beard and hair (hairpiece), with a magical knife in front of it. (University College, London (*ibid.*)).

14. Winged Serpent – Metropolitan Museum, No. 22. 1. 53 (*Ibid.*).

15. Winged Serpents, guarding the fimi trees in Africa (Herodotus III, 107).

16. Bearded Ureas, with human head, depicting Amenhotep IV, National Museum, Cairo (*ibid.*).

17. Ureus, with human head, without a beard (*ibid.*).

Notwithstanding the fact that the greater part of the Serpents of the Middle Kingdom are without beards, H. Fisher presumes that the beard of the Serpent from our "tale" emphasizes its divinity. The author suggests the Serpent to be treated as a good demon and not as the *alter ego* of the king of Egypt (*ibid.*). In the final run he classifies the Serpent from Sh. S. to the family of the apotropaic demons of the type Bes and Tauret (*ibid.*).

18. A Serpent of measures similar to these of the Serpent from Sh. S., and also of the example from "The Coffin Texts" is described in "The Book of the Dead", Chapter 108:

*mḥ 30 m 3w.f mḥ 10 m wsh.f*  
*jw mḥ 3 m ḥt.f m ds* (Lepsius 1842: Pl. 39)

His length is thirty cubits,

He is wide 10 cubits, 3 cubits in the frontal part are of flint. e

This Serpent used to live on the top of Bahaw, the mountain of the sun-rise, and his name was *jmj-hm.f* – "He who is in his flames."

19. Serpents of monstrous sizes that were dwelling in the mountains around the Red Sea. The example is from Philostratis (Redford 1975).

20. The snake – temptress from Genesis, 3: 14. The understanding is that "she" was walking on legs, since otherwise the execration by the god would be devoid of sense: "... be cursed ... you will crawl on your belly and will eat dust in all of the days of your life." (Genesis 3: 14)

In studies by E. Maksimov and D. Redford, as well as in literature of more general nature, numerous examples of snakes are presented, but we are limiting ourselves only to the ones which are close to the context of Sh. S.

Debates were provoked in respect to the word *ḥbswt* from the description of the Serpent. K. Sethe suggested the translation “tail” (Sethe 1907–1908: 83), which was not accepted (Gardiner 1947 (II): 238). W. Simpson adopted the translation “hood”, such as the one by cobras (Simpson 1979: 52) and from here originate the contemporary comparisons of the Serpent with a cobra. Simultaneously Simpson denies the translation “eyebrows” replacing it with “signs”. Similar is also the interpretation by Derchain-Urtel (Derchain – Urtel 1974: 85). There is a commonly accepted opinion that the Serpent is with a human head (Fisher 1977: 156). From the text we know that he speaks using human language, can carry the man in his maws, etc.

The “human head” is not acceptable to H. Goedicke, who points out that if the Serpent had a human face, Egyptians would have noted that fact, with the expression “human face” (*ḥr n pꜣt*) (Goedicke 1980: 28). In addition to the human head not being marked anywhere, one cannot presume that the “beard” directs necessarily to human features (ibid.). H. Goedicke also supports his individual opinion about the word *ḥbsw*. In his view, this is a “trace” (Goedicke 1974: 30), while the dimensions of the Serpent are a part of playing with words (Goedicke 1980: 28). According to Derchain – Urtel, the gold and the lazuli are a proof that the word is about the king or god Amun (Derchain – Urtel 1974: 88 ff.), but enough has been said along these lines already. What is really untraditional is the understanding of the Serpent’s colours as “brightness” and “darkness”.

In respect to the beard, we would remind the already quoted opinion of V. Golenischeff that it reminds of the snake-like dragons of the ancient Greeks (Golenischeff 1912: 154).

In “The Story of Sinuhe” a list of deities is preserved, among which we also notice:

- Ureret, the Lady Lord of Punt
- Nut
- Horus-uer-Re
- all Egyptian gods
- the gods of the *jw nw w3d-wr* (sea islands) (Sin. B 210–211).

What impresses is, that Sinuhe draws a difference between Punt and the sea islands, while in the “Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor” the serpent is the lord of both the island and of Punt. Of course, the island is “phantasmal” and according to his master’s prophecy will turn into waves.

So in scientists’ conceptions the Serpent is connected to the king, to god Re, to Atum (Goedicke 1980: 28). It is noted that it is a foreign, non-Egyptian divine creature (Lanczkowski 1955: 239 ff.), but in Goedicke’s opinion it is not typical for Egyptians to express gratitude to foreign deities (Goedicke Op. cit. 29), while on

the other side, the text itself does not connect the Serpent to the world of Egyptians. What has eventually happened to the Serpent's family (Sh. S. 129) does however link him to Re, i.e. the word is about a supreme deity (Goedicke 1974: 58).

H. Goedicke, in his study of the "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor", and also in a number of articles on this subject remarks, that the Serpent's role in the life of Egyptian is limited: it predicts, it inhabits a place which a man could not see, owns riches, it's dwelling place will vanish into the waters (Sh. S. 116 et. sec.; 73; 151 et. sec.; 153 et. sec.) (ibid.). According to H. Goedicke, the calamitous shipwreck and the unexpected encounter with the Serpent are events of destiny's scale.

As far as this scientist is concerned, the Serpent represents Destiny. Goedicke underlines that in Chapter 108 of "The Book of the Dead" the Serpent is also a symbol of destiny. There, he inhabits the Bahaw Mountain – the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead. In order to reach the afterworld, man has to encounter Destiny. The frontal part of that Destiny is of "flint", which means that it is "unchangeable", because only death opens the road to that world (Goedicke 1980). Such are H. Goedicke's explanations, which in our view are not supported by evidence from the primary sources.

It is time to be introduced to the deity Neheb-Kau "He who constrains Kau", who is known from "The Pyramid Texts". He is named *hꜥꜥw* "Serpent", he is the "The Great Serpent..." a well-meaning and supportive creature. Nehebkaui assists the deceased king. Fulfills the king's desire that his "good name" be pronounced to Nehebkaui, so that he could "highlight this good sentence before the two Enneads." (Pyr. 1708) (Shorter 1935; Wilkinson 2003: 224; Lekov 2008). (We will return specially to the example from Pyr. 1708 when we analyze Sh. S. 159.)

The provided examples expose the Serpent from the "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor" in a wider context, from which it becomes clear that the Serpent cannot be put under the same nominator as other known to us from various texts and images similar creatures. Still, it could to a certain extent be compared to the Serpent from the Mount Bahaw from "The Book of the Dead" (see previous reference). As it becomes evident from the entire text of Sh. S., the Serpent, which is the master of the island, and of Punt, has also features of guardian of the boundaries of the world, more specifically of its south-eastern limits. What was said about the connection to Seth's re-incarnations remains in force.

In the course of considering the subject of the Serpent, several thoughts have to be devoted to the use of the plural of the word *ntr* in Sh. S. 56. The fire offering is dedicated to *ntrw* (plural), yet it is one representative of the divine world that appears. It is possible that the sign for plural is a graphic depiction of a totality, from which in the given context follows to understand *ntrw* as a "force" (singular), the whole aggregated Force. To the Serpent from "The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor" we will be returning more often than once.

(159) ... *jmj rn.j nfr(w) m njwt.k*

Make my name *neferu* in your town!

Old perfective functioning as explanation to the object. The peculiarity is that the form serves to qualify the object of certain verbs:

*gmj* – “find”

*m33* – “look, see”

*rdj* – “give”, “make”, “allow”, and it’s imperative *jmj*

Compare: Sh. S. 157 with the verb *gmj* (Gardiner 1957: §315)

A similar example from stela Vienna 142 is offered by A. Erman in his “Grammar” (Erman 1928: §335).

The interpretation of this fragment from Sh. S. provokes a discussion and if today there is at least some agreement concerning the translation, then complete mutual understanding is missing.

A. Erman translates: “Lass (mainen) Namen in deiner Stadt shoen sein...” (Let my name be nice in your country...) (Erman, ZAS, XLIII, 21).

A. Gardiner devotes considerable attention to A. Erman’s interpretation. He explains that A. Erman’s understanding presumes that the suffix for first-person, singular, is omitted by the scribe after *rn*. This according to A. Gardiner is very much more in line with:

1. The position expressed by the Serpent in response to the shipwrecked sailor in Sh. S. 149–154.
2. The words directly preceding Sh. S. 158–159.

A. Gardiner suggests the following translation: “Come safely; and raise up a good name (for thyself) in thy town; behold, that is (all) that I wish from thee.”

A. Gardiner emphasizes that this is actually the interpretation of V. Golenisheff and G. Maspero and that such an interpretation has a priority and does not require alternatives.

A. Gardiner suggests the phrase *jmj rn nfr m nt.k* to be compared to the content of the Cairo stele MK 20503c: *nfr rn m r n njwt.f* (Gardiner 1909b: 66). At that time, A. Gardiner was under the strong influence of his friend and publisher of the text, V. Golenisheff, in whose opinion the symbol “seated person” after the word *rn* was read by the Egyptians as determinative, and not as suffix *j* (Golenisheff 1906: 10). Later on, A. Gardiner withdrew his statement and started reading *rn.j* instead of the earlier interpretation as *rn.k* (Gardiner 1957: §315).

In the world of ancient Egyptians the name carries within itself ritual and magical power. It is a vital attribute of the personality. Here is what Y. Perepelkin has written about the name:

“In the Old Kingdom the name was perceived as a specific soul or essence. The name lived, it was capable of feeling bad. It could be delivered, man could prosper with it. Knowledge of the name gave others power over the man who bore it and therefore it was of importance to the person to own a latent name not known even to his own mother. Since the name denoted the personality, the preservation of the name had the value of preserving the personality. Even pyramid inscriptions connect directly the eternity of the king with the preservation of his name. And what else did the anxious repetition of the king’s name by future generations mean if not continuation of his power forever?”

(Perepelkin 1988: 386).

Further on Y. Perepelkin puts stress on the link between the king’s name and the pyramid. “The pyramid embodied the king’s name; it was even perceived as the king himself and the word “pyramid” was represented by his name!” (Perepelkin 1988: 388).

Y. Perepelkin’s opinion comes as a comment to an excerpt from “Prayer for the Pyramid”, which is worth quoting because it throws light upon the Serpent’s plea from the “Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor”:

*j3 psd.t 3.t jmj.t jwnw rdj.tn rwd N. rdj.tn rwd mr pn n(j) N k3.t.f tn n d.t d.t mj rwd (j)r rn jtmw hntj psd.t 3.t (Pyr. 601)*

Oh, Great Ennead which is in lunu, give endurance to the king N. Give stability to this pyramid of N – his accomplishments for eternal times, just as the name of Atum, who presides over the Great Ennead endures.

The quoted excerpt puts an accent on the connection between the name and the monument.

The Serpent’s wish to have his name *nfrw* in the town of the Egyptian receives a detailed interpretation in Thuthmose’s I statement from the Abydos stela.

*jr.n hmw.j nn n jt.j 3sjr  
n mrwt mn rn.j rwd mnw.j  
smnh mnw nw hmw.j dm rn.j sh3 nhbt.j (Urk. IV 100–101)*

Make my *hemu* such for my father Osiris,  
So my name endures and my monuments are indestructible.”  
Decorate the monuments of my *hemu*, pronounce my name, remember my titulary.

Below are a few more examples which clarify what it means for the name to be *nfr*.

*wnn b3.f nḥ r ʿ nb dr*  
*rn.f nfr m r(3) ʿnhw*  
*sh3.t.f 3h.f n d.t* (Urk. IV 62)

Let his *ba* be alive in the hand of the Lord of All,  
 Let his name be *nefer* (smart, young) in the mouth of the living!  
 He is remembered, his glory is eternal!

An interesting parallel is the famous excerpt from the pyramid of Pepi:

*nfr n Ppj pn ḥnʿ rn.f*  
*ʿnh Ppj pn ḥnʿ k3.f* (Pyr. 469).

Young is this Pipe with his name,  
 Alive is this Pipe together with his *ka*.

A similar state of the name, comparable to the Serpent's wish, may be found in the inscription of *Rnj*, from Dyn. XVIII:

*rn.j nfr m t3 r dr.f* (Urk. IV, 75)

Young is my name in the country all until its bounds.

The examples show that the name *rn* is associated with the option of *nfr*, while *ʿnh* may be the state of *b3* or of *ka*. Similar examples could be presented endlessly.

Since the beginning of the Old Kingdom, Egyptians often have held two names:

1. *rn ʿ3* – the long, formal name, which is either theophoric, or basilo-phoric (i.e. it incorporated in itself the name of a deity or king).
2. *rn nds* – the small, short name, which in the majority of cases is an abbreviation of the long name. Later on *rn nds* was replaced by *rn nfr* – “the good, the young name”, which the Egyptian acquired sometime after birth: it characterized its bearer and enhanced his status. This name lost its significance by the end of the Old Kingdom, and virtually disappeared during the Middle Kingdom (Doxey, OEA, II, 490–491).

In O. Berlev's opinion the problem of *rn nfr* is identical to the one of *ntr nfr*. The solution lies in clarifying the contrast between the epithets “big”, “great” and “good”, “wonderful” that are combined either with the noun “god” or the noun “name”. In both cases the epithet “wonderful” is euphemism of the word “small”, the normal antonym to the epithets “big”, “great”. Thus the active pair “big” and

“small” should be interpreted as “adult” and “young”. Possible shades of meaning are also “greater”, “older”, and “younger”. The “small name” was opposed to the “big name”. Ultimately “good, wonderful” is euphemism for “small” in the sense of “young” (Berlev 1982: 44). The “young name” is given after birth. It is the child’s, unofficial, name (ibid.). It follows from the aforesaid that in Sh. S. 159 the Serpent wished his cult to be established in Egypt, his everyday name to be pronounced in Egypt and following the pattern of the establishment of the “young name”, given at birth, the desire of the Serpent, read between the lines, is to include the creation of his image. According to the “Palermo Stone” for example, the birth of a deity is marked by the creation of its image (Schafer 1902= Urk I, 235–249).

If this is the meaning of the words of the Serpent in Sh. S. 159, then the generally accepted idea of the Serpent as the only god Creator (Baines 1990: 52–72), whose daughter is goddess Maat (Derchain-Urtel 1974: 83–104) appears to be an artificial construction, which does not fit into the context of the “Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor.”

In Sh. S. 159 we find the first and only mentioning of *rn* – “name”. The Serpent’s name is not disclosed directly anywhere in the text, but it is obvious that the Egyptian man has an idea about whom is he communicating with.

The “Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor” observes the established Egyptian rule that the name of the deity should not be mentioned. The name of the god or the king is sacred, it is a secret.

*hm n mwt.f rn.f* (Pyr 394)

His mother knows not his name!

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